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STUDENT VOICE

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Popular UW-River Falls instructor who lost job during budget cuts may return in fall

Katie Galarno

Falcon News Service

Instead of preparing to clean out his office because he has lost his job to budget cuts, one UW-River Falls instructor has been informed that he has the option to continue teaching this fall.

Joe Blum is an instructor in the Department of Screen and Stage Arts (SASA), the manager of production operations who oversees equipment checkout for students and a video producer with University Communications and Marketing. Earlier this semester, he was told that his two-year contract with UWRF would not be renewed, which he said surprised both him and his colleagues.

“I think we were all pretty shocked when we found out,” Blum said, “especially because I do support quite a few different things, so we weren’t expecting that to go.”

While Blum was breaking the news to his students, Chair of SASA Robin Murray was trying to figure out a way to keep Blum at the university. She said that she and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Bradley Caskey worked something out that would allow Blum to teach six credits each semester of the 2016-2017 academic year. They are also in the process of making sure that Blum can continue overseeing the equipment checkout.

“This has been in the works and there’s nothing official yet,” Murray said, “but I feel very confident that between myself and the dean, we have figured out a plan that’s going to work really well.”

Meanwhile, students decided to get involved in the effort to save Blum’s position. Corey Fern and Emma Johnson, co-presidents of the improvisation troupe that Blum advises, began circulating a petition after Fern spoke to Blum and noticed that he seemed upset.

“He said like, ‘Well I just found out that I’m going to be out of a job in June,’ and my heart immediately sank,” Fern said. “So what I did is I said, ‘I’m not just going to sit down and let this happen.’”

Fern said that he shared the petition with Johnson and ended up with approximately 250 signatures before the petition was delivered with a stack of letters of support to Chancellor Dean Van Galen. Johnson said that, upon learning that Blum could be returning, she was surprised.

“Corey and I went into this with a realist view,” Johnson said. “We said, ‘All right, this might not save one guy because it’s one person, but at least it’ll get the word out there to the chancellor that there’s people who care about the budget cuts.’”

The support from students is something that Blum said blew him away, especially because he likes working with them in particular.

“Just to hear that was ending was really tough, but all of the students coming together in all the different facets that I work with



Tori Schneider/Student Voice

Joe Blum, instructor of stage and screen arts, writes on the board during his Storytelling: Digital Media class, Monday, April 11 in North Hall.

was just amazing,” Blum said. “That’s why I’m here is to help the students and work with them.”

Murray said that some of her students threatened to leave if Blum’s position was not renewed, so she was happy to see them taking action even though it was she and Caskey who ultimately figured things out.

“I just feel like a few years ago, if this had happened, students would have just complained and not done anything,” Murray said, “so I’m feeling good about it.”

However, Caskey said in an email that he was already convinced of Blum’s importance

to the university and that the petition did not influence him when making the hiring decision.

“I knew how important he is to our students’ success and I just needed to see how the budget cuts were playing out across all CAS programs before I could determine whether or not we had money to fund his assignments,” Caskey said.

Murray said that the result so far is not perfect, but that the goal is to keep Blum at UWRF for another year while more details are worked out.

“It’s not the best solution in the world, but

it’s kind of like a Band-Aid for a while,” Murray said, “and that gives us time to think about what we can do and where we can possibly find funding and reorganizing.”

Unless University Communications and Marketing figures out a way to fund Blum’s position as the video producer, he would no longer be a full-time employee. Murray said that equipment checkout hours may be decreased and Blum may not have as much time to work with students on independent studies if his position is only part of what it is right now.

St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice Center offers alternative system to low-level offenders

Ryan Odeen

Falcon News Service

Upon being arrested and charged with a low-level offense or petty misdemeanor, someone accused of a crime may face uncertainty about what will happen in the court system. Instead of thinking in traditional terms of justice, the St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice Center in River Falls offers a different approach.

Rather than an offender going through the traditional justice system, where there is simply crime and punishment, the St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice Center offers a process of reconciliation with the victims and the community as a whole.

Susan Capparelli, executive director of the center, said the idea of restorative justice has resonated with her since her time as a master’s student at Hamline Law School in St. Paul. She says restorative justice has been revolutionizing the criminal justice system in many ways.

“The victim is often kind of neglected in the court system,” Capparelli said. “That role of healing is not there.”

The courts acknowledge that in certain cases restorative justice is a more favorable alternative than the traditional system. The court will often divert offenders to a restorative justice program, or the offenders are charged with a lesser offense for participating in a program.

The courts recognize that in order to keep recidivism, or people committing the same offenses, from happening there has to be an alternative to the traditional model, which seems to fail low-level offenders. To reduce recidivism rates, Capparelli said, offenders’ thinking and behaviors have to be changed.

“A big part of the restorative process is empathy, accountability through empathy,” Capparelli said. “And hearing a story of a victim, or a victim’s surrogate, or community members that have been impacted by crime and conflict in the community, so there’s that rip-

ple effect. Those things are just not discussed in the judicial system.”

UW-River Falls works directly with the St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice with students who have been charged with underage consumption of alcohol and drug offenses. Capparelli said the program serves the two-county area: St. Croix and Pierce counties. However, some types of cases, including felonies and sexual assaults, are not handled by the program.

“We have our own criteria. I think that outside agencies and entities appreciate that, that we’re not trying to be everything,” Capparelli said. “By and large, restorative justice for these petty offenses, that do not need to sit in our criminal justice system for nine months or 18 months, can be very effective and highly cost saving.”

A typical week at St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice has different sessions: underage consumption panels, controlled substance and alcohol intervention, a teen traffic violation

seminar, or a victim impact panel, to name a few. Retail theft intervention is another area of concern for the program.

“What we offer is a brief, focused intervention. So it’s typically only about a two-hour commitment, and it is focused on accountability,” said Liana Frey, manager of the center’s operations. “While it is non-judgmental, you’re here for a reason, you’re here to do work, so participation is required.”

The non-profit organization operates on a \$150,000 annual budget, Capparelli said, relying on a few grants and community donations, as well as the nominal fees that offenders pay — \$35 for children and \$65 for adults. The program has roughly 40-50 volunteers, a few student interns and community members who help with certain aspects of the circle conferences.

St. Croix Valley Restorative Justice’s annual fundraising dinner and auction is scheduled April 23 at the Kilkarney Golf Course in River Falls.

News briefs:

Seven UWRF students to present at Posters in the Rotunda

From a potential drug to treat melanoma, the testing of targeted antibiotics against classified endophytic contamination, and a small grains winnower to lower extremity kinematics and the impact of a living green wall on mood and academic performance, seven UW-River Falls undergraduates bring an impressive grab bag of research topics to this year’s Posters in the Rotunda event in Madison April 13.

