

RIDER

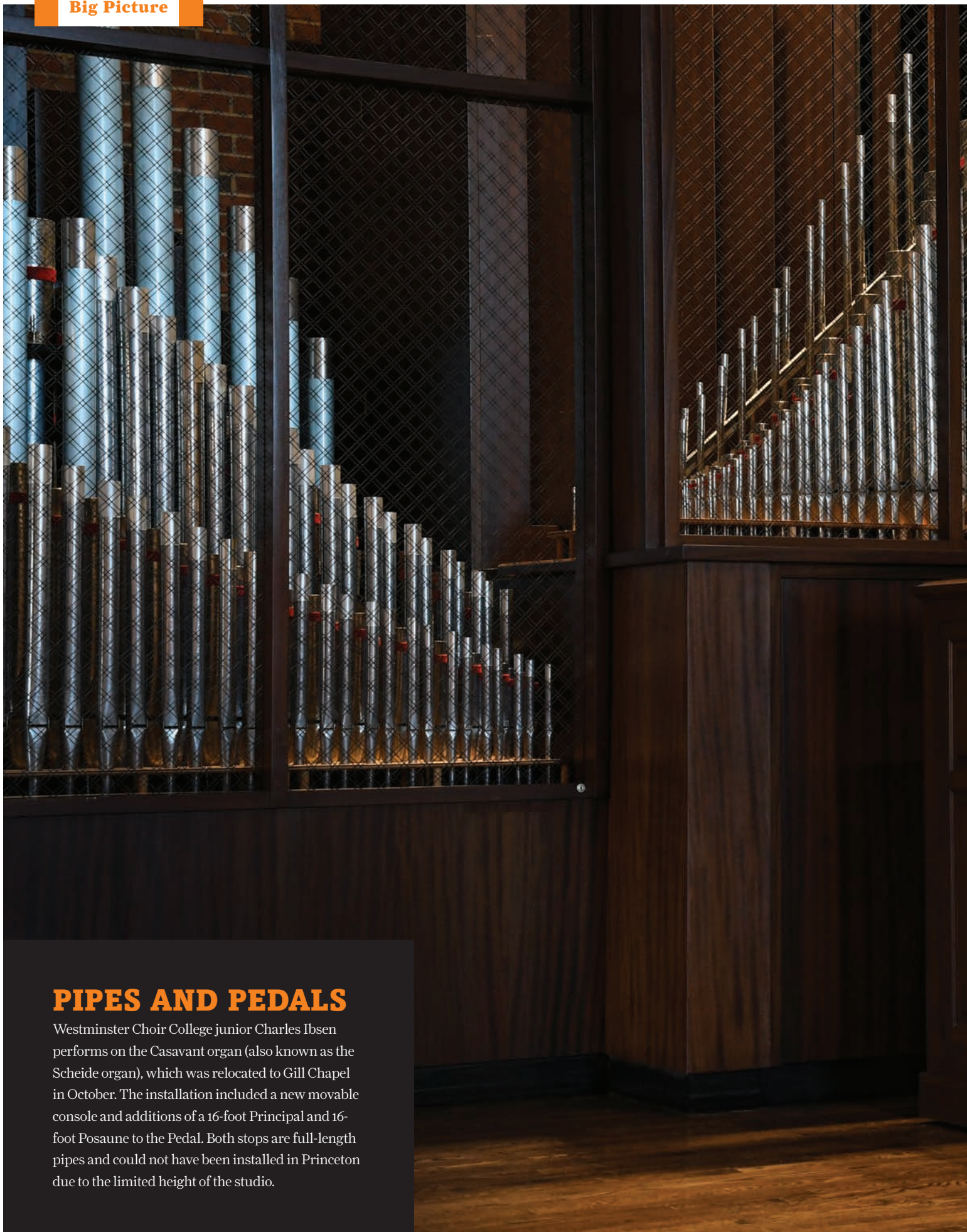
a magazine for alumni and friends

Spring 2021

WITHOUT A NET

Joblessness, homelessness and food insecurity are real threats to college students; Kristian Gardner '20 rose above them all





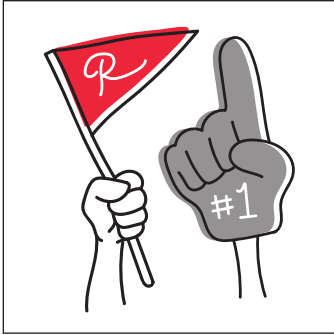
PIPES AND PEDALS

Westminster Choir College junior Charles Ibsen performs on the Casavant organ (also known as the Scheide organ), which was relocated to Gill Chapel in October. The installation included a new movable console and additions of a 16-foot Principal and 16-foot Posaune to the Pedal. Both stops are full-length pipes and could not have been installed in Princeton due to the limited height of the studio.



Photo by Peter G. Borg

Spring 2021



14 Anticipating a post-pandemic world

What the Broncos are most looking forward to



16 Risky business

With problem gambling on the rise, Dr. Mack Costello studies its addictive nature in Rider's Gambling Research Lab



20 Anything is possible

Joblessness, homelessness and food insecurity are real threats to college students; Kristian Gardner '20 rose above them all

DEPARTMENTS

4 Rider Roundup

8 Faculty Profile

10 Go Broncos!

24 Class Notes

30 5 Tips

RIDER

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Dear alumni and friends,

THE PANDEMIC HAS MADE THE EXPERIENCE OF LOSS AS COMMON AS SAND AT THE JERSEY SHORE. SOME LOST LOVED ONES, OTHERS LOST LIVELIHOODS AND STILL MORE LOST THE EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES THAT CONNECT US TO ONE ANOTHER.

So much loss has made this an exceedingly long, hard year. It is almost impossible, looking ahead to a post-pandemic future, for our hearts not to swell in anticipation. I'm happy to report we remain cautiously optimistic that Rider will resume extensive in-person teaching, housing, on-campus events and activities this fall.

Such plans show that, after so much darkness, we are finally beginning to see the light return. As we resume on-campus activities, I can assure you they won't take place in an environment frozen in time. Even as we embraced the extraordinary challenge of operating a university during a pandemic, we never stopped our efforts to move the University forward. Fewer students may have been living here, but our progress marched ahead, notably on some major projects, including one that promises to boost the profile of Rider University, the Rider Arena Project.

We recently entered the final phase in our efforts to transform Alumni Gym into a modern NCAA Division I arena. Through the support of our loyal donors, Rider has invested more than \$11 million into this historic facility, the first building ever on the Lawrenceville campus and the home of our basketball, volleyball and wrestling teams. Major recent gifts include an anonymous \$2.5 million commitment and a \$1 million gift from longtime Rider Athletics supporters



Chuck and Isabel Baker.

There is so much to look forward to this fall, but after a season of athletic competition in empty arenas, I'm sure many of us are particularly thrilled about the prospect of once-again cheering

on the Broncs inside of Alumni Gym, once it's safe to do so. Anyone who has ever experienced the energy inside "The Broncs' Zoo" knows how inspiring and fun it can be for everyone on campus. What truly excites me about seeing the visible improvements taking shape inside Alumni Gym is knowing the impact they will have on our student-athletes, coaches and athletic trainers, and the foot-stomping fans who cheer them on.

While we can never regain what we lost during the pandemic, it is within our power, moving forward, to provide our campus community with the best overall experience we possibly can. For our student-athletes and fans in particular, the Rider Arena Project will accomplish that goal. It's time to bring the project home. There are many ways to make your mark on Alumni Gym. Get involved and learn more by visiting rider.edu/bringing-it-home.

Sincerely,

Gregory G. Dell'Omo, Ph.D.
President, Rider University

UNIVERSITY *News*



Ground breaking

On Nov. 30, 2020, Rider broke ground on a new wing of its Science and Technology Center thanks to a \$4 million leadership gift from Michael J. Hennessy '82 in support of the project. The gift is the largest ever received at Rider for the sciences. The University plans to name the building the Mike and Patti Hennessy Science and Technology Center once the project is completed in January 2022.

The one-story addition will expand the size of the building to more than 79,000 sq. ft. and provide modern labs and classroom space for cybersecurity, anatomy and physiology, as well as an evolving program in software engineering. The \$7.5 to \$8 million project will support a new greenhouse, along with distinct areas meant to encourage collaboration, discussion and study. University Advancement is currently fundraising in support of the project, which will allow Rider to continue to integrate its newer disciplines of cybersecurity, computer science, and health and exercise sciences with traditional offerings in biology, chemistry, environmental science, mathematics and physics.

Hennessy met his wife, Patrice "Patti" Shelmet Hennessy '82, at Rider when they were both students. Patti, who passed away in early 2020 after a long illness, graduated from Rider with a bachelor's in office administration. The couple have been longtime supporters of Rider, particularly its Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics. Once Hennessy learned about the expansion plans for the Science and Technology Center, he immediately saw the importance of such growth given his business experience in sciences and health care media, as well as a way to commemorate Patti through this gift.

Hennessy, who earned a bachelor's in political science from Rider, is the founder and chairman of the largest privately held, independent, full-service medical media company in North America, MJH Life Sciences. The company delivers health care news to health professionals in the pharmaceutical, medical device, diagnostic and biotech industries. He served as a Rider Trustee for nine years, completing his third three-year term in 2017.

