



NSF Grant aids student research opportunities

By Brannagh Rattigan

Rider's Department of Computer Science and Mathematics has been awarded its first National Science Foundation grant of \$650,000, with assistant professor Jay Luo serving as the leading principal investigator.

Of the total fund, \$217,779 of it will be invested at Rider to support experiential learning in artificial intelligence security and privacy for undergraduate students. The remaining total will be split three ways to three R1 collaborative institutions — Indiana University Bloomington, the University of Missouri–Kansas City and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa — that Rider gets the opportunity to cooperate with.

Although Rider is not an R1 institution, to work alongside top-tier universities in research activity is a step forward in itself to expanding the research opportunities for Rider students in all fields.

The NSF funding is intended as a three-year program that will run from Fall 2026 to Spring 2029. Annually, the department will submit a report on the progress made based on the grant.

While Rider has received similar funding in the past, an NSF grant has never been awarded toward AI technology and security prior to this, which Luo suggested to be the highest sponsorship.

"Every year, [NSF receives] thousands of proposals from all kinds of universities within the United States, and then they have a panel to review the proposals, and they will then fund some of them. Usually, for education, the fund rate is around 25%, but in the past year, I think it is even lower, around 20%," Luo said.

The funding Rider received is going straight to expanding the experiential learning process for undergraduate students in AI security and privacy. Luo



Photo courtesy of Jay Luo

Jay Luo, the leading principal investigator, is orchestrating the application of the NSF grant into AI cybersecurity research.

explained that, with the grant, the university will be able to sponsor students researching AI security-related projects and set up team competitions for those doing well in their work in order to encourage students' studies.

Luo additionally shared insight into how the grant will be able to connect the academic and real worlds, especially for cybersecurity and computer science students, as it offers more opportunities. The program made possible by the grant is designed to connect classroom learning with research experience and workplace-ready skills.

"We'll also be able to use this money to collaborate with the industry. We're going to partner with the industrial partners so that we can build up this pipeline and students can have a smooth transition from the classroom to the workplace," Luo said.

The grant has already allowed the department to hire two undergraduate students as research mentors. In the whole three years, the university will be able to hire three undergraduate students to work on research projects and mentorships each semester.



SEE "NSF"
PAGE 2

New academic college announced amid universitywide changes

By Samantha Clark and Cal Sutton

Over the summer, a search committee was formed to assist in the appointment of a new dean for the Westminster College of Media and Performing Arts.

During a season of change at Rider, the restructuring of academic colleges has goals of helping to foster a sense of community and broaden students' academic experiences.

Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs Kelly Bidle has had a large impact on the decision to design the WCMPA for students.

"Back in 2022 is when the College of Arts and Sciences — liberal arts and sciences — and Westminster, had all merged," Bidle said.

The merge between academic disciplines was the first step for the arts at Rider. Although this is true, there were leaps to be made, thus leading to the development of the WCMPA.

"While it worked well, it could have worked better," Bidle said. "With the new Westminster College of Media and Performing Arts, not only are there our strengths with Westminster, but we have a lot of strengths in media."

While Bidle does not anticipate any major changes within students' academic experiences following the development of the WCMPA, she is aiming to spearhead new programming for students and revise curricula.

"In today's market, students being exposed to more things, generally, is probably going to be beneficial in the job market and career searches," Bidle said. "Putting them all in one house, so to speak, I think made a lot of sense."

Bidle aims for the WCMPA to help students gain interdisciplinary experiences and broaden their tool belts for when they enter the workforce.

One of the largest opportunities students are given through this new change, according to Bidle, is the Rider Student Media Center. A certificate program has been launched alongside it to add proof of a larger skillset to a student's degree and help build their media experience. The certificate can be obtained if a student completes one semester in each of the three segments of the Media Center — the radio station, the student newspaper and the TV studio.



SEE "WESTMINSTER"
PAGE 3



Grace Juarez/The Rider News

WCMPA was announced via universitywide email on Sept. 1.

Provost reimagines Teaching and Learning Collective to enhance student and faculty

By Samantha Clark

Rider’s Teaching and Learning Center has been reimagined into the Teaching and Learning Collective, which now follows a faculty-led structure, allowing all professors involved to collaborate across disciplines, reshape how they educate and develop courses to best assist their students.

Building better educators

In previous years, the Teaching and Learning Center allowed Rider faculty members to learn key skills in a classroom-like setting from a director outside of the university. These skills could then be brought into Rider’s classrooms, leading to faculty development and multifaceted coursework.

However, as Rider President John Loyack began to restructure the university, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs Kelly Bidle made a plan to reorganize the Center, as well, reimagining what faculty development should look like.

The new model, now known as the Teaching and Learning Collective, follows four main pillars of development.

According to the Collective’s informational page, the pillars include Teaching with Emerging Technology, Responsive Pedagogies for Student Success, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and Professional Development, and High-Impact Teaching and Experiential Learning.

Each pillar urges professors to look at new innovations in education and use them to their advantage in the classroom to better guide students through their coursework.

Bidle also emphasized the importance of a faculty-led structure, which lets professors learn from and alongside one another. With this, she set a plan to rotate the program’s leadership, which would now consist of two Rider faculty members, every two years.

For the inaugural co-directors of the Collective, Bidle selected Erica Ryan, a professor and director of the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, and Justin Burton, a professor in the Department of Media Arts.

“The Provost reached out to Justin and I at the end of last academic year and said ... that we need to bring a robust faculty development program back into the picture,” Ryan said. “There’s a clear indication that this new direction is an investment in faculty becoming better teachers, not only for themselves, but for the students.”

As co-directors, Ryan and Burton will shape the Collective’s structure and choose programming for each learning community, a cohort of six to 10 faculty members who explore the selected topic and learn from one another.

“The work we’re doing is because we want to do our work well,” Burton said. “The university is trusting faculty to know how to lead the way on this.”

Inside the communities

As the inaugural co-directors, Ryan and Burton selected three faculty learning communities, two that focus on the use of artificial intelligence in the classroom and one that centers around first-generation college students, which coincides with the emphasis placed in Loyack’s March to Sustainability Plan.

Laurel Harris, an associate English professor, is leading the Rider Critical AI Collaboratory, which explores the use of artificial intelligence in higher education from a philosophical standpoint.

Faculty members will consider how teaching and studying English, philosophy, history and the social sciences are changing now that students have access to technology that is capable of thinking for them.

Redesigning Courses in the Age of AI, the second AI-focused community, is led by Federica Rossetti, an assistant professor of marketing.

Exploring how to engage with AI responsibly, this learning community will look at a more practical approach to technology, which allows professors to help students maintain their critical-thinking skills and create authentic work while using technological assistance.

“Whenever we have a new technology that comes, it can be difficult, so I think it’s really important for faculty to really take stock of what it is and what it means for us and the work we do,” Burton said.

Assistant Professor of Spanish and Latinx Studies Cynthia Martinez’s community, titled “Becoming ‘New Jersey’s Hub for First-Generation Students’: What Faculty Can Do,” explores how Rider can best assist these students, both during and after college.

Examining the practical challenges that first-generation students experience when arriving on campus, the community aims to educate faculty on how institutions can best serve students after graduation through experiential learning, hands-on opportunities and concrete work experience.

“One of [Loyack’s] big pushes is for Rider to think of itself as a hub for first-generation college students. A lot of us are really excited about that. ... Being able to serve first-generation students is a privilege,” Burton said.

An investment in education

While the learning communities place a new importance on faculty development, the shift from the Center to the Collective also brings a renewed commitment to funding.

“In the last five years or so, the university stopped funding faculty participation in this kind of thing,” Ryan said. “When [Bidle] came up with this new version, she felt, and we agreed, that we need to bring that [funding] back.”

Instructors involved in each community will now be compensated for their participation, reinforcing the

university’s devotion to faculty development and the future of their students.

Ryan said, “I think it is really exciting that Rider is turning this corner and getting to a place of financial stability, and is bringing everybody along with that.”

Additionally, professors’ involvement is an investment in the Rider community, as the Collective allows faculty to learn from peers who approach teaching differently, it combines various departments, backgrounds and concentrations.

“As a faculty member, it’s easy to be in your silo ... You teach your classes, you’re in a department, you see your colleagues,” Ryan said. “These learning communities are diverse in terms of hitting all of the colleges on campus, hitting people from disparate fields. So, it fosters a sense of community broadly among faculty.”