These are just a handful among the dozens of research topics that University of Wisconsin System students and faculty research mentors will showcase at the event. Students participating from UW-River Falls are: Noah Stueven of Sheboygan, Rebbekah Hite of River Falls, Mitch Breuer of Goodhue, Minn., Kaitlynn Graven of River Falls, Alison Miotke of South St. Paul, Minn., Siri Doyle of Hayward, and Matthew Pechacek of Prescott.

State legislators will join UW System and institutional leaders in welcoming 140 students and nearly 90 faculty mentors to the State Capitol rotunda Wednesday. Undergraduates from the System’s 26 campuses will set up poster displays and share the findings of their diverse research subjects. Many topics involved multiple academic years of study and collaboration with faculty mentors and community partners throughout the state.

UW System President Ray Cross will welcome students, faculty members and other guests at the 13th annual Posters event. The event begins at 9:30 a.m. with welcome remarks in the Grand Army of the Republic Room. Posters will remain on display until 3 p.m. in the Capitol Rotunda.

The UW System has earned a national reputation as a leader in undergraduate research, which contributes to the state’s priorities, including retention, graduate rates, and workforce and economic development.

“The issues being addressed or investigated by UW students are real-life issues affecting Wisconsin citizens and communities,” Cross said. “The research being done here has the potential to inform public policy and decisions made by the private sector. It is a powerful illustration of the UW System’s ongoing commitment to the Wisconsin Idea.”

Wisconsin Eye will provide live coverage of the event’s opening remarks by President Cross. Wisconsin Eye also expects to highlight at least one presenter from each UW institution as part of a program on the Posters in the Rotunda event to be aired at a future date.

More information on the Posters in the Rotunda schedule is available at <http://www.wisconsin.edu/posters>. For further information about UW-River Falls undergraduate research, email beth.schommer@uwrf.edu.

UWRF once again earns STARS Silver Rating for sustainability

The University of Wisconsin-River Falls has earned its fourth consecutive STARS Silver Rating in recognition of its sustainability achievements from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). STARS, the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, measures and encourages sustainability in all aspects of higher education.

The UW-River Falls campus is committed to modeling the values, principles, and practices of sustainability. Campus sustainability initiatives include: alternative fuels and transportation; energy and water conservation, waste minimization, and infusing sustainability into the curriculum. UW-River Falls was one of the original institutions that participated in the beta testing for the initial development of the STARS ranking tool.

“UW-River Falls is fortunate to have many champions of sustainability amongst our students, faculty, and staff,” said Mark Klapatch, UW-River Falls sustainability and custo-

dial supervisor. “The achievement of a silver rating requires contributions from people all over campus across many disciplines and truly demonstrates the passion our campus community has for modeling sustainability.

With more than 750 participants on six continents, AASHE’s STARS program is the most widely recognized framework in the world for publicly reporting comprehensive information related to a college or university’s sustainability performance. Participants report achievements in four overall areas: academics, engagement, operations, and planning/administration. One additional section allows for innovation credits, allowing an institution to note unique programs and initiatives. UW-River Falls submitted four innovation credits, receiving the maximum amount of additional credit available.

“Colleges and universities are like small cities, and their impact is substantial. STARS was developed by the campus sustainability community to provide high standards for recognizing campus sustainability efforts,” said AASHE Executive Director Meghan Fay Zahniser. “UW-River Falls has demonstrated a substantial commitment to sustainability by achieving a STARS silver rating and is to be congratulated for their efforts.”

Unlike other rating or ranking systems, this program is open to all institutions of higher education, and the criteria that determine a STARS rating is transparent and accessible to anyone. Because STARS is a program based on credits earned, it allows for both internal comparisons as well as comparisons with similar institutions. AASHE is an association of colleges and universities that are working to create a sustainable future. AASHE’s mission is to empower higher education to lead the sustainability transformation. It provides resources, professional development and a network of support to enable institutions of higher education to model and advance sustainability in everything they do, from governance and operations to education and research. For more information about AASHE, visit www.aashe.org. For more information about the STARS program, visit <http://stars.aashe.org>.

Most recent and previous STARS reports for UW-River Falls are publicly available at <https://stars.aashe.org/institutions/university-of-wisconsin-river-falls-wi/report>.

For more information on sustainability efforts at UW-River Falls, visit <http://www.uwrf.edu/sustainability> or email mark.klapatch@uwrf.edu.

UWRF innovation team continues on to international competition

University of Wisconsin-River Falls Director for the Center of Innovation and Business Development Danielle Campeau announced today that UW-River Falls Team Protein Pod was the winner of the university’s Second Annual Innovation Challenge. The win means the team is now accepted into the International Business Model Competition at the Microsoft Ventures Campus in Redmond, Wash., April 29-30 where they will compete with teams from around the world for more than \$75,000 in prize money.

UWRF’s Innovation Challenge was created to support business startups on campus and reward innovative ideas. The Innovation Challenge is modeled around recent research in Lean Startup that guides entrepreneurs to “get out of the building” and test their business assumptions utilizing tools such as the Business Model Canvas. This process is different from the typical Business Plan Competition. Entrepreneurs are rewarded for creating a hypothesis, testing their assumptions with potential customers and pivoting their business idea based on the high-quality feedback they are receiving.

Many startup businesses fail and the Lean Startup methodology helps entrepreneurs reduce the risk of failure through testing their business assumptions. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to find failure points early in the process. In fact, the more weaknesses that are identified and pivots to their ideas based on that feedback, the better.

This year, two teams competed in the Innovation Challenge hosted at UWRF on March 3. Eighteen judges participated in the event including business leaders and economic development professionals from across the state. Edward Matsushima and Zach Merriek, both freshman business administration majors, won the competition with their business idea, Protein Pod. Their product offers a convenient transportation method for nutritional protein to maximize the benefits by reducing the amount of time between a workout and administration of the supplement.

Senior Michael Mader, a marketing major, took second

place with his social enterprise, Hippy Feet. According to the Salvation Army, the number one requested item in homeless shelters is socks. Hippy Feet provides a solution to this pervasive problem by offering a buy-one give-one product. Purchasing the organic, durable wool sock allows the customer to give back as a pair is automatically donated to a local homeless shelter.

More than \$6,000 in prize money was awarded to these teams.

Both teams will compete at the WI Big Idea Tournament on Saturday, April 9, in Madison. Student teams from other UW institutions will be vying for the main prize, a \$25,000 Ideadvance Grant.

The Innovation Challenge is offered through the Center for Innovation and Business Development within the UWRF College of Business and Economics (CBE) and is made possible through financial contributions by AGS Data Systems, WiSys Technology Foundation and UW-Extension. Associate Professor of Management Marina Onken serves as faculty adviser of the program.

The university recently awarded CBE funding to move forward with an “Accelerating Innovation” program to create a culture of innovation on campus by consolidating a MakerSpace and offering specific course-work in innovation, design and diffusion of new ideas.

Individuals interested in learning more about innovation at UWRF should email danielle.campeau@uwrf.edu.