Business minded

On Jan. 30, Maggie Achanzar, a senior at Mercer County Technical School's Health Science Academy, was named the winner of the 2021 Norm Brodsky Business Concept Competition. Her prize — a full, four-year scholarship to Rider. Achanzar claimed the top prize after pitching her product idea, Sili-Head, a mannequin head that aims to solve many common problems for people who use them to style wigs. She plans to study either entrepreneurship or chemistry at Rider.

The annual competition challenges high school students to develop an innovative business idea and present it in front of a panel of judges, *Shark Tank* style. It is sponsored by husband and wife Norm '64 and Elaine Brodsky. Norm, a long-time entrepreneur, is the namesake of Rider's Norm Brodsky College of Business.



Grammy moment

Seven Westminster Choir College alumni were featured in Grammy-winning recordings this year. In the Best Choral Performance category, the Grammy went to the recording of Richard Danielpour's oratorio *The Passion of Yeshuah*. It features the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra, whose chorus master is Adam Luebke '04 (pictured above). Tenor Timothy Fallon '03 is a soloist, and Ryan Russell Brown '14 and Stephen Karr '04 sing in the chorus. Makeda Hampton '09 is a member of the Metropolitan Opera Chorus in the recording of Gershwin's *Porgy & Bess*, which took home the Grammy for Best Opera Recording. Dominic Inferrera '94 and Linda Lee Jones '08 sang in the Experiential Orchestra and Chorus on a recording of Ethel Smyth's *The Prison*, which won for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album.

Quotable



“They are carrying the burden of what they are experiencing here at home and they are going overseas and still fighting for a country that doesn’t love them.”

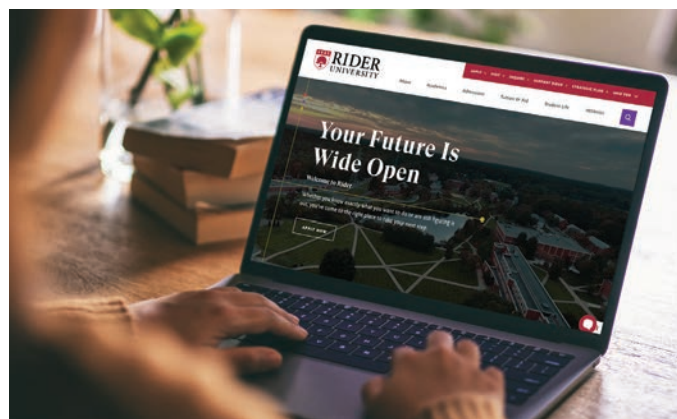
- Junior Danielle “Dani” Jackson, history and film and television double major, speaking about African American World War I and II veterans who fought for their country abroad and for their own civil rights at home. These heroes are the subject of her documentary series, *A Two-Front War*. A successful Kickstarter campaign raised more than \$8,000 to fund the filming of the 12-part series’ first episode.

College firsts

Rider University was selected to the Center for First-generation Student Success’ 2021-22 First-gen Forward cohort. The designation recognizes institutions of higher education that have demonstrated a commitment to improving experiences and advancing outcomes of first-generation college students.

A show of support

Thomas ’70 and Tina Mulhare committed \$600,000 to address the University’s top fundraising priorities. Their gift helped support an endowed scholarship, the Annual Fund and a new patio. The Thomas ’70 and Tina Mulhare Patio, adjacent to Sweigart Hall, has become a relaxing spot on campus to enjoy lunch, study or collaborate with peers.



New site, who’s this?

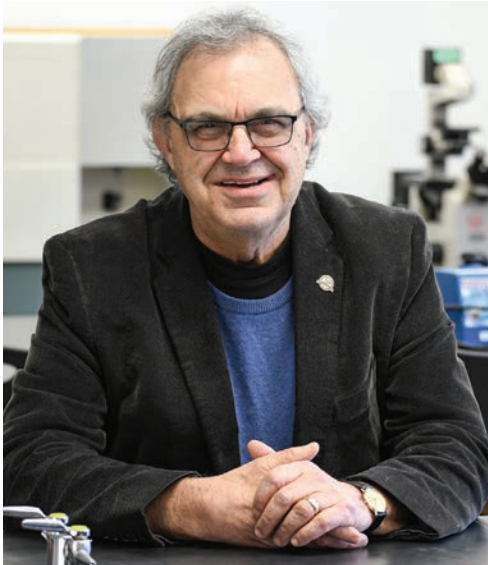
Rider launched a fully redesigned website on Oct. 28, 2020. The site features updated photography, content, design and interactive elements that reflect the University’s brand identity, as well as enhanced search powered by Google, a user-friendly academic program finder tool and multilingual translation.

The project was a collaboration between University Marketing & Communications, creative agency 160over90 and web development agency KWALL, with input from key stakeholders, such as students, faculty and staff. Five students — studying computer science, marketing and business communication — gained hands-on experience working on the new website.

Books and basketball

Rider participated in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference’s Time Out for Black Lives initiative. College basketball coaches and student-athletes released videos of themselves reading children’s stories with positive messages about Black culture, justice for all and education on timeoutforblacklives.com. Rider Men’s Basketball Head Coach Kevin Baggett read the book *I Got Next* by Daria Peoples-Riley. Rider Women’s Basketball Head Coach Lynn Milligan read the book *This is Your Time* by Ruby Bridges.

UNIVERSITY *News*



Lasting impression

The Rider community recently lost two prominent members, each with a personality that inspired seemingly universal admiration from all — Dr. Jonathan Yavelow and Eugene Marsh '13, '18.

Yavelow died on Oct. 29, 2020, due to lung cancer. He was 68. Yavelow taught at Rider for 38 years, serving as the assistant dean for the sciences, faculty director of the University's Health Studies Institute and the chair of the biology department. Many remember Yavelow for his unwavering optimism, exuberant personality and steadfast loyalty to Rider.

"Anything involving Jonathan was almost guaranteed to be more lively, interesting and fun," says Dr. Kelly Bidle, the dean of Rider's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. "He was not just a wonderful and brilliant colleague; he was an amazing person and mentor who left an impression on everyone who had the chance to know him."

In addition to his teaching, Yavelow was a consultant and visiting scientist at a number of institutions, and his research was published in numerous scientific journals. Yavelow was the recipient of multiple research grants and was appointed in 2012 by the governor of New Jersey to serve as a commissioner on the New Jersey State Commission on Cancer Research. Last year, colleagues, former students and friends established The Jonathan Yavelow Scholarship Fund, a new scholarship endowed in his honor to benefit undergraduate science students with financial need.

Marsh died on Jan. 29 from COVID-19 complications. He was 71. At the time of his death, Marsh was enrolled in Rider's Doctor of Educational Leadership program, the capstone of his relentless late-in-life quest for education. He had previously earned a bachelor's in liberal studies and a master's in clinical mental health counseling, both from Rider.

Growing up in South Carolina during an era of segregation, Marsh was among the first African American students to integrate his all-white high school. He went on to become a decorated Vietnam War veteran, but unable to secure employment after returning home, he became homeless for about three years. He eventually began a career in construction with Duke Power Company. In 1998, he founded his own firm in New Jersey, Construction Project Management Services, Inc. The company's projects included renovations to the Statue of Liberty in 2009.

Marsh wanted to use his education not simply as a means of personal fulfillment but as a tool to help other people. He was particularly focused on mentoring and counseling veterans and Black people.

Quotable



"My goal is to eventually become a business owner and company executive, to create a scholarship fund to help students, and to use my platform to provide a voice for minorities, especially Africans like myself who are often marginalized."

- Senior global supply chain management major Nunana Honutse, who was selected out of 135 undergraduate students to earn the John Galt Solutions' \$10,000 Scholarship for Future Supply Chain Leaders

Climate change collaboration

The U.S. Department of Energy recently awarded a team of collaborators that includes Rider biology professor Dr. Kerrie Sendall a \$1.6 million grant. They will use the grant to support their efforts to study the effects of climate change on salt marsh plant communities in Maryland.

Transfer credit

Rider was once again named to the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society's annual Transfer Honor Roll. Rider was among only 150 colleges and universities nationwide to receive the recognition and one of only six institutions recognized in New Jersey. The Transfer Honor Roll recognizes four-year colleges and universities that have developed transfer pathways that lead to excellence and success among community college transfer students. One of every four Rider undergraduates is a transfer student.

\$1.6 million

Rider's Student Support Services Program was awarded a new federal grant sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The grant, which is funded for five years, from 2020 through 2025, assists low-income, first-generation students at Rider, as well as those who are homeless, veterans and individuals with disabilities to develop the academic, social, intellectual and emotional skills to help them find success in college.

The total award of \$1.6 million will be distributed over the next five years to provide orientation activities, workshops, services and other resources to help students transition to Rider and integrate successfully into the University community.

