

Andris Straumanis: The impact of a professor, a mentor, and a friend

Joshua Brauer

joshua.brauer@my.uwrf.edu

Impact is something difficult to measure and impossible to feel until an object is removed. It's a force of nature that possesses a life of its own as situations evolve and time progresses. For students and faculty, both past and present, that force of nature was synonymous with the name of Andris Straumanis, who was an associate professor and director of the journalism program in the Department of Communication and Media Studies at UW-River Falls.

To his family, his friends, his students, and his coworkers, Andris was a momentous figure. He unexpectedly died on Sep. 11, 2023. He was 66 years old.

Born on March 8, 1957, in Long Island, New York, Andris Straumanis was a first-generation Latvian American, and much of his professional research reflected that crucial aspect of his life. At the time of his passing, he was working on a digital project titled "Latvian Baptists in America, 1890-1924."

Andris is survived by his daughter Kaija Straumanis and her husband Chad Post, along with his grandson Aleksanders.

Since 2005, Professor Straumanis was the cornerstone of the Journalism department, where he served as an advisor and professor for students, and the faculty advisor for the Student Voice. The gravity he emanated as all of those things cannot be understated.

"In my time at River Falls, he served as my professor, advisor, and mentor. He excelled in all three fields," said former student Sam Fristed, who is currently working as a journalist for WQOW, a TV station in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. "It was an honor to know Andris. He meant so much to the department, the field of journalism, and to me. He will be missed dearly."

These sentiments resonated widely as the news of Andris' death spread, touching everyone he had influenced.

"I learned leadership skills and what it means to be a journalist because of him," former student and past editor of the Student Voice, Ashley Hanely, said. "He showed us the power of the pen, and how we can share and tell meaningful stories to make a difference in this world."

Andris was the epitome of a silent professional. Humble and calculated, he would possess an almost wizard-like quality as he walked down the hallway to teach one of his courses, those who knew him said.

"His dedication to his students was truly remarkable," Souzeina Mushtaq, an Assistant Professor in the journalism program, said. "I wouldn't exaggerate if I said his students were his priority. Andris' passion for teaching and mentoring was evident in everything he did, from his advising sessions to his classroom lectures."

The rapport he built with his students inside and outside of the classroom was that of paternal care. He kindled the journalistic flame within a vast number of students during their time with him.

"Andris was first my teacher, but over time he also became a trusted friend. I think of him as someone I could laugh with, and always get advice from," said recent graduate Brooke Shepherd.

Andris' teachings had a profound impact on the students. Recent graduate Anna Gunderson, who served as the former General Manager of the Student Voice, said, "His



Professor Andris Straumanis taught at UW-River Falls for 18 years, and passed away unexpectedly on Sept. 11. Students and faculty reflected on his memory and his impact in their lives. Photo by Souzeina Mushtaq.

teachings and his leadership have had a profound impact on shaping who I am today and how I see the world around me."

Andris was also known for his quick-witted humor. An unexpected one-liner or dry comment from him would cause those around him to break a smile.

"Over the past 20 or so years, I very much enjoyed my time with Andris. His 'Bob Newhart meets Fraser Crain' sense of humor always put a smile on my face," said David Bonko, an Associate Professor in the Marketing Communications program.

"Andris was a wonderful colleague," said Professor Emerita Patricia Berg. "He was unflappable and was completely devoted to his students. I will miss the quiet, wry sense of humor that reflected his towering intellect."

This towering intellect was matched by his immense passion for journalism and his students alike. Professor Straumanis would spend countless hours outside of his sanctioned office hours with his students. He would write recommendation letters, advise students on current story

Straumanis continued on page 3

Board of Regents visits UWRF

Jack Schindler Van Hoof

jack.schindlervanhoof@my.uwrf.edu

On Oct. 5 and Oct. 6, 2023, UW-River Falls hosted the UW System Board of Regents for the first time since 2014. The Board of Regents, which is responsible for UW System policies, met on the UWRF campus to discuss finances, education, and more for the UW System.

According to the UW System's website, the Board of Regents, or BOR, is responsible for "reviewing and approving university budgets, setting admission standards, and establishing the framework within which the individual [universities] are allowed to operate."

The BOR also appoints the president of the UW System, a position currently held by Jay Rothman, as well as the chancellors of the 13 UW universities.

"Having the Board of Regents meet on the UWRF campus provides a significant opportunity to highlight the impactful work our faculty, staff, and students do, as well as gives the regents first-hand knowledge of our programs and facilities to help them make informed decisions which affect the future of the university," UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo said.

The BOR held various meetings on Oct. 5 and Oct. 6, including their regular standing committee and full board meetings. On Oct. 5, they held their Audit Committee, Capital Planning and Budget Committee, Business and Finance Committee, Education Committee, and a full board meeting and closed session. On Oct. 6, they held another full board meeting and closed session. All meetings were held at UWRF's University Center.

UWRF showcased several programs and projects, including the Montessori doctoral program, the Wuethrich Family/Grassland Dairy Center of Excellence, and the Science and Technology Innovation Center, or SciTech.

The BOR usually meets eight times a year; about half of these meetings are held at UW-Madison, and about half are held at one of the other 12 UW universities. The purpose of this, according to UWRF's website, is for the BOR to "learn more about the programs [the universities] provide to students and the challenges they face."

The Audit Committee met to discuss the UW System Fiscal Year 2024 Audit Plan Progress Report, though no action on the audit plan was taken. The committee then discussed the issue of cybersecurity, starting with the usage of TikTok and other "foreign technologies" in the UW System.

They also discussed the UW information technology security program, which includes security policies, phishing awareness campaigns, and other methods intended to prevent or limit cybersecurity attacks.

The Capital Planning and Budget Committee met to vote on two UW university maintenance and repair projects: a Scott Hall restaurant renovation at UW-Oshkosh, and a fire suppression system renovation at UW-Madison. Both projects were approved.

The committee approved a lease of office space for the School of Medicine and Public Health at UW-Madison, which would accommodate "54 doctors to support the Residency Program," according to the committee meeting notes.

They also approved the development of an indoor turf facility at UW-Superior, with support from the City of Superior, the Superior Amateur Hockey Association, and several other organizations, including "a possible partnership with a local professional athletic team."

UW-River Falls concluded the meeting with a presentation on "capital planning in support of interdisciplinary and experiential learning in STEM fields."

At the Business and Finance Committee, UWRF presented on strategies it has adopted "to increase revenue and decrease expenses, in pursuit of institutional goals to ensure ongoing financial stability." These strategies included campus stakeholder engagement, strategic restructuring, and "other administrative measures," according to the committee meeting notes.

The committee then approved the Fiscal Year 2022-23 UW System Report on Program Revenue Balances by University and Level of Commitment. According to the report, "10 of the 13 UW universities are reporting a structural deficit in the coming year."

This is, in part, because "costs funded largely or entirely with program revenue have increased, with some expenses

nearing pre-pandemic levels." These program revenues represent "approximately 82% of total funding" for the UW System.

According to the report, tuition balances decreased by "17.3% between FY 2022 and FY 2023, to \$246.7 million, which is a 55.3% reduction since FY 2013." In addition, COVID relief funds, amounting to \$423.6 million, were mostly exhausted at the end of 2023.

The committee concluded with the adoption of two license agreements, with GE Precision Healthcare LLC and T-Mobile Central LLC, an administrative transportation update, and a service agreement with Huron Consulting Group, Inc.

The Education Committee met to present four new academic programs: A Master of Science in Supply Chain Management at UW-Green Bay, A Bachelor of Business Administration in Business: Entrepreneurship at UW-Madison, A Bachelor of Business Administration in Business: Human Resources Management at UW-Madison, A Bachelor in Business Administration in Business: Management at UW-Madison.