UWRF to host Ag Day to raise agriculture awareness

The University of Wisconsin-River Falls Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter will host the fourth annual Ag Day on Campus on Tuesday, April 19, to promote Wisconsin agriculture. All events are free and open to the public.

With interactive events taking place all day, non-agricultural students, faculty and community members are invited to learn more about agriculture, interact with animals and enjoy food grown and raised by farmers. This year’s theme is “AGvocate.”

Student organizations in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES), along with local agricultural businesses, will have educational and interactive booths set up outside the University Center in the middle of campus from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and beginning at 5:30 p.m., a beef sandwich meal will be served in the Agriculture Science building. At 6:30 p.m., keynote speaker and farm broadcaster Bryant Gill will give a presentation on agricultural advocacy.

“This is a great opportunity to reach out to our fellow students who don’t have as much contact with agriculture as we do,” said Collegiate Farm Bureau public relations officer Britany Statz. “As Farm Bureau members, we take great pride in educating people about everything that goes into producing the food they eat and the clothes they wear. When you’re so far removed from farming, it can be easy to become misinformed about agriculture, so that’s where we as a Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter can step up and change that.”

The UW-River Falls Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter was first established on campus in April 2012 and is associated with the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation (wfbf.com), Wisconsin’s largest general farm organization. Much like Wisconsin’s diverse agricultural landscape, Farm Bureau members represent all farm commodities, and all farm sizes and management styles. Farm Bureau’s mission is to lead farming and rural communities through legislative representation, education, public relations and leadership development.

For more information, email mikayla.hanrahan@my.uwrf.edu.

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Have something to say?

Write a letter to the editor. Email your thoughts to editor@uwrfvoice.com

River Falls Police/UWRF Police Department

Tuesday, April 5

- A theft was reported at Crabtree Hall around 12:30 p.m.

Friday, April. 8

- Property damage due to a motervechicle related accident was reported around 9:30 a.m. at 406 S 2nd Street.

Monday, April. 11

- Property damage due to a motorvechicle related accident was reported around 8 a.m between Cascade Ave and Wild Rose Ave.

Editor’s note:
Information for this section is taken from the UW-River Falls Police Department incident reports.

Climate Summit gets UWRF talking about sustainability

Sophia Koch
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Student leaders, environmental groups and experts from across the country gathered Saturday at UW-River Falls to discuss problems, potential solutions and plans of action related to climate change and sustainability.

The UW Climate Leadership Summit was organized by the UWRF Student Senate and was sponsored in part by the National Campus Leadership Council (NCLC). It included guests from all across Wisconsin and Minnesota, a large proportion of them from student governments and environmental clubs, and they gathered at 8:00 a.m. in the University Center Ballroom in order to discuss and learn about the dangers of climate change and what universities can do in order to be more sustainable.

“We’ve been contributing to climate change for quite some time,” said Cecilia Martinez, the director of research programs at the Center for Earth Energy and Democracy (CEED) and one of many experts who presented over the course of the summit about the impact of humans on the planet.

A study done by NASA reports that in the past century alone, the average global temperature has climbed by about 0.7 degrees. Historically, temperature fluctuations have occurred as the planet goes in and out of ice ages, but the current rise in temperature is happening about ten times faster than in the past. This change correlates with steadily increasing carbon dioxide levels in the earth’s atmosphere—levels that humans have contributed to through use of fossil fuels.

“I think [people] should be aware of their own actions on a daily basis,” Martinez said. “I think also that it is really important for people on college campuses to become very aware of the different processes of intervention, where are the points of intervention where they can actually make a difference.”

In addition to the expert panels and speeches, there were breakout sessions in which groups of guests could listen to and discuss ideas with one another. One featured the concept of the “green fee”, a practice UWRF is hoping to implement in the near future in order to promote greater sustainability on campus. UWRF’s sustainability supervisor Mark Klapatch joined forces with Alex Thomas, the environmental and sustainability affairs director from UW-Stevens Point, to discuss how Stevens Point has already implemented the idea and what methods UWRF might use in creating its own green fee program.

The green fee, they explained, would come from students in the form of segregated fees, and would be pooled together into what Stevens Point calls a “green fund” that can be allocated towards different projects related to sustainability. Thomas cited projects already



Tori Schneider/Student Voice
UWRF Student Senate President Chris Morgan addresses the crowd at the UW Climate Leadership Summit on Saturday, April 9.

being implemented at Stevens Point, and Klapatch proposed potential projects for UWRF such as a composting program, investment in the River Falls solar garden, and faculty/student research projects.

Brian Erdrich, a junior creative writing major at UWRF who was invited to the event, said that he liked what was going on at the Climate Summit, but believes that more needs to be done. “What we’re doing is good,” he said. The universities are serving as a role model for the surrounding communities and other institutions, but the next step is to do

more outreach towards those communities and get as much of the world involved in solving this problem as possible. “If every single university in the Wisconsin system is one hundred percent clean and green and nobody else is, that’s not going to be enough.”

Brady Murphy, the Student Senate chairman of external relations and one of the organizers heavily involved in the summit, spoke on what Senate plans to do in following up on the ideas discussed at the event. Specifically, he said, the aim is to implement the green fee concept discussed by Thomas and Klapatch.

“I genuinely think that the best way to connect the students with information is to enact it, and let them know as we’re doing so why we’re implementing these things,” Murphy said. “In order for people to care on this campus, you kind of have to give them something to talk about.”

The green fee will only go into effect pending a proposal from the Senate and a vote of approval from the student body. It will not be enacted this year, but Murphy says next year’s Senate, presumably, will make the project a top priority.

Historian says art collecting reveals story of United States-Asia relations

Ryan Funes
Falcon News Service

An expert on Asian relations with the West recently spent two days in River Falls speaking on campus and in the community.

While historian Warren Cohen’s presentation on the UW-River Falls campus focused on U.S.-China relations, his Friday, April 8, talk at the River Falls Public Library was on an even more narrow topic — Asian art collecting in America.

Cohen was chosen as this year’s Wyman Visiting Professor in History by Zhiguo Yang, chair of the Department of History and Philosophy.

“He is very approachable... He is less confusing in his presentation because he tends to not place what he is presenting in a complex, theoretical framework,” Yang said. “Many of the audience found this style of presentation appealing and attractive.”

Cohen is a distinguished university professor emeritus at the University of Washington and has written about the subject of U.S.-China relations in his book “The Challenge to American Primacy, 1945 to the Present,” part of the four-volume “Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations.”

It is a subject he has extensive knowledge on, and how it can be seen in collections of art gave new insight into those relations.

Through his presentation, he talked of how Asian art collecting arose in the late 20th century, and how it grew from a luxury to a way of life for some. Cohen gave long explanations of how unscrupulous some of this collecting came to be, such as those who would steal priceless ancient artifacts from sites in

China or Japan or rob graves for their collections.