A tribute to 'Miss Ann'

Those who visited Daly Dining Hall from the 1980s through the 2000s know the name 'Miss Ann.' Ann Keith was a constant presence in thousands of students' daily lives. Whether it was a good day, a bad day or simply an average one, Miss Ann always had time to share a few kind or quick-witted words as she swiped students into the dining hall. After her death in April 2020, faculty, staff, students and alumni showed an outpouring of love for her on social media. Some recall how she never let a student go hungry, her words of encouragement or reassurance that helped them through difficult times, and her perpetual generosity.



65

"If you went to Rider, you knew this woman for a fact. There were countless times she went out of her way to help other students including myself, whether it was from having a bad day or your swipe not working. Ms. Ann will truly be loved and never forgotten."

"My time at Rider was enhanced by her. She was THE Daly's mom and I think she knew how much everyone adored her. RIP Ms. Ann."



"Miss Ann radiated warmth and kindness. I always looked forward to visiting Daly's and chatting with Miss Ann. She always spoke of her children and grandchildren and how much she loved her Rider family. As a parent, it was so comforting to know such a sweet, nurturing woman was watching over my daughter and her classmates while they were away from home. Sending prayers to the Keith family."

"It's amazing how someone can make such a big impact on your life without really having a close friendship with that person. Everyone at Rider knew and loved Miss Ann."

"We always say RIDER is about the people. Miss Ann from my days as a student to my days as a coach was one of the best!!! RIP."

"Miss Ann was so pure and genuine. She was one of the first people I saw after news on 9/11 hit. She was a huge comfort to many of us confused 18 year old kids. She was a bright light in this world. Condolences to her family."



Dr. Kathleen Pierce

PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
GRADUATE EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP,
AND COUNSELING

Dr. Kathleen Pierce is ready for the next phase of education. While the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly forced education into a mainly virtual environment, it also provided a catalyst to challenge the way educators think about engaging their students.

“The idea of ‘sage on the stage’ and ‘the teacher as transmitter of knowledge’ — it took a pandemic for people to see that really doesn’t work,” she says.

As a professor in Rider’s post-baccalaureate teacher certification and Master of Arts in Teaching programs, Pierce specializes in preparing career changers to become K-12 teachers. Throughout the pandemic, she has witnessed the immense dedication and creativity the next wave of teachers is bringing to the profession. One of her students called her kindergarteners on the phone to coach them in math because they didn’t have computers. Another led her students through the creation of a full-length radio play.

Collaboration and creation are at the heart of Pierce’s personal pedagogy. Learning is not about memorization or mimicking; it is most effective when students create something original, she believes. Since 2015, Pierce’s graduate students have been working with Amanda Schott’s ’16 eighth graders. Each fall, the Rider students mentor the eighth graders using Google Drive to produce a final compilation of creative writing.

“They learn so much about listening to and working with students,” Pierce says. “It’s not just about teaching seven subjects. It’s about knowing your kids and being able to help them learn by creating a space where it’s OK to be themselves and express themselves.”



“I TEACH because it’s immensely exciting and fulfilling to be a part of others’ growth and help them find their own voice.”

What has it been like preparing career changers to become teachers during a pandemic?

Some of our students lost their day jobs, had to move back in with parents or they have children of their own, so there were heavy and various pressures on them. The state hasn’t lessened any of the requirements for being a teacher, so it’s been hard and incessant work. This past year, we’ve all been first-year teachers as we navigate challenging constraints.

I’ve learned so much from my students. We’re constantly trading tips and strategies to really engage in this virtual environment.

How will the dramatic shift from the typical in-person classroom set up impact the

field of education moving forward?

There are many of us interested in transforming education at every level and this was an opportunity to do so. In the panic, the first reaction was to give out worksheets to keep people busy. That’s not engaging work in the online environment or in physical classrooms. The pandemic has really challenged us to find ways to make the learning transformative for students in a remote environment, but this is not about Zoom. For learning to be transformative, we have to ask good questions and create our own knowledge and agency, rather than simply saying, “I know this. I know that.”

When I was trained in undergrad for English, it was all about the content. There was no way I could really learn to be a teacher until I was in the classroom. Students come to our program to learn how to strategize so their students can grapple and learn something new and make original work of it. Having students create

a book of writing or a group project that has some substance allows them to grow and make use of their own knowledge, not just acquire facts.

What does it mean to be a teacher in 2021 and beyond?

It’s about people and pedagogy. Prior to the pandemic, some thought that technology had the answers for transforming education, but we have seen technology has its profound drawbacks and surprising opportunities. You have to care for people as human beings to help them learn something new and develop their own agency. I’m introducing my beginning teachers into the world of schooling and diverse kids and how much an adult who listens can make a difference. You have to be interested in who students are rather than just what the curriculum dictates. A thoughtful teacher can blend student playfulness and learning with the curriculum.

By Rachel Stengel '14, '20
Photos by Peter G. Borg

What’s in your (home) office, professor?



Logan, my 4-year-old dog

Logan has become the neighborhood therapy dog, always accepting belly rubs on our walks. He’s usually announcing every person or delivery truck that passes by, when he’s not napping under my desk.



Writing partnership collection

Since we could not meet in person for this year’s writing partnership as we typically do, we compiled a digital version thanks to my student Sophia Brana. This year’s theme was ‘grit.’

ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS



WINTER / SPRING

PICTURED: MAKAYLA FIREBAUGH, FRESHMAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE MAJOR
RICHIE CASTANEDA, SOPHOMORE FINANCE AND SPORTS MANAGEMENT DOUBLE MAJOR

On top

In March, graduate student **Jesse Dellavecchia '20** became Rider wrestling's first-ever national finalist, as well as Rider's 18th NCAA All-American. He advanced to the national championship bout at 157 pounds by pinning top-seeded Ryan Deakin of Northwestern in the biggest win in Rider wrestling history. Prior to Dellavecchia's win, the furthest a Rider wrestler had gone at the NAAs was to the third-place bout, an accomplishment the Broncs have boasted five times. After falling in the national championship bout, he ended the season at 11-1. "Jesse has dedicated his life to the sport and has been completely devoted to our program and University from day one on campus," says Head Coach John Hangey.



Photo by Larry Slater

Freshman guard **Makayla Firebaugh** earned MAAC Co-Rookie of the Year, becoming the first Rider player to earn the honor in Lynn Milligan's 14 years as head coach. Firebaugh averaged a team-high 11 points per game this season and was also named to the MAAC All-Championship Team.

Junior guard **Dwight Murray Jr.** was an All-MAAC and National Association of Basketball Coaches All-District 1 Second Team selection after leading Rider men's basketball in scoring, rebounding, assists, double-doubles, free-throw percentage and minutes per game this season.

Senior **Austin Devereux** won the 119th New Jersey Amateur Championship in August. In his first tournament of Rider's season, he ran away with the title at the MAAC Spring Kickoff, shooting 10-under par. The next-closest competitor was nine strokes back.

Sophomore **Richie Castaneda** finished 15th at MAAC Championships to earn All-MAAC honors, helping Rider to a third-place finish as a team. The third-place performance matched Rider's best-ever finish at MAAC Championships.

A Whole New Ballgame

A. J. MOORE ON SPORTS AND MEDIA

Mint condition

ARE DIGITAL COLLECTIBLES THE NEW SPORTS TRADING CARDS?

By A.J. Moore



Associate Professor of Journalism A.J. Moore is the director of Rider's program in sports media.

Quick, go look in your basement for that Cal Ripken Jr. rookie baseball card you once treasured. While down there, look for the cherished Mickey Mantle card your father passed down to you. Then keep searching for that three-ring binder filled with pages of Gregg Jefferies cards you were once certain would help pay for a retirement condo in Florida.

Chances are those sports cards are long gone from your possession. They were likely sold off, lost or given away to a thrift store by your parents the moment you moved out of the house — all common experiences for people who collected baseball cards in the 1980s and early '90s. Then, in the mid '90s, many people ignored the once thriving sports card industry altogether after it collapsed because of its own failed overproduction.

A second chance is now upon us to get back into the sports trading market. Instead of dealing with player images on cardboard, today it's about digitized player highlight snippets. Just get ready to pay a lot — as in six figures — for the prized commodities in this market.

Sure, the traditional cards are still around. The digital highlights (or moments) though, backed by cryptocurrencies, are more attractive to the younger, modern sports fan accustomed to being on their phone at all times and having around-the-clock access to media, daily fantasy sports and online gambling.

These non-fungible digital properties are similar to bitcoin but encrypted to be unique. The sports lull during the peak of the pandemic got investors interested, and the media is now taking note after so many high-priced transactions.

The main entity involved with these digital assets, and a name you should know, is NBA Top Shot. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the company processed more than \$250 million in sales from over 100,000 buyers in February alone.

Part of the meteoric rise and money exchanged for digital highlights is the company's deal with the NBA and its players to reward them with a portion of all sales. That means the league promotes this burgeoning market and players looking to make a side hustle gladly post information about their own highlights on social media to influence their followers.

Just like trading days of old, consumers can get in relatively cheap. Chip in a couple of bucks for rookie players, in hopes of investing in a hot commodity at the ground level. Or with enough funds, go bigger for the established superstars like LeBron James. (The James or Giannis Antetokounmpo zip code is where people are playing the six figure sums.)

Unbeknownst to so many sports fans is the fact that while they are watching these players' highlights on television, others are paying exorbitant funds for uniquely digitized versions of them.

