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University of Wisconsin-River Falls

STUDENT VOICE

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COVID-19 leads to class suspensions

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UWRF has made the decision Wednesday night to cancel all in-person classes until March 30. In an email sent from the chancellor to the campus community, Dean Van Galen wrote that the main priority is safety on campus. There will be no instruction taking place from March 16-30. The email from the chancellor says, "all UWRF instructors will need to move course content to alternate methods of instruction including but not limited to online modes." All classes that normally meet face-to-face are being suspended

from March 30 through at least April 10.

As the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, many universities across the country are taking precautions. On March 10 public health officials announced that a presumptive case of coronavirus has been identified in Pierce County and several more cases throughout the Midwest.

Schools near UWRF have also taken action and have moved all face-to-face classes to alternative learning methods until further notice. UW-Stout, University of Minnesota campuses, and UW-Madison have all decided to close their campuses and suspend classes following spring break.

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Men's club baseball works to become official team

Reagan Hoverman
Falcon News Service

The men's club baseball team at UW-River Falls is working toward regaining its status as an official competitive school sport for the first time since it was suspended nearly two decades ago.

Some of the final moments for competitive baseball at UWRF were in the spring of the 2001-2002 season, the year that the program was suspended. For that Falcons baseball roster, the cutting of the program was unexpected.

The baseball team was scheduled for a weekend series against UW-Stout in April 2002. At the time Josh Eidem, one of the team captains, was getting his team ready for their matchup with the Blue Devils that Saturday morning. However, the team was greeted by Athletic Director Rick Bowen who delivered the news that the program was being suspended.

"It was devastating," Eidem said. "Rick came down and told us that the decision of the Competition Committee had been to eliminate the baseball program."

The Competition Committee, an athletic department committee, in addition to the Faculty Senate, had decided that baseball, as well as gymnastics and wrestling, would be suspended for the foreseeable future.

Eidem said he and his team were given several reasons for why baseball's suspension including competition level and inconsistent coaching. At that time, the Competition Committee was looking at each sport in terms of how competitive it had been in the

past and how competitive it could be in the future.

Bob Burrows started reporting on UW-River Falls athletics in 1996 for the River Falls Journal. He had seen several part-time coaches come and go between 1996 and 2002 when the program was suspended.

"They went through about three different head coaches; they had a hard time retaining coaches. Part of that may have been looking at it as a part-time position," Burrows said.

Baseball at UWRF before the 2002 suspension had never been able to finance a full-time head coach. The team struggled to compete and to make consistent postseason runs. Without having full-time support, it was nearly impossible for the team to gain an advantage against other schools with full-time coaches.

"Our head coach would come in from working overnight shifts at his regular job to trying to be a Division III baseball coach. So that was a difficulty at the time," Eidem said. "What that affects is not only consistency of coaches, but it's how much time they can put into recruiting and some of those different things that other schools are doing that, I think, made it harder for us to compete."

After the program was suspended, community members were still holding out hope that the program would return in a couple of years. However, that sentiment changed when the university tore down the old baseball field.

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What's new in the greenhouse?

Find out on page 3

Flowers from greenhouse. Photo by Izzy Forliti

What are you looking forward to on spring break?

By Angelique Tretsven and Sara Ollig



Ezekiel Olakunle

“I am looking forward to going to California, going to LA, going to have a fun time, and eat some good food.”



Lamaree Whitson

“Making a lot of money and getting away from school.”

Piper Richter

“I’m excited to spend time with family, friends, and work with my fair animals. And spending time with my boyfriend.”



Calvin Chang

“I’m looking forward to just sleeping, catching up on all of my hours that I stayed up. But also have fun with my family and friends. And just eat a lot of good food.”



Alieu Toh

“I’m excited to hang out with my high school friends”



Kallie Spooner

“I’m excited to go home and see my family and friends.”

Elizabeth Bertram

“I’m looking forward to spending time with my family, and working with my horse, trying to get her up to shape on riding.”



Muhammad Omer

“I’m looking forward to not having class and not having to wake up early.”



Greenhouse offers multiple learning opportunities

Isabella Forliti

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Succulents, blooming flowers, and the first signs of spring are a year-round experience in the greenhouse at UW-River Falls.

Located behind the Agricultural Science building, the first part of the greenhouse was built in 1974. The other two parts were completed in the early '90s. The first part of the greenhouse used to be made of glass, but a hailstorm in the early 2000s destroyed the structure and the students' semester-long projects.

A blessing in disguise, the greenhouse then updated its infrastructure to the glorious state it is in today. The greenhouse manager, Dan Waletzko, has been taking care of the greenhouse complex and the two and a half-acre teaching plot for 26 years. Various activities occur within the greenhouse, depending on the semester, both from students in classes and in clubs and organizations.

This spring semester, the new floriculture class has been practicing different techniques in both agriculture and art. Floriculture students are learning the entirety of the process from seed to transplant. Waletzko said "they melt together horticulture and art." He continued on to explain that students have to figure out what different plants grow well together along with what colors and textures in the various plants compliment each other.

The floriculture class and organizations such as Horticulture Society and Alpha Zi, an honorary horticulture society, utilize the greenhouse for two different plant sales during spring semester.

The UWRF Forage team, led by Dr. Yoana Newman, spends time in the greenhouse looking at legumes and other materials that are grown in the greenhouse to help them practice for competitions. The UWRF official website reported on the Forage team this past January as they took first place for the second year in a row at the National Forage Bowl Competition, held in Greenville.