As he talked, Cohen revealed a lot of information on various collectors and museums, such as how the Boston Museum of Fine Arts acquired its extensive collection of Japanese art, or how collectors’ personal lives would be concerned with the hunt for new pieces to add to their collections.

Despite how cutthroat the business can get, Cohen confided that collecting that art contributed a lot to a country’s own culture and appearance to the world. For the collector themselves, it can say a lot.

“I think for most people this is a status symbol, and the rarer a piece you have the more important sense of self you have,” he said of those who collect. “But for other people it can be a strictly aesthetic sort of thing: ‘This could be the most beautiful thing I have ever seen and I have got to have it.’”

UWRF Professor Emeritus Kurt Leichtle said he quite enjoyed Cohen’s presentation.

“He’s a very good lecturer, and the programs have been good, and the responses have been good. The department’s enjoyed having him. It’s been interesting for us to have to talk to somebody of his caliber and it’s not a set of topics we get to see,” he said of Cohen.

Cohen said that whenever people see a piece of Asian or any foreign art, they should always question where it came from, for they might get some fascinating and important answers.

He recalled one statue he saw in France that he later found out had to be smuggled into the country. Knowing the fate of that piece, Cohen said, who knows what other secrets works of art may hide.

Incumbent, challenger to face off in UW-River Falls Student Senate election

Paul Langfellow
Falcon News Service

As another semester at UW-River Falls comes to a close, so does another cycle of representatives in Student Senate. Elections for next year’s Student Senate, including president and vice president, are scheduled April 27-29.

The elections will take place online and will be open during the entire three-day duration for any UWRF students to vote.

Incumbent President Chris Morgan is running for re-election against Brady Murphy, who is the Student Senate’s director of external relations.

In the vice presidential race, Halan Tran, a member of the Student Senate’s Executive Board, will be running on the same ticket with Morgan. Tran will be up against Jessica Knapp, the inclusivity senator, who will be on the ballot without a running mate.

Each of the candidates also has a platform and new ideas that they would like to bring to Student Senate for the upcoming school year. Murphy said that he would really like to centralize and bring students together on campus to create more organization and raise awareness about what is going on around campus.

“There are some very serious issues and the one that I would like to touch on, I believe that UWRF as a campus is, it’s fractured, and I believe that there are a lot of ways we can go about correcting this fractured campus that we have,” Murphy said.

Morgan’s platform includes funding sustainability on campus, continuing to raise awareness about sexual assault, and seeking additional support for military veterans who

attend UWRF.

“For next year we are going to continue on the sustainability track. So, this year we pretty much set the groundwork for sustainability, it’s carrying it out next year. So next year my main goal is for one of the first meetings back have it on the agenda for a green fee,” Morgan said.

All elected positions will be included on the ballot, while other positions that are appointed by the Student Senate president of Student Senate — such as chairs for certain committees — will not. A total of 11 positions will be on the ballot.

Student Senate as a whole will go through some changes next year as it does every year, however this is normal for UWRF. Director of Student Involvement Paul Shepherd, the staff advisor to Student Senate, said that the body has evolved over time and that this year’s members have had more of a focus on outreach toward the campus.

“Depending on who the leadership is within the organization, the priorities do shift a little bit,” Shepherd said. “You know this year with Chris Morgan as the president, there was a lot more focus on outreach and doing a lot more programming and events that are designed to raise the profile of different issues on campus that face students.”

The new senate will take office on Tuesday, May 3.

EDITORIAL

Students should make voices heard voting in Student Senate elections

Student Senate elections are coming up. UW-River Falls students will have the option of voting online for their choice of Senate president along with other members of Senate including the vice-president between April 27-29.

The race for president will be between incumbent Christopher Morgan and another Senate member, Brady Murphy.

It is important that students know this; these elections have consistently low participation, which ought to change. While it may not seem important enough, the president of Student Senate, along with all members of the organization, has a major role in what happens on this university and affects the lives of students.

Senate has done plenty of good work this past year, notably working heavily on the “It’s on Us” campaign as part of its focus of sexual assault and mental health awareness, sustainability and inclusivity. As the head of this push, Christopher Morgan has made for an exceptional president and certainly proven himself as capable of the position. Brady Murphy is close to completing his second year as a member of Senate but remains untested in such a demanding position. We felt it important to write this editorial because college-aged men and women have historically been the lowest demographic in terms of voting turnout – according to the U.S. Census Bureau, rates of voting among those aged 18-24 were 38 percent in the 2012 elections. This is compared to 50, 63 and 70 percent turnout among those aged 25-44, 45-64 and 65+ respectively. Even this low rate would be optimistic in this election. During 2014’s election, there were a total of 728 votes out of a total of 5603 total enrolled students – that is a voting rate of 13 percent.

One thing that could explain the poor turnout is a lack of information or awareness. That is why it is so important to seek out information actively instead of waiting until it is delivered to oneself. That being said, though, Student Senate should absolutely be doing everything they can to spread the word on the upcoming elections and making sure people understand the positions of those in the running, particularly the prospective presidents and vice-presidents.

We hope that this year will see a good turnout of informed students voting who are aware of what the candidates stand for. Another important thing: in the 2014 election, Anthony Sumnicht won the position of president with only 50.42 percent of the vote – a margin of just six votes – so do not think for an instant that your individual vote does not count.

Editorials represent the opinion of the Student Voice Editorial Board and are prepared by the editorial staff.

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Budget cuts threaten strength of great professors on campus

Conor Rose
Columnist

When society says, “You can’t,” I say you can. When someone doubts your abilities, confidently tell them, “Just watch me.” These are lessons taught and practiced within the walls of Professor Warren Johnson’s Marketing Communications classes. Johnson encourages the belief of, “You can do this, no matter what others say,” in all of his lessons. He approaches teaching with a practical opinion, and prepares students for professional working conditions. Johnson strives to make his students employable, and we as students value these types of tendencies in an instructor. Unfortunately, budget cuts continue to take away classes and instructors like Johnson, jeopardizing our education and careers as students. Unless we voice our opinions on the things we value as students, these reductions will continue to get worse.

This spring semester, Johnson introduced MARC 389, Personal Branding, to the marketing communications department. “I simply want to be a positive difference in students’ needs for the future,” says Johnson. After writing up the course, conversing with other professors, and convincing the Steering Committee, MARC 389, Personal Branding was introduced in the spring of 2016. This class turned out to be the first to fill of any class offered in the entire marketing department. Obviously, his lessons and lectures are in demand by students.

“Mr. Johnson isn’t someone who comes into class each day, teaches his lesson from a text book, packs up his briefcase and leaves the classroom. Every assignment is thoroughly thought out and tailored to fit our real life needs,” said Madeline Steil, a freshman in Johnson’s Personal Branding class. Johnson’s classroom chemistry encourages progression and creates student involvement far more than any of my other marketing communication classes.