You don't have to sit idly by. The time is here to get into the digital highlights market and rectify any mistakes made in your youth with sports trading cards. Just be ready to pay a lot more money than you did with the wax packs sold at your local drugstore.

Also, make sure not to lose your digital password.

Safety measures

RIDER SPORTS MEDICINE CONFRONTS THE CORONAVIRUS

By Adam Grybowski

In his role as head athletic trainer for Rider Athletics, Tim Lengle is accustomed to treating the common injuries athletes routinely face. Still, “there’s a surprise every day,” he says. “You never know what you’re going to be dealing with.”

Last March, the biggest surprise of Lengle’s career arrived: the coronavirus pandemic.

The Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) responded by pulling the plug on athletic competition, first in the spring and then again in the fall. Last November, the MAAC announced that competition would finally resume.

Lengle wanted nothing more than for the return to succeed, but he harbored doubts about how it could be accomplished. “In my gut, I didn’t see how we would get through it,” he says. “We made a lot of changes and intelligent decisions that certainly lowered the risk. But still, when you have 20 or 30 athletes in a room, if anyone of them has COVID, there’s a chance everyone is going to soon have it.”

To prepare for the challenge, Lengle and his team dove deep into several unfamiliar areas. Recalling those subjects, he sounds like an ambitious undergraduate ticking off his course roster: infectious disease, supply

chain economics, epidemiology. Over the summer the entire sports medicine staff became certified contact tracers. “All of these things you never thought would be your job became necessary,” he says.

The stakes were high. The onus was on Rider to keep people safe and healthy. Testing and contact tracing imposed a significant financial and workload burden. Failure could mean not only the end of competition but, even more troubling, the beginning of a breakout on campus. All the while, standards and guidelines were evolving, sometimes with barely a moment’s notice.

The coronavirus was also exacerbating conditions that affected mental health, a growing area of importance for Lengle’s staff. Over time, he says he has seen “more and more” student-athletes struggling with mental health, a trend that mirrors student populations across the U.S. As the pandemic upset livelihoods and curbed social interaction, researchers noted increased rates of

anxiety and depression at large. The situation could be particularly hard for student-athletes.

“Some of these athletes had their seasons yanked out from underneath them,” Lengle says, “and the concepts of quarantine and isolation aren’t ones anyone likes.”

To provide an effective response, the sports medicine staff leaned into their formal training — last year, they became one of the only athletics departments in the nation to become certified in mental health first aid — and drew upon their close relationship with Rider’s Counseling Services for additional support.

Despite these challenges and others, Lengle describes the winter season as a success. While quarantines were at times necessary, each of those occurrences ultimately involved a limited number of cases. Jesse Dellavecchia ’20 became Rider’s first-ever wrestler to advance to the national championship bout. Both the men’s and women’s basketball teams exceeded expectations in the MAAC tournament.

Lengle credits the way student-athletes responded to this season’s stressful conditions. “They embraced the fact that if they wanted to have a season and compete, then this is the reality,” he says. “I chalk that up to our student-athletes buying into COVID prevention strategies and doing their best not to go out and be social like normal college students.”

Over his 20 years as an athletic trainer at Rider, Lengle says this year has been the most difficult. And while he’s proud of what his staff has accomplished, he can’t wait for the post-pandemic future. “In the athletic training room, the joy is in treating student athletes and helping them get better through hands-on work,” he says. “We’re fortunate at Rider to have a fantastic staff. We’d be struggling otherwise.”

Photo by Peter G. Borg



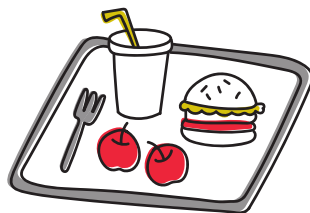
When the Broncs are back

Looking ahead to a post-pandemic world

Throughout the past year, the Rider community has kept so many simple wishes bottled up inside — their desires for what they want to do but can't because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As vaccines begin to provide a light at the end of the tunnel and a hopeful path to a post-pandemic world, *Rider* magazine asked the University community to finish the sentence "I can't wait to..." Here's what they said.

Illustrations by Megan Rosanova

"I can't wait to..."

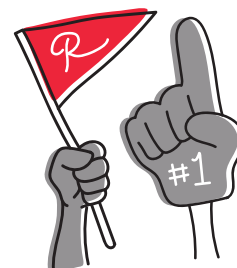


"...eat my favorite meal from Daly Dining Hall."

- Daryl Gregory
Sophomore popular music studies major

"...attend the basketball games with my friends."

- Mike Powell
Freshman sports media major



"...be back at Rider, seeing my friends every day, walking to class, getting Starbucks beforehand and going to Crans for lunch."

- Suzette Rodriguez
Sophomore finance major



"...send students to study abroad and welcome more international students to campus!"

- Meghan Korb '17
Master's of business communication student and graduate assistant for the Center for International Education

"...serendipitously cross paths with current and former students in hallways and on campus."

- Dr. Bonnie Lehet
Assistant professor, Department of Graduate Education, Leadership, and Counseling



"...do a semester in Los Angeles my senior year."

- Jenni Profera
Freshman theatre major





"...stand and walk around a classroom while I teach, and see more than just my students' heads and torsos."

- Dr. Cara DiYanni
Associate professor,
Department of Psychology

"...experience that unforgettable moment of absolute unity when singing the Lutkin Benediction with my entire Westminster Choir College family."

- Ally Jurgens
Junior music education major



"...have a picnic with friends on the Campus Mall."

- Olivia Gillingham '19
Master's of business
administration student



"...be back in the teaching labs with our students, providing them with the 'high-touch' faculty interactions that make our science programs so strong."

- Dr. James Riggs
Professor, Department of Biology, Behavioral
Neuroscience and Health Sciences



"...hang out in the Commuter Lounge with all my friends."

- Belveth Simon
Sophomore secondary education
and mathematics major



"...win the grand prize at the Eggcellent Egg Hunt, because I WILL win."

- Peter Strippoli
Junior business analytics and
sports management double major

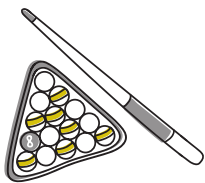
"...take my kids on campus to enjoy sunny walks around the beautiful lake."

- Jessi Oliano '03, '06
Lecturer, Department of
Communication and Journalism



"...see EVERYONE in person and feel the energy and excitement of being on a college campus."

- Dr. DonnaJean Fredeen
Provost and vice president for academic affairs



"...play pool in the Student Recreation Center with my friends."

- Sean Rampersad
Sophomore general liberal arts major



"...dance on stage with my Rider Dance Ensemble family."

- Becca Martin
Junior elementary education major



Risky Business

WITH PROBLEM GAMBLING ON THE RISE,
DR. MACK COSTELLO STUDIES ITS ADDICTIVE NATURE
IN RIDER'S GAMBLING RESEARCH LAB.

By Rachel Stengel '14, '20

Photography by Peter G. Borg | Illustrations by Natalie Nguyen

The biggest winners and losers are in New Jersey — in terms of gambling that is. In 2020 alone, bettors wagered \$6 billion on New Jersey sports books and subsequently lost \$393.2 million, both records in any state for any year, according to the state's Department of Gaming Enforcement. The same year, the state raked in \$2.88 billion in gross gaming revenue. Gambling has traditionally been big business in New Jersey, but with new online options and legalized sports betting, the prevalence of problem gambling has increased, experts say.

People gamble for a variety of reasons beyond the thrill of possibly winning big, but not everyone who gambles has a gambling problem. The World Health Organization estimates 1-6% of the population suffers from problem gambling. What makes one person a recreational gambler and one a problem gambler? That's something Dr. Mack Costello has been asking himself a lot in the last decade.

"What problem gambling looks like will vary quite a bit, but what it will come down to is that someone gambles too much for their life," he says. "It absorbs a large amount of their time and resources — cognitive and otherwise — to the point where it interferes with their relationships and anything else they want to do or used to do. There's a lot that makes it complicated. What becomes clear with problem gambling — it's under-treated and understudied."

Costello is an expert in problem gambling or gambling disorder, as officially classified by the American Psychological Association in the DSM-5. Gambling disorder was first categorized as an impulse control disorder, called pathological gambling, in the 1980s. But its modern definition as a behavioral addiction better addresses the brain's reward system associated with gambling.

Look at the reinforcement system of a slot machine. Press the button or pull the lever and watch the reels align. Hit triple



Dr. Mack Costello, an expert in problem gambling, joined Rider's Department of Psychology in 2015.

cherries, you win. Try again, lose. Try again, lose. The random nature of the game combined with the chance of a reward can be incredibly addictive for some.

"It's a very simple reinforcement schedule, but a very powerful one," Costello says. "That random-ratio schedule is what all gambling or games of chance rely on."

Other games like poker and blackjack are presented as skill-based games that require more strategic thought than a slot machine. Players have choices they can make throughout the game, which may give some a sense of control regarding the outcome.

"You may have somebody who's losing a lot, but has some idea that they can win," Costello says. "That's going to be a hard thing to get somebody to stop doing even if they have some awareness of their illusion of control. The game has some things that you just can't control."

