



Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

Public Safety sent out a Timely Warning email on Feb. 12, detailing an alleged sexual assault that took place on Jan. 1 on campus.

University administrators keep quiet about two incidents alleging criminal behavior

By Grace Bertrand

University administrators have released no additional information about two incidents involving alleged criminal conduct, including a Jan. 1 sexual assault that reportedly happened on campus.

Rider is required by law to notify the campus community of serious threats under the federal Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act that was enacted to keep university communities informed.

After Rider's Department of Public Safety was notified by Lawrence Police on Feb. 2 of the alleged sexual assault, Public Safety did not notify the university until 10 days later. School officials said the delay was at the request of Lawrence Police to "avoid compromising its investigation," according to the Feb. 12 Timely Warning email sent out by Public Safety.

Limited information

After the Feb. 12 Rider alert informed students of the open investigation on the sexual assault case, university students remain in the dark regarding any new information on the case.

Director of Public Safety Matthew Babcock said he did not have any further information to share on who the individuals involved were or where the incident took place, as the investigation is with Lawrence Police.

Lawrence Police Sgt. Daniel Gladney did not respond to multiple requests from The Rider News for information regarding the investigation.

Babcock told The Rider News on Feb. 24, "The timely warning incident lies with the Title IX office for investigation."

Dean of Students and Deputy Title IX Coordinator Christine Mehlhorn told The Rider News on Feb. 17 that the university was relying on Lawrence police's investigation and that any other available information would be "communicated appropriately."

"Our understanding is limited to the information shared by law enforcement, including that the reported incident occurred on campus on January 1, 2026, and involved individuals who were known to one another," Mehlhorn said in an email. "The Timely Warning

reflects all of the information currently available to us that we are able to share."

The issue comes years after students accused the university of failing to properly investigate sexual assaults on campus as required by Title IX, which is also federal legislation that requires universities to investigate sexual assault.

Rider's Title IX office is expected to provide support to the university community in creating a safe educational environment by addressing instances of discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct through investigation, formal and informal problem solving and education.

In 2020, Rider launched an independent investigation after dozens of students and alumni who were part of Rider's former School of Fine and Performing Arts created a 44-page document detailing more than 120 anonymous complaints. These complaints included allegations of sexual harassment, racism, inappropriate relationships and body-shaming done by faculty at the university.

The Rider News did an in-depth story in November 2022 on the failures of Rider's Title IX office to communicate properly with students who had filed complaints and never got their cases resolved. Some of the victims of sexual harassment in previous years alleged to a Rider News reporter that the university never even interviewed them. The Title IX coordinator at the time, Barbara Lawrence, later left the university.

According to Mehlhorn, former Title IX Coordinator Ryan McKinney is also no longer at Rider, and a new Title IX coordinator has been hired and will be announced to the university community soon. This new appointment comes after the Title IX Office has had several leadership changes during the last four years.

Further silence

Also this month, the university did not send a campuswide notification about a student's arrest in Camden County for alleged possession of sexual abuse material involving a child.

On Feb. 10, the Camden County Prosecutor's

Office released a press release detailing the arrest and charges against Rider sophomore game design major Ethan Byrne for the possession of sexual abuse material involving a child in the third degree.

Students were informed of Byrne's arrest from a Feb. 18 article by The Rider News. Babcock said Public Safety only became aware of the arrest through social media the same day a press release was sent out by Camden County.

Byrne was arrested during winter recess. Lt. Andrew McNeil of the prosecutor's office said the investigation is ongoing. Byrne's arrest and charge were not publicly detailed to the Rider community by the administration, prompting questions and concerns from other students after Byrne was seen on campus.

Assistant Dean of Students Keith Kemo told The Rider News in a Feb. 17 email that the university could not legally comment on any activity or action of a current student under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and therefore, were unable to confirm whether Rider was aware of Byrne's arrest before he returned this semester.

"What I can share, in a more broad fashion, is that if the university were aware of such information, we would take it very seriously," Kemo said. "The Dean of Students Office would take immediate action to protect the health or safety of any community member, or prevent disruption to the university's learning environment."

Kemo did not respond to a Feb. 24 email from The Rider News requesting more information.

As both Lawrence Police and the Camden County Prosecutor's Office continue their investigations into the two reports of alleged illegal conduct, Rider is still permitted to conduct its own investigations into the matters and keep students informed.

Kemo said that while the university is subject to federal privacy laws, Rider reviews all allegations that could violate Rider's policy "in real time, as we become aware of things and take appropriate action all the time to keep the campus community safe."

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SECURITY BRIEFS

BY MADISON LEWIS

Information provided by Public Safety Director Matthew Babcock

Unfounded aromatics

Suspicious scents. On Feb. 18, at 10:20 a.m., Public Safety was conducting a Park, Walk and Talk of Hill Hall, when they detected the odor of marijuana. The odor was coming from the first floor of the building. Public Safety was able to narrow down the source to the first floor hallway, but could not locate the source.

Toppled tree limb

Compromised car. On Feb. 23, at 11:13 a.m., Public Safety was on patrol when they found a car damaged in the Kroner Lot. While on patrol, the officer discovered a tree limb had fallen onto a vehicle parked in the lot. Public Safety attempted to contact the owner and documented the incident.

Moore and more maintenance

Disconnected dorms. On Feb. 18, at 2:45 p.m., Public Safety was notified by Facilities Management that the fire alarm panel in Ziegler and Moore Hall was offline. The Lawrence Township Fire Marshal was notified and advised that a fire watch would have to be established to check the building until repairs could be made. Public Safety conducted checks of the building every 30 minutes until repairs were made on Feb. 19, at 1:00 p.m.

CORRECTION

In last week's digital edition, the "Letter to the editor: Welcome to rock bottom" incorrectly spelled the last name of the author, David Spoganetz. The Rider News deeply regrets this error.

Sarah F. Griffin/The Rider News

Moore Library reshapes amid ongoing budget cuts

By Caroline Haviland

To push through financial and faculty-loss challenges that plagued many sectors on Rider's campus in recent years, Moore Library has undergone a reevaluation of its operations to optimize its performance, despite being understaffed.

The library's most recent setback came when former professor-librarian Heather Dalal was a part of the mass faculty layoffs in December due to the university's critical financial condition. With her departure, Moore Library was left with five librarians, including Dean of the Library Sharon Whitfield.

Whitfield, who was appointed to the position in July 2025 as the first librarian dean since 2017, said she tries to view these obstacles in a positive light and make it an opportunity to reassess traditional offerings and shape the library more innovatively.

She said, "We're actually not pulling back, we're pushing forward."

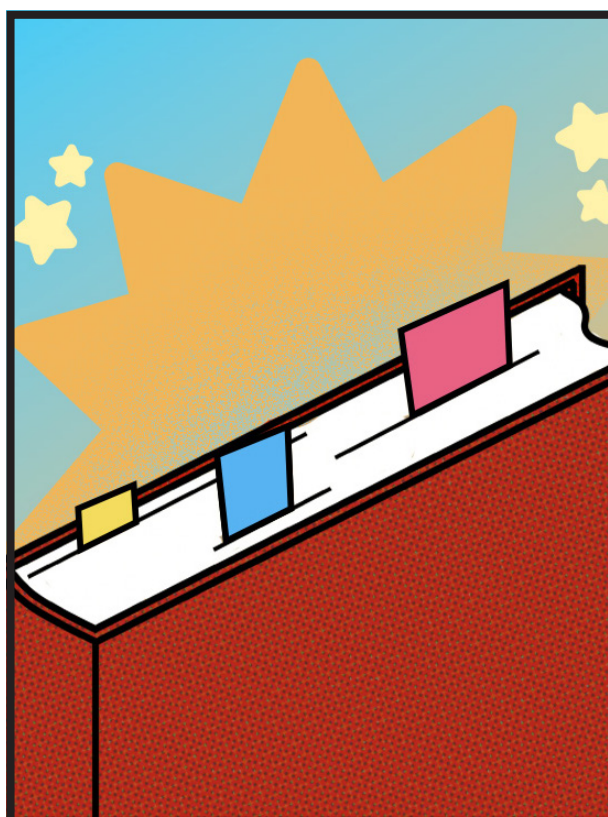
Moving away from a "traditional library" model

To get a better understanding of what brings value to the university library, Whitfield said she set a "framework to live by" with three categories: instruction, access and outreach.