All programs were approved.

The committee also approved the appointment of Aaron Perry to the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health Oversight and Advisory Committee of the Wisconsin Partnership Program, to fill a vacant position.

UWRF then presented on "examples of academic programs with innovative characteristics, at [UWRF]." The committee held an update on the upcoming Wisconsin Direct Admission program, which "aims to increase access and simplify the admissions process for Wisconsin high school students," according to the committee meeting notes.

The meeting concluded with a discussion of the policies and procedures that are involved in the review of academic programming, including accreditation and quality assurance.

Transcripts for all four committee meetings can be found online at www.wisconsin.edu/regents/meetingmaterials/.

Jay Rothman talks EDI, reciprocity, and more

Lexi Janzer

lexi.janzer@my.uwrf.edu

Student Voice Assistant Editor Lexi Janzer spoke with UW System President Jay Rothman. The interview is as follows:

How do you plan on supporting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) programs across the System when the legislature is explicitly telling you to get rid of them?

We're focusing on EDI and looking at three guiding principles in the system. One is student success, and understanding that diversity is a broad group of factors.

It's certainly underrepresented students, but it's veterans, it's disabled students, it's first-generation students, it's students of lower socioeconomic means, students of different religions, students who have different political ideologies, How can we create a climate where they can be successful from recruitment to retention to graduation?

Secondly, we want to make sure that our EDI efforts are focused on creating cultural fluency. We're preparing students who are going to work not only in Wisconsin or Minnesota, but more broadly across the US, but beyond that, in the global marketplace,

The final piece is making sure that we're supporting our faculty and staff, and making sure that they have the same welcoming environment, but that we also provide training about teaching a diverse class [and] dealing with difficult

issues within the classroom,

All of those things are important, because, at the end of the day, we have to educate all of the qualified students we can if Wisconsin is going to win the war for talent. We don't have enough engineers and nurses and teachers and data scientists and business people.

If we're going to win the war for talent, we have to be in an environment where everybody can flourish....

How do you plan on supporting UW-River Falls through getting our reciprocity bill passed?

We have been supportive [of the reciprocity bill], and I've been grateful for the bipartisan support of the bill, which will allow the university to keep more of the revenue that it is generating. It's an important component, and we're hopeful that ultimately the legislature will pass it and Governor Evers will sign it into law.

How is the UW system going to help UW-River Falls combat Minnesota's North Star Promise?

I think the North Star Promise and the tuition promise is something we have to be cognizant of, We are trying to find other sources of financing in the private area: philanthropic support to create a tuition promise similar to [Minnesota's].

The important thing to note, too, is that, over the years, River Falls, along with the other 12 universities in the system, have worked hard to increase the amount of institu-

tional aid that students are getting....

We're going to do our best to make sure that college is affordable, but I think it's important to remember that we are the most affordable public university system in the Midwest, So it's not just what Minnesota does, but it's what we can do internally, and we're working hard to make sure that we remain affordable.

How does the UW System Strategic Enrollment Plan affect UW-River Falls?

We're trying to increase the number of graduates from System schools to 41,000 by 2028. We want to make sure that we have as many different avenues as we can for that. One of the things we're going to be piloting next year is direct admissions,

We are going to be working on trying to further communicate to the population at large the value of higher education, The economics are unassailable; you will make more money if you go to college and get that college degree. There's also all kinds of benefits from a societal perspective; there's higher levels of civic engagement [and] philanthropy.

We want to make sure that we are affordable and provide accessibility for everybody who wants to [attend college], and even convince those who might think 'I don't know if I'm college material' that they are, and that they can be successful here. That's what we want to create here, not only at River Falls, but across the system.

An impact that will live on

Continued from page 1

drafts, or search the web for possible story leads to give to them.

“My senior year of college I worked on an independent study with him,” said Izzy Forliti, another former Student Voice Editor. “I am eternally grateful for the one hour a week I got to spend in his office, equally learning new things and laughing and arguing about the different ways to pronounce the word ‘bagel.’”

“I remember at the end of every semester Andris would always bring in cookies,” current student Michelle Stangler said. “He would always bring in a few oatmeal raisins, knowing not many of us would go for them so he could have a few. It was always a happy memory about enjoying the small things in life.”

“Andris was and will continue to be an inspiration to me for years to come. He was an amazing professor, advisor, mentor, and friend,” said current Assistant Editor of the Student Voice, Lexi Janzer. “I remember getting so excited to run my story ideas by him just to hear his feedback, and the dread that Friday morning layout critics would bring. He was a huge part of my support system being so far away from home and the reason I am where I am today. I am forever grateful for the short three years I had to learn from him.”

Andris paid meticulous attention to detail in his students’ work, challenging them to perfect their craft. Former student Natalie Torbert recalled, “Andris was tough but fair. He would push me and support me in everything that I did.”

“Andris was a brilliant man, and he never took shortcuts when it came to his students,” Charlie Swanson, a current journalism student and past Student Voice Assistant Editor stated. “What I originally deemed as a demand for perfection was simply a challenge from Andris to do things the right way.”

“Andris was that remarkable kind of teacher who inspired greatness in students,” 2012 graduate and former Student Voice member Mike Brun said. “It was a crushing feeling to fall short of his expectations, but a tremendous source of pride to earn his praise. He will forever be the voice in my head that questions whether I am using a word or phrase correctly.”

Prior to teaching and advising at UW-River Falls, Professor Straumanis received his bachelor’s in journalism from Southern Illinois University, a master’s degree in American studies from the University of Minnesota, and



Michelle Stangler and Andris Straumanis. Photo by Michelle Stangler.

a graduate certificate in digital public humanities through George Mason University.

His professional work included a decade of writing, reporting, and editing in Illinois and Minnesota. He previously taught at UW-Eau Claire along with teaching courses at two universities in Latvia, splitting his time between River Falls and the Baltic State’s colleges.

There is a saying posted on the corkboard in the Student Voice office that states, “What would Andris do?” It is a saying that reaches beyond the scope of journalism and the Student Voice, one that drifts off the page and into everyday life.

“Andris was, in many ways, the heart and soul of the Student Voice,” the current Editor of the Student Voice,

Jack Schindler Van Hoof said. “It won’t be the same without him, but we will do our best to honor his memory with the journalism that we do at the Voice. Andris is the reason why I and so many others love journalism.”

All of Andris’ care, wit, expertise, patience, and intellect garnered the respect and appreciation of anyone who had the pleasure to meet and interact with him, those who knew him said. He was truly a steward of his profession, a mentor to a generation of journalists, and a remarkable man. He will be missed dearly for years and years to come.

A further celebration of life will be held in the Communication and Media Studies main office in North Hall 310 on Nov. 30, from 1-3 p.m.

Chancellor advocates for reciprocity legislation

Rachel Karweick

Rachel.Karweick@my.uwrf.edu

Chancellor Maria Gallo, and staff from other UW universities, testified before the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Universities and Revenue in support of a bill that will help UW System schools retain some of the reciprocity dollars that their Minnesota students pay.

Students who are Minnesota residents pay more in tuition than students who are Wisconsin residents. The way it is currently, some of that reciprocity money goes back to Minnesota, and the rest goes into the Wisconsin state general fund. “We lost over \$4.3 million in earned revenue because of the current, outdated reciprocity mechanism,” Gallo said.

The state can then do what it wants with the money, and it does not have to be used for higher education.