Throughout this semester, I have continued to build my public speaking skills in Personal Branding with Johnson. As an extension to his Persuasion class, I am again consistently challenged with new types of speeches. The syllabus calls for seven total. Overcoming the fear of public speaking is so critical for success in the professional field, and the requirement for speaking in front of classes is declining in this technologically influenced educational environment we live in. I challenge students, whether a marketing communications student or not, to take one of Johnson’s classes to enhance their personal speaking skills.

As I continue to experience the success of Personal Brand-

ing, I wanted to write this piece to express my thoughts and opinions on Johnson’s course. Ironically, while doing so, recent budget cuts have threatened to eliminate these classes. The marketing communications department is currently offering him 40 percent classroom employment next semester, two classes per week. On top of that, no teaching appointment has been offered to him for spring of next year, and this course which my classmates are raving about, is not offered at all.

Students deserve to be informed on what is happening, and should be aware of the effects these budget cuts will ultimately have on our education. Professor Johnson mentioned in my interview with him that this has been happening since he was a student at UWRF in the 1970’s. “If you want to make a difference, you need to vocalize yourself in waves,” said Johnson. Budget cuts will continue to take our educational opportunities and great professors away from us, unless we voice our opinions.

“With recent budget cuts affecting the university, I’m concerned I will not be able to complete my major within four years here at UWRF. I know for many students, adding an additional year (or more!) of schooling is a big deal financially as well as personally, because we all want to advance to an adult life and real-world jobs after college,” said Janelle Olson, a sophomore marketing communications student and supporter of Johnson’s speaking courses.

This is why I write today, to inform the student body of these current issues, and to potentially save this professor’s job. Warren Johnson sees students as equals, and treats them this way, and I intend to treat respected professors the same. He has taught me to stand for things I believe in, even if others disagree. This is why I took the time to address and confront these issues, and this is the reason I will continue to fight to keep Johnson in the classroom, because expressing yourself in waves, truly is the only effective way to create change in our society.

I encourage all students to pay attention to budget cuts, and the changes being made in the educational curriculum during their time here at UWRF. If we to choose to remain unaware and excluded, we will continue to lose professors that make huge impacts on our education. It is our responsibility to voice our opinions on these issues, and to keep our brilliant, influential educators, like Professor Johnson, on campus.

Conor Rose is a junior majoring in marketing communications. He is an entrepreneur working on his second company and seeks to incorporate an outdoor, adventure-driven lifestyle.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT: STUDENT FEMINIST ORGANIZATION



JJ Knapp
Student Feminist Organization

Q: How long have you been involved with the org and why did you decide to get involved?
A. I’ve been involved with the organization for almost four full semesters. I joined as soon as I transferred here last fall. I identify as a feminist and thought I would at least give the organization a chance by showing up to the first few meetings to get a feel for what kind of priorities the group had. Needless to say, I liked what I saw.

Q: What are three things you want people on campus to know about your org?
A. Feminism benefits everyone, not just women. The definition of feminism has evolved to project all genders, even outside of the western gender binary. Feminism fights for equality and not just against sexism and misogyny. Our group also focuses on ableism, classism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. We’re not all doom and gloom. Our group isn’t always

running around with pitch forks and torches. A lot of what our group is about is maintaining and developing positive relationships and connections. We do a lot of group bonding and volunteer activities in the community. When we aren’t having a debate, we’re having a movie night. Our org definitely knows how to have fun, while also being aware of our surroundings.

Q. When and where does your org meet?
A. We meet at 6:30 in the Willow River Room (Room 334) on Monday evenings.

Q. How can other students get involved in your org?
A. Feel free to show up to one of our meetings, as they are open to everyone. If you want to know more about where we stand as feminists, please check out our posts on our Facebook page: UWRF Student Feminist Organization. If you see something that makes you uncomfortable or concerned, message the page or email us at uwrf.sfo@gmail.com We always appreciate feedback!

Q. What do you think makes a person a good leader?
A. In the case of SFO, I think there are a few things that one really needs to follow: Know when to back down from an argument. Some people can’t be convinced or persuaded, and some just love to start fires underneath it. Know when to walk away and to save your breath so that you can focus your energy elsewhere in a more positive way. Have a good balance in how you approach social change. There is a fine line between being a radical and being politically aware in the way that you approach change and overall communication with others. Certain situations call for certain demeanors, and you need to find a good mix of what to do so that you can push for progressive change while still acting somewhat professional and respectable. People don’t always listen to you when you’re angry, even if you have every right to be angry. It’s just the way the system works, and you have to play the system to win. Realize that you are never done growing. As a feminist, there is always more that you can learn and do to become a better ally and advocate. Be open minded, do your research and don’t be afraid to ask questions.

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STUDENT *voices*

What hobby are you looking forward to the most this spring?

Compiled by Katie Galarno



David Johnson
“Frisbee.”



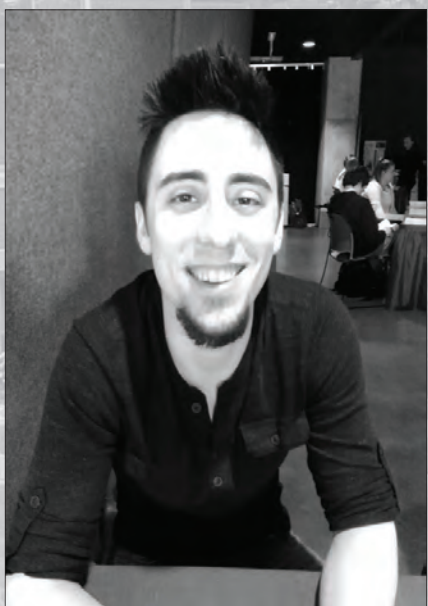
Emma Johnson
“Soccer.”



Miranda Rang
“ATV-ing.”



Nikiesha Myers
“Hiking.”



Eli Nord
“Fly fishing.”

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Etiquette Training

Hosted by: Sigma Alpha – Beta Zeta

Date: April 26, 2016

When: 6:00 p.m.

Where: West Wind Supper Club

Etiquette Professional: Dr. Sierra Howry

*Email eryn.orth@my.uwrf.edu for registration information

*Complimentary dinner will be provided

* First come – First serve

*Training will include dinner etiquette, social networking and interviewing tips and tricks

WRFW 88.7 Student Radio

Tune in. Stream online. wrfw887.com

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Find Freddy’s lost feather in this issue of the Voice and win two free movie passes to the Falls Theatre!

The first person to report the find to **editor@uwrfvoice.com** AFTER 10 a.m. Friday wins!

The winner will be announced on the Voice’s Twitter and Facebook accounts:

@uwrfvoice and **facebook.com/Uwrfstudentvoice**

Now Playing: The Jungle Book

Do you have something to say?

Write a letter to the editor.