With this structure, the library's faculty decided to put certain services on hold, such as its incorporation of virtual reality into pedagogy, due to limited resources prohibiting them from performing the service to the optimal degree.

The reason for this, she said, is to focus their attention on areas where they can excel.

Budget cuts have also resulted in a loss of access



Grace Juarez/The Rider News

Moore Library has been facing various changes, as there have been fewer librarians in recent years and the library has experienced budget cuts.

to databases, which were decided through a cost-per-use metric that helped the library see if it was getting ideal usage on each resource. Some of the databases removed pertained to the Modern Language Association, economics literature and nursing literature.

Even with these reductions, Whitfield said Moore Library has continued to expand its collaborations, like working with the 100-level research class required for all undergraduates. This partnership involves each student receiving about 10 information literacy modules to complete, with the hope that they would understand and utilize researching skills better.

These joint efforts can bring fruitful results, Professor-Librarian Melissa Hofmann said, as they help both students and faculty alike.

"We can help faculty make better research assignments so they're students are actually learning what they want them to learn with the information landscape changing so fast," Hofmann said.

The Academic Success Center has also joined with Moore Library to offer students assistance from tutors and librarians on Monday and Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The objective of these initiatives, Whitfield said, is to expand outreach to the Rider community to let faculty, staff and students know what the library can offer.

Upon reviewing data detailing overall usage of the library in fall 2025, that goal seemed to be met, as Whitfield said there was a 54% increase in comparison to fall 2024.

"Nothing makes a librarian happier than for you to hear noise because that means people are in the building, hopefully they're studying together, working out problems together," Whitfield said. "When it's quiet and no one is here, that's the worst thing for a librarian."

When a student now walks into Moore Library, they will no longer find a librarian sitting at the reference desk waiting to be approached. Instead, Whitfield said she prefers her librarians to be walking around, getting outside

Rider announces new universitywide changes across campus

By Caroline Haviland

Members of the Rider community can expect some new faces and changes on campus this semester, as Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff Mary-Alice Ozechoski detailed a list of plans underway to improve Rider’s services, programs and staffing in a Feb. 23 universitywide email.

These measures come as Rider hired a consultant in November to meet with students and provide the university with a report outlining recommendations to improve the student experience, the email said.

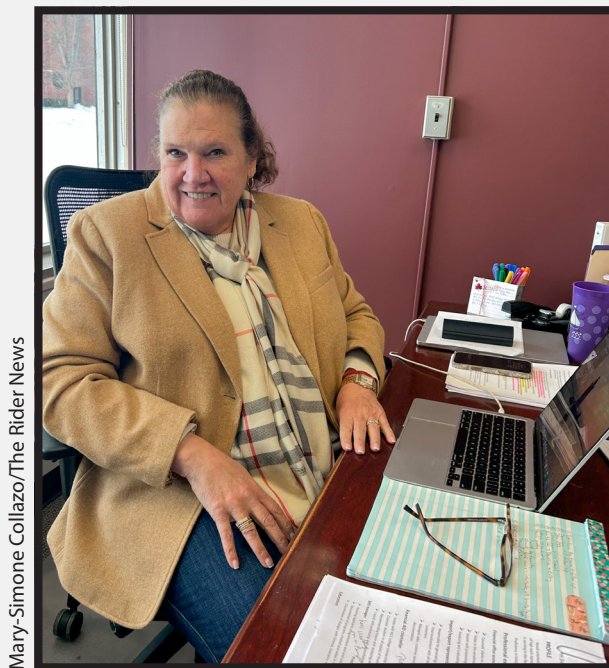
“While not every initiative will directly impact every student, each is designed to strengthen the student experience and ensure every Bronc finds a home, a community, and a sense of belonging at Rider,” the email said.

To increase accessibility to related offices, the Vona Annex adjacent to Daly Dining Hall will be transitioned into a Wellness Center, housing the Counseling Center and the university’s Health Services. A full execution of the center can be expected in fall 2026, but a preview of its offerings will begin after spring break, the email said.

The new center will also include a sensory room for “stress reduction and sensory balance,” as well as a community outreach space for training, group discussion and educational purposes.

Similarly, to make the division more reachable, Ozechoski’s email stated Student Affairs will move back to the Bart Luedeke Center in March 2026.

To fill recently vacated positions, the university appointed Jacqueline Watford as director of financial aid, who began on Feb. 9, and Kellie McKinney as executive director of residential engagement and development, the email detailed. McKinney started



Mary-Simone Collazo/The Rider News

Mary-Alice Ozechoski sent out a campuswide email announcing universitywide changes that are expected through the fall 2026 semester.

in her position over the winter recess, and has already implemented new procedures in the Department of Residential Education and University Housing.

One of these additions, which was stated in the Feb. 23 email, is the university’s return to residential buildings for first-year students residing on campus.

McKinney explained to The Rider News on Feb. 9, “[The previous housing selection process] created situations where students with significantly fewer credits were able to access housing options well ahead

of peers who were closer to graduation. Over time, this led to concerns about equity across the broader residential community.”

With the new 2026-27 housing selection approach marking all students in a group formation under a specific grade level, Rider will be able to designate specific residential areas for first-years, sophomores, upperclassmen and graduate students starting in fall 2026, McKinney said.

To add onto the developments in Rider’s residential communities, a new Education Living Learning Community will begin in fall 2026 for first-year and transfer education majors, Ozechoski’s Feb. 23 email stated.

The Student Navigation Office has also returned to campus after being put on a hiatus in fall 2024, the email announced. The office aims to provide first-years, transfers and adult learners with a support coach to walk them through their first year at Rider, according to an archive of the program’s web page.

Director of Student Involvement and First Year Programs Kadi Diallo said to The Rider News, “There is definitely going to be that connection piece, not only student to student, but to student to staff ... Think of SNO as a space where you can get your questions answered and you can get holistic support.”

Ozechoski’s email included a final addition regarding Rider Dining’s new commuter lunch program at no cost. No other details were provided on this initiative.

To further enhance dining, Daly Dining Hall also added new grab-and-go selections at its checkout and Saxbys now offers weekend hours with meal exchange options.

Librarians work to keep services ‘human centered’ after cuts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

and being involved in the community to shape how the library is perceived on campus. Students can also schedule one-on-one appointments with a librarian on their website to get the assistance they need.

“During that reshaping and reforming, I think we’re moving away from just being a traditional library to being more innovative,” Whitfield said.

Challenges to Solutions

A primary reason for these changes in operations comes from a significant cut to the library’s budget. In an April 2024 article published by The Rider News, Moore Library’s budget was reported to be sitting at \$1.25 million in 2019. That number got cut by 20% in 2021, 30% in 2022 and an additional 20% in 2024, making it half of what it once was.

The budget now is undergoing “recalibration,” Whitfield said, as their existing budget model was developed based on former Rider President Gregory Dell’Omo’s administration’s projections, which no longer align with the current university environment.

Hofmann said Whitfield has been successful at creating improvements in the building’s space with minimal cost, such as making more study rooms, taking out shelves to create additional seating and using

their funds to install power outlets in the center of numerous sitting areas.

However, with a decreasing budget and less librarians, the same workload has been left to those remaining at Moore Library.

When she started at Rider in 2008, Hofmann said Moore Library housed 10 librarians. Over the years, many of them left to pursue other career opportunities, but they were not replaced.