“For a couple of years we’ve been making a very concerted effort, with the support of some legislators, to try and get that mechanism changed,” said Beth Schommer, the Chief of Staff in the Chancellor’s Office.

“The bills that have been introduced both last session and this session are oriented at accomplishing two things,” Schommer said. “One would be to give the UW System direct negotiating authority over this agreement so that they can manage the arrangement [and] manage how the money is handled. Then, the campus that educates the Minnesota student, would retain the full amount of tuition that the student pays.”

The bill still has several steps to go through before it can go into effect. Schommer said.

“It’s had public hearings in both the Assembly and the Senate,” she said. “It needs to finish going through its legislative action, which means it has to get onto the floor of both the Senate and the Assembly. It has to go to the Joint Committee on Finance because it’s revenue-related. Then, once it passes through all of the state legislature, it goes to the Governor’s desk to be signed into law.”

If it was able to retain reciprocity dollars, UWRF would be able to invest the money into campus programs. Schommer said, “We have our new Science and Technology Innovation Center being built. In that facility we are going to

include a university and business collaboration center with more direct outreach to the business community, allowing businesses to interact with our students for internships, research projects, that kind of thing. A facility like that would need some funding to help make it operational, so that would be one possible way we would spend it.”

A UWRF student, Mayala Keita, provided a written testimony for the hearing as well.

“I believe that all students, regardless of where they are from, would benefit from UW-River Falls being able to retain the extra tuition that I and other Minnesota students pay,” Keita stated. “The university needs that revenue to continue to make available things like certification courses. They could also expand the support provided by the great UWRF Career Services office.”

Currently, almost half of the students at UWRF are Minnesota residents and are paying reciprocity money.

“This is revenue that could have been reinvested in UWRF, meeting student demands and filling regional employer needs,” Gallo said.

Falcon Football soars to homecoming victory

Joshua Brauer

joshua.brauer@my.uwrf.edu

UW-River Falls football took home the 27-16 Homecoming victory against UW-Platteville on September 30 at Ramer Field. The game marked the fourth of the season for River Falls, and the first WIAC matchup of the fledgling season.

Falcon hopefuls packed the bleachers of Ramer Field in anticipation of the homecoming matchup between the two high-octane offenses. Entering the contest, River Falls and Platteville were ranked first and second respectively in the WIAC for their offensive capabilities, with River Falls averaging 52 points per game and Platteville averaging 45.

Following a warmer-than-average kickoff at 1 p.m. (the temperature at kickoff was 79 degrees Fahrenheit), Platteville's offense marched out for the first drive of the contest.

Although possessing two of the most volatile offenses in the conference, neither school could gain an effective upper hand in the first quarter. A slew of early penalty flags and solid defensive sets effectively curbed both offenses during the opening quarter.

After a total of four punts, one turnover on downs, and a failed 42-yard field goal from River Falls, the quarter ended in a stalemate at 0-0.

The second quarter began with a cannon of a kick from Platteville's Andrew Schweigert as he crushed a 44-yard field goal. This kick opened the game wide open and signified a dinner bell for the River Falls offense for the rest of the half.

River Falls quarterback Kaleb Blaha took the next drive in stride, and, along with running back Michael Krueger, picked up a quick first down in the first few plays. Following an 11-yard completion and a targeting penalty which saw Platteville's cornerback Sam Smith ejected from the game, Blaha and the Falcon offense were poised to strike.

A 25-yard pass from Blaha to Jake Hilton set up the subsequent dish from Blaha to receiver Mason Van Zeeland for the 14-yard touchdown, capping off a 7-play, 75-yard scoring drive from River Falls that only chewed two minutes off of the clock. The lightning-fast drive awarded the Falcons their first points of the contest and the lead at 7-3.

Platteville's next drive proved unfruitful after a failed 31-yard field goal attempt, and River Falls picked up at their own 21-yard line. Blaha displayed his abilities on the drive, proving his position as first in the WIAC for passing and second in rushing. Blaha marched the Falcon offense



The Falcons defeated the UW-Platteville Pioneers 27-16. (Photo courtesy of Sam Silver)

down the gridiron.

Back-to-back passes to Luke Kush from Blaha, and a trick play which saw Blaha catch a 14-yard pass from Krueger, placed the homecoming hopefuls back into a position to score. A dot from Blaha to Jake Hilton in the back of the endzone satiated the cheering homecoming crowd as they saw their Falcons take a 14-3 lead.

The first half ended with an impressive and spirited Falcon defense, where the WIAC's number one defense repelled and denied the visiting Pioneers a total of seven times at the goal line as time expired.

During the homecoming halftime, the 2023 UW-River Falls Hall of Fame class was announced. Some members recognized were former River Falls Volleyball Coach Patti Ford, former River Falls Track and Field Athlete Alyssa Woitas, and the 1996 UWRF Women's Volleyball Team.

The third quarter began with another staple Falcon drive. A spectacular one-handed snag from receiver Ron Beauchamp at midfield, followed by another 23-yard laser from Blaha to Kush placed the Falcons within striking distance yet again.

A 44-yard rainbow from Blaha found the golden hands of Van Zeeland for his second score of the game, extending the Falcon lead to 14.

Following the score, the Pioneers shifted to a more ag-

gressive style of offense and began pecking away at the Falcon lead. Platteville's quarterback Michael Priami had the ball in his hands the entire next drive, tossing a slew of short screen passes that grinded the River Fall's defense deep into their own territory.

During this point in the game injury timeouts were rife as a few River Falls players came down with cramps as the sweltering temperature and all-black uniforms came into the forefront of play. A well-placed throw along the sideline from Priami to Brandt Stare brought the visitors within two scores at 21-10. The next Falcon drive was stunted by the Pioneer defense as Linebacker Colton Ingram awarded Blaha his second interception of the season.

Priami settled back into a rhythm, completing a four-minute 71-yard drive with a two-yard touchdown pass. Following a missed extra point, the Pioneers now found themselves directly back in the ballgame with a score of 21-16 with the fourth quarter approaching.

After a few unsuccessful drives in the early stages of the fourth, River Falls was able to piece together a comprehensive attack, utilizing Blaha's shifty running ability and arm. A 14-yard pass sealed the finality of the drive, with receiver Jake Hilton diving towards the far pile on for the score. The second failed extra point of the contest left the score standing at 27-16, the Falcons with 8:30 left on the game clock.

Platteville received the next kickoff and drove in rhythm, picking up four first downs in the matter of a couple of minutes and threatening the defending Falcons yet again. That threat ended with a Falcon interception by defensive back Michael Brown at the River Falls 30-yard line. The rest of the contest relied on a few key runs from Blaha and company to secure three first downs before kneeling out the clock, ending the homecoming contest with a Falcon victory of 27-16.

Blaha threw for 377 yards and four touchdowns in the contest, and he also led the Falcon ground game with 32 attempts and 88 yards. Ron Beauchamp led the receiving corps with 122 yards, with Van Zeeland and Hilton both catching two touchdowns each in the contest. Linebacker Cade Schmidt led the Falcon defense with nine tackles on the day.

River Fall's homecoming win garnered them their first WIAC win of the season and fourth overall of the new year, keeping them in contention with UW-Whitewater who also has a perfect record of 4-0 on the season. This streak would continue until the Falcons fell to the UW-Whitewater Warhawks 21-14 on October 14.



Ramer Field was packed with fans for the homecoming game. (Photo courtesy of Sam Silver)

UWRF Women's Volleyball returns home 17-7

Ethan Lay

ethan.lay@my.uwrf.edu

Head coach Dipen Patel leads his second year with the UWRF women's volleyball program after being hired in early 2022. The Falcons are currently 17-7 and 2-2 in conference matchups. Four games remain in the regular season, posing critical opportunities for Patel's Falcons.