For some, the punishment of losing money isn't enough to dissuade them from continuing to gamble. Instead, they may double down or continue to

gamble for an extended period of time. Costello likes to look at one's days and dollars gambled to evaluate both factors.

"Even if it doesn't seem like they're gambling too much in frequency, they could be gambling too much in magnitude and could lose a lot of money, which could ruin their lives and compound other problems," he says. "There's a lot of ways the problems can start and maintain themselves. It can be too much time or money involved. A lot of times it's both when someone really gets themselves in trouble with gambling and seeks help."

The costs of gambling addiction are high, for the individual and public health.

Those with gambling-related problems tend to have poor to fair general health. Some research cites comorbidity rates as high as 90% for problem gamblers, who may suffer from other illnesses and disorders such as depression, substance abuse and personality disorders. The National Council on Problem Gambling estimates that one in five gambling addicts attempts suicide, the highest rate

for any kind of addiction.

There are a number of treatment and intervention options available, from programs like Gamblers Anonymous and 1-800-GAMBLER that provide support groups to self-help programs. As a Doctoral Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Costello uses applied behavior analysis to treat gambling addiction. This approach strives to find new behaviors for people to engage in to replace gambling and manage those behaviors with a rewards system.

"When you look at most successful behavioral interventions for addiction, still the most common outcome of that or any addiction treatment is relapse. You have to be ready for that," he says. "What you want the person to have are these skills to do other things or deal with the urge or whatever it is that leads them to gamble."

Most treatments strive for abstinence from gambling, but some tend to focus on harm reduction as total abstinence may not be the most realistic goal for everyone. Matching the correct treatment method to the person is key to a productive intervention, Costello says. Enrolling in treatment, getting treatment early and staying committed to it are all frequent problems related to addressing gambling addiction. There are large dropout rates in clinical studies for gambling addiction treatment, up to 50% in a study published in *Clinical Psychology Review*.

"I think a sad reality is that things just get too bad," Costello says. "A lot of times, when someone goes to treatment it's likely they're going to present that it's taken over their life and that's a tough situation to be in. How do you catch something like this early and stop it? There's a lot of ideas about that, but we don't really have clear solutions."

Growing up in Florida, Costello had exposure to gambling. Sure, poker, dice games, slots and other casino favorites are wagered on in Florida, but the state also has a history of betting on dog and horse races and one of the fastest (literally, in terms of speed) sports in the world, jai alai.

“The presentation of gambling is different for certain people in certain places. In Florida, there are things that people in other places don’t even know what I’m talking about, like jai alai,” he says. “It’s a high-action sport that kind of exists for betting like horse racing. I’m a kid growing up so I didn’t realize that not everyone understands gambling this way. That became really clear when I started studying it and talking to others who study it. I feel like I have something to add.”

Costello’s interest in risky behavior and problem gambling

led him to New Jersey, which has some of the highest rates of problem gambling. Recent data cites a 6.3% rate of gambling disorders among residents — triple the rate in comparison to other populations.

Shortly after joining Rider’s Department of Psychology as an assistant professor in 2015, he began the process to secure slot machines for the department. After much back and forth with the state, Costello acquired four casino slot machines to join a range of computer-based and table games in Rider’s Gambling Research Lab. Located on the third floor of the Science and Technology Center, the lab has been vital for Costello and his students.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, walk-in volunteers, many of whom were students, a particularly high-risk category for potential gambling addiction, would spend time playing the slot machines, while Costello and his students observed their behaviors. The researchers sought to establish some general population benchmarks for how people play — how long, how much they bet, how many wins and loses.

“Everybody in behavioral-related psychologies will understand that what

you have happen in the lab is going to be different from what happens in other environments,” Costello says. “We have this slightly more valid laboratory and we can get good data to benchmark what happens in there with what happens in casinos.”

Avisha Patel ’20 was part of the research team as a graduate student in Rider’s applied psychology program. She observed participants’ interactions with slot machines in the

**“
What problem gambling looks like will vary quite a bit, but what it will come down to is that someone gambles too much for their life.
”**

Gambling Research Lab and at Parks Casino in Bensalem, Pa. Although overall differences appear in the final data set, Patel noted many similarities between the students studied in the lab and the real-world casino-goers.

“The data we collected helped showcase how much time people spent on gambling, which can lead to addiction, and their motivation for going to casinos and sitting at slot machines,” she says. “A lot of the research can be generalized to similar experiences in the lab or at casinos.”

In some cases, those in the lab who had pretty consistent losing streaks tended to quit quickly, Patel says. Some who had a little success building their imaginary profit became invested in chasing a win, personifying the addictive nature of gambling, even without any real money involved.

“They were more inclined to stay a little longer. It could be a fake voucher for \$2,500, but it was interesting to see those who wanted to utilize that amount of fake money,” Patel says. “They really wanted to see where the fake money would take them.”





A pair of chance events in his junior year left Kristian Gardner '20 homeless and depressed. Now on his way to his top choice for a doctoral program, his powerful story of vulnerability and resilience shows that

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

By Adam Grybowski

Photography by Peter G. Borg

From a distance, it would have been hard to distinguish what made Kristian Gardner '20 different from his peers at Rider.

It was the spring of 2017, and like many if not most college students, he was scraping by financially but blossoming intellectually. His grades were good, as were his post-graduation job prospects. Gardner had chosen his field of study, accounting, more for practical reasons than passion. He felt confident it would lead to a stable career, and he had already secured internships that were greasing the wheels for a successful launch into the job market.

He was well-liked, creating friendships as easily with his fraternity brothers as with the administrators and faculty he had gotten to know since transferring from Mercer County Community College in 2015.

In many ways, Gardner was cruising, content to make the temporary sacrifices almost all college students make so he could later leverage his education into a richer, more fulfilling life.

Then, one day, he was laid off from his job at a call center. Though the news was unwelcome, it was likely only a temporary setback. Gardner had held many jobs since striking out on his own at 18, when he left his birthplace of New York City and moved to

New Jersey. No matter what life threw at him, he had always made it work and this time, he felt like he could do it again.

But then more bad news arrived. The lease on his off-campus apartment was not going to be renewed, and Gardner and his five roommates had to find other places to live.

These twin events, taken in tandem, exposed a dangerous vulnerability. Like many college students (and Americans in general), Gardner had little savings to count on. He didn't own a car. He had a complicated relationship with his family, made more complicated by the death of his mother when he was in 10th grade, and he couldn't fall back on family as others could, including some of his roommates, who moved back in with their parents.

To continue making headway toward his bachelor's degree, Gardner needed a job. To land a job, he needed to prove he had a place to live. To obtain a new lease, he needed a security deposit. To save up for a security deposit, he needed a job.

This perverse cycle was the beginning of a spiral into darkness. "Coming into this situation in the first place, I'm a nontraditional student," says Gardner, 32, about pursuing an education. "I don't have that family support others can take for granted. I've been trying to figure out this whole thing on my own."

At first, Gardner couch-surfed, bouncing around amongst friends. He recalls their generosity, the loaning of blankets, the sneaking into basements to elude the awareness of landlords. But over time, as he continued having trouble securing a job, he grew embarrassed, guilty and depressed. His grades suffered. Food became scarce. He eventually stopped going to class altogether. Desperate, he left New Jersey and moved to a shelter in New York City near Penn Station and then to another in Harlem.

“It got to the point where I was genuinely ready to give up,” he says. “I nosedived.”

Such vulnerability is not atypical. Survey results released in 2019 by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice paint a portrait of substantial insecurity of basic needs amongst college students.

The Hope Center reported that about 41% of students at four-year institutions of higher education experienced food insecurity in the previous 30 days preceding the survey. One-quarter of survey respondents enrolled in four-year institutions said they had trouble paying their rent or mortgage, with 16% having skipped paying a full amount recently.

Rider is far from immune from these trends. In 2018, the University created The Rider Resource Pantry to give students a place where they can access food, clothing, toiletries and other essential resources they may lack.

Rayjohn Felicia '18 was a senior accounting major when the Pantry opened. Today, he is back at Rider pursuing a master's in business administration and also serving as a graduate assistant who oversees the Pantry's daily operations.

“As an undergrad, I knew that there was an issue with students who don't have as much as other students,” he says. “Some are less fortunate than others, but when I came into this position, I was opened up to how big of a problem this really is.”

According to data collected by Rider's Office of Service and Civic Engagement, those who use the Pantry are more likely to be employed than not. Seniors access the Pantry more than any other class. Among all racial and ethnic groups, Black and white students are tied at the top of the list, each being equally as likely to use the Pantry as the other.

Felicia acknowledges the Pantry serves diverse needs among diverse people. He recalls assisting a student who was also a mother. He recalls a patron being grateful for a single box of pasta and

usage of the Pantry doubling after the pandemic began, with a coinciding spike in requests for cleaning supplies.

“We see students who use the Pantry once and we also see students who develop a regular pattern of use,” he says.

The Pantry is open to all Rider students, including part-time and graduate students. It is run entirely by student volunteers and funded solely through donations. These include an annual \$5,000 boost from Gourmet Dining, the University's food service partner, and a \$4,000 donation from Whole Foods Market's Nickels for Nonprofits Program last August. A recently purchased refrigerator has allowed the Pantry to provide healthier, fresh food options.