Another club that uses the greenhouse is SALSA, the Student Alliance for Local and Sustainable Agriculture. This group utilizes both the greenhouse and the teaching plots not too far from the greenhouse. SALSA students take the initia-

tive to grow their own produce as a fundraiser. "This usually happens during the summer," Waletzko states, "they go to the farmers market by Dick's Market in River Falls and sell there, and when they have the concert on the hill (the summer concert series held by UWRF) they commonly try to sell there too!"

Any and all majors are welcome to take advantage of the greenhouse. Although biology students have access to a 1,000 square foot indoor greenhouse-like space on the fifth floor of the Agricultural Science building, even they find themselves exploring through the campus greenhouse. They are commonly hunting for bacteria samples and taking notes of the diversity in the building.

The office of Undergraduate Research Scholarly and Creative Activity (URSCA) also takes advantage of the easily accessible research space. Currently, a UWRF URSCA student is attempting to adjust the typical growing period of a crop. They are using a plant hormone called gibberellins on 60-70 different varieties of a crop and working to see if they can get a different outcome with the plant. Waletzko explained, "The project has worked so far! This is amazing, because it is typically not a crop treated for this, changing its normal cycle, tricking it a little, trying to get things to form just using another hormone is cool."

The greenhouse at UWRF is constantly trying to take advantage of new modernizations for use during classes. Waletzko mentioned that the idea and common goal is for students to be equipped for the world after they graduate and kept up to date with the latest technologies in horticulture.

UWRF is implementing a new class and system this semester, the use of hydroponics. According to Dictionary.com, hydroponics is "the process of growing plants in sand, gravel, or liquid, with added nutrients but without soil." To start, only a small group of students studied the basics of hydroponics. As Waletzko describes it, "What they are doing is growing hydroponic lettuce, microgreens, tomatoes, and cucumbers. Students have production sheets; they are taking readings of pH every week, essentially monitoring levels to adjust plants in the new systems." As of right now, the system is being fully installed within the greenhouse and will hopefully be done by the 2020 fall semester.

With so much happening at the greenhouse, Waletzko ex-

plained his favorite part of the greenhouse, "I like all of the creativity the students have when they come up with individual projects, seeing them from start to finish, and seeing unexpected things." He goes on to explain how the greenhouse feels like an extension of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, as it provides a space for students to be exposed to all things horticulture, agronomy, and soils.

An exciting addition to the greenhouse is the infamous corpse plant. A past gift to the greenhouse, the corpse plant is an enormous standing plant that has two leaves that look like trunks of small



Plants from UWRF greenhouse
Photos by Isabella Forliti



trees. This gigantic plant, on average, blooms once every seven years. However, when the flower blooms for 24 hours, a wretched smell similar to that of rotting flesh follows.

The flower bloomed about seven years ago on campus, sadly overnight, but a webcam was active for students to look at the gorgeous flower without having to suffer the smell. The plant was supposed to bloom some time recently, but a small leak in the ceiling and a little too much water changed the plans. Instead of blooming, the corpse plant created an additional leaf instead. UWRF students must wait in anticipation to see what happens, maybe two flowers will bloom in years to come!

Although the greenhouse is prioritized for students in classes and organizations, unfamiliar faces visit occasionally to experience the active learning occurring on campus. There have been tours for many different groups from around the River Falls community. "High schools and preschools, anyone from 8 months to 108 years, all are welcome to the River Falls garden club and greenhouse," says Waletzko.

The greenhouse is always waiting for students to discover and explore what's inside, however, a quick heads-up is required! The greenhouse is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the week, and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Fridays. If students would like more information or to schedule a tour, email Dan Waletzko at daniel.k.waletzko@uwrf.edu.



Manager Dan Waletzko in the campus greenhouse
Photo by Isabella Forliti

Coronavirus leads to class suspensions and cancellations

Continued from pg 1

UWRF campus offices, dining services and on-campus housing will remain open and available during these class suspensions. Although students are allowed to remain living on campus, many students are affected by this change. The email sent to the campus community advised students to leave residence halls if possible. "Students leaving campus are encouraged to go home to their permanent residence and stay home if possible and take with them their essential belongings, academic materials, laptops and medications," according to the email.

Freshman student Riley Peltier has a few concerns about the issue.

"Part of me isn't very surprised because other schools started cancelling within the past few days so I knew something was going to happen here too," she said. "I'm kind of upset because I won't be able to see many of my friends now, they all live hours away. We were also thinking about our meal plans and all the money we paid for things that now we can't even really use because of the suspensions."

The transition to online classes is also a concern for students.

"I think online classes for some classes are going to be interesting and maybe difficult to do but I mean we have to

do it so we can at least try to finish off the semester," Peltier said.

However, Junior Manon Berger thought online classes may be beneficial.

"I'm grateful that classes were suspended. As soon as spring break is over I think there's potential for a huge outbreak. I also think online classes will be good to continue with and I also don't think online classes will affect student's mental health as much," she said.

The transition for students, faculty and staff may be difficult. Freshman student Allison Lehner said, "Honestly, I think the coronavirus is causing a lot more fear than it needs to, but it's also nice to see that the school cares for our health and safety."

Campus events with gatherings of 50 people are more will be cancelled, athletic events will be following NCAA/WIAC guidance which includes spectator-free events, and non-essential personal travel is discouraged by the university.

According to the chancellor's March 11 email all face-to-face classes are suspended until April 10, at which point the campus community will receive updates from the administration on whether the classes will continue either online or in person.



Low attendance stretches to many classrooms after the announcement of class cancellations.