At the heart of the Teaching and Learning Collective though, is the commitment to students, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that the investment in faculty development translates into stronger courses, more engaging learning and an overall better student experience.

“If faculty development is working well, it’s mostly never thought about by students,” Burton said. “It will show up as them being satisfied with their classes, feeling that their professors are responsive and [thoughtful] and, just in general, what they are learning is relevant to their lives and their future careers.”



Erica Ryan and Justin Burton will serve as the inaugural co-directors of the Teaching and Learning Collective.

Student leadership thrives under new funding

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Phan An Nguyen, a senior computer science and cybersecurity double major, is one of the undergraduate students hired as a research mentor this semester. Nguyen has been focusing on his studies in CYB 490, the independent research class for cybersecurity majors, and will continue with the new support provided by the NSF.

When Nguyen was first informed of the department’s award and his offered position as a research mentor, he relayed feeling a mixture of emotions.

“When this came to me as an opportunity, I didn’t really believe it,” he said. “[Luo] came and told me that we got funding from NSF to do research and for me to continue my CYB 490 research, and I really respected that, because it felt like he really believed in me.”

The research mentors will aid their fellow students by providing advice and direction in their projects and class work, while also continuing their own focused research.

Nguyen is stepping into the position with ambition, hoping to help his peers, while also finding the next path for his academic career.

“For me, it’s going to help me get lots of experience doing research so that I can apply for graduate school and so that I can know if I’m fit for that research or not. For me to help other students, that would be great,” Nguyen said.

Ultimately, with the resources provided by the NSF grant, Luo and the rest of the computer science and mathematics department want to create new opportunities for any Rider students interested in AI security and technology.

“This is not only for the computer science and cybersecurity department. We will build our program for a competition where all of the students on campus, if they have an interest in exploring AI security topics, can form a team and join the competition,” Luo said.

While discussing the future of Rider with this newfound funding, Nguyen shared a desire for the

department to continue to procure financial support for all the new ideas students have that they can now bring into fruition.

“I really want this funding to continue because I know a lot of my friends want to do research as well. They’ve got some new ideas and they should get an opportunity as well,” Nguyen said.

AI is known to be controversial in its use and potential abuse as a resource in academic settings. Luo, however, wanted to endorse a different perspective of AI, as he stated a goal to not get away with using AI, but rather, an intention to beat AI with the provided grant.

Luo said, “Of course, AI itself has a lot of concerning issues about security and privacy but with this grant, we fund students to explore the AI security frameworks, the practice and the technological advancements. We focus on it from a technology perspective, not from an ethical perspective.”



Cal Sutton/The Rider News

Joana Pirela de De Gregorio, assistant director for the Student Navigation Office, assists first-year and international students at Rider.

Office of International Education absorbed by Rider’s Student Navigation Office

By Cal Sutton

At the end of June, the decision was made to move the Office of International Education under the umbrella of the Student Navigation Office, following the departure of the Office of International Education’s director, Kim Algeo, among other universitywide and structural changes.

The OIE and S.N.O. joined forces and are now working as one, with an office still located in the Bart Luedeke Center.

Joana Pirela de De Gregorio, S.N.O.’s assistant director, said that Algeo was a great leader and was loved by the students she encountered, following her transition to Saint Peter’s University over the summer.

Following the changes within the OIE, Rider’s S.N.O. has taken on a more expansive approach to supporting students. Originally assisting first-year students — freshmen and transfers — S.N.O. now supports first-year students, international students and those who want to study abroad for semesterized programs.

“All support for international students will be now under S.N.O.,” De Gregorio said. “Anything relating to their visa status, F-1 or J-1, will be supported through us, the DSOs and PDSOs.”

F-1 and J-1 visas are how international students stay in the United States to complete their university-level studies.

Designated school officials, or DSOs, and principal

designated school officials, or PDSOs, are university officials who assist international students in their ability to study at universities in different countries.

PDSOs complete and submit documentation for the international students that the U.S. government and Department of Homeland Security can access.

The restructuring of S.N.O. to expand its approach and include the university’s study abroad opportunities was done to streamline access to international experiences for Rider students.

S.N.O.’s major duty is to help new students learn about and navigate Rider.

Now that S.N.O. leads international education and study abroad opportunities, they will also cater to any student who plans to study abroad or wants to learn more about it.

Camilla Sabogal, a junior elementary education major, studied abroad in Spain as a short-term education-based program this summer.

Sabogal credits the OIE’s staff for her ability to study abroad and get the assistance she needed to be successful. She is grateful that the staff is making the move to S.N.O.

“All the main staff that were in OIE are now in S.N.O., so there’s no change in that way,” Sabogal said. “All the same people who were so helpful to me and so helpful to other people are still in the office.”

While she acknowledges that this shift can be

confusing—especially amid many other structural changes—she is excited to see what is in store for S.N.O.

“I think a lot of the changes Rider has done have been for what they perceive as for the better, and I hope it is for the better,” Sabogal said.

One large change regarding studying abroad is occurring this academic year. The avenues of communication for short-term study abroad programs are shifting, since they are now entirely organized by the leading professors.

Semesterized study abroad programs will still be handled by S.N.O.

“Part of the changes transitioning through OIE, [are] faculty-led programs. [They] are going to be managed directly through the faculty, and then semesters will be through [S.N.O.],” De Gregorio said.

S.N.O. is also transitioning from utilizing a separate website for studying abroad and university-led international travel to streamlining the information and keeping it all on Rider’s main website.

Updates to the websites for study abroad opportunities are planned to take place in October.

De Gregorio said that S.N.O.’s goal for this year, following the new structure, is to “make students feel comfortable, supported and that their inquiries — not only academic — but social and emotional, are also attended, so they can find a home away from home.”

The search for inaugural dean underway

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In the future, the WCMPA is potentially going to see new course offerings, curricular changes, new academic programs and new or improved extracurriculars.

In a Sept. 1 universitywide email announcing a multitude of structural changes, Bidle said, “In naming this college, we honor the brand strength of one of the nation’s most respected traditions in choral music and performing arts while simultaneously recognizing our need to further advance interdisciplinary programs in media, music production, game and graphic design and other creative industries.”

Many of the university’s departments were consolidated to streamline and strengthen Rider’s academic programs. Originally at 23 departments, many majors have made moves under different leaders to now encompass 14 different departments. Majors were not cut in this process, but rather moved under different leadership.

During this developmental time for the arts at Rider, university leadership and the WCMPA’s departmental staff have been working to find the inaugural dean.

Eugene Kutcher, dean of the Norm Brodsky College of Business, is the chairman for the WCMPA Dean Search Committee.

Kutcher has been on search committees for

Rider before, as he previously served to help find the university’s eighth president, John Loyack, and has done other work to help the processes run smoothly.

“We put a great team together of a committee to work on [finding a new dean],” Kutcher said.

The WCMPA encompasses many majors and programs. They include, but are not limited to, acting, dance, film and television, journalism, music production, theatre, music education and voice performance.

The inaugural dean has to fill the role in a way that can allow all students in these programs to have a fulfilling academic experience.

Each dean candidate was scored along a rubric, including if they can portray their vision for the college, if they have strong experience in one or more of the fields included in the WCMPA, budgeting and management experience, a focus on equitable student experiences and more.

Kutcher said, “The first thing [we looked for] was someone who was an expert in one of those disciplines, but then, also somebody who has an appreciation and knowledge of all other disciplines too. Somebody who can truly be an academic leader across all these areas.”



Photo courtesy of Rider University

Jason Vodicka is serving as WCMPA’s interim dean.

Photo courtesy of Joanna Avitto



Rider Dance Ensemble members learned student-made jazz choreography to “Read Your Mind” by Sabrina Carpenter.

Creating community: Rider Dance Ensemble’s Workshop Week

By Sofia Santiago

While the rest of campus moved in, music and laughter echoed through the halls of the Bart Luedeke Center.

The source? New and returning members of Rider Dance Ensemble gathered for the club’s annual Workshop Week, from Sept. 2 to 6.

11 student choreographers held 45-minute classes throughout the week, where they taught under-a-minute dance combos to a variety of styles and songs. A jazz piece to “Read Your Mind” by Sabrina Carpenter, a tap number to “Yeah!” by Usher, a heels choreo to “Love Game” by Lady Gaga and a contemporary routine to “Dracula” by Labrinth were just a few of the different classes available.