Multiple reports have concluded that lack of basic needs can negatively impact a student's academic efforts and performance. This was certainly the case with Gardner, whose sterling academic standing fell off a cliff after he lost his job and his apartment. For a time, as he struggled to meet his basic needs, he stopped going to his classes altogether and became completely disengaged from the University.

Rider has pursued other ways to assist students who face these circumstances. Recently, it stepped up its efforts after the coronavirus pandemic began its destructive march, particularly among the most vulnerable. Since last spring, Rider has been raising money to directly

benefit students facing unexpected financial burdens so that they can fulfill immediate critical needs, such as paying medical bills not covered by insurance, covering losses of income or housing, and securing an Internet hotspot to access remote instruction.

“The pandemic has affected all of us, shaking the foundations of so many everyday things we can normally take for granted,” says Rider President Gregory G. Dell'Omo, Ph.D. “But it has been an even greater challenge for those students who carry additional burdens. Unfortunately, we expect many of those needs to persist, and we are constantly looking for ways to provide them with more support.”

Despite everyone's best efforts, some students still slip through the cracks. One of them was Kristian Gardner — or almost was. After living in homeless shelters for months, Gardner had enough. “Eventually, I said to myself, this isn't the trajectory I want to be on,” he says.

Finally, he was offered a new job, once again in telemarketing. Gardner began working full time and moved back to New Jersey. Then he got a second job working weekends, and then a third in the evenings. “The checks were nice, but I was killing myself,” he says. “And I didn't know what my next step was.”

“
**MY DRIVING FACTOR WAS,
IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG
NOW, I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO
REALIZE MY DREAM.**
”



Gardner vacuumed up opportunities at Rider and was eventually accepted into every doctoral program he applied to.

As he was re-establishing himself, he happened to run into Jan Friedman-Krupnick, a longtime Rider employee who is now the director of business and technology innovation.

“She was the staff member I could trust and talk to, almost like she was my psychologist,” Gardner says. “She also witnessed the complete decline in my life. During that time she fought for me. She went above and beyond and was a strong advocate.”

Now, her advocacy would resume. After catching up, she informed Gardner that an administrative position had opened up in the Division of Student Affairs. She encouraged him to apply, which he did. “Kristian blew us away in the interview,” Friedman-Krupnick says. “He has such depth of character and insight. We were thrilled to hire him.”

It was a new beginning that had such a powerful impact on Gardner’s life, he can recall the date of his first day of work at Rider as easily as a best friend’s birthday: Nov. 7, 2018. “Everything turned around for me that day,” he says.

Gardner felt he now had the stability to resume his studies and finish his degree. He decided to change majors. “I really wanted to find something that truly interested me, regardless of the job outlook and career prospects,” he says.

After landing on organizational psychology, he then set his sights on a specific career. He had become attracted to the idea of becoming an expert in his field of study. Gardner arranged a meeting with the dean of Rider’s Norm Brodsky College of Business, Dr. Eugene Kutcher. Gardner recalls, “I asked Dr. Kutcher, ‘What would it take for me to be a professor?’”

Gardner seized on Kutcher’s advice like an entrepreneur with a million-dollar idea. “I felt like this was my only chance,” he says. “My driving factor was, if something goes wrong now, I’ll never be able to realize my dream. I needed to make the most of it, make every day count.”

He vacuumed up the opportunities at Rider. He earned an Undergraduate Research Scholar Award. He joined the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. He flew to conferences. He ingratiated himself with faculty and staff alike, becoming indispensable in Student Affairs and unstoppable in the classroom. His GPA not only rebounded; it exceeded his previous performance as he earned a 4.0.

Gardner knew everything he was doing was necessary so that he could have a shot at being accepted into a competitive doctoral program. “To make myself the best applicant, I knew I was going to have to dive deep,” he says. “I kept asking to

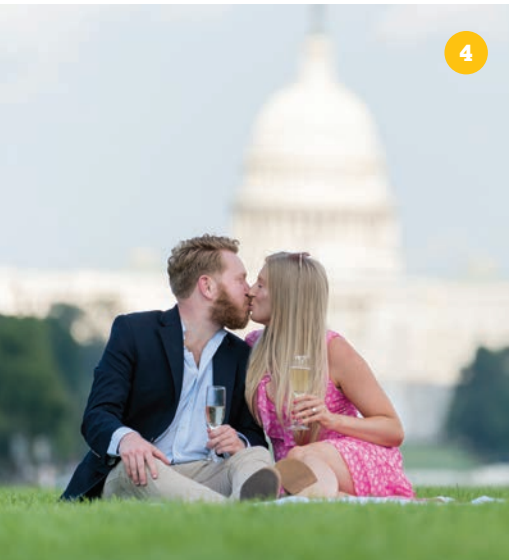
do more projects. I kept overcommitting myself. I was desperate to get into these programs. I was hungry for it and that was visible. I haven’t looked back since. I just kept pushing.”

His plan worked. This semester, Gardner learned he was accepted into every doctoral program he applied to. In the fall, he will begin as a graduate student in the organizational behavior and management program at Temple University’s Fox School of Business on a presidential fellowship.

Gardner has described his story as one of redemption, which isn’t quite accurate. Redemption implies the presence of sin. Circumstance may have almost diminished his light before it could burn brightest, but it wasn’t because of any personal behavior nearly as grave as sin. Caught in a temporary web of misfortune, he simply couldn’t rely on the privileges some students can take for granted.

Gardner is quick to cite Rider’s “supportive culture” as crucial in helping him overcome this challenge, which may be true, but he also bears significant responsibility for his achievements. “For all that Kristian has gone through,” Friedman-Krupnick says, “to land on his feet — he’s deserving of the highest accolades.” ■





Weddings, births engagements and gatherings

- 1 **Dominique Pesco '14, '19** and **Scott Taylor '15** are engaged. The couple is currently celebrating their eighth year together and plan to marry on May 21, 2022, with seven Rider alumni in the bridal party.
- 2 **Steven Santos '17, '20** and **Angela Del Collo '18, '19** were engaged on Dec. 21, 2020, while returning to New Jersey for the holidays. They met during a Residence Hall Association meeting in 2015 and are planning on a January 2023 wedding.
- 3 **Sophie Harper '16** and **Elena Martinez '20** are engaged. Harper and Martinez met in 2013 at Rider's Spectrum Pride Alliance. After losing touch over the years, they reconnected in 2016 and have been together since early 2017. On Jan. 9, Martinez proposed to Harper at a vineyard in northern New Jersey. On Jan. 16, Harper proposed to Martinez back where they met on Rider's campus. The couple is forever grateful for Rider University. They look forward to their wedding in the spring of 2022.
- 4 **Hunter Morgen '16** proposed to Cora Mandy on the National Mall during a picnic, something the couple always talked about doing. They met in 2016 in Trump Tower working on the presidential campaign of Donald J. Trump. Soon after they met, they moved to Washington, D.C., where they had an incredible experience working at the highest levels of the U.S. government.
- 5 **RahQuan King '19** celebrated the birth of his son Kyrie King on Dec. 15, 2020.
- 6 **Michelle Nick '14** and Bill Bundenthal are engaged. Nick received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a minor in health administration from Rider University. She is currently working at ADP TotalSource as a human resources business partner. A 2022 wedding is planned.
- 7 **Roger Alvarado '03** and **Lindsay (Walter) Alvarado '06, '09** welcomed a new addition to their family, Abigail, on Dec. 14, 2020. The couple resides in Ewing, N.J., and has another daughter Annabel, age 3. Roger is currently a vice president at Merrill Lynch Bank of America. Lindsay is a career advisor and adjunct instructor within the Norm Brodsky College of Business at Rider University.
- 8 **Marie McGarr '15** and **Nick Rapisarda '15, '16** were engaged on Aug. 8, 2020. McGarr, a sister of Alpha Xi Delta, and Rapisarda, a brother of Sigma Phi Epsilon, first became friends in 2013. The couple began dating in 2016 and hope to marry in 2022.





Dear alumni and friends,

Greetings! As we look ahead to the promise of a better year, I hope you and your families are safe and well. Spring on campus has always been a favorite of mine. We have the latest group of alumni graduating and joining our Alumni Association, the trees are in full bloom and, on a sunny day, you can see groups of students gathering on the Campus Mall. While spring this year looks quite different, we still get to congratulate the Class of 2021 on their accomplishments and wish them well. They need the support of their Alumni Association more than ever and I encourage you to lend a helping hand when you can.

If anyone is interested in becoming more actively involved, we are seeking nominations for the Alumni Board of Directors. You can send along your interest to alumni@rider.edu.

As the University moves ahead with fall plans, I look forward to meeting many of you in person at events. Over the summer, we will communicate more about our plans for fall events. For now, stay well and have a wonderful spring and summer.