Hofmann said this has made her and her colleagues “more generalists and less experts,” as they have become liaisons to differing schools across campus, instead of specific departments. This has increased the amount of collection development and research instruction each librarian must complete in order to best support the curriculum.

Whitfield said in order to combat the heavier workload, the library has resorted to automating certain processes through artificial intelligence to avoid the staff from feeling burnt out.

One of these processes being assisted with artificial intelligence includes a diversity, equity and inclusion audit on the library’s social work collection, but Whitfield said the artificial intelligence work is always “human centered.”

“I don’t think technology could exist without a



Jay Roberson/The Rider News

Budget cuts and loss of librarians have both impacted what Moore Library offers

human factor. Anything we’re driving with AI and workflows makes the process work more effectively,” Whitfield said.

With all of these adjustments made over the years, Whitfield said she commends her colleagues’ willingness to push forward, and signified their positions in a single sentence: “Librarians are people who are willing to embrace change.”

THE TRUTH WILL BE TOLD THIS SATURDAT AT 11 A.M.








Shining Light on Black Excellence: Reggie Walker

By Jasmine White

Two-time Rider alum Reggie Walker returned to the university after receiving his doctorate in educational leadership with a concentration in higher education to serve as the director of the Equal Opportunity Program, a state-sponsored program that helps low-income New Jersey residents attend college. A former EOP student himself, Walker now is giving back to the university that started it all.

Walker began at Rider in the summer 2001 and finished with his bachelor's degree in radio and television communications in spring 2005. He returned to Rider for its graduate program for counseling, but pivoted over to being a part of Rider's first cohort of its Organizational Leadership Program.

"I came into a program particularly at the time at Rider where there were less students of color than we have now," Walker said. "It was very, very important for us to have resources and connections and individuals who not only understood us, but also understood our unique situations, with our socioeconomic backgrounds."

Walker emphasized that being able to come back to an institution that showed him "so much love and support" drove him to want to give that same experience to other students in Rider's upcoming years. During Walker's undergraduate junior year, he knew that he wanted to go into education, and returned for a master's degree while working as the graduate assistant for EOP.

"[Being the graduate assistant for EOP] really allowed me to dig and do some amazing work," Walker said. "I was a peer counselor while I was in undergrad, but being a grad assistant allowed me to take on some amazing responsibilities, paving the way for me to do what I'm doing now."

While being a peer counselor, Walker was also president of Black Student Union. He realized that he had many other gifts and talents when it came to

mentoring others, and he remembered faculty and staff at the time making comments like "are you sure you're in the right major?"

Now as the director of EOP, Walker is proud to be a part of EOP's Male Leadership Academy, Women in Action, and the Turning Point Academic Empowerment Program. Walker worked with another graduate assistant to create the Multicultural Student Leadership Institute, now called the All Broncs Belong Program, directed by the Center of Community and Belonging. Its aim was to bring about a similar welcoming experience for students that do not qualify to be in EOP.

Though Walker credits these positions as being pivotal in his career, the most important moment in his educational journey at Rider was when he met his now wife, Zuri Walker.

"We already have a son named Guy, that's our oldest, and then our daughter, we named her Rider because that's where we met," Walker said. "So she thinks she has a school named after her."

Freshman communication major Johnnie Edwards expressed how being a part of EOP has been nothing short of a "second family." Edwards compared Walker to "the old uncle at the cookout who is super wise and always comes around with jokes."

"Every time I go into the office, it's either me and him playing around arguing or him getting on me about work," Edwards said. "I love seeing that work-fun balancing people, because it shows that even though they are technically in a position of power, it still shows that they care."

Sophomore sports management major Donte King expressed how Walker has been an important mentor to everyone in EOP, while honing in on his kindness.

"Whenever he sees a student having trouble or in need to talk to someone, he is always free to talk to the students, giving advice that they may need to combat



Photo courtesy of Reggie Walker

Reggie Walker is a two-time Rider graduate.

the situation," King said. "I always see students come back to his office just to chat with him."

Walker said his love for Jesus Christ takes precedence over everything else, allowing him to use his positions at Rider to help bring about college ministry initiatives, working alongside his church. Walker exercises his faith in daily practices, whether it be praying for students or "walking in his God-given purpose" by serving his community and succeeding despite being in a system that does not fully accept him due to his appearance. Walker leaves the following words of encouragement to everyone:

"Struggle is beautiful," Walker said. "Sometimes you have to look at your struggles and go ... they've made me creative, they've made me resourceful, they've made me struggle, they've made me vulnerable ... all the things that serve you well."

SHINING LIGHT ON
BLACK
EXCELLENCE

Logo by Maggie Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Exploring and expanding the e-sports community at Rider

By Brannagh Rattigan

From murder mystery games to high-tension competitions in Super Smash Brothers, the e-sports team at Rider has got it all covered with its two casual and competitive group meetings.

The casual team spent Thursday night on Feb. 19 brainstorming through various puzzle games in the murder mystery game called "Murder By Numbers." Beginning at 7:30 p.m. in Fine Arts, the group's members relieved stress working together on puzzle mini games, with soft music filling the background.

At the same time, in the Science and Technology center, the competitive team was working together to fight in a rescheduled Super Smash Bros. match. The group was led by junior English major Julian Geibel, president of the e-sports club and captain of the Super Smash Bros. Ultimate team.

Geibel, who joined the club as a freshman, explained that the competitive team is in the midst of their season playing in the Mid-American Conference. This means leading Super Smash Bros. and Street Fighter Six tournaments every other Friday.

"We work in tandem with TCNJ and so one Friday will be us, another with them, and so on and so forth," Geibel said.

Later in the season, the competitive team will partake in a larger competition called the Royal Stampede, which Rider's e-sports team participated in for the first time last year.

"It is much bigger as opposed to our biweekly Smash tournaments, which are more local and small-scale," Geibel said.

Besides competition, Geibel expressed how welcoming the community and atmosphere of the e-sports team is, both casual and competitive.

"It's just a good way to build community and get a lot of people together and just play games, because that's what it's really all about," Geibel said.

Freshman member and communication studies



Brannagh Rattigan/The Rider News

The e-sports club hosts casual and competitive meetings with a welcoming environment.

major Julian Paz joined the team after realizing in high school that he had a passion for Super Smash Bros and competing in local tournaments.

"Once I realized Rider had their own e-sports team for Super Smash Bros, I made it my goal to make that the first club I joined," Paz said.

He shared that the competitive team competes in two leagues, the MAC, which is primarily online, and the Garden State Esports, where they travel to other colleges.

"My favorite memory was the GSE competition from last semester, where we went in and faced Rutgers, Princeton, and other top level schools in the league," he said.

Paz explained that the community within the e-sports team is extremely welcoming and always open to take in new members, although the competitive team is best for people who have more than just an

interest in the game.

"The community is very, very welcoming of both the casual and the competitive side, because we all share a hobby of video games. Everyone is super cool, and I love the crowd, energy and everything that's going on around it," Paz said.

Geibel expressed plans to do takeovers at Muller's Pub, and do as much as they can to involve the community in upcoming events.

All in all, the hope is for esports to continue to thrive at Rider, and for success in their competitive season.

Geibel said, "My main goal right now is to keep Rider esports afloat, we are in such a great position right now, and my goal going into next year is to keep it at that same level. Growing would be great, I just want the club to continue to thrive as it has been the last couple years."

New Saxbys SCEO is leading by example

By Sofia Santiago

Saxbys' website details its mission to "make life better" through several core values. Before starting in her position as the spring 2026 Saxbys Student CEO, Leonor Alves recalls reading through them and found that they resonated with her.