The format of the classes is similar to how some professional auditions and intensives are run, serving as another helpful experience for dance majors and minors at Rider.

former RDE members showed up to see old friends and enjoy the community.

“I’ve had multiple alumni text me and be like, ‘Can I come on Saturday or come on Sunday?’ And I’m like, ‘Yes, absolutely. Come, come hang out,’” Rubach said.

Planning for the week was led by the RDE executive board over the summer, during which prospective student choreographers submitted their proposals and waited to get approved. Once the choreographer lineup had been finalized, a schedule for the week was emailed to all students who had signed up.

Junior psychology major and RDE Vice President Laney Minko gave insights on how the schedule was organized. Attendees were divided and placed into groups in which they would attend classes throughout the week.

Since Workshop Week takes place before the beginning of the semester, club members who reside on campus had to move in early to attend.

“We have to book the rooms and make sure that we can hold an event before the school year even starts,” Minko explained.

On Sept. 2, the fun started with a scavenger hunt around campus, giving the groups a chance to get familiar with each other.

Sept. 3 and 4 marked the most intense days of the week. Full-club warmups led by different e-board members started at 11 a.m. and classes ran from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. Each group had three classes a day with hour-long breaks in between, and each choreographer taught at least once per day.

Kristyn Helfand, a senior graphic design major, the merchandising chair of RDE and choreographer for Workshop Week, taught a musical theater combo to “Someone in the Crowd” from “La La Land.”

“When you’re a choreographer, you have to be really intentional about what you’re doing. You want to be mindful that it’s not going to look the same on everyone, and everyone’s a different skill level,” Helfand said. She attended other choreographers’ classes as well.

“When you’re a dancer, you want to make sure you’re perfecting the choreography and you’re really taking it in,” Helfand continued.

At 8 p.m. on Sept. 3 and 4, the whole club would gather again in SCI 102 for movie nights of the previous years’ fall and spring RDE showcases.

Abigail Noriega, sophomore dance major and treasurer of RDE, who ran warmups that Friday, said, “I love movie nights. I also love taking the actual classes, but I think the movie nights are just where everybody gets to be themselves and have slightly less stress.”

On Sept. 5, no movie night meant the schedule started and ended an hour later. Finally, on Sept. 6, the 2023-24 RDE president and vice president returned to teach a masterclass. This year, Victoria Yzaguirre, ’25, and Jared Hiller, ’25, taught a contemporary combo to “End of August” by Noah Kahan. As soon as other club members saw the pair, greetings and hugs were in order.

“It’s really nostalgic, and this song out of all the

songs on his album makes me very emotional. We’re just super excited. It’s nice that other alums came back [to] dance with us and hang out,” Yzaguirre said.

Hiller said, “It’s just a really good experience. ... We loved doing it when we were here at Rider. It’s a mini community, honestly. And when you find your community here at Rider, it kind of makes your experience, academically and socially.”

The week ended with a photo shoot and picnic on the Campus Green. Throughout the week, photos were taken by Joanna Avitto, ’23, another RDE alum.

Avitto started doing workshop-week pictures the year that she graduated, and she later asked to come back to take dance pictures for her portfolio.

“I had asked to come back, and then every year since, they’ve asked me to come back and do it, and I’m happy to. I love seeing how the club is growing and how big a part of peoples’ college career [RDE] becomes. It’s really special, and I love documenting it for them so they have the memories,” Avitto said.

Helfand summarized what RDE Workshop Week means for new members, returning members and alums, stating: “There’s a big emphasis on community and being together, because anyone can join the dance ensemble, no matter their experience level. If they’ve been dancing for 10 years, or if this is their first day ever dancing, it’s really just about trying new things and having fun.”

Photo courtesy of Joanna Avitto



Incoming students, current students and Rider Dance Ensemble alums participated in the workshops.

“For everyone outside of dance, it opens the doors for a lot of people that didn’t realize that that door was even there. Workshop week serves as an introduction,” said Zeno Rubach, junior game and interactive media design major, RDE President and choreographer for workshop week.

Sign-ups began at the start of the summer and were open to all returning club members and any students interested in the club. Incoming freshmen were also invited and encouraged to participate as a way to get acclimated to campus. Even Rider alumni who were

Photo courtesy of Joanna Avitto



The week-long dance intensive was open to students of all skill levels.

Rider’s Welcome Week reimagined

By Sofia Santiago

Amid the many changes to Rider, the New Student Orientation and Welcome Week events were adapted, reigniting Rider traditions to kick off the school year and giving incoming students a taste of campus life.

After move-in on Sept. 4, students and their families could head over to the Campus Mall to get lunch and mingle at the Welcome Barbecue. To further recharge, a Mister Softee ice-cream truck provided refreshing sweet treats for dessert. This year’s orientation leaders were also in attendance.

Julian Hernandez, a senior cyber security major and orientation leader, explained the effort that went into planning Welcome Week.

Starting in late June, orientation leaders worked over the course of the summer to create the Welcome Week itinerary. They focused on including events that they thought new students would enjoy, drawing inspiration from what their experience of Welcome Week was like.

“When it comes to icebreakers, games, everything that you guys experienced, we created and we scheduled. We also had a very big hand in deciding what activities students were going to do,” Hernandez said. “So, orientation leaders do a lot more than just help students on session days. They create the sessions and they practice them and they try to master them as best as they can.”

Later that day, at 7:30 p.m., students attended Playfair! to break the ice, bond with their classmates and get the chance to score tickets for a Six Flags trip on Sept. 7.

Playfair! is an old tradition that was brought back this year, and the Six Flags trip was added to increase off-campus bonding.

Sept. 5 began with the classic Radio Bingo Brunch at Daly Dining Hall and was followed by a required health and safety programming, such as Sex Signals and Bronc Safety 101, in the afternoon.



Abby Ray/The Rider News

Welcome Week favorites this year included: Playfair!, First Night Out and Cranberry Craze.

Previously, the educational programming would take place during the overnight summer orientation sessions. However, this year, summer orientation was not mandatory for new students and overnight sessions were not offered.

Christine Melhorn, the dean of students, clarified the reason for the changes.

“We figured it’s a more timely way of doing it. Students are getting the information they need right before they actually need it, rather than being overwhelmed with a ton of content over the summer. ... We really wanted to focus during the July months on making friends, making connections and just getting excited about coming back in the fall,” said Melhorn.

The day wrapped up with First Night Out activities across campus for students to choose from: silent disco, karaoke, glow golf and Build-a-Bronc.

On Sept. 6, the required educational programming continued throughout the day, and ended with the

fan-favorite Cranberry Craze on the Residence Quad.

New inflatable obstacle courses and giant activities made their debut, letting freshmen and returning students alike let loose and enjoy the evening. Hungry students lined up at food trucks, where empanadas, sodas and crepes were served.

The week’s festivities will come to a close with Rockfest on Sept. 11 at 7 p.m. at the Ben Cohen Turf Field Parking Lot.

Elizabeth Karns, a senior majoring in data analytics and global supply chain management, former orientation leader and current student coordinator for the Office of First Year Programs and Orientation, commented on the differences in this year’s Welcome Week.

Karns said, “We have had some administrative changes, but I wouldn’t say it’s a bad thing at all. In fact, I think a lot of the changes that we made have really helped student engagement grow.”

Welcome Week Photo Gallery

Photos by Abby Ray



Abby Ray/The Rider News

Presented by Sofia Santiago

Graphic by Grace Juarez

September Horoscopes

Virgo

(Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)

Be kind to yourself this month, Virgo. Some of your goals may seem out of reach, but September is the time to pour your energy into following your dreams. Experiment and embrace new beginnings, and you will find unexpected alternatives to your current setbacks or even venture down a new path.

Libra

(Sept. 23 - Oct. 23)

Give yourself a break, Libra. You have been carrying too much on your plate and straining yourself. Take a step back and allow yourself to let go and enjoy the release. While keeping yourself booked and busy may be tempting, try to make calmer plans and recharge.

Scorpio

(Oct. 24 - Nov. 21)

Your relationships will flourish, Scorpio! Whether it is spontaneous plans with old friends or a wave of new connections, expect to be more social this month and put yourself out there. With more people demanding your time, remember to pay attention to your own needs and stay authentic.