Stephen Brill '01

President, Alumni Board of Directors and Alumni Association

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- » Master of Science in Nursing (MSN)
- » Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification

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'60s

Dominick Karp '64 sends his best wishes to all Broncs past and present, especially those who knew him at Rider. After graduating with a bachelor's in management, he was drafted into the Army. He served a tour of duty in Vietnam with the 25th Infantry Division. After being discharged in 1966, he had a management position with the W T Grant retail company until June 1973. He then began his career as an internal revenue agent with the Internal Revenue Service auditing corporations. "I was glad I had my Rider education because it prepared me well for my IRS employment. I have fond memories of my days on the Rider campus and of my multitude of experiences performing IRS examinations," he says. Karp retired from the IRS in January 2005 and remains healthy and happy in New Hope, Pa.

Alvin Hower '65, '68 published the book *No Greater Service* in August 2020. The memoir explores his service as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Philippines from 1969-74.

Maggie Kline '66, '69 celebrated the release of her third book, *Brain-Changing Strategies to Trauma-Proof Our Schools: A Heart-Centered Movement for Wiring Well-Being*, by presenting it at the Harvard/MIT/Johns Hopkins Joint Virtual Conference on Learning and the Brain in November. Published by Penguin/Random House, the book provides tools to identify and reverse trauma-driven behaviors so students feel supported and safe. Kline is a family therapist, trauma specialist, school psychologist and former teacher. She studied secretarial science and distributive education at Rider.

ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR

School of Fine & Performing Arts Distinguished Alumni Awards 2021

VISIT RIDER.EDU/SFPAWARDS BY JUNE 15, 2021.

Dr. Richard R. Young '68

published the book *Intermodal Maritime Security: Supply Chain Risk Mitigation*. The book is a collection of chapters authored by leaders in the fields of maritime operations, insurance and physical security, cyber threats, port operations and global supply chains. Young is a retired distinguished professor of supply chain management at the School of Business Administration at Penn State's Capital College.

'70s

Bill Mate '71 was elected president of the Jupiter-Tequesta-Hobe Sound Realtors Association. The association is a division of the Miami Realtors Association, the largest local realtor association in the U.S. Mate is also a member of Miami's corporate board and is a director of the Florida Realtors Association and the National Realtors Association.

Michael Bruno '75 was named to the advisory board of Gaind Capital Partners. He received a bachelor's in elementary education from Rider and a master's in human resource administration from Columbia University. He currently serves as the CEO and founder of New Directions for Grads (ND4G), a progressive executive search and advisory services firm.

Cheryl Mihal '78 created an e-commerce platform called You're Special to help consumers maintain a happy and healthy lifestyle from their own home. The initiative grew out of the efforts of her company Sew Special, which expanded to assist the health care community by providing access to PPE at the onset of the coronavirus

Newsmaker**Drill and ceremony**

Tim Coombs '09 sings in the U.S. Army Field Band

By Adam Grybowski

On the day when he was selected to become a member of the U.S. Army Field Band in 2014, Tim Coombs '09 walked outside, called his parents and, as he recalls it, bawled his eyes out.

The Field Band has served as the musical ambassador of the U.S. Army since 1946. Since then, it has inspired countless audiences as it supports veterans and diplomacy. Joining the Field Band requires, in addition to coming out on top during auditions, a minimum of a four-year enlistment but it's common for members to stay on much longer, often for decades. Coombs knew he had locked in a secure career doing the thing he loved most: singing.

At the time, Coombs had been working in a corporate office while performing side gigs. He anticipated, with fear, a future when those gigs would possibly fall away in the face of other pressures. "The gigs that I was doing didn't pay enough to make a living," Coombs says, "but the fulfillment they brought to my heart was overflowing."

Coombs was promoted to sergeant first class in February. He points out that the U.S. government is the largest employer of musicians in the country. Each branch of the armed forces can have several bands in addition to premier bands that perform a wide variety of styles and genres. "You see these bands play on TV for the president without even realizing it's a military job," Coombs says. "I wish I would have known about this opportunity sooner."

Over the years, Coombs, who received a bachelor's in music education from Westminster Choir College, where he met his wife, Mallory Coombs '13, a musical theatre major at Rider, has performed for presidents and other world leaders at various functions and ceremonies, including the funeral of President George H. W. Bush. In addition to these kinds of prestigious events, the Field Band also embarks upon regular tours that take it to schools and communities across the nation. They are on the road about 100 days of the year (absent a pandemic), divided up roughly between three tours.

"Our goal is to connect our army to the public and thank our veterans," Coombs says. "We bring the Army to the grassroots of America."

Tours have brought Coombs back to his high school (he's originally from South Brunswick, N.J.) and college. After the Field Band performed at Westminster a couple of years ago, the Westminster Choir sang the *Lutkin Benediction* for their guests in return. "My commander still talks about that performance to this day," Coombs says.

The Field Band is renowned for its inspirational performances and eclectic range of repertoire, but their combat skills may be what definitively set them apart from other ensembles. Military musicians must go through basic training, even if the likelihood of facing active combat remains relatively small. Coombs completed his training over 10 weeks at Fort Jackson in South Carolina. "At the end of the day, you have to remember what you signed up for," he says. "First and foremost, you're a soldier."



"Rider is in my will because it provided me with a full athletic scholarship, a hands-on education and a warm, encouraging environment to increase my understanding of the world and my place in it."

- **Diane Fulham Blaszkowski '89**

Director of Grant Development and Administration, Rutgers University Foundation

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pandemic. Sew Special provides hotels, restaurants, nonprofits and other organizations with personalized logo merchandise. Cheryl majored in sociology and psychology at Rider, where she met her husband, **James Mihal '78**, who majored in management and organizational behavior. They met while working as bartenders at the Pub and were married in 1982.

'80s

Charlene Vogt-Gerbig '83

recently completed a year of study, discourse and collaboration in the New Jersey Education Association's Teacher Leader Academy. She and her colleagues are among the first in New Jersey to earn the teacher leadership endorsement.

Al Altomari '86 was named the No. 9 top biotech CEO of 2021 on a list compiled by the Healthcare Technology Report. He is the chairman and chief executive officer of Agile Therapeutics. He has more than 39 years of pharmaceutical experience and also currently serves on the boards of directors for several organizations, including TASK (Trenton Area Soup Kitchen), Insmmed, Inc., and Baudax Bio, Inc. Altomari received a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance from Drexel University and a Master of Business Administration from Rider.

Maryann T. Mannen '84, '93

was named the executive vice president and chief financial officer of Marathon Petroleum Corp. in January. Marathon operates the nation's largest refining system. Mannen received a bachelor's in accounting and a master's in business administration from Rider.

Linda Corbacho Trapani

'88 graduated from Florida Institute of Technology with a Master of Arts in Professional Behavior Analysis and passed the certification examination to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). She works for the Barnegat Township School District as a behaviorist in the preschool program. Her husband, **Santo Trapani '88**, recently started up a general contracting business, RMA Improvements, LLC, after working in the cosmetology education field for many years. The couple has three grown children and lives in Forked River, N.J.

'90s

Michael Tucker '92 was named director of business development of Maplewood Senior Living in Princeton, N.J. Maplewood at Princeton offers assisted living, memory care and short-term care options to the greater Princeton area. Tucker graduated from Rider with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration.

Gregory M. Smith '93 was promoted to president of commercial banking of Peapack-Gladstone Bank. His previous roles include working as a group sales executive for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions for Capital One and senior regional vice president for Summit Bank. Smith received a bachelor's from Fairleigh Dickinson University and a master's in business administration from Rider.

Richard Torres '93 became a member of the Kean University Board of Trustees. A senior attorney in the real estate industry group at Goodwin Procter LLP, he received a bachelor's from Rider and a law degree from Cornell.

John Mittler '97 has started doing voiceover recording at home focusing on audiobook narration. He now has four audiobooks available on several major platforms including Amazon and iTunes, with more in the works.

Heidi (Kenschaft) Vass '98 and **Emma Grace (Dunbar) Roche '09**, graduates of Westminster Choir College, recently created the new classical sacred quartet, Seraphour. The all-female quartet is on a mission to spread light and hope while cathedrals and concert halls are silent this year.

Jessica Battaglia '99 was named the new in-house corporate counsel of Larken Associates, an integrated real estate company. Battaglia is admitted to practice law in New Jersey and the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey. She received a law degree from Seton Hall University School of Law and a bachelor's in political science and English literature from Rider.

Craig Carpenito '96 joined King & Spalding LLP as a partner in the firm's special matters and government investigations practice group in its New York office. He previously served as the United States Attorney for the District of New Jersey, overseeing all federal criminal prosecutions and civil matters in New Jersey.

'00s

Michael Amoroso '00 was promoted to chief executive officer of Abeona Therapeutics, a leader in gene and cell therapy. Amoroso received a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences from Rider and an Executive Master of Business Administration in Management from the Stern School of Business, New York University.

Newsmaker



Forced bravery

Stephen Gerard '84 provides lessons for midcareer entrepreneurs in new book

By Rachel Stengel '14, '20

On an historically cold day in January 2004, Stephen Gerard '84 was flat on his back in the parking lot of a bargain motel. He had just spent the entire day rushing around to meetings for his new business in Northern New Jersey, Manhattan and Connecticut that led nowhere.

"It was literally one of those comedic moments where you had to laugh because it was physically and metaphorically — oh how the mighty have fallen," Gerard says. "I picked myself back up and woke up the next day saying 'OK, let's do this again.'"