'We are a Community, Serving Our Community'

As a senior business administration major, Alves has been a part of the Rider community for four years. She has played as a midfielder on the women's soccer team since her freshman year and worked at Muller's Pub before starting her internship at Saxbys. Most of her fall semester is dedicated to the sport, but with the season over, she explained that she takes the spring semesters to focus on her career and prepare for the future.

Alves was already familiar with Saxbys as one of the go-to cafes and study spots on campus and she often frequents Sweigart Hall, where Saxbys is located, for classes, advising or to grab some food. However, she was not aware of the structure nor scope of the Saxbys Experiential Learning Program until a meeting she had with Karl Craft, director of career development and success, in which she was informed about the position.

"I heard about this, and I thought it was an awesome internship, because you get to deal with a lot of different parts of the business. And Saxbys is really amazing. Not enough [people talk] about how well structured they are," Alves said.

After the application process, she was accepted and started her training, which included online courses that involved lectures, readings, discussions and a final presentation project. Over winter break, she attended a week of training at the Saxbys headquarters in Philadelphia.

She described how her experience there took care of any concerns she had.

"[Saxbys is] so quick to answer. You really feel like you have a whole team with you. It's not like you're alone managing the cafe at all," Alves said.



Photo courtesy of Leonor Alves

Leonor Alves was initially interested in the Saxbys SCEO position as an internship experience.

As a customer, Alves never thought about the behind the scenes.

"You just look at the cafe, and then you look at the food and the drinks, and you don't see all the steps that come behind in order for you to have everything well prepared on time. That amazed me, all that process. And I really, really like the structure and the support they gave," Alves said.

Another concern she had before stepping into the position was fitting in with the team at Rider. As the work started, those concerns also disappeared.

"[Alves] started pretty recently, but already she's off to an amazing start. She is super personable. She's always helping us behind bar. She's always going out of her way, even when she's not technically on the clock, to do anything that we might need," said Joey Mangam, a junior elementary education major, who has been working at Saxbys for a year and is currently



Photo courtesy of Leonor Alves

Leonor Alves, senior business administrator, plays on the women's soccer team as a midfielder.

one of the team leads.

Mangam explained that Alves was inquisitive and not afraid to ask for help.

Because of the support from headquarters and from the Rider's Saxbys team, Alves feels that the initial challenge of getting used to a new environment was easier.

Alves said, "That's normal when you have a team. We rely on each other, and sometimes, things happen, and it's not as planned, but that's fine as well. We'll find a solution for that."

'Care Personally and Communicate Openly'

Being the Saxbys SCEO is a comprehensive and busy job for Alves.

"My focus has been 100% on the cafe, the team, the tasks, everything," she said.

On a weekly basis, she gets to the cafe an hour before it opens to take inventory and places orders through various vendors, if necessary. Other tasks include making reports on sales and costs and having weekly meetings with her manager and staff, but most of her time is spent behind the counter preparing food. Communication is key for her, especially during morning rushes.

"There are always things that happen," Alves said. "For example, one of our ovens broke down, which obviously is going to slow us down on the food part while we're working on repairs. These are things that we can't control, so we have to focus on what we can control."

She explained the best way to help her team is to schedule enough team members and delegate the different stations that need them so the food can be served quickly.

"A big part, if I'm working behind the bar when there's a rush, is just checking if everything is okay, helping out every team member that needs help and obviously to do it myself, not just to rely on others to work," Alves said.

Mangam affirmed, "[Alves is] very hands on. She gives us tips and pointers if needed, and she isn't afraid to kind of tell us if we need to improve on something. But the way that she does it is very kind."

Alves' time spent working at Muller's Pub helped her with her customer service skills, but she noted the differences between the two seemingly similar jobs. At the Pub, she could chat with the customers and see how their day was going.

"The rush here, it's much different. The speed you need to have is much greater. We have that [guest] interaction here, it's awesome if we can do that, but we don't have as much time," Alves said.

At Saxbys, speed of service is something that she is always trying to improve. Alves makes the effort to communicate with others in all aspects of life, not just with customers and the Saxbys team.

Originally from Portugal, Alves' family lives abroad. She visits during breaks and tries to call home whenever she is free. However, with a time difference of five hours, it can be a challenge.

"Now, during the day I'm very busy, and at night,

when I'm free, they're asleep. But they know this is the best for me and for my future, so they understand. On the weekends, we always try to catch up more and talk for longer," she explained.

Eloise Jones, senior criminal justice major and player on Rider women's soccer team, has known Alves since their freshman year. Longtime friends and teammates, Jones recalled how quiet Alves was when they first met and how much that has changed.

"Something I always really respect about [Alves] is that English isn't her first language, but that hasn't stopped her in any way," Jones said.

'Serve Yourself by Serving Others'

As a leader, Alves emulates what she admires in leaders that she has had.

"A big thing that I like in leaders, and I try to live by myself, is lead by example," she explained. She puts this into practice by doing the tasks that are not as enjoyable, such as deep cleaning.

Alves will split up tasks that are "not enjoyable," still encouraging teamwork to get tasks done faster, ensuring that no one works alone. By splitting the tasks and holding everyone accountable, the standards are the same for everyone. The team also appreciates this.

"Sometimes [Alves will] come behind bar when we're closing, and help us do dishes or go take out the trash, things that people don't typically like to do ... Her being behind bar and helping us all the time really shows how dedicated she is to her position and how much she cares about it," Mangam said.

Jones echoed this sentiment, "She's done it all, but I've never seen her be so excited ... She is the friend that will come and pick you up at 3 a.m. if you're stranded. She would go above and beyond for anyone, you don't even have to ask, and she's there."



Photo courtesy of Leonor Alves

Leonor Alves is originally from Aveiro, Portugal.

The power of unity and representation

By now, it has been over two weeks since the Super Bowl LX Halftime Show. Watching it was a feeling like no other, seeing all of the cultural references, and getting excited when I could recognize parts from my own childhood or family stories. With all of the North and South American flags waving high at the end of Bad Bunny's performance, and the joy of finding my own country's flag in the mix, I realized that this is what representation is all about.

My family immigrated from the small country of Guyana. Not many people know it even exists. Seeing its name get called out on national television, along with many other well-known South American countries, was a welcomed surprise for me.

What made the experience even better was the community that was formed from it. Sitting next to my Puerto Rican friend, laughing and pointing at everything we recognized was a highlight in and of itself. The following week, social media was filled with people talking about how they felt represented, whether they were from South America or not. Sharing culture is what brings people together in the end.

As a society, we have come a long way in terms of diversity. I remember growing up and clinging onto any character whose skin had a slight tan to it. It is a joy to pick up any piece of media and find someone who looks like you now.

This is one of the few reasons why representation matters. Identifying with something or someone is part of it, but accuracy is also vital.

This is why the halftime show was so good. All of the references were genuine to Bad Bunny's life and made people feel seen. There were no stereotypes, just real experiences.