Sagittarius

(Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)

Do not overthink it, Sagittarius. Recognize your efforts and the progress you have made toward your goals and remind yourself that you do not need to wait for anyone else's validation. Keep it up and keep moving forward. Remember that reminiscing is nice, but it is easy to get bogged down thinking about the past.

Capricorn

(Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)

Your creativity will bloom this month, Capricorn. Curiosity and novelty will push you into new opportunities and learning experiences. Inspiration will strike easily, so make the most of it by sharing your thoughts with others and engaging in conversations with those close to you.

Aquarius

(Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)

Express yourself, Aquarius. September may bring emotions to the surface that have been brewing for a while. The actions and conversations that will occur as a result will mark turning points in your relationships. Navigating these milestones is difficult, but reach out for support and do not expect to have to go through it alone.

Pisces

(Feb. 19 - March 20)

Passion will drive you, Pisces. This month will present some hopeful news in both your career and personal life. Reflect on which relationships are balanced in terms of effort, and focus on the heartfelt connections. Remember that, sometimes, understanding comes from forgiveness.

Aries

(March 21 - April 19)

Have patience, Aries. You may find yourself paying more attention to your day-to-day decisions and responsibilities, so remember to pick your battles wisely and slow down every once in a while. Do not be afraid to stand up for yourself. Set boundaries and enjoy your increased motivation.

Taurus

(April 20 - May 20)

Try something new, Taurus. Now is the time to take a risk and explore something you have been curious about. In this season of discovery, you will find yourself facing the unexpected with confidence. Do not forget to have some alone time, though, and dedicate a portion of that curiosity inward.

Gemini

(May 21 - June 21)

Be ready to reflect, Gemini. While introspection about your relationships and how they make you feel may cause some anxiety this month, focus on yourself and you will feel refreshed. Try a new workout or invest in self-care to destress.

Cancer

(June 22 - July 22)

Communication is key this month, Cancer. Be prepared to have important conversations in your personal and professional life and do not hesitate to stand up for yourself and express your needs. Trust yourself and show your authenticity; you should expect to enjoy many of these conversations.

Leo

(July 23 - Aug. 22)

Invest in stability, Leo. If you focus on your finances, reevaluate your budget and confront patterns you have been meaning to change, you will find yourself in abundance and create the security you have been chasing. To keep yourself balanced, make an effort to spend some time with your loved ones.

A Rider News welcome letter

As quickly as it came, so too it went. Summer is over and we are back on campus for another fall semester! Despite that sounding boring and tiresome, going back to college always allows for great experiences and long-lasting memories. For me, I think it will be impossible to forget the first year I had here. How great it was, meeting my friends, walking around campus and not having to wake up at 6:30 a.m. to catch the bus to school.

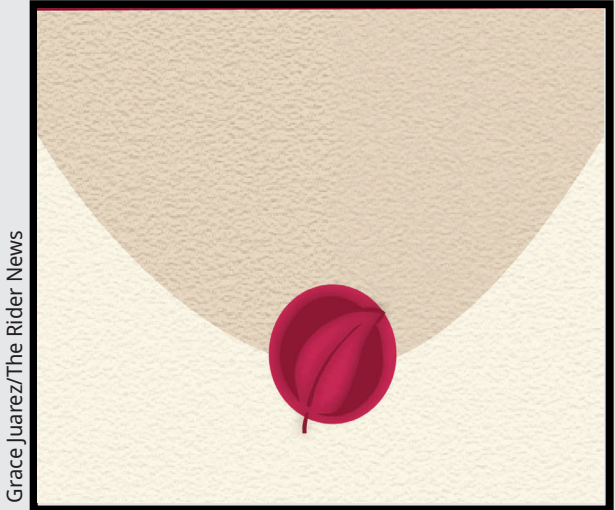
I would like to dedicate this article as my personal invitation and welcome letter to all the students returning to this campus, be it their first or their last year.

To any of the seniors that may be reading this, I wish for you the speediest of semesters and the best of luck possible to what is sure to be a great career ahead of you after your tenure at Rider. We thank you for your time and dedication at this school, and hope it all pays off! Again, best of luck. I, myself, look forward to being in your shoes sooner rather than later.

To the juniors and my fellow sophomores, I think the best word of advice is to just keep up the work you have already put in. The home stretch is in sight for you, juniors. What

a concept that must be, only being one year removed from your final chapter of college. I know for me, I am excited to reach the halfway point at the end of this year. I still feel as though I am a freshman in high school, but now that the high school class of 2025 is already past their freshman year of college, that is bizarre.

And finally, to the incoming freshmen. For me, personally, freshman year is not that hard to reminisce on, as it was technically only a couple of months ago. While it probably feels daunting, as I most definitely felt that way, that feeling washes away quicker than you can realize. Once you get beyond the sad parts of leaving your families, or the scary elements of lecture halls and communal bathrooms, college truly unravels into an experience like no other. There will obviously be obstacles, like eventually locking yourself out of your dorm or not understanding how Canvas works, but getting past them leads you down an exciting path. Whether it be meeting new people, learning the most fascinating of things from your wise and old professors or participating in new and old hobbies alike; be it writing for an award-winning newspaper at The Rider News,



Advice and best wishes to all coming back from summer vacation playing ping-pong and 8-ball at the Student Recreation Center or downing an unhealthy amount of ice cream cones at Daly Dining Hall. In college, tribulations lead to triumph. Your future here at Rider is bright, and we, as a community, are happy to invite you here among us and look forward to seeing you all across campus, thriving.

Alfie Eville
sophomore history and secondary education major

OUT ON CAMPUS

Introducing the author and queer safe spaces on campus

College is daunting. 3,000 new faces when you walk on campus, and if you are an LGBTQIA+ student, the masses may not always feel friendly or safe.

My name is Cal and I am a junior journalism major here at Rider. I am The Rider News' managing editor and I am also an openly queer and trans individual.

I, of all people, can acknowledge that being a queer individual is not always the easiest thing. Nor is it comfortable when in a new environment. From awkward moments during attendance because I did not add my preferred name to Canvas, to feeling a little bit different than my peers in social circles, I get it.

I want to give my fellow LGBTQIA+ peers the support and encouragement I wish I had when I started at Rider.

Despite Rider being a small, liberal arts university, new situations can rile up anxiety and stress for anyone when you are in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar individuals.

While you may not be able to analyze and assess each student's personal values, I can confidently say that most students at Rider that I have encountered have been nothing less than kind and respectful to the LGBTQIA+ students on campus.

There are also organizations and offices that provide support to those who identify as LGBTQIA+ or with other diverse groups on campus.

A few solid options of safe spaces that are geared toward LGBTQIA+ students include Spectrum Pride Alliance, the Center for

Community and Belonging and Rider's Counseling Center.

Spectrum Pride Alliance is Rider's club for LGBTQIA+ students and allies. Spectrum is a student organization that hosts activities at weekly meetings, which are geared toward giving students a safe space to be themselves, regardless of their identity.

With events such as paint and sip, drag queen bingo and learning about queer characters in media, Spectrum makes community the forefront of their club.

Spectrum also recognizes and celebrates National Coming Out Day, which occurs every year in the beginning of October.

The Center for Community and Belonging is known for being a place on campus for students to connect with each other, hang out and attend events!

There is a large lounge area in the entrance of the CCB where students can gather and have a comfortable, safe space to be with their friends.

Different groups on campus can host events in the CCB, along with university wide SafeZone Training, which is hosted in their meeting room!

The CCB prioritizes acceptance and appreciation of people from diverse backgrounds; including LGBTQIA+ students and those of different races, cultures and religions.

This year, the CCB also plans to launch virtual trainings for the Rider community. "Demystifying Inclusion and Belonging



Out on Campus' first installment highlights safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ individuals at Rider and LGBT+ Affirming Spaces" is the new training being offered, and will include discussion groups to follow the training.

Rider's Counseling Center also hosts workshops as a resource to diverse student populations.

Roy. G. Biv is Rider's LGBTQIA+ support group hosted by the Counseling Center. They also have the ability to provide students with one-on-one support and are very supportive of Rider's population of LGBTQIA+ students on campus.

No matter who you are, how you identify or where you go on campus, there is someone to support you at Rider.