Email your thoughts to editor@uwrfvoice.com

Defensive coordinator's return makes it a family affair

Kate Vruwink
Falcon News Service

After first stepping onto the UW-River Falls campus as a prospective student six years ago, Rocky Larson knew where he belonged. It was the school his parents attended and met at when they were students, and where they made the decision to move to Somerset, Wisconsin, to begin their family. According to Larson, with a family that is as close as his, it was important for him to stay around home. Larson is now back at UWRF as the newly hired football defensive coordinator.

“I wanted to be close to home, and I wanted to be with a family atmosphere. It felt right stepping on campus here and I knew a lot of people from my dad,” he said. “It was just a right fit.”

A big reason he wanted to be so close to home was to watch his younger siblings compete in high school sports. At that point in time, his brother Reggie was involved in basketball and football. Reggie’s twin, McKell, was helping their dad on the sidelines of the football games, and their family had just adopted Gaelin Elmore, who played football and is now at the University of Minnesota.

Due to an injury that occurred in high school, Rocky was not able to play college football, but instead was brought on as a

coach. He said that as an 18-year-old coaching 22-year-olds, he was forced to grow up quickly. Larson spent the 2010 through 2013 seasons coaching various positions on the defensive side of the ball.

When Reggie and McKell both graduated in June 2013, they had plans to attend different colleges. Reggie had been offered a full-ride scholarship to West Point, the U.S. military academy, and McKell was off to UW-Eau Claire.

However, after spending two unhappy weeks at West Point, Reggie decided he would come to UWRF to play. For him, nothing could beat being that close to home and having a brother who was coaching. Reggie began his football career during the 2013 season as a center.

McKell also found herself at UWRF after one semester at UWEC because both her brothers were on campus, and she missed being around football. McKell was brought on staff, and helps with film, writing down play calls, and setting up for practices and games.

According to McKell, football has played an important role in her family’s dynamic.

“We’re really tight knit, and football has a lot to do with that,” she said.

After the 2014 season came to an end Rocky was offered an internship at the University of Minnesota. Six months later, he got a call from the head coach at UW-La Crosse

and was offered a full-time position there, which he accepted. The Larson siblings were split up — and on two opposing teams.

UWRF played UW-La Crosse in the 2015 season and beat the Eagles in overtime, 21-20, according to the UWRF sports information website. For Rocky, the loss was terrible, especially since it was the only game he was able to watch his brother play all season.

When the year drew to a close, Rocky knew he wanted to return to UWRF so he called Head Coach Matthew Walker to tell him he’d come back as a volunteer for the football team. Then, as luck would have it, a the defensive coordinator position opened up and Rocky got the job.

For him, it was great to be able to come back to his family, girlfriend and the place he called home.

“My family was really excited, we all went out to eat. It was like a big homecoming,” he said.

McKell said she was the last to find out that Rocky was returning to UWRF.

“My family left me out of the loop because I can’t keep secrets,” she said with a laugh. “So I had no idea. I had no idea he was going to be in the role of defensive coordinator. But I was really happy.”

Reggie echoed McKell’s happiness, and added he was glad to have his brother be able to watch him play his last year of football.

“I was really excited for him to be back,” he said. “He wanted to watch me for one more year, and now he gets to coach me for one more year.”

As the spring football season kicks off, the siblings get to see each other every single day, along with their dad, Bruce Larson, who is helping coach. When asked if it ever got old seeing her family every day, McKell responded with a laugh.

“A little bit,” she said. “No, they’re good. I love hanging out with them.”

Rocky also pointed out that every day there are four Larsons on the field, but it’s even better when their mom makes the drive to River Falls to have supper with them all after practice.

With his newly acquired position and his family by his side, Rocky said he felt some pressure the first day on the job.

“Nervous? I was the first day,” he said. “Walking into the office I was pretty nervous because there was a lot of coaches I didn’t know, there was a lot of players I didn’t know. But after an hour of being in the office, I felt home.”

Rocky will kick off his coaching career as the defensive coordinator on Sept. 3 at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



Tori Schneider/Student Voice
Reggie, Rocky and McKell Larson are all siblings and all have a special role on the football team. Reggie is the team’s center lineman, McKell helps film the team and

UW-River Falls Student Senate hosts Climate Summit



Tori Schneider/Student Voice
Left: J. Drank Hamilton, the Fresh Energy-Science policy Director spoke to the audience. Middle: A panel including Rebecca Otto, MN State Auditor; Shawn Otto, Novelist, political analyst and science advocate; Michael Hsu, MN Board of Regents; Kelly Cain, founder of Saint Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development (SCISCD) discussed climate change. Right: Mark Klapatch, sustainability coordinator talks about the STARS report, UWRF has a silver rating.



Tori Schneider/Student Voice
Left: Student environmental activists from throughout the UW System gather, including UWRF’s own ECOS. Right: Greg Mathews, former president of ECOS talks about the progress on the UWRF Divestment Campaign and the importance of civil disobedience.

Following regional trend, Whole Earth food co-op rebrands

Molly Kinney
Falcon News Service

Whole Earth Grocery Cooperative in downtown River Falls received a facelift at the end of March, following the trend General Manager Evan Sayre says is happening at similar establishments throughout the region. Leading up to the renovation, the annual owners meeting was heavily publicized due to a big announcement that was to be made. Sayre, who has held his position for just about a year, said the reaction so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

“The reaction has been two-fold. We not only remodeled, but also underwent a branding change. We unveiled a new logo and brand. Nobody at the meeting knew, or shouldn’t have at least, what we were going to announce. We tried to keep it secret to increase impact as much as possible,” Sayre said. “We were a little nervous, but the reception has been very positive.”

The renovation happened overnight. Whole Earth closed for 24 hours, and employees worked in 12-hour shifts. First they took out the shelving, and put the products in milk crates for storage in a large truck. A flooring crew came in and replaced the white tiles with a chestnut-colored wood.

Mika Lambert, an art student at UW-River Falls and a cashier at Whole Earth, was a part of the process.

“Everyone was super tired,” she said. “I honestly thought it impossible to do in just a day, but we got it done. I couldn’t be a part of the whole thing because of class, but it was a really intensive and hardcore process and

I think it’s really admirable that everyone worked to hard to finish super quickly.”

She added: “A lot was done to increase the flow of the store, too. It’s not hard sections. Now one section leads to another for a smoother shopping experience. Now when you walk in you’re led right to the produce and coffee instead of the cashiers.”

The lighting was also changed from fluorescent bulbs to LED bulbs, a push towards integrating more sustainable practices to Whole Earth’s business model, Sayre said. A new cooler will be installed, which will also help the co-op save both money and reduce its environmental impact.

As general manager, Sayre is responsible for all operational decisions, and decided it was time to renovate based on the growing number of whole food stores in the region.

“The decision had less to do with growth and more to do with competitive environment,” Sayre said. “Organic and natural food stores are becoming more prevalent than general stores. We needed to do something to react to the change in shopping habits.”

This also was the reason for rebranding the store.

“This is a trend happening in co-ops across the Upper Midwest right now,” he said. “All of them are rebranding or remodeling and growing or moving or making some dramatic change. There’s just a conventional pressure.”