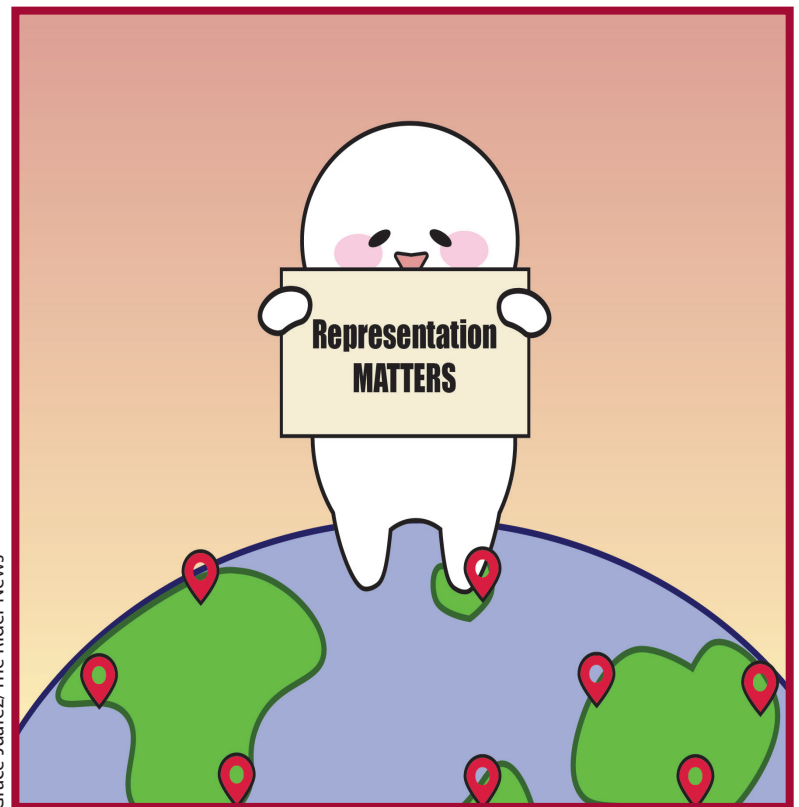
Diversity is important now more than ever. With an increased presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and changes to immigration policies,

we must show that everyone is welcome. There is no society in which a person is deserving of discrimination because of their race or ethnic background. Seeing statements of unity, such as the halftime show, is imperative to our future.

Unity is one aspect that feels almost forgotten at times. Everybody from different backgrounds has their own fight. However, no one can do everything alone. We must be able to uplift one another and stand together. We risk more division otherwise.

Creating unity can also include the small parts of life, too. Celebrate your friends' different traditions with them, keep an open mind and congratulate each other on any wins. Learning about different cultures has always been one of my favorite parts of education. If we continue to make space for each other and are welcome to learn, then we will be able to maintain unity as a society.

Representation matters in everything that we do. Sometimes, we do not even realize it and take it for granted. Thanks to people who have fought for equal rights and made their existence known, we have received so much in recent years. This is why we are able to find a wide variety of shades in makeup, see so many different kinds of love stories in the media and find various holiday decor in stores. While everything is not perfect, it is important to recognize how far we



Representation and diversity matter more today than ever before.

have come as a society and continue to push for a better future. We must always have a sense of belonging and carry it with us wherever we go.

For anyone out there who is struggling, you are heard and you are loved.

Jenna Munswami
junior communication studies major

Reexamining and redefining 'Black Excellence'

As someone who spent the majority of my life performing the model of "Black Excellence," the irony of now calling out the concept is not lost on me.

My own divulsion from the concept of "Black Excellence" came when I started to look at myself and ask what place I wanted to have in the world. Though, based on sociopolitical thoughts I lacked an understanding of at the time, I had three questions I posed to myself.

What did excellence do for not just me, but my community? Whose ideas and dreams of excellence was I adhering myself to? And why did I need to be "the best," to be in rooms that my non-Black peers were granted access to?

To be Black means to live in an almost constant state of performance. We are taught from an early age about the preconception people will have for us in life and how we have to behave to circumvent those ideas.

Almost every Black person could talk about the stereotypes — the "angry" Black woman, who finds a problem with everything or the "ghetto" Black man who flunks out of school — within our communities. They are almost cautionary tales for us to avoid, because to be Black means to be observed as a monolith, devoid of your own identity.

This is how concepts of "Black Excellence" gain notoriety. Starting as examples for Black people to look up to and aspire to become, when we see figures like Beyoncé or even when we graduate from a class with a Black valedictorian, it is hard not to feel a connection to that accomplishment — especially when you can understand the amount of extra work taken to get there.

But what have those accomplishments truly meant for the community? Not to diminish the work of representation, but individualized accomplishments will never be the solution to systemic issues. What these



The current framing of "striving for Black Excellence" can put undue pressure on Black individuals.

role models really do is give a false illusion that the solution to racism is to be "the best."

Which begs the question: what about those who cannot perform to the same levels of excellence? Do they not deserve to be able to enter a room and be treated with the same amounts of respect and dignity as any other person?

When the idea of excellence becomes a sense of exceptionalism, a class divide is created. By pedestooling those who are high-achieving in such a way we establish them as rarities, or as atypical from the Black experience. However, historically, that has never been the case.

Black people have always been just as capable and

competent as their non-Black counterparts, but regardless of that, Black people should not be made to perform to any higher standard to be acknowledged while working within white spaces.

When we throw around the phrase "Black Excellence," we inadvertently say that it is a choice to not be greater and absolve the real systems of inequality that serve the purpose of oppressing a community.

It is as if Black people have an equal access to education and wealth across the board, or as if the real issue plaguing the Black community is laziness.

When Black people attach to "Black Excellence," what we really do is adhere to the concept that we have to prove our sense of humanity, that Black people have to be more to achieve personhood — but the truth is we are enough for simply being.

Zyheim Bell
senior journalism major

Grieving a 'superhero' and balancing college

On Jan. 30 at around 6 p.m., my father Michael F. Bolcato was pronounced dead. I was home when it happened along with my mom, my grandma and my pet boxer dog. My father was 58 years old when he passed away. Now, almost a month later, I am still experiencing grief.

What is grief? Grief is essentially a deep, shallow feeling that is usually caused by a death, especially of someone who is very close to you. Many college students experience grief every day. Healgrief.org reports that roughly between 35% to 48% of college students have or are experiencing grief every day from the death of a loved one.

My dad meant so much to me. He was practically my superhero. We did everything together, from going to taekwondo to watching every single Marvel movie in the theater. The last few months of his life were by far the happiest, as he wanted to check in with me every single day for the last three months until his untimely passing. We shared some great laughs too. His death was very sudden as our family all had no idea that this was going to happen to him.

He only got to live in our dream house in New Egypt, New Jersey, for a few months until his passing. Our family sold our house of 23 years in Jackson, New Jersey, over the summer. My dad got to ride his dream car, the Ford Bronco, for only 10 days until he passed. He was seen as the mayor of the gym by locals who knew him, as he would be at the gym bright and early



Photo courtesy of Michael Bolcato

Michael Bolcato (left) saw his dad as his own personal superhero.

every single morning at 4 a.m. My dad would talk to everyone at the old Stop & Shop in Jackson that closed down. He was called "the mayor of Jackson," as well, because he knew so many people in the town.

My dad was also known for rescuing many boxer dogs throughout his lifetime. Our family has had four different boxers ever since he and my mom married in 2002.

So far, my dealing with the grief since the passing of my father has been a roller coaster ride, to say the least. There are days where I am really happy but then there are days when I am really sad and thinking of my dad. Life is pretty much a roller coaster, with its highs and lows, and that is what I have learned from experiencing grief over the past few weeks. Dealing with grief has been a ride for me.

During this time of grief, however, there has been a

light for me at Rider University. I have gained tons of support from my friends and family here at Rider. The university has so many different organizations, like TRIO Student Support Services and the Counseling Center, that have helped me during this tough time in my life.

I meet with the Counseling Center at least once a week and they have helped me so much navigating this difficult time. Every time I go in there, I get treated with 30 minutes of a weighted blanket and coloring book time. It is such a great way to relieve stress and help me relax. TRIO has been a great help through this tough time, as well. My TRIO counselor is my high school history teacher's wife, so that brings in extra support for me.

I also would like to shout out and say thank you to all of my friends and family here at Rider and in Jackson. All of you mean so much to me and I love all of the support that I have been getting over the past few weeks.

Grief is not an easy thing to deal and process with, as many people know. It is a thing that may never go away, but knowing my dad, he is up there looking after me every single day and taking care of me. I will always love you, Dad!