Cal Sutton
junior journalism major

The films of summer 2026: A recap

Over the past couple of years, I would say that summer blockbusters have taken a step back. Outside of the yearly superhero film being churned out, theatergoers have only gotten one or two exciting — and good — movies each summer. The last time I remember being excited was 2023 with the releases of “Barbie” and “Oppenheimer” coinciding on the same day. With that being said, summer 2026 delivered in every capacity, with some of the most hyped projects of this decade. Many were good, some were letdowns, but let us dive into four of the biggest releases that came out while the Broncs were on vacation.

“Obsession”

Starting off in chronological order with a film that technically did not actually premiere in 2026. “Obsession” had actually debuted at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2025, but had not seen a massive theater release until May 15. I distinctly remember hearing about it online, but not really thinking much of it; I actually confused it for a similar indie horror project called “Passenger,” which had received middling reviews. Perhaps this is why when I went to go see it, my expectations were rather low. Although, my opinion had immediately shifted before the halfway mark had arrived. Curry Barker, who had gotten famous off of funny videos posted to social media, penned and directed this as his debut feature. Inde Navarrette stars as Nikki, in what is her first big role, as is true with Michael Johnston, who plays Bear. I say this because it makes what I am about to say even more impressive: this is one of the standout films in not just the horror genre, but of the 21st century. The direction here is stellar, with Barker’s insistence on hiding details in the shadow, keeping the viewer tense, as well as holding shots for uncomfortable lengths and letting the actors carry those extended scenes of terror. As for the aforementioned actors, Johnston did a terrific job in this role, but the true star is Navarrette, who is my long-shot pick to win the Oscar for Best Actress. Her range must be studied, as she so easily goes from calm and normal to violently screaming or mortifyingly bleak. Watching her in this film kept me up at night, and I am grateful that I was able to see her perform in this role. I do not like to say someone “carried a film,” as there are so many moving parts, as is true for “Obsession,” but Navarrette is hard to ignore as the standout part of this nearly-perfect horror film. I thoroughly enjoyed the simplistic plot elevated by these talented young minds. For that, a five star rating is the only appropriate one I see for “Obsession.”

“Disclosure Day”

The next, and probably most disappointing, film is “Disclosure Day,” the latest from legendary filmmaker Steven Spielberg. For many, high expectations were all they had after seeing his name attached to a new alien-based project. I, however, had little excitement. I thought I was hallucinating when, at the end of the trailer, it said “Directed by Steven Spielberg.” I would say this will go down as one of his more forgettable projects. Spielberg has made half a dozen alien-adjacent films now, and he peaked with his first.



Summer 2026 was one of great success for cinematic releases this year

The genre has been exhausted, and that shows, as the film was boring and dry. The most exciting part was Emily Blunt beatboxing on live television halfway through. It was predictable, with little action or commitment to the main cast. Josh O’Connor tried his best, but nothing could have brought life to this script. The worst part has to be how disjointed the themes are. The film’s attempts at trying to be profound about religion and higher beings fall flat, and are more insufferable than inspiring. This, to me, culminates in two stars out of five.

“Spider-Man: Brand New Day”

I would be remiss if I did not include this next film here, as it has several broken records at the box office. The latest entry in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, “Spider-Man: Brand New Day.” Despite my lethargic outlook on superhero movies as of late, I was hyped beyond belief for this movie. The plot looked exciting, and I could not wait to see where they picked it up after “No Way Home.” So, did it live up to the hype? Was it better than the previous entries? I would say the answer to that is a resounding “yes.” This film does not rely on nostalgia-bait or other storylines and characters from the MCU — while yes, it does feature characters from other series, it does not detract from the story and can easily stand alone. It is simple and down-to-earth. I think the choice to focus heavily on Peter Parker and his life, instead of making Spider-Man the focus, was so refreshing. After all these movies about the man in the costume, I want to see a story about the man in the costume. The struggles that Parker goes through are something any person can relate to, without all the wizard-magic and space monsters. I felt myself connecting and empathizing with Parker, MJ and even

Frank — who was such a nice and unexpected addition to the cast. While the action and Spider-Man moments were cool to see, I think it is Tom Holland and Zendaya’s acting as regular people that drive this story, and cut to the themes more than anything else. To me, this is a breath of fresh air for the MCU, and I hope to see films like this more in the future. “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” gets four stars out of five, and is without a doubt a top-four Marvel movie.

“The Odyssey”

Last, and easily the most hyped film, is Christopher Nolan’s “The Odyssey.” Now, I must preface this by saying something controversial: I am not the biggest fan of Nolan’s work. I like several of his films, namely “The Prestige” and “Inception.” However, I think he has got to be the most overrated filmmaker of all time. I would argue “Interstellar” is perfectly alright, and “Dunkirk” is middling at best. So when I heard he was covering “The Odyssey,” I was unphased. After seeing the movie, I thought it was just fine. To me, Nolan makes just regular big-budget action blockbusters and dresses them up as something avant-garde. This movie does not do anything special, and yet it is being heralded as this generation’s “Citizen Kane.” I roll my eyes at that, because people are just so quick to gloss over the blatant flaws of this movie just because “it is Christopher Nolan!” To be succinct, the script is all over the place in terms of dialogue and pacing, the adaptation is poor and, at times, painfully incorrect, Tom Holland is bad, Anne Hathaway is wasted, Travis Scott is here for some reason and Odysseus never

pets or acknowledges Argos — the worst offense, in my opinion. Is it bad? Absolutely not. But overhyped to an obnoxious extent. Finally, I want to mention the IMAX debate. I think Nolan’s publicity stunt of filming this in IMAX is nothing more than a gimmick, on par with John Waters providing “scratch-n-sniff” papers for audiences to use while watching Polyester. I get when filmmakers want to use 35 mm or 70 mm film instead of digital, but Nolan choosing to do it in IMAX ostracizes so many filmgoers by clipping off entire parts of the screen. All in all, I give “The Odyssey” three-and-a-half stars out of five.

As I had said in my introduction, this was a great summer, even despite some of the underwhelming films. Enjoying the lead up and hype to “The Odyssey” and “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” was terrific, and films like “Obsession” were quite the enjoyable watches! Now, if I had to pick my “movie of the summer,” it would have to be “Obsession.” Even if “The Odyssey” had delivered a great story, I would still probably have Barker’s indie-horror project over the big-budget Nolan feature. It just goes to show that money cannot buy a good picture, all that matters is talent and passion. This summer, if I had to give it a rating akin to the films, it would have to be a solid four out of five. It was an exciting time, and got a lot of people out of the house and into the theater to see their favorite directors, characters and storylines! I hope the winter of this year can cap off a terrific all-around 2026.

Alfie Eville
sophomore history and secondary education major

Sony and Rockstar eyeing all-digital future

For as long as the industry has existed, you could always buy the physical copy of video games. Now, Sony wants to ditch that method of purchase altogether and make gaming a digital-only venture. In July of this year, gaming and entertainment goliath Sony Interactive Entertainment announced that, by the beginning of 2028, it would halt and discontinue production of physical media for the PlayStation line of consoles. This decision was made due to analytics showing that 80% of game sales for the PlayStation came from digital copies of games. The decision received backlash from fans, as the concern of preservation through physical media has spiked in recent years.

The recent trend of purchasing physical media has seen a very noticeable increase in recent years,

especially among Generation Z. This applies to mediums outside gaming as well, like DVDs and Blu-Rays for film and CDs and vinyls for music. The concerns stem from the increase in streaming services and subscriptions and the normalization of films not being able to be watched on any streaming platforms. If, hypothetically, “Stranger Things” were to be taken off Netflix, those who do not physically own the series would not be able to watch the show. And this is especially true when it comes to games.

The gaming industry has seen a rise in indie games. For those who may not know, indie games are those that are made independently and without the financial backing of a larger studio. Many of these games gain significant traction online and become very popular. Deltarune and Mecha Chameleon, for example, are both indie games that have sold millions of copies each, with Deltarune specifically breaking multiple records on Valve’s digital gaming platform, Steam.

Recently, however, Sony is not the only company that is moving toward an all-digital model. Rockstar Games, known for the Grand Theft Auto series, has made a controversial decision with their upcoming game, Grand Theft Auto VI. They have also decided to go completely digital with the game, as well as locking exclusive content for the game behind the “Special Edition” release, which will cost \$100; a \$20 increase from the base game.

This decision has garnered major backlash, as well, most notably by an anonymous entity named CyberLeek. Last month, they leaked footage of the game and showcased the in-game map, claiming to have total access to the game. CyberLeek also threatened to release more footage of the game if Rockstar did not change the all-digital rollout of the game.