Photo by Brooke Shepherd



Empty side walks the morning of March 13, as many students head for home.

Photo by Brooke Shepherd.

Spring break study abroad canceled due to coronavirus

Brooke Shepherd

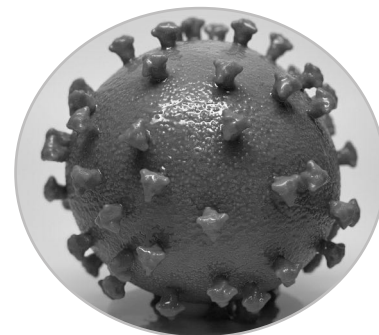
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Due to the growing risk of coronavirus both in-state and internationally, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs David Travis said in a campus-wide email sent on March 9, that study abroad trips scheduled for spring break will be canceled. Travis listed various factors relating to coronavirus.

As of March 9, the Department of Health Services and the Pierce County Public Health Department in Wisconsin have confirmed the second case coronavirus. The person had been traveling within the U.S., and is remaining in isolation at home. Pierce County health officials are looking into who has been in contact with the patient.

According to the provost, the virus' im-

pact is compromising the educational experience of the trips abroad. Further details of the decision have not been worked out yet. Travis said there will be more information soon.



Model of the coronavirus. Photo courtesy of the National Institutes of Health.

Teachers on strike in St. Paul leading to class cancellations

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The Saint Paul public school district canceled all K-12 classes on Tuesday, March 10 as teachers and other faculty began their first union strike since 1946.

Approximately 36,000 students were excused from the school day. Churches, community buildings and a few schools remained open for students that need breakfast and lunch, as well as childcare for younger students. School is also canceled for Wednesday, March 11 and all consecutive days until an agreement with the union and school district is made.

According to the Star Tribune, the last Saint Paul strike was in Nov. 1946. More than 1,000 staff members strike for smaller class sizes, higher wages, and building upgrades. The school union won the strike, and made national news, paving the path as one of the first school unions to strike and win.

Today, the St. Paul Federation of Educators are asking the district board for three things; higher wages for teachers,

more mental health professionals including psychologists, social workers and behavioral specialists, and a bilingual staff that can accommodate the multitude of English Language Learners (ELL) within the district, one of the largest ELL populations in the Minnesota education system.

In 2018, a school district referendum passed, meaning citizens voted to increase school funding. This funding was intended to increase mental health support, implement a strategic plan for student success and limit future budget cuts. However, the mental health and counseling departments in Saint Paul schools continue to disappoint staff, students and faculty. The discussions between the St. Paul Federation of Educators and the St. Paul District has lasted for over nine months, and continued till 3 am on Tuesday night, reaching no agreement.

During their late night discussion, the Superintendent, Joe Gothard, requested for arbitration instead of displacing the students from their classrooms, meaning the two groups would submit the dispute to arbitrator who would then make

the final decision. However, this request was denied and the teachers continued their plan to strike. Tuesday, March 10 and Wednesday, March 11 are currently canceled, however this cancellation is likely to be extended.

Through the Falcon Tutors program, University of Wisconsin-River Falls education students complete a field experience through Washington Technology Magnet school and LIFE prep academy, two schools in the Saint Paul school district. The UW-River Falls students that attend the field experience on Tuesday and Wednesday had the day off this week, however an alternative school district is likely to welcome the tutors if the strike continues.

It is not clear how long the strike will go, however it is clear that the strike and disagreement puts stress on faculty, union members, the school board, parents and the students. All things considered, it's a universal truth that students should be in the classroom, not waiting at home for a disagreement to be mediated.

UWRF facilitates conversation around mental health

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The University of Wisconsin-River Falls has made addressing mental health a priority this spring semester. Student Health and Counseling Services has teamed up with Student Involvement to create a new program to break the stigma around talking about mental health.

Mental Health Mondays are held from 11 a.m. to noon in the Trimble room the second Monday of every month, on the second floor of the University Center. “This program is trying to make mental health conversations accessible,” says Elise Peters, the Events and Activities Coordinator in the Office of Student Involvement, “everybody experiences mental health whether it is from test stress or anxiety, everyone is interacting with it every day.” Students do not need to sign up for the event, however, it’s a Falcon 5 event so they get a point if they show up to swipe in!

Last year, Student Health and Counseling held an event called Success Coaching, which inspired Mental Health Mondays. Kaleah Bautch, a Mental Health Counselor for the

Student Health and Counseling Office, said, “We wanted to make it stronger by pairing with student involvement.”

The idea was to create an open and inviting space where students could feel free to talk about their own experiences with mental health. Peters says, “We are aware that going into counseling is not always efficient, and being able to talk peer to peer can create conversations and destigmatize mental health and saying ‘oh, me too’ to others stories and experiencing similar things helps with creating that space for vulnerability.”

Peters and Bautch made a point to say that this event is not meant for walk-in visitors. Students should feel welcome and encouraged to sit and share for a while and experience the full event. Each event is structured with the idea of a topic, activity, some food, and finally sending people off with a self-care kit.

Although it only happens once a month, Peters and Bautch feel the events have been a success with engaged students attending and taking advantage of the space. Bautch feels it is beneficial to have events like this on a college campus for a few reasons, “I think it shows that as a university we care

about mental health. It is something that we value and want to give students the opportunity to continue to be able to work on and develop skills that will help them beyond college and be successful adults.”



Promotional image from Diversity Inclusion and Belonging social media.