In Patel's first season, he led the Falcons to 22-11 in the regular season. UWRF would squeak in the WIAC tournament as the #6 seed with a 2-5 conference record. The Falcons fell to UW-Stevens Point in the first round 3-1. Though a frustrating exit, the season represented a rebound from a 2021 season without a WIAC tournament birth.

The Falcons grabbed their first conference win this season against a resistant UW-Stout team. Considering that in-conference wins determine tournament seeding, it's not surprising that Patel considers these wins important. "With how competitive our conference is, I think winning the right games is really important. If you're not in a position to outright win the conference tournament, can you compete well enough in the conference to where you're regionally ranked?" Patel acknowledges the WIAC's overall strength this season, calling it "The Big Ten of Division Three," and for good reason. Currently, the WIAC has zero teams below .500 overall, and three teams ranked top 25 in the AVCA/TARAFLEX Division III WVB Poll.

The Falcons saw some success against ranked teams this season, beating both Cornell College and Gustavus Adolphus. Head coach Dipen Patel acknowledges these victories but prefers to keep his team moving forward. After defeating #16 ranked Gustavus Adolphus, Patel said, "I think we're still game-to-game right now. But beating them is just awesome for the program. There's nothing stopping us from being a competitive team."



The Falcons defeated the UW-Stout Blue Devils 3-2. (Photo courtesy of Carly Lynch)

UWRF will return to Don Page Arena on October 20, beginning a three-game home stretch. The Falcons will face UW-Oshkosh first, who are currently 26-0 and the #1 seed in the WIAC. Second is UW-Eau Claire, who are currently the #6 seed and 1-3 in the conference. Lastly, Hamline University, whom the Falcons defeated 3-0 last season. UWRF will travel to UW-Whitewater for the final game of the reg-

ular season, to face the currently 19-2 Warhawks.

Nearing the end of the regular season, the Falcons are looking to lock up more favorable tournament seeding. They currently hold the #5 seed in the WIAC and will likely be on the road throughout the conference tournament. These final four games will play a pivotal role in tournament seeding but also in playoff momentum.

Steve Bartlein leads rebirthed Falcons Baseball

Ethan Lay

ethan.lay@my.uwrf.edu

The University of Wisconsin-River Falls continues to expand its athletic lineup, as men's baseball is set to return as a varsity sport for the 2025 season. The program has been given new life after a lengthy 21-year absence from UWRF. The Falcons are set to compete in the WIAC, which currently features seven universities from the UW System.

In early August, Steve Bartlein was named the head coach of the rebirthed Falcons. As a player, Bartlein experienced success with UW-Whitewater from 2010-2013, receiving multiple WIAC accolades in his time with the Warhawks. From 2017-2023, he served as an assistant coach for the UW-Whitewater baseball program and grabbed multiple conference titles in the process.

Coach Bartlein acknowledges the long-standing drought of men's baseball on campus but sees the program's implementation as a sign of renewed interest. As UWRF continues to implement varsity programs, Bartlein sees the school as having an increasingly relevant athletic department. "We're seeing a lot of good trends in athletics here." He also considers the Falcon Center as a sign of UWRF's commitment to building a home for student-athletes. "I think every recruit I've had on campus so far has been really impressed with this facility."

Though the Falcons are still early into the recruiting process, Coach Bartlein has wasted no time scouting talent. He says, "A majority of my time has been spent reaching out to different high schools, clubs, and kids." In addition

to reaching out, Bartlein spends a great deal of his Fridays and Saturdays with different baseball clubs, engaging with players and building a network.

Along with building a team full of talented players comes the necessity of role-model coaches. A vital portion of Bartlein's job will be choosing his staff, but he won't be hiring any coaches this year. However, his time at Whitewater certainly gives him some names to consider in 2024. Bartlein said, "What you consider is people that are looking to get into college athletics, and can bring together knowledge and experience to help our student-athletes. When you're a student-athlete on a team, you want to be around people that you can relate to and feel like they're helping you progress."

This will be Coach Bartlein's first crack at a head coach position in the WIAC. He said, "I couldn't ask for a better opportunity at a better time." As Bartlein is no longer under contract with UW-Whitewater, he'll be moving his wife and two young children to River Falls in October. UWRF welcomes him and his family to River Falls.

The Falcons will take the field in the Spring of 2025, hoping to feel the success of Coach Bartlein's early commitment and dedication to the program.



Steve Bartlein is set to coach men's baseball in 2025. (Photo courtesy of UWRF)

SciTech construction “on schedule,” set for 2026

Johan Harworth

johan.harworth@my.uwrf.edu

With the sight of a massive crane overseeing the UW-River Falls campus, change is coming to the university in the form of the new Science and Technology Innovation Center, which is set to have its first classes in 2026.

The construction of the Science and Tech Innovation Center, or SciTech, where Hagestead Hall once stood, is on schedule, according to Alan Symicek, the Chief Facilities Officer for UW-River Falls. The building’s concrete foundations are about halfway complete.

“Over the next month or two [construction crews] will continue to see more of that progress on the below-ground concrete foundations for the building,” Symicek said.

A school that is submerged in snow for months at a time presents substantial roadblocks in the construction process. According to Symicek, however, the SciTech construction site will not be closed during the winter, “as weather permits.” This will allow for the four floors of the concrete structure to be completed around June 2024.

In terms of classes and facilities, UW-River Falls students will have many options. While many of the classes in SciTech will be for students in the Chemistry, Biology, Physics, and Psychology fields, non-science major students will be able to experience the new building as well, via the Business Collaboration Center, or BCC.

The BCC will be available to all students in all three colleges, and is intended to provide a facility for businesses to collaborate with students on undergraduate research and internships.

Symicek said, “A lot of times, [the] best innovations come when you combine people of different disciplines.” The hope is that the BCC will offer students a new place on campus to collaborate with both potential business partners and students of different majors to develop creative and innovative ideas and projects.



The SciTech construction site, where Hagestead once stood. (Photo by Jack Schindler Van Hoof)

The SciTech building is only the beginning of development on the UWRF campus. Once classes start in SciTech, UWRF’s Centennial Science Hall will be used for lecture-based classes only. Department offices will be moved out of both Centennial Science Hall and the Agricultural Sciences or AgSci building.

Centennial will be used for relocation space during the renovation of AgSci and North Hall. Then, Centennial will take the main focus, and renovations will be given to the

science hall to convert it into a classroom building, over 50 years after its construction in 1977.

Change is coming to UW-River Falls, and SciTech is only the beginning, not just for the buildings on campus, but for students and faculty as well. A ceremonial groundbreaking is set for Monday, Oct. 23, at 3:30 p.m., at the corner of E. Cascade Avenue and S. 3rd Street.



SciTech is scheduled to open for classes in 2026. (Photo by Jack Schindler Van Hoof)

Wisconsin crime victim services face challenges

Lexi Janzer
lexi.janzer@my.uwrf.edu

Western Wisconsin counties have few crime victim services mandated by the state. Crime victim services is a term that encapsulates all programs and services that help crime victims return, as much as possible, to a normal life after a crime was committed. People working in these services face challenges like burnout, staffing, and funding.

Victim witness coordinators have many state victim services that they can suggest to crime victims. These programs include a crime victim compensation program, VINE, which informs victims of their offender's custody status; "Safe at Home," which is a statewide address confidentiality program; victim appellate notification services, which notifies victims of any appeals being made; and DOC NOTIS, which provides offender information, including anticipated release date, upcoming parole review, and other things.