*Michael Bolcato
junior communication studies major*



2026-27 

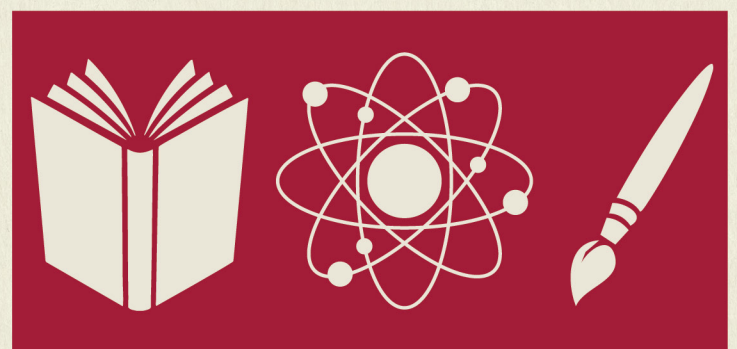
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Hilary Duff stays true to 2000s pop sound in new album

The pop princess of the early 2000s is back! Last Friday, Hilary Duff released “luck... or something,” the singer’s sixth studio album and her first one since 2015’s understated “Breathe In. Breathe Out.”

The star’s burst back into the pop music scene was highly anticipated by millennials and older Gen Z members alike as we yearned to get a taste of the nostalgic music of our childhoods. But, before you dust off your UGG boots and bubblegum chapstick, let us look a little bit deeper into this new record’s vibe.

The studio album is shorter than many pop records we see today — I am looking at you Taylor Swift — with only 11 songs on the album totaling just under 38 minutes in total play time.

The album gets off to a very strong start with “Weather For Tennis,” which might just be my favorite song from the new album. The first few opening notes sound like they are taken right off of Duff’s 2003 album “Metamorphosis” and bring the upbeat mood I was hoping to get from listening.

By the end of the first track, I was practically dancing around my room singing into my hairbrush as I fully took advantage of the nostalgic vibes I was listening to. The bouncy pop sounds continued into track two, “Roommates.” While the pre-chorus of this song caught me off guard with the cringey lyric “life is lifin’,” I did enjoy how it kept up the youthful sound while exploring more mature themes.

The whole album seems to cleverly balance this nostalgic teeny-bopper sound while Duff’s lyrics explore more mature topics, such as the complexities of familial and romantic relationships, loneliness, forgiveness and more explicitly sexual themes.

For example, track three “We Don’t Talk” could be interpreted to be about an estranged familial

relationship, perhaps even a sibling, and how that is affecting the singer. It is refreshing to have a modern pop song that seems to be about something other than romantic relationships and focuses on the relatable struggles with family bonds instead.

Unfortunately, not every song on the album can be a winner. The fourth song on the album, “Future Tripping,” is skippable. The song just seems to drag on for too long, repeating the same four lyrics over and over again until the inevitable fade-out. While this style of repetitive lyrics may be true to early 2000s music, it is just not a good fit for the rest of the album.

That being said, the next song, “Growing Up,” explores what happens to old friendships as one matures; a topic I am sure many college students and young adults can relate to. “Growing Up” is not a stand-out per se, but is worth listening to, nonetheless.

As seems to be a theme with this album, I again got whiplash getting thrown into “The Optimist,” a slower, skippable song. It is almost frustrating going right back into the upbeat sound again with track seven “You, From The Honeymoon.” Upon listening to the album a few times, I have realized that this is one of those records that you do not have to listen to in order and it is definitely okay to skip through, replaying just your favorites.

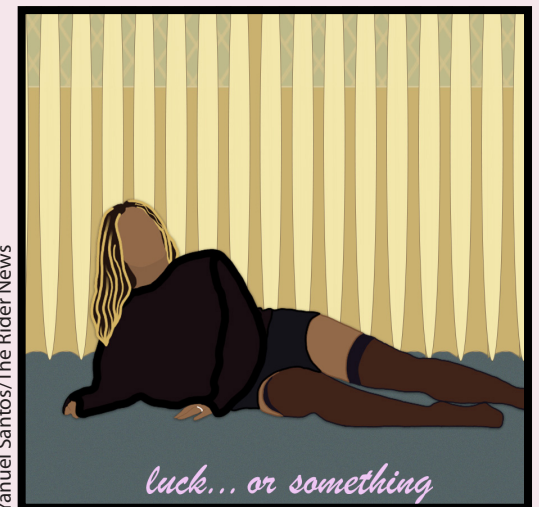
Speaking of favorites, track 10, “Tell Me That Won’t Happen,” is probably my second-favorite song on the album and put me right back in the mood to dance and sing around my room. While not the top of modern pop music I would hear in the club, such as Chappel Roan’s “Pink Pony Club,” Duff manages to balance modern lyrics with hyper-pop synths reminiscent of what I was listening to on my CD player in 2008 and not on Beats headphones in 2026.

Finally, the album concludes with “Adult Size

Medium,” a song where Duff shares the most mature lyrics and most modern electro-pop sounds of the album. “Adult Size Medium” is another one of my favorites and places a nice bow on the album, tying it all together. For some reason, this song also makes me feel like Duff has another album up her sleeve that will entirely explore more mature themes and sounds. I will certainly be keeping my eyes and ears out for that, should my predictions come true.

Even if you are not normally a pop music fan, the album is short enough that you can play the whole thing on your drive to work and see what you think for yourself. Again, you will likely find that the record has some hits and some misses. Overall, I give “luck... or something” three out of five stars ... or something.

Libby D’Orvilliers
senior psychology major



The album “luck... or something” was released on Feb. 20.

COMIC:

Harvey and Schnozola

By N. D. Medal



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Broncs secure a win in final home games of the season

By Samantha Clark

The Rider Broncs hosted their final games in the Alumni Gym for the 2025-26 season, and after falling 72-66 against the Canisius University Golden Griffins, they prevailed, 67-62, in a hard-fought battle against the Niagara University Purple Eagles on Senior Day.

'Get back up and keep fighting'

The Broncs went scoreless for the first two minutes of play on Feb. 20, allowing the Golden Griffins to open the matchup with an 11-0 run, until sophomore guard Flash Burton splashed a deep field goal attempt.

After stealing possession and drawing the foul, junior guard Caleb Smith picked up two quick points for the Broncs.

Senior guard Zion Cruz cashed in a jumpshot from just within the arc, and after stealing possession, once again, Burton drove down the lane for the layup.

Smith found senior forward Shemani Fuller in the paint, who put one up and in for two, and after a 3-pointer from Cruz, the Broncs closed the gap to less than 10 points.

The Broncs found their fourth steal of the half in Burton, who drove coast-to-coast for a one-handed slam dunk. Cruz then repeated his previous play, splashing the triple, once again, to close the point deficit to less than 10.

Burton splashed the Broncs' third 3-pointer in seven minutes, setting them back by just four points.

Another scoreless streak followed, but after driving layups from Smith and junior guard Antwan Wilson, the Broncs headed into the break trailing 40-30.

Cruz opened the second half driving full force to the basket, drilling the layup for a quick two points. Burton followed shortly after with a 3-pointer from the corner, the Broncs taking Canisius on a 5-0 run to begin the final 20 minutes of play.

Successful shots from Cruz, Fuller and sophomore forward Bynum continued the strong offensive effort on the court, and after two shots at the free throw line from Burton, it was a one-possession game.

Sending the ball from baseline to baseline, Fuller

found a wide-open Burton under the net, laying it up and in to put the Broncs down by just one. Continuing to make big moves on the hardwood, Fuller then hit back-to-back layups.

Fighting against heavy defense in the post, Cruz hit another layup and senior forward Mohamad Diallo did the same 30 seconds later to tie up the matchup in the final six minutes.

Cruz splashed a 3-pointer with eight seconds remaining, the Broncs ending the battle down 72-66.

"We've learned a lot from [this season]," Head Coach Kevin Baggett said. "Just like life, we get back up and keep fighting."