UWRF men’s baseball works to become official team

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“I was out there the day they brought the bulldozers in to take that baseball field out and replace it with tennis courts. I was out there with Don Page, he used to coach baseball back in the day and at the time he was retired as the Athletic Director here,” Burrows said. “That hit him hard. He got emotional out there that day. It was one thing to drop the program, but then when they came out and bulldozed the field, that made it permanent.”

After the field was demolished there was a 13-year gap until baseball returned to UWRF. In 2016, baseball was brought back to campus as a registered student organization by Aaron Mamer, who graduated in 2019.

He was later elected organizational founder and president.

The first year that baseball was back on campus there were only nine players on the roster. Ryan Newpower, current baseball club president, was one of those nine players.

“We played one game our first year and we had nobody sitting on the bench,” Newpower said. “Since then we’ve been at every Involvement Fair continuously recruiting guys.”

Newpower and his team worked with Campus Recreation to make the baseball team a sport club in 2017 after spending the one-year minimum as a registered student organization. Traditionally, sport clubs are more intense and require more involvement than an intermural sport but less than an official collegiate sport.

The growth of the sport club baseball team has been steady since the inaugural 2016 season. In 2018 the roster grew to 15 players and now, during the 2019-2020 season, there is an active 25-man roster.

“This year was the first year we had to make decisions about who to bring and who to leave behind,” Newpower said. “This is the first year where it’s really been serious, you’ve got to be good enough to come.”

Both the number of players on the roster and the level of competition have been increasing in the last two years. Newpower said the current goal for the team is the same as it was four years ago – get back to Division III baseball.

“When Mamer founded the club, his ultimate goal was to build something that would turn back into a Division III team,” Newpower said. “He knew that it would not happen in his time here, he just thought it would be cool to have it be traced back to him. And we’ve all jumped on board with that.”

If the current baseball team regains NCAA status as a competitor in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) it would solve a lot of the funding problems.

As a Sport Club, the team only receives about \$3,000 in funding each year, half of which goes to the league fee for the conference that they play in. The team currently plays wherever they can afford to play. They don’t have a “home field” anymore because of the razing of the baseball field over a

decade ago. The owners of the field at Hoffman Park in River Falls are asking for \$500 per game for the team to use the field, Newpower said. Although the field is located on public property, stadium use still requires a fee to be paid that does not go to the city. Greg Peters, a River Falls insurance salesman and one of the people setting the price for events at the ballpark, said that the going rate for everybody is \$500 for a game or \$100 per hour for other events.

Because of the high cost associated with finding a place to play, the baseball team can’t afford to keep winning games this season. The team currently is leading its division after playing its fall series and it has two more series in the spring. If the team were to win the division, and then win the first playoff series, they would be going to the Club World Series which is in Pennsylvania. The problem is, the team doesn’t

have the funding to finance that kind of trip.

“It’s very much on the mind of all of us that we’re in contention,” Newpower said.

If the baseball team becomes a competitive school sport, they would have transportation, lodging, and other expenses covered by the university instead of having the players pay out of pocket. The team would be back to focusing on winning baseball games, not logistics and finances.

Each year UWRF looks at potentially adding and suspending sports and baseball will be one of the teams on the list for reinstatement. The Faculty Senate Athletic Committee, the Chancellor and the Athletic Director would all have to agree to reinstate the baseball program. However, a formal process for reinstating the team has not been started, according to Athletic Director Crystal Lanning.



The 2019-2020 UW-River Falls men’s club baseball team. Photo by Reagan Hoverman.

Conservatives threaten to sue campus over free speech issue

Theodore Tollefson

Falcon News Service

What started out as a simple misunderstanding on campus policy, has become an issue of First Amendment rights that could soon lead into a legal battle between UW-River Falls and a student.

Back on September 6, UWRF freshman Sofie Salmon was accompanied by members of Turning Point USA, a non profit group that is affiliated with conservative/libertarian college organizations. As stated on their website, "Turning Point USA was founded in 2012 by Charlie Kirk. The organization's mission is to identify, educate, train, and organize students to promote principles of freedom, free market, and limited government."

Salmon and the others were walking around campus with a free speech ball for any student to write anything they wanted on it. They were then approached by Kristin Barstad, the campus conference services manager.

Barstad informed the group they were violating a campus policy, but could not cite what it was off the top of her head. When Barstad approached the group, one of the members began filming the conversation on their phone. In the video, Salmon asked "What would be the consequences if we did not comply with the policy?"

Barstad responded, "University police would come and ask you to leave based on the university policy that you are violating."

Salmon replied, "Thank you so much for answering our questions."

Salmon was contacted for further comment on this story but declined.

Two months after the incident, Salmon attempted to get into contact with Barstad about the campus policy that she and the members of Turning Point USA may have been violating. In an email to Barstad from Salmon on November 6, Salmon had said, "Although we were not aware of any restrictions on our ability to recruit members with a free speech ball, we alerted the administration as to what we were doing so they would know what was going on. On the spur of the moment, you were not able to point us to a specific policy, but did tell us that if we were not willing to move, you would call the campus police to escort us out."

Salmon did not receive a reply from Barstad and had instead received a reply from Karyn Wells, Assistant Director of Student Involvement. In her reply, Wells said, "I received your email from Kristin Barstad, who mentioned you are interested in starting a new student organization at UW-River

Falls. My office works directly with students to support them in this process. You will find the minimum requirements for starting a Recognized Student Organization (RSO). This will be a great resource for you as you begin this process."