On Aug. 26, Rockstar posted an official statement on the social media site X, apologizing for “everything [taking] as long as

it has,” in reference to the many delays that the game has faced, and thanked those who have been patient enough to wait for the official gameplay trailer. This gameplay trailer was released on Netflix the next day, which also outraged a lot of fans, as they believe that the trailer for a game should not be locked behind a subscription.

At the time of writing this, neither Sony nor Rockstar have backed down from the all-digital future they seem to be pushing, despite the backlash and complaints of countless fans, many of whom are reciting the phrase, “If buying isn’t owning, then piracy isn’t stealing” in comment sections of Sony’s social media posts. Many fans are now considering piracy as a way to protest the all-digital format or not engage with Sony at all with their future endeavors, choosing to stick with the Xbox Series X/S or the Nintendo Switch 2.

As someone who is a huge advocate for physical media, I vehemently disagree with Sony and Rockstar’s choices. Their push to cease production of physical copies of games is nothing less than aggravating, and even insulting to myself and many other collectors. Physically owning games gives the consumer the ability to actually own what they buy, instead of purchasing a license to engage with that media. The case with GTA VI makes me especially nervous; if this game is a hit, critically and financially, it would mean the industry takes one step closer to a future where the consumer doesn’t own anything, and the big companies have power over the entire market. Any form of art, including video games, is supposed to be a conversation between artist and viewer, and we should not get to a point where that conversation is being interfered with by greedy corporations trying to control everything.

Ryan Denkovic
sophomore English major



Grace Juarez/The Rider News

Gaming companies are taking steps toward digital-only releases





Longstreet House, 2083 Lawrenceville Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
©2026 General Meetings: Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m

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

Executive Editor Samantha Clark	Multimedia Editor Abby Ray
Managing Editor Cal Sutton	Copy Editors Teagan Rotella Jenna Munswami
News Editor Brannagh Rattigan	Social Media Editors Mallory Hoelzl Tatyanna Beauliere-Jackson
Features and Entertainment Editor Sofia Santiago	Design Manager Grace Juarez
Opinion Editor Alfie Eville	Circulation Manager Matt Cirola
Sports Editor Joshua Yuhas	Faculty Adviser Barbara Boyer

One copy per person, bulk copies available for purchase at \$1 each

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

 ridernews@rider.edu

MEN'S SOCCER

Rider overtake 2025 win total, 3-1-1 to start the 2026 season

By Joshua Yuhas

Rider men's soccer opened their new season with a 1-0 road victory against James Madison University, a 2-0 home victory over Howard University, a 1-2 loss at Fairleigh Dickinson University, a 3-2 victory over NJIT and a 0-0 draw against Saint Joseph's University on Sept. 8.

A road split and home dominance

Beginning the fresh campaign against the James Madison Dukes on Aug. 20, the Broncos survived four early shots in the opening 11 minutes but a pair of corners flipped the momentum in Rider's favor.

Pressure by the Broncos produced a turnover, where junior forward Chimeka Azurunwa knocked it toward junior forward Emmanuel Dan-Adokiene, who poked the ball into the back of the net for a 1-0 Rider lead.

Attacks settled down until the final seconds of the half when graduate student goalkeeper Marius Helias moved up in the box to contest the Dukes' attacker.

Helias made himself big when going one-on-one with the attacker and making the save and earning the #2 spot on SportsCenter's Top 10 Plays list.

The Broncos would hold on for the 1-0 shutout victory on the road with Helias' four saves, earning him the Metro Defensive Player of the Week honor.

Rider then returned home to Ben Cohen Field on Aug. 28 against the Howard Bison, where the Broncos dominated the shot total 26-6.

An unassisted goal for Arunzunwa and then a Dan-Adokiene score assisted by junior defender Carter Schmitz led Rider to a dominant 2-0 victory.

"We've only been together maybe a month now, but we're continuing to gel and get better with each other in the combinations and everything," Arunzunwa said.

With two shutouts to start the year, Head Coach Chad Duernberger was extremely supportive of the

form Helias has opened the season with.

"I just think he's grown so much as a goalkeeper, and he's playing with a lot of confidence right now," Duernberger said.

On Aug. 31, the Broncos traveled to Teaneck, New Jersey to face the Fairleigh Dickinson Knights, trading shots to open the match.

In the 24th minute, the Knights scored and held the Broncos without a shot until senior forward Patrick Rojek equalized the game at 1-1.

A penalty kick awarded to the Knights in the second half produced the game winning score, as each of Rider's attempts were stopped, handing the Broncos their first loss of the season.

'Tell me what you guys are gonna be like'

The Broncos began a two-game home stretch with redshirt sophomore goalkeeper Tim Devine making his first start in net for Rider in a matchup against the NJIT Highlanders on Sept. 4.

The Highlanders scored within the opening minutes of the match, then added a second goal later in the half, leading the shot battle 9-5 over Rider.

"There's gonna be a time in the second half where we're down on the road and our seasons on the line in conference play," Duernberger said. "Here's a great opportunity to tell me what you guys are gonna be like for that moment."

A halftime speech not as much on tactics, but rather mentality, lit a spark in the Broncos with senior defender Ryan Vaubel scoring the first and Rojek scoring off a strong play and assist by sophomore midfielder Drew Heil to tie the match at two.

Starting on a ball hit up the field by Devine, freshman midfielder Gavin Faracchio collected the pass yards outside of the box and sent a screamer into the top of the net to set off total pandemonium at Ben



Abby Ray/The Rider News

Sophomore midfielder **Axel Lucas** fighting for possession.

"It's just going out there and putting in big challenges and getting the job done. And the guys have my back, and I got their back. So the second half was a different story," Devine said.

After trailing 2-0 at halftime, the Rider Broncos prevailed to take the 3-2 victory against NJIT.

Closing out their home stretch, Rider took on the Saint Joseph's Hawks on Sept. 8.

Devine got put to work early with two saves in the first minute, then the Broncos fired three shots in return.

With an evenly-matched first half, both sides were lockstepped into halftime.

When play resumed, Rider tossed two shots before Devine survived a Hawks onslaught.

The Broncos pushed the pace as the match came to a close, just narrowly missing a chance in the final minute, ending the match in a 0-0 draw.

Rider will return to the road on Saturday for a matchup with LaSalle University on Sept. 12.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Broncs tally win, loss and draw in non-conference, lose the Metro opener

By Joshua Yuhas

To begin the 2026 season, the Rider women's soccer team collected each type of result in non-conference play with a 1-0 win at Wagner College, a 1-1 draw at NJIT and a 2-1 loss at home to Temple University, then opened Metro Conference play with a 3-0 loss at Fairfield.

Empty loss column

Both sides produced a pair of corner kicks within the first 15 minutes of the season opener on Aug. 13 against the Wagner Seahawks.

On the final corner, the Broncos opted for a short pass, where junior back Leah Marcell found sophomore back Ella Baumgardt in pace.

From within the 15-yard mark of the football field, Baumgardt fired a laser into the top right corner for her first collegiate-career goal.

The Seahawks launched a pair of shots in the following minutes, but sophomore goalkeeper Ashley Moore made two saves to keep the game scoreless heading into halftime.

Sitting evenly in the stats at half, Wagner's offense had nine shots in the second half to Rider's two.

Junior forward Tess Ferrie would tally the only two shots for the second half of the match for the Broncos, with one being saved by the Seahawks' goalkeeper.

The Rider defense held strong to squash each threat brought against them to secure the 1-0 shutout victory.

Staying on the road, the Broncos faced off against the NJIT Highlanders on Aug. 16.

The Broncos first shot would not come until the 32nd minute, when Ferrie's shot was saved.

In net, Moore was forced to make a pair of saves that then set up the momentum for a free kick just by the right sideline for senior back Bethie Morgan.

Morgan, recognizing some open space by the right post, lofted the ball past the Highlanders' goalkeeper to give the Broncos a 1-0 lead.

Despite trailing in shot totals nine to three, Rider held a one-goal lead heading into halftime.

The Highlanders continued the trend in the second half with 10 shots to the Broncos' three, and eventually were able to break one past to tie it all at one.

Constant pressure led to no avail for NJIT, and a pair of last minute shot attempts would not go for Rider either, ending the match in a 1-1 draw.