The final homestand

The first three minutes of play on Feb. 22 was scoreless for the Broncs until Fuller hit a shot from the line. Possession then quickly fell into the hands of Burton, who found Bynum in the post for two.

Showing strong defensive and offensive efforts, Fuller obtained the rebound and laid it up and in for two, bringing the Broncs down by just three. Smith then showed the same pressure, getting the defensive rebound and driving coast-to-coast for the layup.

Burton hit both of his free throws to put Rider down 10-9 halfway through the first, and after Bynum splashed two jumpshots in the paint, the Broncs took their first lead of the afternoon.

With nothing but net, senior forward Daniel Helterhoff swished in another jumpshot, followed by another from sophomore forward Cole McCabe a minute and a half later.

Possession fell into the hands of Diallo after a Purple Eagle's missed foul shot, opening doors for a 3-pointer from Burton. With a two from deep, Burton hit his next field goal less than a minute later, pushing the Broncs to regain the lead in the final two minutes of the first half.

After a 5-0 run from Niagara, Burton splashed another triple to send Rider into halftime down 28-27.

"I'm a shooter... I just had to let it fly," Burton said.



Liliana R. Basile/The Rider News

Senior forward **Shemani Fuller** hit 16 points in Rider's win against Niagara University, just two points shy of his career high as a Bronc.

To open the second half, Cruz splashed a 3-pointer from the corner and Burton found Fuller under the net for a dunk, the Broncs now taking the lead for the third time. Extending the lead further, Bynum and Fuller cashed in a pair of driving layups.

Fighting against tight defense, Burton splashed a layup over his defender, Bynum doing the same 30 seconds later and again on the next possession.

The Broncs continued on a five-minute scoreless run until Fuller and Burton drove for four quick points, attempting to close the gap widened by the Purple Eagles during the drought.

Sent to the line twice in the same minute, Fuller hit three foul shots to tie the matchup at 59-59. Burton then splashed his third 3-pointer to take the lead, sending the Alumni Gym into a frenzy.

After clutch free throws from Wilson, Fuller and Burton, the Broncs secured a 67-62 victory in their final game of the season in the Alumni Gym.

"In a year that we haven't been the team that we wanted to be, we appreciate [the fans]," Baggett said. "I'm glad we were able to get that win for them."

The Rider Broncs will head on the road to play their final two games of the season when they face Iona University on Feb. 27 and Siena University on March 1. Both games will be streamed on ESPN+.

Broncs split on the road as MAAC tournament hopes dwindle

By Joshua Yuhas

Sitting on the edge of a spot in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference tournament, Rider women's basketball went back on the road, splitting their games in New York with a 55-53 overtime victory over Canisius University and a 52-56 loss to Niagara University.

Overtime heroics

Canisius opened the game on Feb. 19 with a layup, but junior guard Aliya McIver responded quickly by draining a left wing 3-pointer.

Both teams went scoreless for nearly two minutes before another set of layups left a 9-9 tie at the final timeout of the opening quarter.

After some interior scoring from the Golden Griffins and a McIver 3-pointer for the Broncs, Rider trailed by one point after the first quarter.

Sophomore guard Emmy Roach drove from the right wing for a layup before another extended scoring drought broke out.

McIver nailed a turnaround jumpshot to break the drought, then a minute later knocked down a 3-pointer off an offensive rebound.

To extend the lead, Roach laid the ball in for an eight-point cushion, until the Golden Griffins splashed a 3-pointer in the final seconds of the first half.

Despite only five second-quarter points for Canisius, Rider led by just five, with McIver scoring 13 first-half points.

Scoring remained still for the opening two minutes of the third quarter, until sophomore guard Amany Lopez drove to the paint for the score.

"When my name was called, I did my best to do everything my coaches wanted from me, which was being a spark of energy and doing the simple things to give us momentum," Lopez said.

Canisius cut the deficit after the layup, but Lopez stole that momentum back by grabbing an offensive rebound to set up another 3-pointer from McIver.



Yanuel Santos/The Rider News

Junior guard **Deb Okechukwu** reached six points in the final game of Rider's Buffalo road trip on Feb. 21.

Lopez scored three of Rider's next five points following that shot, but a 5-0 Canisius run cut the eight-point deficit to three in the final three minutes.

A trio of layups from freshman guard Alena Cofield spread across the first five minutes of the fourth quarter, and a pair of Golden Griffins' free throws provided limited scoring.

Lopez dropped down a midrange shot to give Rider a 41-32 lead with just three and a half minutes remaining, but Canisius would not give up.

Another 5-0 Golden Griffins run over the next two minutes cut the Broncs' lead to four points before Lopez grabbed a steal, allowing junior center Kaylan Deveney to hit a 3-pointer.

Mistakes ate at the Broncs in the final minutes through turnovers and missed free throws, biting them in the end when the Golden Griffins grabbed an offensive rebound and tied the game at 45 by the end of regulation.

In the opening three minutes of overtime, Cofield matched the scoring of the Golden Griffins, until a pair of free throws and a layup gave Canisius a late four-point lead.

Through free throws from Cofield and Deveney and a steal from McIver, the Broncs trailed 52-53 with 22 seconds left in the game.

Roach, set at the right elbow, handed off to a curling Cofield, who drove to the left block and kicked it out to Deveney for a wide open 3-pointer to win the game, 55-53.

"We showed a lot of resilience after almost giving the game away in regulation. We made enough plays to win the game and I couldn't be more proud of our team," Head Coach Jackie Hartzell said.

Almost had it

Scoring started slow against Niagara on Feb. 21, and after a Cofield 3-pointer and free throws from the Purple Eagles, the game was tied at 3-3 after the first five minutes of play.

A trade of shots from the charity stripe and perimeter left the Purple Eagles leading by four points at the end of the first quarter.

After a Cofield layup, Niagara went on an 11-0 run over the following five minutes, Rider ending the half trailing 25-35.

Early 3-pointers in the second half from graduate student forward Kristina Ekofo and McIver started a surge back for the Broncs, and a pair of finishes at the rim for junior guard Deb Okechukwu cut the deficit to four points.

Both Niagara and Rider failed to score for three minutes, until Cofield dropped a layup in, and by the quarter's end, the Broncs trailed by just three.

Ekofo launched a 3-pointer that would not fall, allowing the Purple Eagles to put the game away. With the sound of the final buzzer, the Broncs left New York with a 52-56 loss to Niagara.

Sitting at 11th place in the MAAC standings, as of Feb. 23, the fight for a tournament spot continues for the Broncs in their final two matchups of the season.

The Broncs face Siena University on Feb. 26 in the Alumni Gym and take on Mount Saint Mary's University on Feb. 28 in Maryland. Both games will be broadcast on ESPN+.

Sports

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BASEBALL

Broncs start 3-0 after sweep of UNC Asheville

By Benjamin Shinault

For the first time since the 2020 season, Rider baseball swept its opening series of the year. The Broncs traveled down to Asheville, North Carolina, to take on the University of North Carolina Asheville Bulldogs. Scoring was not hard to come by for the Broncs, as they scored 26 runs over the three-game sweep.

Late game execution

Game one of the series was the toughest game out of the three, as Rider had to battle throughout all nine innings on Feb. 20.

The Bulldogs got on the board first with a home run to left field to take an early 1-0 lead in the second inning.

In the very next inning, junior outfielder Kyle Neri tied it up at 1-1 with an RBI double down the left field line to score senior infielder Will Gallagher.

UNC Asheville struck again in the next inning with a two-run home run to snag back the lead, 3-1.