Salmon replied to Wells, and asked once again what policies that her and her peers were in violation of back on September 6. "I cannot find any policies about speaking to other students about or reserving outdoor space on the website. It [the website] makes it really hard to know what I can and cannot do when I cannot figure out what the policies are," said Salmon in her email reply to Wells.

After what had been perceived by Salmon to be a failure in facilitating communications with the university's administration on what policies she may have violated. Salmon then reached out to the Christian non-profit organization, Alliance Defending Freedom, to assist her.

Alliance Defending Freedom is a legal interest group based in Scottsdale, Arizona. ADF's purpose, as stated on their website is, "To advocate for religious freedom to uphold justice and preserve the right of people to freely live out their faith." Alliance Defending Freedom is also listed as an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Alliance Defending Freedom was contacted for comment, but did not reply to questions asked by Falcon News Service.

ADF sent a letter to Chancellor Dean Van Galen on February 10, stating that UWRF had unconstitutionally suppressed student expression on campus. The letter was written by Caleb Dalton, legal counselor of ADF Center for Academic Freedom. Dalton wrote, "To avoid litigation and comply with the First Amendment we request that you immediately revise UW-River Falls' policies on expression to permit students to engage in expression in public outdoor areas without prior restraint."

In the letter, Dalton also wrote that, "UW-River Falls' policies currently violate the First Amendment and our client's rights. On behalf of our client, we therefore ask that you respond to us in writing - no later than February 24 - with the following: 1) identify the policy applied to prohibit Sofie from speaking, and 2) agreeing to revise the outdoor facility use policies to ensure that administrators do not prohibit students from speaking spontaneously in public outdoor areas."

The university has identified which policy that applied to Salmon's misuse of outdoor facility use. The policy titled, "Use of University Facility", says, "University departments and recognized campus organizations may use university facilities on a no-charge basis for those programs that are identified as being part of the direct department/organization mission for the University, and is not revenue producing in

nature. Sponsorship or invitation by a University department/organization is required for the use of any University space by persons or groups from off-campus. The sponsorship of an off-campus group does not release the University department/organization from the responsibility of paying for direct costs and rental fees incurred with the facility being used. Sponsorship duties include the direct involvement (planning, organizing, and facilitation) for the event and include the monitoring of the event by the University department/organization."

Based on the Use of University Facility Policy, Salmon could not use the space on campus since she was accompanied by an off campus organization, that group being Turning Point USA.

Also listed in the University Facility Policy is the outdoor space use. The "Outdoor Space includes: Amphitheater, University Center Mall, Hagestad Mall, Hathorn Lawn, and other outdoor facilities (exception is the athletic facilities)."

The process for any student organization or off campus organization to use such space stated in the University Facility Policy is as follows:

Fill out a facilities reservation request form.

A tentative reservation is sent to the customer.

Before the tentative reservation is confirmed, the requestor will need to agree to appropriate parameters for outdoor facility use and limitations for the event. (Requestor pressing submit is considered a signature) Depending on the size and scope of the event, the room reservation could also remain in a tentative status until the group meets with staff to discuss/ finalize the event details.

If event details are needed, starting 30 days prior to the event, a \$5 per day fee will be assessed until the event details have been received.

Campus Reservations will confirm the outdoor facility use and notify other departments on campus that need information about the activity including but not limited to Facilities Management, Grounds, University Police, Dean or Department in or near where the outdoor event will take place.

As Salmon had only notified campus administration earlier in the day of her intent to use the outdoor space outside the University Center with an off campus organization. Barstad had to approach and ask Salmon and the members of Turning Point USA to stop walking around with a free speech ball.

The UW System Office of General Counsel sent their reply to ADF. However according to Beth Schommer, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, cannot be publicly accessed right now due to attorney client privilege, without a written request sent to the UW System Office of General Counsel.

KARE 11 reporter Jana Shortal scheduled for campus seminar

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On March 17, Jana Shortal, a reporter and co-anchor of "Breaking the News" on KARE 11, will be visiting the Falcon's Nest for "Coffee and Conversation with Jana Shortal" from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

At the event, Shortal will share her story, and there will be an opportunity for roundtable discussion. Brunch will be offered, as well as time for questions and answers.

Elise Peters, the events and activities coordinator in Student Involvement, set up the event as a part of the We Are Falcons Values Series. Each month, an event or speaker is chosen that represents one of the campus' values and shows it in action. "This is our second to last one, so we've done one every single month thus far," Peters said, "and they've been very successful, which is cool to see since it is a new concept."

Members of the community, staff, and students are all encouraged to attend. According to Peters, having the space

and opportunity for someone to share their story can be impactful. "We try to provide opportunities that you wouldn't get everywhere else, that's what college is for, right? So I think it's awesome hearing someone else's story who maybe you see on the news everyday and to kind of humanize them, I think, is powerful."

Attending the event is a great way for students, staff, and community members alike to focus on their own values and learn what they really care about, as well as tying those values into the campus values. Peters said "Come to these events and be able to see how your own journey can intertwine with the larger campus values."

The first 100 students to come to the event will receive a giveaway item: a reusable silicone sandwich bag. Shortal will be telling her story of identifying as a part of the LGBTQ+ community and working as a journalist. She had previously appeared on the "TODAY" show, where she told her story as well.



Jana Shortal.
Photo used with permission from Kare 11 newsroom

Gay Straight Alliance hosts drag show

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The UW-River Falls Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) hosted a drag show, a running tradition for almost two decades, in the University Center on March 7.

A drag show is a form of art and entertainment where various performers dress up and sing, dance or lip sync to a song.