Empty no more

After the two road matchups, the Broncos made their first trip home to play on Ben Cohen Field to take on the Temple Owls on Aug. 27.

After an hour-and-a-half start delay due to rain, the Broncos opened the match slowly, surrendering two goals in the first 15 minutes.

At halftime, Temple commanded the shot totals, leading nine to two and carried a 2-0 advantage over Rider into the second half of action.

The Broncos started to put pressure on the Owls with a shot in the 71st minute and a chance saved by the Owls' goalkeeper in the 79th.

After receiving a pass from junior midfielder Ava DeGeorge in the 81st minute, freshman forward Elaine Joy sent a cross, which freshman midfielder Cali Friedel brought down and sent into the net.

"If she crosses to me, it's going to be great. She crossed it right to me, and I just had to take a touch and finish it," Friedel said.

Joy collected her first collegiate assist and Friedel her first collegiate goal as the two freshmen worked together to bring the match within one, but that would be all that was left in the tank.

"We didn't quite have enough to create another opportunity," Head Coach Drayson Hounsoume said. "We got the ball into that area of the field, but maybe we took an extra touch or the cross was delayed or it

got blocked. Happy with the second half, not happy with the first half."

Following their non-conference run with a 1-1-1 record, the Broncos traveled back on the road to face the Fairfield Stags on Sept. 5.

The Stags ran the pace of play from the opening whistle, but the Broncos had premium chances when they could produce them.

Moore kept Fairfield scoreless for most of the first half, until the Stags broke through in the 41st minute.

A save in the final minute of the first half left Moore with five saves after facing 15 shots, while the Stags faced just two.

In the second half, the Stags outshot the Broncos 28 to one, with Moore adding another four saves.

Fairfield notched their second and third goals late in the match to seal a 3-0 loss for Rider.

The Rider Broncos will return home to Ben Cohen field on Sept. 12 against Siena University. The game will be streamed on ESPN+.



Joshua Yuhas/The Rider News

Senior back **Courtney Carter** surveying the field.

VOLLEYBALL

Broncs split the invitational in Philly, get swept in New York

By Lindsay Scarola

Rider volleyball's season began at the Cherry and White Invitational in Philadelphia with a 3-2 win against Fordham University and an 0-3 loss against Temple University. The Broncs then traveled to New York for the Lou Carnesecca Invitational, falling to St. John's University, 0-3, East Texas A&M, 1-3 and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, 1-3.

Down to the final set

The Rams held an early 5-1 lead against the Broncs on Aug. 28. As the set went forward, Rider was still down 15-10 until four straight points were scored during the serve of senior outside hitter Rylah Robinson.

After rallying back, the set was even at 23, before Rider got back-to-back points to claim the first set of the match for the Broncs.

Fordham with a 6-0 lead, gained control of the second set, as they held Rider to only nine.

The Broncs fought back in the third, holding a 7-1 lead and leading the Rams 19-10 late in the set.

Sophomore outside hitter Cecilia DeCaro sealed the deal with another kill for a 25-21 set-three victory.

In set four, the Rams stopped a comeback attempt, winning 25-21 and forcing the fifth and final set.

Head Coach Jeff Rotondo expressed that the team entered the match with plenty of uncertainty.

"We went into it hoping to learn a lot about them in the first set, and I thought we handled that well," Rotondo said.

Rider carried that ability to adjust into the decisive fifth set, jumping out to a 5-1 lead and, despite Fordham looking to stop Rider.

A kill from DeCaro and an ace from senior rightside Anja Kelly secured the Broncs' win.



Senior right side **Anja Kelly** celebrating successful point for Rider.

Tough fight in Philly

Set one against Temple on Aug. 30 was a quick one, with the Owls taking the opening set, 25-14.

A closer second set was left 22-19, until two aces and a kill won the point for Temple.

Despite falling behind two sets early, Rider began to settle in as the match went on.

"I think as the match went on, we got more comfortable and started finding our rhythm. Our energy and communication continued to build each set, and we did a better job adjusting to what Temple was doing," said senior middle blocker Molly Rohde.

Trailing by three, Temple appeared to serve the ball, but the call was ruled in, giving the Owls set point. However, the Broncs challenged the call and the ruling was overturned.

Freshman libero Olivia DeSaro stepped up to serve, delivering a 24-23 lead for Rider and its first set point.

Temple responded when they won three straight points to take the match, sweeping Rider 3-0.

Rocky weekend in Queens

The opening match of the Lou Carnesecca Invitational on Sept. 4 saw the Broncs take on the Red Storm, falling in the opening set, 25-17.

Rider held an 18-17 lead in set two, but the Red Storm the lead that they held for a two-set advantage.

Rider worked back to a 9-7 mark, but a pair of runs led to a 25-13 win and the sweep on the Broncs.

In the second match on Sept. 4, Rider went against the East Texas A&M University Lions.

After falling behind in the first set, DeSaro served four points to give Rider the lead in a tight first set.

Trailing 22-21, kills from Kelly and DeSaro set up the Broncs for set point, but the Lions tied it at 24.

Rider regained the lead, where freshman outside hitter Maisie Nawrocki got the finishing kill.

An 8-1 Lions run in the second set, but the following set would be much closer, tied at 21.

The Lions closed the set with four straight points, now leading 2-1 over the Broncs.

Rider brought the fourth set within one, but the Lions held on, 25-22, defeating Rider 3-1.

The Broncs faced UAB next on Sept. 5, trailing 16-12 prior to the Broncs getting four more points.

The Broncs closed the set 25-23 on a 5-1 run, with four kills by Robinson, reaching set point before surrendering the set 28-26 to the Blazers.

The Blazers dominated set three for to a 2-1 set lead, and controlled set four to take the win.

Reflecting back on these invitationals, Rotondo shared some insight on the team's outlook.

"We need to be more creative in how we score, finding ways to use a bigger block and find openings in the defense," Rotondo said.

The Broncs will travel to Piscataway, New Jersey for the Rutgers Classic, facing the University of Delaware on Sept. 10, Stony Brook University on Sept. 11, and Rutgers University on Sept. 12.

FIELD HOCKEY

Rider unable to pull a victory on the road, 0-4 to open their 2026 season

By Samantha Clark

Rider field hockey kicked off the year with four straight losses in non-Northeast Conference matchups, falling 2-1 to Hofstra University, 4-1 to Colgate University, 8-0 to #17 ranked Monmouth University and 1-0 to Towson University, marking the program's worst start since 1999.

No luck in New York

The Broncs traveled to New York to face the Hofstra University Pride in their season opener on Aug. 28, where they fell 2-1.

The first period started slow, with Rider putting up three missed shots and Hofstra missing four as well.

In the second period, the Broncs scored first with a goal from senior defender Emma Bonshak, which made the NEC's list of Top 5 Plays of the Week.

"Seeing small pieces of a bigger goal start to come together is really rewarding. ... It was a great example of how far grit can take this team. It was a great accomplishment, especially considering all the work put in during the offseason to make that moment happen," Bonshak said.

However, Hofstra responded less than two minutes later with a goal of their own to tie it up at 1-1.

Hofstra attempted another, but with a wide shot, the match was at a standstill going into the second half.

The third period was much like the first, with Hofstra missing four of their attempted goals, two of which were saved by junior goalkeeper Jade Regnart.

The Pride got through eventually, putting up one more in the fourth to close the matchup at 2-1.

Rider continued their New York tour, heading to Colgate University on Aug. 30, kicked off with a Raider goal after eight minutes of unsuccessful play.

Colgate scored two more quick goals in the first period to gain an early 3-0 advantage over the Broncs.

The second period saw less action as both teams had a missed shot in the final three minutes of the half.

Failed attempts by both sides left the Broncs trailing 4-0 heading into the final 15 minutes.

With assists from Bonshak and freshman midfielder Caroline Mauer, junior forward Amanda Walker drilled a goal with five minutes remaining, closing their second game with a 4-1 loss.

"Last year, we learned how important it is to stay together during difficult stretches. Even when things aren't going our way, we know we have the ability to turn things around if we continue to work hard, trust each other, and stay positive," Bonshak said.

Lengthening the streak

Returning to the Garden State, the Broncs traveled down the shore to battle the Monmouth University Hawks on Sept. 4.

Rider went scoreless through all four periods, allowing Monmouth to put up an 8-0 shutout.