According to a Bureau of Justice Statistics Victim Service Provider Survey from 2017, approximately 12,200 providers serve victims throughout the United States. In Wisconsin, Pepin, Polk, St. Croix, and Pierce counties have a combined total of 8 victim service providers. The survey defines victim service providers as organizations that serve victims of crime or abuse as their primary function or had dedicated staff or programs to serve victims. These organizations can include government organizations, non-profit organizations, hospitals, campuses, and others.

This survey also measures how many victims the providers serve. Pepin serves the least number of victims, with 18 per 1,000 people, though Pepin does have the smallest county population. Pierce serves the most victims with 32 per 1,000 people.

Rachel Morgan, a statistician from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), said in an email that "the reason this survey is done is to better help the federal government dis-

tribute money through the Victims of Crime Act to support these services. This data can also help federal, state, and local governments to make "data-driven" decisions in programming and funding."

When asked if there is a baseline to determine whether a county has enough victim service providers, Morgan wrote, "The goal of National Survey of Victim Service Providers was not for BJS to determine if an area has enough victim services. The main goal is to fill in important gaps in the collective understanding of victim service providers and the victims they serve." The Bureau of Justice Statistics has plans to conduct a census through the Office for Victims of Crime website in the fall of 2023. The official survey results will take a few years from now.

Victim witness offices are funded by the county even though each office is required by state law. "I think the funding is more the reimbursement part," said David William, the Polk County Victim Witness Coordinator. "We are required to be here. The biggest funding we get is from the state; we get I think it's something like 40%, so not even quite half of what we spend here in Polk County we get reimbursed for. The wages are part of that reimbursement."

Pam Bellrich, the St. Croix County Victim Witness Coordinator, added, "I wish that there were more funding resources out there, but it is pretty limited, and our reimbursement from the state is always in flux. It used to be that when the programs started, [the state paid] around 90%, and the county only had to pay about 10%. But through the years, since the mid-90s, it's down to like 44% now, so it has shifted. We have recently received information that the state is going to be reimbursing at a higher rate, but who knows? I'll believe that when I see it."

Marsy's Law is another thing that directly affects all Victim Witness Coordinators on a day-to-day basis. Marsy's Law added to victims' rights by allowing victims to be notified of an offender's release and of all criminal case proceedings.

Sue Burr, a Pierce County victim witness coordinator, said, "With the implementation of Marsy's Law, victims now are notified of every single hearing. Once somebody has been arrested, we notify the victims; we have to call them and let them know the charges that they are appearing for a bail bond hearing, and that they have a right to attend and address the court on bond."

The controversial amendment to Wisconsin's constitution was passed in 2020.

"For the 25 years that I have been doing this, I have always felt that the system is lopsided for victims versus defendants," Bellrichard said. "I know the addition of Marsy's Law has helped increase the standing of victims in courtrooms and in court proceedings. But [with] the way the constitution is, I feel like the defendants are always just going to tip the scales with having more rights in the courtroom. But I am okay, with [victims'] ability to be heard at every hearing, to attend every hearing, to speak to the judge at the time of sentencing. We have come a long way with victims' rights and access to court proceedings for victims, so that is a huge plus. But I think that constitutionally it's always going to be different defendants rights versus victims rights."

All three victim witness coordinators mentioned how people in the field frequently struggle with mental health issues, burnout, and language barriers, and also how victims often struggle to find transportation for court dates.

"We are in this profession because we are wired to help people. I wouldn't still be doing this if I didn't still care about people and want to help people," Bellrichard said. "I think that I can speak for everybody in victim services when I say that's what it's all about is just trying to help people as much as we can."

For more reporting on this topic, visit uwrfjournalism.org/2023/08/crime-victim-services/.

SGA seeks to engage with students

Lexi Janzer
lexi.janzer@my.uwrf.edu

The UW-River Falls Student Government Association (SGA) President and Vice President have big plans for the 2023-2024 school year, which includes promoting the association and educating the student population on what SGA does.

Kalli Kubly, a senior in criminology and accounting, is the current SGA President, and has been involved for two years as the College of Business and Economics senator. Connor Tanck, a junior in horticulture, is the current SGA Vice President, and has been involved for one year as the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences senator.

"The Student Government Association is the governing body on campus that gives a voice to the students," said Tanck. "We have student members from all over campus, whether that be the DIB office or a specific college. They are elected in by all the students."

Kubly also said that SGA frequently meets with the Faculty Senate and Academic Staff Council, as much of the policies that these two organizations work on are presented to SGA, and vice versa. SGA also works frequently with the Chancellor and other UW System universities' student government associations.

"I get to meet directly with the Chancellor every month, so that's nice [because] we get to know that important policies we want are out there," said Kubly. "For the last few years, the student senate has been pretty active within the UW System. Each month Connor and I go down to Madison, to meet with the majority of the other student senate leaders to learn about what

their colleges are doing, how we can improve, and how they can improve to make the best student senates."

A major goal for the President and Vice President is to increase student engagement in elections and meetings, and also to increase students' knowledge about what SGA is and what it does. Tanck added that it's important for SGA senators and directors to be involved around campus so students know who their representatives are.

"I think for the past few years, when you talk to students, a lot of the time there is almost a repulsion [for] student senate, where [students] don't fully know what we are doing and, they don't [know] how important their voice actually is," said Kubly.

SGA's Instagram, @uwrfsga, posts short recaps of SGA meetings, providing an initiative for students to be more involved without having to go to the meetings directly.

SGA is navigating many changes this year: finding a new Dean of Students, a position that serves as SGA's faculty advisor; a college merger; three new deans; and other new responsibilities. Despite these changes, SGA has elected 11 new senators and regularly hosts Hump Day Cafe, which provides free coffee and bagels to students at the SGA offices in the University Center.

Tanck said, "I think this semester is going to be built by the students and what they want to see done. We are going to be here no matter what, but the best way we can serve them is when they speak to us when they come to meetings or when they join us in general. We'd love to hear from the students everywhere on campus."

Voice Shorts

Halloween in the Halls - Residence Life is hosting its annual Halloween in the Halls event on Oct. 24 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Children from the community in grades 4K through 5th grade are welcome to participate when accompanied by an adult. All hall councils will help distribute candy to UWRF students living in the Residence Halls who would like to participate.

AASA Egg Rolls - The Asian American Student Association's annual eggroll sale is open for pre-orders until Oct. 27. The options available are pork, veggie, or a combination of both. The price starts at 3 for \$6 sold in multiples of 3. Pick-up will be on Nov. 8, with a location to come.

Blood Drive - The American Red Cross will be on campus for a blood drive Oct. 24-26 from 12-6 pm. in the Falcon Nest. The event is hosted by UWRF Greek Life. Walk-ins are welcome based on availability.

UWRF alum directs street art project

Jack Schindler Van Hoof

jack.schindlervanhoof@my.uwrf.edu

When the city of River Falls reached out to the UW-River Falls Art Department to create a mural at the intersection of Main and Division streets, Moz Rude jumped at the chance. Rude graduated from UW-River Falls with a bachelor's degree in art. Their degree, however, focused on ceramics, not painting. "I had never done a mural before," Rude said.

Despite this, Rude loves to paint, and decided to take on the project. "Only the people who are closest to me know that I paint just as much as I make ceramics," Rude said. "I was excited to pursue an endeavor in the other medium that I like. [The mural] was an opportunity for me to learn and grow, and also to engage in the community."

The city contacted Hannah Freeman, an Assistant Art Professor at UW-River Falls, who then reached out to several former students, including Rude. "I was honored that she even thought of me for a project so big," Rude said.