“Drag is very encompassing and anybody can do it as long as you’re comfortable. A lot of it is creating a persona. A lot of that persona is how people would like to see themselves, or it’s just an entirely different person from themselves,” said Bear Martin, co-chair of the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA).

Sara Meyer is the university conference coordinator. She said the first event like this began in about 2004. Some years the drag show takes place in fall and spring, however this year it only took place in the spring.

Community members as well as past and present students were able to sign up to be part of the event. Performers were able to choose a song and routine to go with it. The day before the show, the stage was set up and those involved were given a few hours to practice, according to Martin.

Martin said the UWRF drag show featured two drag queens and one drag king who regularly perform in the twin cities, and performed at UWRF in the past. The drag queens were Carmen Love and Tawnya Tootsieroll, and the drag king was Ty Tores.

Outside of the routine itself, getting ready can take several hours. According to Martin, “I’ve seen professional queens come in at about 3:30 in the afternoon, and it takes them until about 6:30 to be fully ready in makeup, dress and there’s a lot that goes into it.”

This is one of the only drag shows in the area, according to the Gender and Sexuality Outreach Coordinator Nathan Riel-Elness.

“Besides the professional shows that happen in the cities, Eau Claire is the next closest school to have one,” said Riel-Elness.

Each year since about 2011, GSA has donated the proceeds to the St. Croix Valley Sexual Assault Repsonse Team (SART). Due to recent changes, GSA was only able to donate the proceeds from the intermission. Martin said this would be between \$200 to \$400.

SART uses the donations to support an annual community event that provide a space for sexual assault survivors and allies to gather to learn about sexual violence, as well as the healing processes.

“This partnership is important to SART because the UWRF Drag show is all about consent and that is a value we support and actively teach in the community. Consent is so very important to understand and help in the stop of sexual assault,” said Annelise Hughes, the SART advocacy and community outreach coordinator.

This year, funding for the drag show came from the office of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (DIB). The show costs about \$1,000 to put on.

Riel-Elness said DIB had some funds dedicated to helping student organizations plan programs, offering an alternative to single event funding. Due to rules in the UW-System, student organizations receiving single event funding can not donate the proceeds.

“It’s always been really important to GSA to do fundraising for SART, so with our office helping fund the event, they’re able to still make a charitable contribution,” said Riel-Elness.

Martin said the drag show is a somewhat family friendly way to spend a night. He said: “That representation here helps people know what’s going on and gives them a new form of art. I think it’s fun, it’s relatable at times and it brings the campus together.”

GSA has plans to reinvest the tips from the night to fund future shows.



Photo courtesy of Andrew Iverson.



Right: Mahlie Bergeron-Troy and Left: Shelby Behrens. Two students performing in the drag show. Photo courtesy of Andrew Iverson.

Editorial: UWRF policies may be infringing on free speech of students

UW-River Falls has been faced with a lawsuit regarding potential restriction of free speech on campus. If the university does not comply by changing their policies that allegedly restrict free speech on campus, the lawsuit will follow through, according to a letter from Alliance Defending Freedom law firm sent on Feb. 10.

The lawsuit is regarding an issue that happened early fall semester of 2019. Sofie Salmon, a freshmen student at UWRF was told that she was not allowed to have a large beach ball on the lawn outside the University Center. Salmon was encouraging students to express their free speech by writing on the ball.

After Salmon was told she could not have a free speech ball on university property because of specific policies and the fact that she was not part of a student organization, Alliance Defending Freedom law firm actively looked for these policies and said that there is a case of First Amendment infringement.

The Student Voice explored whether or not the right to free speech is being infringed upon at UWRF. We have concluded that it's complicated. We understand both sides to the argument,

Universities need policies for the general flow of day to day activities. One of the primary concerns of the university is safety. However, the policy in question is extremely difficult to find, and not all in one place.

The campus policy applies to everyone, whether it is a student organization or an outside organization, and it is likely to be an overall safety precaution. If any organization was freely allowed to access campus property, there could be issues in relation to the flow of campus and campus sanctioned events.

On the other side, many staff members pointed out that students should be able to express their freedom of speech

with no regulations. Although policies need to be in place to ensure safety, the university should carefully consider at what point do policies like these cross the line and infringe on constitutional rights. In addition, if there is a policy, it should be easily accessible and clear cut as to what is and is not accepted.

When the incident took place Salmon immediately sent emails to campus administrators and officials asking where to find the exact policy. She did not receive a response on what the policy is in its entirety but the main response she received was how to become a recognized student organization on campus.

There is a video of the occurrence on campusreform.org that shows the exchange between Salmon and Conference and Contract Services Manager Kristen Barstad. The Student Voice staff agreed that the situation was handled poorly by campus representatives and that the policy should be known by these representatives when asked. Especially in a situation where the policy is being enforced directly. If the policy is too complex to keep on hand, it should be simplified so it can be easily understood and accessed.

At the end of the day UWRF is public property and these policies may be seen as infringing on student's free speech. However, student's safety is a priority of the university and the policies can also be seen as ensuring safety on a day to day basis. It seems there is a need for a policy, but the current policy could use some updating.



Screenshot of Campus Reform video of occurrence on UWRF campus

Letter to UWRF from Alliance Defending Freedom

Alliance Defending Freedom has been retained by Sofie Salmon, a Freshman at UW-River Falls, who was told by a campus administrator that she could not engage in expression in the public outdoor areas of campus without paying for a reservation. The administrator threatened to call the police if Sofie did not silence herself or move to the outskirts of campus. The University's policies are unconstitutional and require immediate revision.