Stories like these anchor his new book, *Stuck in the Middle Seat: The Five Phases to Becoming a Midcareer Entrepreneur*, published by ForbesBooks in January. Gerard, who started his first business at 40, provides substantive — and often humorous — advice for aspiring midcareer entrepreneurs. From inception, through launch, growth and scalability, he breaks the entrepreneurial journey into five distinct phases guided by 21 laws. Anyone can start a business doing something they love, he says. It's about looking at how it fits within someone's life.

"Is it a side hustle as they say nowadays or something they want to gear up doing as they're winding down from their primary career in their 60s, 70s and beyond?" he says. "It's not retire with a pension at 60 anymore."

He may not have had anything to show for his hard day's work in 2004, but Gerard's pharmaceutical benchmarking company, TGaS Advisors, quickly blossomed. To date, the company has sold more than \$200 million of professional services. It was sold between 2010 and 2018 for an excess of \$100 million.

Gerard was first drawn to accounting in high school. He had a profit-loss statement above his bed, while his cousin had a Farrah Fawcett poster. "I confess to being a bit of a geek," he says, laughing. He credits his professors at Rider for preparing him to pass his CPA exam on the first shot and secure his first job with Pepsi.

Becoming an entrepreneur was born out of a moment of "forced bravery" as he likes to say. In the early 2000s, Gerard worked for two internet start ups before being fired from a third company because of downsizing. "If I didn't get fired, I don't know if I would have had the guts to start my own business," he says.

TGaS Advisors, which cheekily stands for "Two Guys and Severance," began after he consulted a folder labeled "Start Your Own Business," where he scribbled down fleeting business ideas over the years. Nearly 20 years after its creation, Gerard helps other entrepreneurs bring their businesses to fruition as an advisor and investor. While adaptability and leadership are some of the most important characteristics for entrepreneurs, nonstop devotion is at the top of the list.

"It's like having a child," Gerard says. "It doesn't go away. It cries in the middle of the night. If you're going for it, it's 24/7."

Advice for alumni, from alumni



On getting fit and living a healthy lifestyle

By Shaun Clarida '05

1

MAKE A COMMITMENT

The first step in making a decision or a change starts with realizing what you want to achieve. What is the goal and what are the steps needed to achieve that goal? You have to be 100% fully committed to doing whatever it takes to see it all the way through... no matter how hard it gets!

2

EXAMINE YOUR EATING HABITS

Leading a healthy lifestyle starts with having the right eating habits. The types of foods you eat, how much you're eating and how often you're eating are all going to be dependent on your particular goal. A well-balanced meal can be made up of lean protein, fruits and vegetables, and healthy grains.

3

GET YOUR HEART PUMPING

Cardiovascular activity is not only good for losing weight and dropping body fat, but also very important for maintaining a healthy heart. The type of cardio and length all depends on your particular goal, but on average three to five sessions per week of 20 to 30 minutes a day of any cardiovascular activity that gets your heart going is going to be great.

4

ADD IN STRENGTH TRAINING

You're dieting hard and doing your cardio, so now is the time to add in some strength training to help make you stronger and tone and define your muscles. Some are skeptical of lifting weights for fear of bulking up too much, but that's not the case unless you make it a specific goal. Weights help tone and define muscles when used appropriately. Like cardio, a minimum of three to five sessions per week is going to be what you need.

5

DON'T SKIP REST AND RECOVERY

One thing I've learned over the years is that less is better. You do not have to go to the gym and work out every single day. In fact, your body requires days off, one to two days per week, to recover and help improve your physique so you can achieve your goals. Beating yourself into the ground every single day is going to be detrimental to your mind and body.

Shaun Clarida '05 is a professional bodybuilder who won the 2020 Mr. Olympia bodybuilding competition in the 212-pound weight class.

Peter P. Pfreundschuh '00 was appointed chief financial officer of Frequency Therapeutics, Inc., effective Dec. 1, 2020. A certified public accountant, he received a bachelor's in accounting from Rutgers and a master's in business administration from Rider.

Shawn Scannell '01 was named teacher of the year for Absegami High School in Galloway Township, N.J. Scannell is a certified special education teacher. He graduated from Absegami and returned in 2003 to teach full time. Scannell earned a bachelor's in journalism from Rider.

Harold Laudien '03 planned an ambitious running challenge for himself this spring. In April, he ran a 267-mile virtual race put on by AdventureCORPS. In May, he ran 100 miles, from Key Largo to Key West in Florida, in the Keys 100 Ultra marathon and also completed an Ironman competition in Tulsa, Okla. The recent races continue Laudien's efforts to raise awareness and money for Team PHenomenal Hope, a nonprofit that assists people diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension, an incurable disease of the heart and lungs that leaves people short of breath, fatigued and in pain. Laudien is the founder of Mercer Wealth Management, a firm dedicated to serving those who have traditionally been undervalued or underserved in personal finance.

Dr. Jason Dungee '05 was appointed an assistant professor of music and director of choral activities in the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Department of Music.

Jessica (Kopetsky) Morello '05, '08 was recently appointed director of COVID and risk management for the Children's Home Society of New Jersey. The organization has offices throughout New Jersey and is headquartered in Trenton and Toms River, N.J.

Rob Morello '05 was recently promoted to partner at the law firm

of Hoagland, Longo, Moran, Dunst & Doukas. He is a certified civil trial attorney. The firm has offices in New Brunswick, Red Bank and Hammonton, N.J.

Cathleen Palace '06 successfully defended her dissertation, "The Awareness and Impact of Action Logic for Post-Conventional Women: A Phenomenological Study," in December 2020. She now holds a Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership from Stockton University. In addition, Cathleen and **Michael Palace '05** welcomed their second son, Rhys Aiden Palace, in August 2020.

Dr. J.D. Burnett '07, a graduate of Westminster Choir College, was named artistic director of Orpheus Chamber Singers, a professional 24-voice mixed adult choir. The position is effective Jan. 1, 2022. Burnett is currently associate professor of music at the University of Georgia and is the founding artistic director of Kinnara, Atlanta's premier professional choral ensemble.

Michael DeTuro '08 was named the new superintendent of Mahwah Public Schools in March. He was previously the district's director of curriculum and instruction. DeTuro received a bachelor's from Albright College, a master's from Rider and a doctorate from Seton Hall.

Douglas Ferguson '09 was named a partner in Eisenberg, Gold & Agrawal, P.C., a growing Cherry Hill, N.J., law firm. He received a bachelor's in political science from Rider and is also a graduate of Widener University School of Law.

Rick Sando '09, who studied behavioral neuroscience at Rider, is beginning his first year as an assistant professor of pharmacology at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn. In 2014, Sando received a doctorate from The Scripps Research Institute in San Diego, Calif., where he

studied synaptic plasticity in the mammalian brain. His postdoctoral studies took place in the laboratory of Nobel laureate Thomas Südhof at Stanford University where he continued his research on the brain's neural circuitry.

'10s

Richard "Ricky" Hutton '11 was appointed the director of The Carson Chamber Singers. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Music and Philosophy from Loyola University and a Master of Music in Choral Conducting from Westminster Choir College.

Steve Spinner '12 was appointed chief development officer of the Indiana region of the American Red Cross in February. He is now in his ninth year with the organization. Spinner is responsible for personally raising nearly \$30 million in support of national and statewide programs. He received a bachelor's in business administration from Rider.

Eric Marion '14 recently passed the Chartered Financial Consultant (ChFC) exam. The ChFC program prepares professionals to meet the advanced financial planning needs of individuals, small business owners and others.

Petra Gaskins '15 was named the new chief of staff for Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker, who represents New Jersey's 16th district. Her previous roles include serving as the director of outreach and programming for Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman and an aid to Gov. Phil Murphy.

Samantha Ricchiuti '15 was hired as the business development coordinator, a newly created position at the book marketing firm Smith Publicity. Ricchiuti received a bachelor's in musical theatre from Rider.

Melissa Cunningham '17 graduated from Rutgers-Camden with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She will be working at Cooper University Hospital in Camden in the neuro-orthopaedics unit.

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Virginia Conklin Hopkins '43
Margaret M. Sterling '46
Bernice Freedland Albrecht '47
Ellen Silverstein Cramer '47
Ada Schanck Freeman '47
Nancy Yetter Muir '47
Cy Gruberg '48
David D. Wood '48
James C. Ayres '49
Robert L. Eddy '49
Patricia Webster Gensemer '49
Albert P. Leiggi '49
Genevieve Cebula Marvuglio '49
Joyce Barkman McDonald '49
Renea Oper Zukerberg '49
George N. Arvanitis '50
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Jay A. Hornor '50
Marion Toma Kanka '50
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Angelo S. LaBrutte '59
John S. Lee '59
Dorothy Ramsden Miller '59
Barbara Shedly Solly '59
John E. Godfrey '60
Gerald E. Toft '60
Delton R. Brooks '62
John V. Castiglione '62

Michael E. Dixon '62
Joan St. Clair Roof '62, '63
Elaine DeCuollo Patrick '63
Alexander J. Nagurney Jr. '64
Jack Boshak '65
Elaine Metz Cunningham '65
John P. Gallo '65
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Scott H. Mitchell '96
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