To create their submission for the mural, Rude researched local wildflowers, and decided to focus on the Jacob's Ladder wildflower. "This city and area are known for their natural beauty, and I wanted to represent that in this project," Rude said.

Two days after Rude submitted the design, it was accepted. "The city reached out and said, 'We really like your design. We'd be happy to commission you,'" Rude said. Rude met with Ellen Massey, the management analyst for the River Falls Community Development Department, to further plan the project. "It was really collaborative," Rude said of the process.

The mural is the focus of River Falls' "Paint the Pavement Project," which was created to address safety concerns with the Main and Division Street intersection. In particular, visibility was a concern, as drivers would sometimes fail to see pedestrians or cyclists in the intersection.

The city installed plastic barriers to improve visibility, but, rather than applying standard pavement markings as well, they decided to implement a more artistic alternative.

Thus, the mural was born.

"I know this is a busy intersection, and it feels good to be a part of making this space not only more safe, but more beautiful too," Rude said. The project is part of the City's



Moz Rude directed the River Falls' "Paint the Pavement" project on August 23. (Photo courtesy of UWRF)

Bike and Pedestrian Plan, and was funded by a \$10,000 AARP Community Challenge Grant.

On August 23, 2023, Rude, volunteer artists, city workers, UWRF employees, and community members, started on the mural. They endured temperatures of almost 100 degrees, and an even higher heat index, as they worked.

"We weren't able to finish it in one day because everyone was on the brink of heat stroke," Rude said. "We had to call it early the first day, and it had to be finished the next week."

Ellen Massey said, "City officials are interested in place-making projects like this that benefit River Falls." She said

that River Falls may include public art in future projects.

After graduating from UWRF in May 2023, Rude works as a teaching artist at Northern Clay Center in Minneapolis, MN, and a ceramic instructor at the Phipps Center for the Arts in Hudson, WI. Their website, mozrude.com, describes Rude's artistic process.

"My creative process [with ceramics] is very fluid. I enjoy both hand-building and wheel throwing, but tend to lean towards pinching, coils, and slabs more, I'm just following my intuition and allowing my hands to do what feels natural for them to do."

A major source of inspiration for Rude's work is "the actual subject matter of life," they said. "I pull a lot of my inspiration from my emotions and just being very present. Like what I saw that day; I'll just catalog it on the surface of a pot."

Rude mentioned Michael Helke, an Assistant Professor of Art at UWRF and the Ceramics Program Director, as a major influence for them.

"[Michael] was a big advocate for us students," Rude said. Rude said that it is crucial for artists to connect with their local art communities if they want to succeed. "[Michael] already had all of those connections, and he was super happy to let us know about opportunities."

At Northern Clay Center, Rude teaches ceramics classes for all ages. They are also involved in Northern Clay Center's outreach program, which provides instruction and materials to schools, community centers, and other locations in the Minneapolis area.

"It's centered on community engagement," Rude said, "We send teaching artists to their location, and they teach a class at that site." Rude works as a technician to support this process.

Rude is planning to teach an abstract sculpture class in early 2024; "I'm slowly working my way up to teaching more advanced students, not just beginners," they said. Rude's long-term goal is to get their master's degree in ceramics and become a professor at the university level.

For now, though, Rude is already busy. "I have four jobs," they said. "It's a little insane." Rude and their work can be found online at www.mozrude.com, or on Instagram, @mozpots.



The street mural on the Main and Division Street intersection. (Photo by Jack Schindler Van Hoof)

On the value of internships and related experiences

Michelle Stangler
michelle.stangler@my.uwrf.edu

Nearly 15 internships, multiple freelance writing and related opportunities, and one fellowship project.

Without context, that might seem like a lot, and you may think I'm broke. There's some truth to that statement, but with 365 days in a year, there's ample time to invest in opportunities to learn and grow. Some opportunities were weeklong, and some didn't pay as much, most were compensated through an hourly rate, scholarships, or travel reimbursements, but they were valuable in many ways.

Opened the door to my overall goal

After changing colleges and majors, following my first semester at UW-River Falls, I decided to major in agricultural marketing communications. It wasn't until my summer internship that I realized I wanted to expand my writing skills, which eventually led to me double majoring in journalism.

The summer between freshman and sophomore year, I interned with UWRF and WRFW, the on-campus radio station, alumna Pam Jahnke and the team at the Mid-West Farm Report in southern Wisconsin. This experience made me realize how much I loved telling the stories of people involved in agriculture and asking questions.

This experience ultimately clarified my goal of somehow and somewhere being involved in agriculture and storytelling.

Learned perspectives within the industry

The skills I learned in various jobs, from teamwork to communication, are transferable and can be applied to any long-term career. In fact, while many employers value experiences and degrees, they also appreciate candidates who are willing to learn and have a growth mindset.

I fully embraced this approach. To become a great communicator, I collaborated with various organizations and companies serving the industry. Some of these organizations included local radio stations, agricultural-radio networks, trade magazines, organization communication departments, events, and more.

Gaining these diverse perspectives and insights from a range of people has made me think more critically and, hopefully, become better at my future job.



The several internships and experiences have had a significant impact on Stangler's goals and life after college, as illustrated through some of the opportunities captured in these pictures. (Photos by Michelle Stangler)

Only short-term

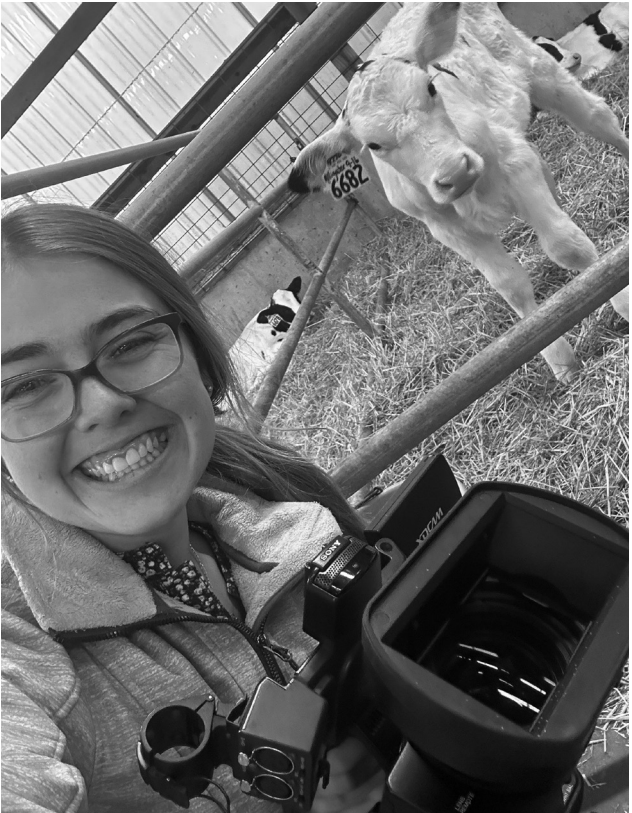
The beauty of internships is that they are generally a few months long, and in some cases, they can be extended. In the field of communications, you may also have the opportunity to work as a freelancer or contractor on a project basis.

This summer, I lived in Idaho for an internship. Not only did I gain valuable experience in magazines, editing, and the industry, but I also learned more about myself while living away from home. I discovered how much I loved paddleboarding, exploring new places, and, most importantly, I gained a better understanding of who I am beyond being a Wisconsinite.