To avoid litigation and comply with the First Amendment we request that you immediately revise UW-River Falls' policies on expression to permit students to engage in expression in public outdoor areas without prior restraint.

By introduction, ADF's Center for Academic Freedom is dedicated to, and with a track record of, ensuring freedom of speech and association for students and faculty so that everyone can freely participate in the marketplace of ideas without fear of government censorship.

Factual Background: On September 6, 2019, excited to start her first semester in college, Sofie Salmon decided to walk around campus to express her appreciation for free speech and recruit members to start a conservative club on campus. To do so, she and a couple of friends rolled an oversized beach ball around (calling it a "free speech ball") so that students could express themselves by writing messages on it.

In doing so, Sofie did not block any sidewalks, impede traffic, hinder instruction, or in any way disrupt the campus educational environment. She stayed only in public outdoor areas where other students often walk and talk.

Even so, UW-River Falls Conference and Contract Services Manager Kristin Barstad approached Sofie and told her that she must stop and leave immediately. When Sofie asked why and what policy forbade her from speaking, Ms. Barstad was unable to cite a specific policy but stated that even though Sofie was a student she would have to pay to reserve space to engage in expression. The only place she could speak without

permission from the University, Sofie was told, is on the public sidewalk on the edge of campus.

When asked what the consequences would be if she kept talking with other students without permission, Sofie was told that the police would be called. Under this threat, Sofie reluctantly packed up and returned to her dorm.

Several weeks later, Sofie attempted to find the University's policies regulating speaking in public outdoor areas and was unable to locate the policies Ms. Barstad mentioned on your website. So, she emailed Ms. Barstad to ask where she could find the applicable policies and how she could reserve space in the future. The only reply Sofie received was from another administrator advising her on how to form a student club. While Sofie was grateful for that information, she still wished to see the regulations for speaking outdoors and replied requesting that information again. She never received a response.

Letter to UW-System Board of Regents

Dear Regents:

It, most certainly, is the case that the administrators of UW-River Falls fail to understand that:

1. "Free Speech" is the necessary, but not sufficient, basis of "Academic Freedom";
2. "Free Speech" is a constitutional right as is (Or should be) protected by the first article of The Bill of Rights of our Republic's Constitution;
3. Violations of that constitutional right (As supported by the derived Law) may provide a "cause in action" for a Federal "civil rights" civil action as might lead to a very severe judgment against the University of Wisconsin and, as individuals and at a bankruptcy-plus level, those UW employees who violate that right.

As I am very, very opposed to all tyrants who attack all rights as should be protected by our nation's Constitution, I hope that such a case is had and that which will yield the judicial punishment of the cited Fascists.

Respectfully and hopefully yours,

James Pawlak

We can, We will, We must: A Review of Netflix documentary series “Cheer”

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Netflix released a documentary series called “Cheer” on January 8th, 2020. The six episode series is about the Navarro College cheerleading team in Corsicana, Texas. The series follows their journey to the National Cheerleading Championship, which is in Daytona, Florida. Navarro College has won 14 National Championships since 2000, they have also won five NCA Grand National Championships since 2012.

The person behind all of Navarro’s wins is the amazing coach, Monica Aldama. Aldama grew up in Corsicana, she graduated from Corsicana High School. Then she attended the University of Texas in Austin and graduated with a B.B.A in finance. She continued with school and went to the University of Texas in Tyler and graduated with a Masters in Business Administration. Aldama first wanted to be the CEO of a major company in New York, but applied to be the head cheer coach for Navarro Cheer on a limb. She got the position in 1996 and started winning championships in 2000. Aldama is often referred to as the ‘queen’ by her cheerleaders, they also say that she has taught them so much, not only about cheerleading but about life in general.

During the series we get to meet five members on the cheer team. First we meet Lexi Brumback, originally from Houston, Texas. Brumback is one of the tumblers on the team and has a lot of elite skills. Brumback states that she probably would be sitting in a jail cell if she hadn’t met Aldama. Brumback admits to making bad decisions during high school. She dropped out of school and never thought she’d attend college. In the finale of the series, she says that she got kicked off the team for getting pulled over in a car that contained illegal things. As of now, she was able to rejoin the team.

Next we meet La’Darius Marshall, from Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Marshall is described as ‘over the top’ by Aldama. Marshall had a very tough childhood, his mother struggled with addiction and was in jail for most of his childhood.

He experienced sexual abuse as a child, and had a tough time being accepted after coming out as gay.

Morgan Simianer, the next cheerleader we meet, is from Osage, Wyoming. Simianer also had a troubled past, during highschool she and her brother lived in a trailer when their mother left them and their father lived with his new wife and kids. Simianer’s brother turned 18 and decided to go look for their mom, leaving her to live alone in the trailer. Her grandparents found out about this abandonment and asked her to come live with them. Simianer says two things saved her; her grandparents and cheerleading. Simianer looks up to Aldama the most as a mother figure.

We then get to meet Gabi Butler, originally from Boca Raton, Florida. Butler has been cheerleading since she was eight and has been on at least six other competition teams throughout her cheer career. She started making youtube videos to show off her skills as a very flexible flyer. She had a big following in the cheer world before going to Navarro to cheer. Butler has a very busy schedule, her parents book her for photo shoots, meet and greets, and cheer competitions. Getting to know her throughout the series, we see that her parents are very controlling of her life and she just wants to be a normal college kid.