Lambert said she likes being a member as well as employee because it is very different from the other stores in town.

“Globalization makes everything look the same wherever you go, and it’s nice to find a gem where you know that this small co-op

isn’t in every other town.”

Sayre said that stores like the co-op just offer something that conventional grocery stores cannot.

“They’re increasing in popularity, but there’s also a challenge to differentiate what we offer through the co-op model, as well as offering real local products versus conventional,” he said. They can do the packaged stuff as well as we can, but they can’t do produce and local suppliers as we can.”

This may be what sets the co-op apart. Sayre said that at the annual meeting, he was happy to announce that of the money spent on products last year, 30 percent went to local suppliers.

“That’s a pretty big number when you consider that we’re a relatively small store, but that impact on the local market is pretty strong on local farmers.”

He said there are plans in the works to expand in the next three to five years, which would almost certainly mean a move.

“Staying on Main Street would be optimal, but we need a parking lot,” Sayre said.

Whole Earth Co-op was founded in the early 1970s, but Sayre said the exact year isn’t known. It was first located on Main Street, moved to a location on Walnut Street, and moved back to Main Street in 1992. The co-op has been in the current location, 126 S. Main St., ever since.

Whole Earth has about 1,680 members. Each member owns an equal share of the co-op, and can vote to elect a board of directors that makes big-picture decisions, and hires the general manager.

Hallie Chasensky has been a part owner of

the co-op for just about a year.

“I was lucky enough to get my membership while I was a student and their discount at the time was very inexpensive for us,” she said. “Now we (owners) get a nice discount on every purchase instead of a cheap membership price. I live two doors down and enjoy the quality, local and organic food, plus the workers are incredibly friendly and helpful.”

As a customer of the co-op, Chasensky said she is very pleased with the renovations.

“The layout makes shopping way easier to navigate and started introducing new products and brands that add to the experience. It bumped from a small town “get what you can” feel to a more modern and innovative store that offers their clientele what they need.”

The atmosphere of Whole Earth, and knowing what she’s supporting, is why Chasensky said she loves shopping at the local business.

“Being a member of Whole Earth has made me a more responsible shopper in many ways. I use less, waste less and feel better about my decisions as a consumer. Not many other grocery chains can give you that experience,” she said.

“I feel like I’m part of my community by supporting, even in a very small way, the business and local farms and families who provide all the produce,” Chasensky continued. “My body and mind feel better because I’m eating better and using responsible, eco-friendly products for my home.”

Sayre said Whole Earth will have an official grand re-opening party, likely in early May.

Rise of terrorism not deterring study abroad at UWRF

Natalie Howell
Falcon News Service

The rise of global terrorism has not affected Americans looking to travel abroad or students looking to take advantage of the study abroad options at UW-River Falls.

On Friday, Nov. 13, suicide bombers and gunmen attacked several locations in Paris, killing about 130 people. On Tuesday, March 22, two bombs were set off at an airport in Brussels and one bomb was set off at a train station. In this deadly attack, about 35 people were killed. Incidents like this underscore how important it is to look at how to stay safe while traveling abroad.

To educate students on how to deal with emergencies when studying abroad, all students at UWRF who are looking to study abroad must go through an online orientation through the Office of International Education. Part of this orientation includes what to do when one finds oneself in an emergency situation, such as a terrorist attack, according to Executive Director for International Education Katrina Larsen.

When it comes to dealing with the idea of an emergency abroad, the university has a response plan that includes setting money aside

for evacuation of students and faculty. Program leaders for each study abroad program must also submit an emergency plan that is catered to the specifics of the trip. By paying their study abroad fees, students are also signed up for an insurance policy that pays for a flight back to the United States in case of an emergency.

However, the rise of global terrorism has not stopped Americans from packing up their suitcases and traveling abroad. The amount of Americans traveling to Europe has gone up significantly in the past few years, with an increase of 4.2 percent from 2013 to 2014 and a 5.9 percent increase from 2014 to 2015, according to the U.S. National Tourism Office.

And UWRF is no different. Larsen said that although concern was expressed after the attacks in Paris, there has not been a significant decrease in students wanting to study abroad. Larsen attributes this to the growing economy and the fact that traveling to Europe has become relatively inexpensive compared to past years.

“Anything is possible. You could be at the Mall of America and a terrorist attack could happen, it is possible,” said Larsen. “I don’t blame people for being concerned or upset, but when you look at the reality of things,

you’re more likely to get hurt while you drive and text.”

Toria Lodzinski is a junior at UWRF who is double majoring in French and psychology. In the fall 2015 semester, Lodzinski was part of the Semester Abroad: Europe program and spent two months conducting research in France, spending much of her time in Paris.

During the November 2015 attacks in Paris, Lodzinski and her colleagues were in Italy. Learning about what had happened in the middle of the night, the students didn’t hear from their program leader of the university until the morning. They were told to continue traveling, but to avoid any tourist attractions and to not return to Paris. With these instructions, Lodzinski traveled to Ireland where she spent the rest of her time abroad with her family.

Lodzinski said that there isn’t much one can do to prepare for a terrorist attack, and UWRF and the Office of International Education is no exception. She said that the only thing that someone can do to prepare for an emergency is simply to be educated and continue to make good decisions while traveling abroad.

“We had our classes, we knew what we were supposed to do in the event of (an

emergency),” Lodzinski said. “But if you’re caught in the wrong spot at the wrong time I don’t think there was anything else the university could have done for us to help us with that.”

Although one cannot necessarily plan for an emergency, Larsen said that there are things students and anyone traveling abroad can keep in mind to stay safe. She said people should try to fit in and avoid hanging out in large groups. People should also avoid protests and sign up for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) through the U.S. Department of State. A free service, this program sends notices and alerts to travelers about what is going on around the world.

Most importantly, Larsen said that people should practice common sense when traveling abroad.

“If something feels a little funky, avoid that,” said Larsen. “Just be an alert, safe kind of person.”

Most of all, Larsen said that the recent acts of extremist groups should not deter students from expanding their minds through studying abroad.

“If we really believed it was unsafe,” Larsen said, “we would not send people.”

The Student Voice is hiring!

Pick up an application outside of room 304 in North Hall.

Applications are due Friday, April 15, at 7 p.m.!

The Voice is hiring the following positions:

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Proofreader	Advertising Manager	

Lauren in Berlin: A city caught between two worlds

Lauren
Simenson

Columnist

Berlin is a shining glass mecca of modern buildings with colorful graffiti carefully applied to any surface paint can get to. Along with the buildings, the people of Berlin even match their city, their loud and colorful clothes with plenty of metal glint in the city’s warm April weather. It is so different from all

While I may have first laid skeptical eyes on Berlin, mostly lamenting about the fact that the city was not full of old historical buildings and that I had to leave gorgeous Italy behind to arrive at my destination in Germany.

of the cities we have visited so far, making me think more of the United States, that is of Minneapolis and of home. I was thrown

off by all of the modern glass buildings in Berlin, because in my mind’s eye, I still see Germany as an old European city with a history which far eclipses that of the very young United States. But Berlin’s buildings do not display that part of itself any longer. The city of Berlin it seems, is a place caught between two different worlds.