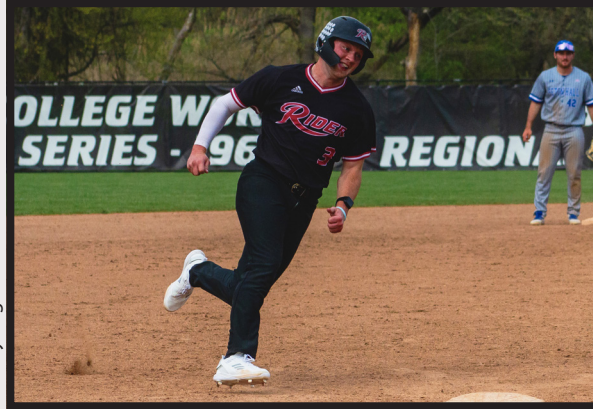
Rider would not back down, because in each of the next four innings, the Broncs threw a run on the board to get out to a 5-3 lead.

In the bottom of the seventh, though, the Bulldogs came through with a two-run home run to tie it at 5-5, leaving Rider with some work to do in the final two innings of play.

The eighth inning came and went with the game still knotted up at 5-5. In the ninth inning, junior infielder Matt Leahy came through with a shot up the middle to score junior catcher Nick Shuhet.

In the bottom of the ninth, senior pitcher Christian Aiello shut the door on the Bulldogs and struck out two to give the Broncs the win on their opening day.

Additionally, pitching was strong in the season opener. Senior pitcher PJ Craig got the nod to start and went five innings, struck out five and only allowed three earned runs. Aiello took the ball the rest of the way and pitched the final four innings, only allowing two hits.



Destiny Pagan/The Rider News

Senior outfielder **Erich Hartmann** had six hits and six RBIs in the UNC Asheville series

Going for a series win

Riding the high of some late-game heroics by Leahy, the Broncs got ready for a doubleheader on Feb. 21. With temperatures dipping to the mid-50s, Rider was ready to get hot and light up the scoreboard in game one of the doubleheader, as they won, 10-8.

By the end of the second inning, Rider finished with a 3-0 lead thanks to senior outfielders Anthony Paskell and Erich Hartmann, who combined for the three runs scored.

The Bulldogs bit back, as they got out to a 5-3 lead and held it until the end of the third inning. In the fifth inning, Hartmann and Neri were able to tie it up at 5-5.

The lead did not last long, as later in the inning UNC Asheville took the lead right back off a home run to center field to make it 6-5.

Rider did not stay in the dumps for long, as they got out to a 10-6 lead, thanks to a three-run home run from sophomore first baseman Charley Magoulick.

Magoulick and Hartmann both had great games at the plate for Rider, combining for five RBIs, six hits and two runs.

The Bulldogs rummaged up two more runs to close the gap to 10-8, but junior pitcher Alex

D'Ambrosio shut the door and secured the win, as well as the save.

'The sweep is even better'

Heading into the final game of the opening series, the Broncs were looking to do something that they have not done in six years, sweep their opening series.

Getting the ball to start was senior pitcher Clayton Poliey who pitched lights out over his five innings of action. Poliey struck out three, allowed just four hits and one earned run.

"He provided what we needed," Acting Head Coach Barry Davis said. "He definitely threw the ball well."

Offensively, the Broncs got on the Bulldogs immediately, as Hartmann launched a two-run homerun in the first inning to get the scoring started for the Broncs.

Hartmann was a critical piece in Rider's sweep of UNC Asheville. Over the three games, he had six RBIs, six hits, two doubles and a home run.

"We came in there with confidence, which we prepared for all preseason," Hartmann said.

After the Hartmann home run, the Bulldogs were able to put one run on the board, but the Broncs responded with eight more runs over the course of the next four innings.

The one responsible for half of those runs was Neri. Like Hartmann, Neri had a strong showing in the opening series. Neri had eight hits, seven RBIs, two doubles and a home run. Neri also left North Carolina with a batting average of .533.

The Bulldogs added one more run in the bottom of the ninth, but the deed was already done. The Broncs won 10-2 and completed the sweep on the road.

"Winning the series is great, but getting the sweep is even better," Davis said.

The Broncs will now head back up north to play the University of Delaware in a three-game series beginning on Feb. 27. All games will be broadcast on ESPN+.

SOFTBALL

Rider scoops up a win in Tar Heel Invitational

By Lindsay Scarola

Rider softball traveled south for the Tar Heel Invitational, falling to host University of North Carolina 11-1 on Feb. 20 before splitting a doubleheader on Feb. 21, where it dropped the first game to Appalachian State University, 9-3, and rebounded to defeat North Carolina Central University, 8-7.

Broncs fall in opener

The Tar Heels started off scoring three in the first inning, then added another in the bottom of the second.

Sophomore middle infielder Aspen Wheeler led off in the third inning with a single. Junior infielder Kiersten Buchanan hit a ground ball to third, but UNC threw the ball away.

After Wheeler sped around the bases to score all the way from first, Rider was on the board.

The Tar Heels fought back immediately with four more runs in the third inning and three in the fourth.

Junior catcher Abby Cruz had a leadoff double, giving the Broncs a chance to score. Though she was left stranded, Rider was mercied in five innings, 11-1.

Split doubleheader

In the Broncs' first game of the day, the Mountaineers got on the board first with runners scoring in the first and second.

In the bottom of the second, sophomore utility Keegan St. Cyr got a one-out single and sophomore first baseman Emma Morgan followed with a walk.

With two outs and two on, Buchanan ripped a single to left, moving the runners up and setting up sophomore pitcher Gabi Rodriguez.

Rodriguez hit a ball into the outfield for a two-run RBI double, putting the Broncs up 3-2.

Appalachian State led off the fourth inning with a home run to tie the game. Rider had their best chance to break the tie in the fifth with two on and two outs, but the Mountaineers put it away, setting the Broncs down 9-3 at the end of play.

In game three, NC Central struck in the top of the first inning and scored three runs. However, Rider had an immediate response with St. Cyr, who delivered a home run before Wheeler singled to keep the rally going.

Cruz and senior outfielder Maddie Luedtke walked to load the bases and Buchanan walked to bring a runner home.

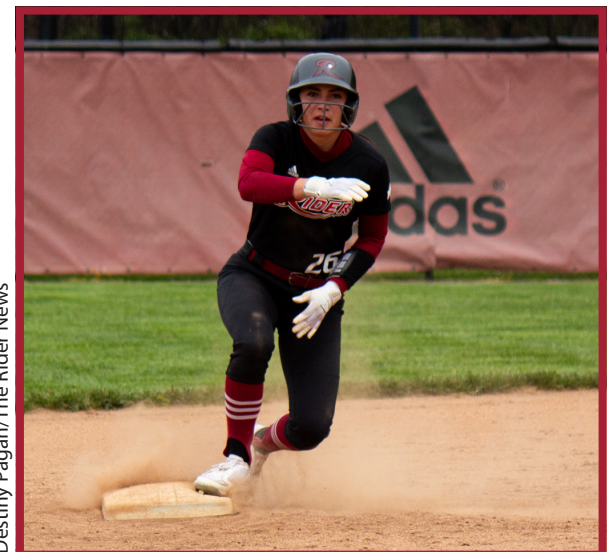
Morgan added two runs off of her single, putting Rider in front, 4-3.

The Broncs continued their rally in the third as Luedtke led off the inning with a single and Buchanan reached on an error.

A sacrifice bunt put runners on second and third. Sophomore infielder Noelle Flail drove in a run on a RBI groundout.

Senior pitcher Fallyn Stoeckel clutched up with a two-run home run, keeping the rally alive.

The Broncs were able to maintain a five-run lead into the top of the sixth after the Eagles scored four



Destiny Pagan/The Rider News

Senior outfielder **Maddie Luedtke** scored two runs against North Carolina Central on Feb. 21.

runs for an 8-7 victory.

"The biggest thing we need to improve on going into this weekend is that we need to play with an attack mindset," Head Coach Davon Ortega said.

Rider will now travel to Greenville, North Carolina, to participate in the Battle at the Max, where it will face Campbell University and East Carolina University on Feb. 27 and 28 and St. John's University on March 1.