There is tremendous value in internships and related experiences that allow us to learn, grow, and make mistakes. People and organizations are eager to invest in young in-

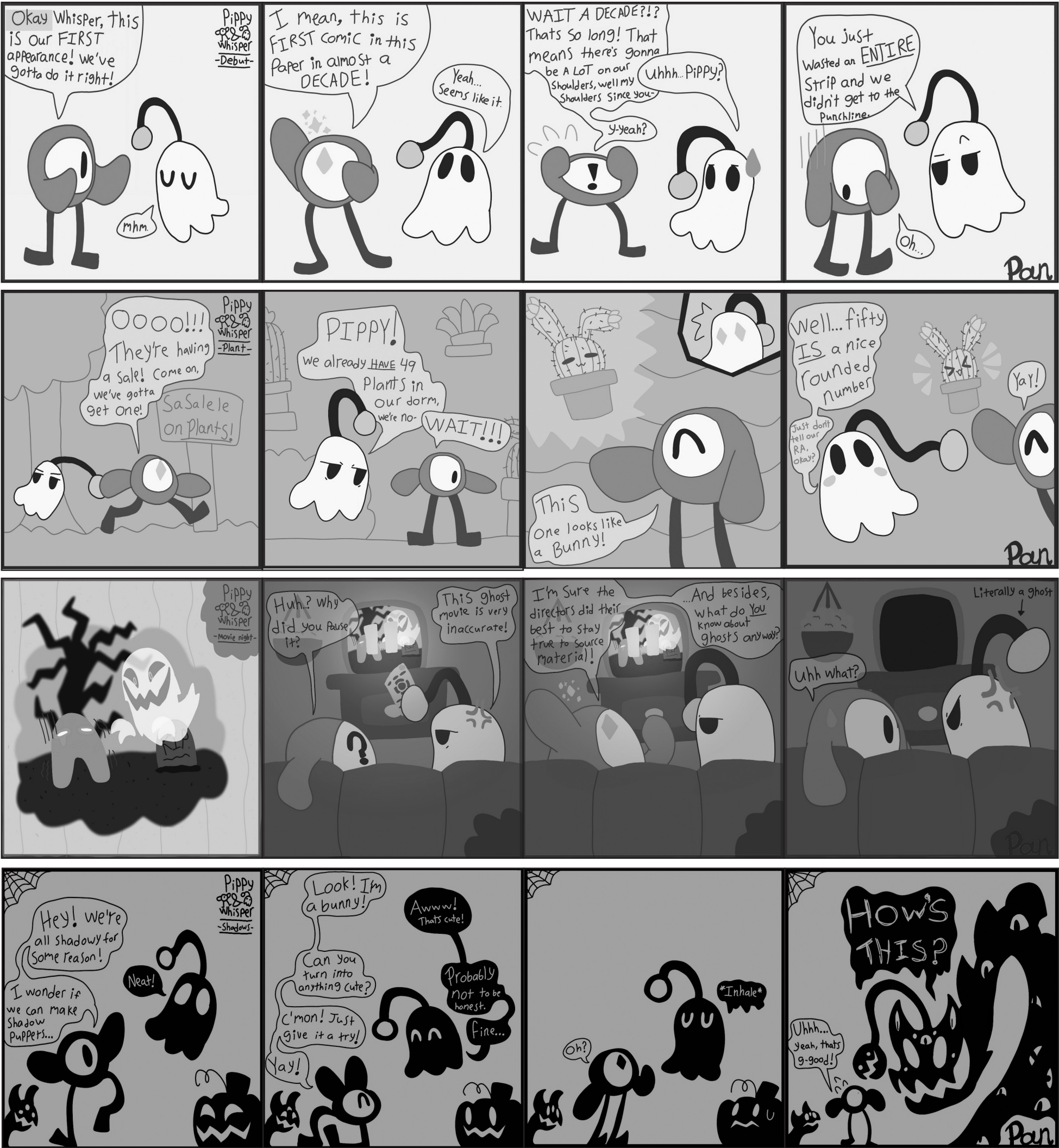
dividuals like us to make a difference and provide a fresh perspective. Whether you hold the title of intern, fellow, or freelancer, you too can learn and grow. Many companies and organizations are already hiring for next summer, and our campus Career Services is a great resource to help you in your search. Utilizing platforms like LinkedIn and Handshake, in addition to following up on opportunities from career fairs, has been where I found the most success. Happy searching!

A storyteller of agriculture, Michelle Stangler is a senior studying journalism and agricultural marketing communications at UW-River Falls. Creator of a communications and podcast Positivity in Ag, she loves helping to share the stories of an industry that provides us food, fuel and fiber. You can reach Stangler at m.lynn.stangler@gmail.com.



Pippy & Whisper

Declan Rutledge | declan.rutledge@my.uwrf.edu



For more comics, visit the Student Voice at uwrfvoice.com

Letter to the Editor

After enrolling for a non-UWRF study abroad program, I was surprised to see 500 dollars charged to my account for a “study abroad” fee. The Office of International Education claims that it is an administrative fee to cover services that they provide to students such as meeting with them and ensuring that credits transfer back to the university. On the study abroad website, there is no mention that a payment is needed to receive services from them. When inquiring why I had to pay this fee although I was going on a program through a different university, they responded that I signed a legally binding document that requires me to pay.

Additionally, the study abroad website does not provide a full itemized list of fees that I would have to pay, only an estimate of what would be paid. The UW System requires insurance for all study abroad program participants and I was expecting to pay a majority of the fees for insurance, not an administrative fee.

It is very misleading to call a fee a “study abroad” fee as it implies that I am being fined for choosing to participate in a study abroad program. There is no purpose to be charged for a non-UWRF program. If there is no mention that services from the office require payment, then there

is no need to be charging a fee and to charge a fee for this is a misrepresentation. Additionally, the legal requirement of this payment in order to participate in a program and receive insurance is extortion.

I am calling on Chancellor Gallo, Provost Travis, the Office of International Education, and the International Programs Committee to change the title of this fee and remove it for those who are choosing to participate in a non-UWRF program,

Sincerely,
Sasha Resig

Editorial: Does the UW System know what it’s doing?

In the wake of a UW-River Falls annual tuition increase and the arrival of Deloitte, a private audit services company, at UWRF, financial concerns are rampant.

The UWRF annual tuition increase of over \$1,000 went into effect in fall of 2023. This increase can be divided into an \$822 annual increase that affects all UW System universities and a \$283 annual increase that affects specifically UWRF.

We at the Student Voice believe that the UWRF-specific increase is reasonable, as it is an investment in UWRF programs like the Falcon Promise and the First-Year Experience. Whether or not we at the Voice see the value in these programs, at least the money will have a direct impact on the UWRF campus, and on the experiences of its students.

The UW System increase, on the other hand, has less direct results. The most direct use of the money, in fact, is the recent announcement that the UW System will be rebranded to the Universities of Wisconsin. The rebrand cost the UW System \$480,000.

We at the Student Voice believe that, whether or not the UW System tuition increase is reasonable, the money is, at current, not being used in a way that benefits the universities.

Jay Rothman, president of the UW System, said, “The idea is to shift the focus from a system to the universities that provide opportunities for students and families across Wisconsin. We think a new name, our new identity, reflects the collective role our 13 public universities play in the economic and social fabric of Wisconsin.”

The Voice believes that this statement exemplifies a lack of transparency on the part of the UW System. Rothman

claims to prioritize the universities, but has authorized Deloitte to conduct audits which will likely be used to facilitate budget cuts.

This follows budget cuts like the ones at UW-Oshkosh, where 140 employees were laid off and 35 positions were left unfilled. In addition, Rothman announced on Oct. 17, that UW-Milwaukee’s Washington County campus and UW-Oshkosh’s Fond du Lac campus would be closing by June 2024, with all of their classes moving online.