On one side, Berlin is known for its violent history which is intensely splashed across our history books, most notable due to the actions which the Nazi government took against Jewish people, gypsies, and homosexuals. While on the other side, Berlin is a city is full of color, graffiti, late nights, and people creating a new kind of history with their art. Perhaps the city of Berlin knows this as there are constant reminders of German history located all around. Near the Brandenburg Gate is an intimidating expanse of grey concrete blocks of various heights that undu-

Along with the buildings, the people of Berlin even match their city, their loud and colorful clothes with plenty of metal glint in the city’s warm April weather. It is so different from all of the cities we have visited so far, making me think more of the United States, that is of Minneapolis and of home.

late across a giant square. Upon first seeing these blocks I thought it was an unfinished project, as there are no words, no signs, or any clear indication about what these blocks were. When I realized it was a memorial honoring all of the Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust the maze of tall concrete blocks went from a puzzling art piece to that of an ominous grave-yard in the middle of the city.

On most of the sidewalks throughout Berlin, if you are lucky that is, you will literally stumble on little brass squares embedded into the cobble-stone sidewalks on which the names and information of Jewish people who died in the Holocaust are stamped into the metal. It is a small constant reminder for all of the people living and visiting Berlin of all of the people who no longer walk these same streets.

However, as you are watching where you are walking, you should also be looking up at all of the incredible murals and graffiti with which the that artists cover Berlin with. One

of my favorite pieces of art in Berlin is of a cosmonaut reaching out a seemingly empty hand, and it is truly one of the most iconic murals in Berlin. Painted by Victor Ash, the Cosmonaut is also the largest stencil drawing in the world according to Amy, my fabulous Art of Berlin tour guide. While I may have first laid skeptical eyes on Berlin, mostly lamenting about the fact that the city was not full of old historical buildings and that I had to leave gorgeous Italy behind to arrive at my destination in Germany. Although Berlin did not end up becoming my favorite city, it was a most welcome break from the cramped old-world cities our traveling group has toured through so far. Berlin is still a city divided-one half that is keeping history alive and still at the forefront of the minds of its visitors and residents- and the other half which is moving forward and creating a multitude of art work that will be a part of Berlin and Germany’s future for its visitors and residents.

Lauren Simenson is a sophomore majoring in communication studies. Her interest include eating dark chocolate, online window shopping and reading anything she can get her hands on. While not at work, at school, taking naps or doing homework, she likes to cook, canoe, fish and write.

Oldest existing piece of literature provides insightful story of ancient life

Brady Johnson

Reviewer

Having been written roughly in 1800 B.C., “The Epic of Gilgamesh” is the oldest surviving piece of literature, at nearly 4000 years old. Written by the Sumerians in the city state of Ur, in the Dhi Qar province of modern Iraq, “The Epic of Gilgamesh” is a tale of the eponymous god king.

The Sumerians are one of the oldest known civilizations, the earliest people known to have used writing by making marks on stone tablets. The Sumerians were some of the most advanced people for their time and their propensity for writing has left us an illustrative view of ancient Mesopotamia.

“The Epic of Gilgamesh” was written on many different stone tablets, which weren’t discovered until 1853 by famous Assyriologist Hormzud Rassam. The tablets were at the time unreadable as there were no means of translating. There was no knowledge of the ancient Sumerian language. We would have no knowledge of what the stone tablets say without the dedication and hard work of another accomplished Assyriologist – George Smith. Sadly, some of “The Epic of Gilgamesh” has been lost to time, however there is ample source material to provide a coherent story. Some translations also fill in the missing sections, as what occurs can often be deduced from the context of the surviving tablets.

“The Epic of Gilgamesh” provides a unique insight to the life of the people of nearly 4000 years ago. It is thought that Gilgamesh was a real king who lived roughly around the same time. The exploits of Gilgamesh are mythological, as it is said he

lived to be hundreds of years old and was 10 feet tall. This was a common practice in these ancient civilizations, to provide legitimacy to the rule of kings, they claimed to be more than a man. Much of “Gilgamesh” is about the different gods and goddesses of the polytheistic religion of ancient Mesopotamia. It is undoubtable that “Gilgamesh” had influence on religious texts for centuries to come. The flood parable in the Bible is present in “Gilgamesh,” which predates the tale in the Bible. Historians agree that there was a great flood in Mesopotamia which affected virtually all of the world known to the writers of “Gilgamesh” and the Bible. Instead of Noah the character in “Gilgamesh” is Utnapishtim. As well as the flood story, the tale of Adam and Eve parallels the story of Enkidu and Shamhat, characters in “Gilgamesh.”

Since *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is older than any other piece of literature, it is natural that it is unlike any other story one might read. For an unaware reader, *Gilgamesh* could be rather difficult, even translated to modern English the book is dense and there is reference to much that the average reader would likely know little about. Despite this, I recommend “The Epic of Gilgamesh” to any reader, but especially those with a penchant for ancient history. My suggestion is to find a copy with annotations, and a well-written introduction. There are many versions of this book accommodating to many different levels of reading proficiency. To read *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is to look as far back in human history as currently possible. Available upon time of writing at the Chalmer Davee library.

Brady Johnson is a junior at UW-River Falls with a double major in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and Spanish. He has a passion for literature and hopes to teach English abroad in the future.

Student Voice Staff: Three fun things to do this weekend

1. River Falls Bar Crawl: Bars in downtown River Falls will host the seventh annual Bar Crawl this Saturday, from 11 a.m. until close. Many bars will sell discounted drinks, and shirts can be purchased through the Facebook group “River Falls Bar Craw 2016” for those over 21. Proceeds from the shirt sales will go towards new playground equipment at Tri-Angles Playground at Hoffman Park.

2. Explore the Kinnikinnic: The Kinnikinnic State Park, located on County Road F, is one of the most pristine state parks in Western Wisconsin. Dark cliff faces run along side the stream, and small outcroppings of sand provide beautiful places to stop for a rest during a streamside hike. Temperatures in the 70s this weekend will make first nature walks of the season all the more enjoyable.

3. Community Barn Dance: The River Falls Community Arts Base is holding the final barn dance of the year on Saturday night. The dance is held at the River Falls Academy Gym, 439 W. Maple, starting at 7 p.m. Family Dances will be held from 7:00-8:30, and more complicated dances for adults will start at 8:30 and go until the end. Everyone is welcome, even if you have no previous barn dancing experience. A short lesson is available for anyone before the more complicated dances start. The cost is \$5 for everyone under 12 years old. For more information, check out the River Falls Chamber of Commerce events page at tourism.rfchamber.com

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