Rider made no attempted goals in the first period, and the Hawks sank two of their nine attempts, putting the Broncs down by two.

The second period was the same, with Rider finding no openings, and Monmouth picking up two goals.

"The team never gave up regardless of the circumstances," Head Coach Gina Carey-Smith said. "We will continue to climb the ladder and when Conference play arrives, we should be dialed in."

The third period was much slower, with Monmouth adding just one goal after nine minutes of the second half, putting Rider down 5-0.

The Broncs did not register a shot, while the Hawks pressured Rider with 11 additional shot attempts.

Senior goalkeeper Sarah Fitzpatrick was put between the posts, where she saved all five of Monmouth's missed shot attempts in the final period.

Despite this, Monmouth put up three more to end the matchup with a 8-0 win over the Broncs, adding another loss to the Rider's opening week.



Senior defense **Emma Bonshak** holding possession of the ball.

The final matchup began at Towson University on Sept. 6, where the Broncs lost in overtime, 1-0.

The Tigers took 10 shots in the first period, six of which were saved by Regnart. However, the Broncs had zero attempts for the first 15 minutes.

Similarly, in the second, Towson attempted nine more goals, with Regnart picking up seven more saves.

Five more failed Tiger attempts and another save from Regnart in the third brought the teams into the final period with an 0-0 standstill.

Both teams took two more shots in the fourth, but with neither finding the net, Rider and Hofstra were sent into a first-goal-takes-all overtime period.

"Once we find the back of the goal, they will be a force to reckon with," Head Coach Gina Carey-Smith said. "We strive to be a little better everyday."

After four minutes, Hofstra found the only goal of the game, extending Rider's losing streak to four, the program's worst season start in nearly three decades.

The Broncs will continue on the road to face Lafayette College on Sept. 11 and Temple University on Sept. 13. Both games will be streamed on ESPN+.

Sports

Confidence fueled on track to Rider

By Joshua Yuhas

From the moment he could walk, Rider men’s soccer graduate student defender Sawyer Koza was kicking the ball around the house practicing his skills for the soccer pitch. In a journey of twists and turns along the way, Koza found his home with the Broncs, carrying lessons and support gained across the path to Rider’s campus in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

Runs in the family

Being put in as many sports as possible from the jump, Koza was destined to follow in the footsteps of his athletic family, drawing inspiration from the field and the track.

“All my siblings ran for basically their entire lives, and they still continue to run. My mom runs, so that was really big in our family,” Koza said.

With his mother running, his brother Ethan running track and cross country for Lehigh and Temple University and his aunt playing soccer at the University of Delaware, Koza had a strong athletic pipeline to follow.

Running became an activity he enjoyed thoroughly, just like the rest of his family, and a trait that carried over well to the large pitches of soccer.

When hitting a hurdle or challenge, Koza always felt comfortable turning to his family, who carried the knowledge and experience to understand his circumstances.

“It was really nice to have an outlet to help me out when things got a little difficult, because they have been through similar,” Koza said.

Whether it was about injuries or playing time, there was always someone a call or text away for advice.

‘Something so simple’

A product of Newtown, Pennsylvania, Koza attended Council Rock North High School, where he added “All-District punter” to his athletic resume.

“It helped my understanding of a long ball here versus how high the ball is, all that stuff,” Koza said.

Before high school, Koza found his avenue into the professional world on the club side of soccer.

While with the Patriot FC club team at around age 10, a scout for the Philadelphia Union, a club in the top level of American soccer with Major League Soccer, invited Koza to train with them and eventually join the club’s youth academy.

“It was an awesome experience between the places I got to go, knowing some of the first team players now and a lot of the players who helped me out,” Koza said. “The coaching was so good, the players were so good. ... I definitely wouldn’t be where I am today without that.”

Although the time in the academy was a section of his career that he cherishes, there was one moment that a Union coach instilled a core trait that Koza defines himself with to this day.

That coach was Kevin Coleman, and when a 13-year-old Sawyer Koza was questioning his playing time, Coleman reassured him that confidence is important.

“That’s one conversation that I’ll never forget, because it’s something so simple that just being reminded of [it] has made a huge difference,” Koza said.

Since that conversation with Coleman, Koza has felt confident as a player with that profound impact transitioning into everything that he does.

Keep up with the pace

Coming up to the decision to open his college career, the familiarity of Temple with his mom and brother each attending the school and the opportunity to start led Koza to begin his collegiate career with the Owls in 2022.

Starting 10 of the 13 games in his freshman year at Temple, Koza scored three goals with six shots on goal, notching two assists that season, one against the then

22nd-ranked University of Tulsa Golden Hurricanes.

Following his freshman year, Koza felt it was the right time to make a change when he entered the transfer portal and found his way to the Rutgers University Scarlet Knights.

Making the jump to the Big 10, Koza had to make a major adjustment to the pacing of everything.

“It was just a much different speed of everything. Not even just the soccer, everything in general was faster and more intense. And that definitely took some getting used to,” Koza said.

With everyone giving their full effort all the time and looking to make that next step to the professional level, the level was raised for Koza.

In his opening season as a sophomore with the Scarlet Knights in 2023, Koza played 297 minutes across 11 games he appeared in, where he contributed an assist.

His following season, however, would be one where the support behind him would become critical, as an injury caused Koza to miss the entire 2024 campaign.

Koza would return for his senior season with Rutgers with 115 minutes played throughout seven games and one start in 2025.

At the conclusion of his undergraduate years, he was left with no choice but to find a new home if he wanted to continue his collegiate career.

“After I transferred from Temple, I swore I would never enter the transfer portal again, but I ended up having to be in there again,” Koza said.

Checking every box

Taking the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Championship in 2023 with a 12-4-4 record and the MAAC Regular Season title in 2024 with a 14-5-1 record, the Rider Broncs were one of the top performers in the conference, until 2025 saw a flip to a 2-11-1 season.

For Rider men’s soccer Head Coach Chad Duernberger, it was time to put the prior season behind, and that started with finding the right guys for the team to match the standard.

“I don’t want a locker room of the same personality, we want a locker room that has the same mentality,” Duernberger said. “We can have different people in the locker room, but they all have to have the same mentality for how we go about things.”

Looking for someone to join the brotherhood with the right mentality, Duernberger was also searching for players that added experience.

From his year at Temple and three years spent with Rutgers, Koza was the right personality and the experienced player that was needed for the roster.

As for Koza, the landscape of collegiate athletics creating major shifts in year-to-year performance was in the back of his mind, and he knew that any season can be turned around the following year, especially a system he was familiar with.

“I knew Ryan Vaubel on the team already, so I knew that there were some top quality players,” Koza said. “And I had faith that, you know, with the people coming in, there’s no doubt we could turn it around.”

In addition to all the traits scouted, Koza’s call made the decision that much easier to get back on track with the standard set over the past few years for the program.

“You can tell when you get on a call if you think it’s the right fit almost immediately. I could tell with Sawyer on the first call that he would fit right in here at Rider,” Duernberger said.

Settling in

In the start of the 2026 year, the chemistry amongst the team has made the adjustment to the pace of play in the Metro Conference a fun time.

From working together as a team, to hanging out, getting along from the jump as a new core was instant.

In addition to the quick chemistry building, finding

Photos by Peter Borg, Graphic by Grace Juarez/The Rider News



Sawyer Koza has helped the Broncs to a 3-1-1 record in 2026.

the right training and tactics has been a crucial aspect of establishing confidence for Koza at Rider.

“[Duernberger] has done a great job of showing us different ways to play and how we can play with each other with the strengths that we have and the weaknesses that we have,” Koza said.

Koza has expressed consistent confidence on and off the pitch and, paired with his versatility, he has become a valuable addition to the Rider squad.

Whether it is working to maintain the back line or shifting his way up to the attack side, Koza’s versatility gives options for when anything is to come up.

“The fact that he could play as an attacking midfielder on a Tuesday night and then start at left back on a Saturday gives the team a lot of opportunity to be successful,” Duernberger said.

The brotherhood for the men’s soccer side has all but continued to grow with the new squad and the team all are together as a unit, whether split in a group or united.

All of these aspects have made the adjustment to Rider that much better for Koza to find his place and share his confidence, looking forward to the celebrations that can be had with the team.

Koza said, “It’s some of the most fun I’ve had and the easiest team I’ve been able to click with.”