When we interviewed Jay Rothman at the Board of Regents meeting on Oct. 6, he said, “we are the most affordable public university system in the Midwest, and we’re working hard to make sure that we remain affordable.” Rothman’s authorization of systemwide tuition increases seems to weaken this promise of affordability.

In addition, the Board of Regents meeting listed skepticism of the value of higher education as one of the threats that the UW System is facing. Tuition increases, however, will only increase skepticism, even if the UW universities remain affordable. We believe that PR decisions like the rebrand, which are questionable at best, could also increase skepticism.

Rothman is correct that the UW universities, and especially River Falls, are affordable relative to other public universities. The Voice believes that UW-River Falls continues to offer a worthwhile cost-to-benefit ratio, but, if recent trends continue, that could change.

Affordability is one of, if not the most important factor in many students’ decisions to attend UWRF, and mounting tuition increases could undermine that. Many of the Voice’s staff members, especially those in their freshman year, ex-

pressed concern at such a possibility.

UWRF’s reciprocity bill offers a potential answer to these concerns.

Minnesota residents pay more in tuition than Wisconsin residents, and that additional revenue, which amounts to \$4.3 million, is sent to the state of Wisconsin. The reciprocity bill would allow UWRF to retain that lost revenue, and use it as it sees fit.

The Student Voice supports the reciprocity bill for several reasons. Despite the fact that the state of Wisconsin has a projected surplus of over 7.1 billion dollars, the Wisconsin State Assembly cut UW System funding by \$32 million in September 2023. In our opinion, taking an additional \$4.3 million, from UW-River Falls specifically, is unreasonable.

If UWRF were able to retain the reciprocity money, it would have the opportunity to reject Deloitte’s audit suggestions, eliminate its structural deficit, increase professor and staff member salaries, and perhaps even reduce the recent tuition increase.

After decisions such as UWRF’s \$232,000 rebrand and the \$100,000 College Tour episode, we at the Voice are under no assurance that UWRF will use the money effectively, but at least the university would have the financial flexibility to do so.

Of course, it remains to be seen whether the bill will be passed. With these and other challenges looming on the horizon, change is needed in the UW System, and, in our opinion, a UW System rebrand is not going to suffice. All the while, it’s becoming more and more difficult to remain hopeful for the future of Wisconsin higher education.



- Editor

Assistant Editor

General Manager

Reporter

Reporter

Reporter

Comics

Photography

Sports Reporter

Faculty Advisor

Advisor in mem.
- Jack Schindler Van Hoof

Lexi Janzer

Josh Brauer

Rachel Karweick

Caroline

Johan

Declan

Elliot Issacson

Ethan Lay

Jennifer Willis-Rivera

Andris Straumanis

The Student Voice is a student-written and managed newspaper for UW-River Falls, and is published monthly during the regular school year.

All editorial content in the Student Voice is determined by the newspaper’s Editorial Board.

The opinions expressed in editorials and columns do not represent those of the newspaper’s advisor, student population, administration, faculty or staff.

Letters to the editor must be 300 words or less, and include a first and last name and phone number. They can be submitted at 304 North Hall, River Falls, WI 54022 or to editor@uwrvoice.com.

The Student Voice reserves the right to edit any material for content, libel or space. It also reserves the right to withhold letters. All letters, news releases, briefs, display ads and classified ads must be able to be submitted no later than Wednesday at noon during the week of publishing. Information on publishing schedule can be obtained by contacting the editor.

Because of high production costs, UW-River Falls community members are permitted to collect one copy of the Student Voice per issue. A single copy of the Student Voice is valued at \$1, and additional copies may be requested from the editorial staff via email. Newspaper theft is a crime. Those who violate the single copy rule may be subject to civil and criminal prosecution.

TikTok “preacher” Sister Cindy sparks controversy

Riley Budge and Jack Schindler Van Hoof

Cindy Smock, or Sister Cindy, as she is better known, addressed a crowd of UW-River Falls students and faculty on Sept. 12, 2022, as part of her “Ho No Mo revolution.”

Smock is a Christian preacher known for her provocative campus sermons, in which she condemns sexual promiscuity and homosexuality among college students, particularly women. Smock introduces her sermons as “Sister Cindy’s slut-shaming show.”

Smock travels to universities around the United States to present her “slut-shaming shows.” Many have denounced her and her demonstrations as hateful.

Smock’s renown has been credited to viral content on social media, especially TikTok, where she has 430,000 followers and 9.4 million likes. This success on social media has been attributed to the “shock value” of her content, which is often explicit in nature.

When Smock arrived in River Falls, she was asked to leave the University Center lawn by University Center staff, who told her she needed to have a reservation to use the space, as per UWRF policy. Smock didn’t leave the campus, however; for the next four hours, she addressed students and faculty outside of the SciTech construction site.

“We’re Christians, and Christians have a message, that God saves, Jesus Christ saves,” Bill Landerholm said. “Sometimes we use the methods at our disposal, which is the popular TikTok and other things, to launch into that message.”

Landerholm is a traveling campus preacher as well, and he said that he has known Smock and her late husband, Jed Smock, for 25 years. Landerholm is a non-denominational Christian, and he said that he believes Cindy Smock is as well.

“We’re here to tell the college student there’s a different way to think,” Landerholm said. “There are different worldviews worth considering, and one of those is Christianity.”

Another demonstrator, Francisco, who said that he didn’t have a last name, explained the sign he had brought. “The sign says, ‘Ask me why you deserve hell,’” he said. “It’s a magnet to create a conversation. It doesn’t say you’re going to go to hell; it just says you deserve to go.”

Another sign said, “Warning. Hell awaits,” and included abortionists, rebellious women, sports nuts, party animals, cowards, and Catholics on its list of people who, according to the sign’s creator, Vijay, are going to hell.



Cindy Smock spoke before a crowd of UWRF students and faculty on Sept. 12. (Photo by Jack Schindler Van Hoof)

“If you are on this list, you’re in trouble with God, because this is how sinful people are. You don’t want to sin,” Vijay said. “Jesus died for the sins of all the people. But salvation is not automatic. So if you continue to sin, you’re not a Christian. You may be a fake.”

Allen Torian, a UWRF student and football player, mentioned Vijay’s sign, and its inclusion of “sports nuts.” “Sports is something that’s driven me to be the man I am today,” he said. “Just because I like sports, I’m going to hell? I feel like that’s kind of messed up.”

“It’s a great example of free speech,” Dean Vesperman, Assistant Professor of Teacher Education at UWRF, said of Smock’s demonstration. “It’s part of Jefferson’s marketplace of ideas, that people can say things and do things in the marketplace.”

“The marketplace will decide what sayings, what things, have value and what don’t have value,” Vesperman said.

“You shouldn’t suppress it.”

“I feel like if they had more clear points, it would make a little bit more sense,” Torian said. “But she’s over there rambling, and it really didn’t make any sense to me.”

Another student, Carter Huffman, said, “I think she’s a hilarious person who is completely wrong, and I’m here for the joke.”

Bill Landerholm said, “You’re always going to have your mockers. The Bible says some mocked, some thought about it, and some actually believed. There are many testimonials of people who said they were changed because [Sister Cindy] came to their campus.”

“[The students] are here for the theater, not really the religion,” Vesperman said.

Austin Eldeen, another student and football player said, “I’m Christian, I believe in God, but you’re not going to reach anybody with any [expletive] like that.”



Dozens gathered to hear Smock speak. (Photo by Jack Schindler Van Hoof)



A demonstrator and his sign at Cindy Smock’s speech. (Photo by Riley Budge)