Lastly, we meet Jerry Harris who is originally from Chicago, Illinois. Him and his brother were raised by their mother. They grew up poor and she did everything she could for Harris to be in cheer because she knew he loved it so much. When Harris was 16, his mother died from lung cancer, Harris says whenever he cheers it’s always for her. Harris is known for having the best ‘mat talk’ on the team. ‘Mat talk’ is saying positive phrases to your other teammates that are on the mat with you, so they know someone is cheering you on to do your best. In the finale of the series Harris gets accepted into his dream school, the University of Louisville. He ended up only going for a semester before returning back to Navarro.

The team has lots of superstitions. On the walk down to the mat they have to hold hands with a member of the team,

they have secret handshakes with every member of the team, and my favorite is while they are in Daytona. The team has a tradition that they can only enter the ocean if they win the competition. I love this tradition because I would do my best while performing so we can get in that ocean.

Over the series the team experiences many challenges, injuries being one of the biggest hardships they face. Injuries are hard on the team because then they have to rework the routine with a new person in place of the injured person. Things get very intense counting down the days till Daytona and even once they get to Daytona.

Spoiler alert! While in Daytona, it’s their turn to perform. They get about a minute into their routine and one of the members of the team lands wrong on his foot and limps off the mat, causing the rest of the team to stop and get off the mat. A coordinator of the competition speaks to Aldama and states “you have 30 minutes to practice with an alternate and then you guys will perform again.” They get confirmation that they will only be judged from the point of where they stopped. They perform again and do the routine perfectly, things get really emotional, everyone is crying and hugging each other.

A couple hours later they finally get to announce the winners. It is between Navarro and Trinity Valley. They have a rule in the competition that they announce second place first and the first place team has to hold in the excitement until they officially announce it. The coordinators reveal that the second place winners are Trinity Valley and you can see the Navarro team try to hold in all their emotions until they announce that they won first place. Once they declare first place everyone screams, cries, and hugs each other. The team is then seen running into the ocean because they finally did it.

Overall, I think this was a great show to watch. I was very skeptical of this show at first because of the stereotype that cheerleaders have, but this show definitely diminishes that. Cheerleaders are normal people just like us.



Screenshot of Netflix documentary “CHEER”

Faculty free time: Horticulture professor has passion for plants and gardening

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The Student Voice is excited to welcome back the “Faculty Free Time” column where we take a look at what different faculty members enjoy doing outside of work. This column is written to show students a different side to the faculty at UW- River Falls to find commonalities between students and staff as well as provide faculty a chance to display their professional and personal accomplishments.

David Zlesak is a professor of horticulture at UW-River Falls and has been teaching plant science at the university for 11 years. Before teaching at UWRF, Zlesak was involved in some research at the University of Minnesota as an extension and worked with grower groups, industry members and master gardener volunteers. Zlesak is also an alumnus of UWRF and graduated with a degree in horticulture in 1993.

Plants have always been a passion of Zlesaks, “I’m grateful because the topic that I teach is what I love already. Working with plants is something I’ve done as a kid” he said. Outside of teaching plant science and continuing to be involved in research, Zlesak enjoys breeding landscape roses. He said, “at home I breed hearty landscape roses, every spring I raise thousands of new rose seedlings.” Much of Zlesak’s free time is devoted to research and his passion for plant science.

Zlesak also enjoys making connections with new people, through his work he has met many people who also enjoy horticulture. “The people that I’ve gotten to know through my work live in many other parts of the country so I try to keep in touch with phone calls and emails and sharing plants,” he said.

Working with plants and learning more and more about plants in general has always been a part of Zlesak’s life. Originally being from Milwaukee, he did not live in a rural area, however his grandparents lived on a farm when he was young and they started to teach Zlesak about plants. He said, “after they sent me home with plants it was a way for me to feel connected to them.” His passion for plants has always made him feel connected to nature.

Aside from his free time spent with plants and research, Zlesak also enjoys ice skating. He learned to ice skate years ago and he has continuously enjoyed improving his skills. “It’s fun to have good skating friends and it’s good exercise, and there’s always new challenges and skills to learn,” he said.

Zlesak also spends time in the Twin Cities on the weekends, whether it’s research related or to see friends. “I collaborate with some good friends of mine on some research projects so I do a lot of work in the lab over there,” he said. “Beyond that, I used to live in St. Paul so I like to visit old friends, go out to eat, go shopping or go to concerts with them,” he continued.

Zlesak also serves as a part of a national advisory board that meets at least once a year. It’s called the National Clean Plant program, “our goal is to help make clean plant material that’s free of viruses available for industry to help keep our agriculture strong. I especially work with the roses, however there’s also grapes and other fruits that are a part of this so it helps with food security,” he said.



Professor David Zlesak with roses at a commercial production field
Photo courtesy of David Zlesak

Although much of Zlesak’s free time is spent working with plants and expanding his knowledge about the topics he is teaching, he enjoys being able to be surrounded by it everyday. Horticulture and plant science is Zlesak’s passion and learning more about these topics is something he looks forward to continuing to do in years to come.

STUDENT VOICE

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN RIVER FALLS

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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 554022 or to editor@uwrfvoice.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.

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Have any sports-related questions or just need life advice?

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How to cope with political differences in a relationship?

In 2020 it can be very disheartening to discuss anything remotely related to politics. When in a relationship with someone that has significant political differences, I think there are a couple of ways to work around that situation. The first thing that I would do is set some guidelines for when political issues are going to be discussed. The one that would be most important to me is respecting the other person's point of view. Two people may vehemently disagree about a certain political issue. However, as long as both people respect each other and make sure to respect each other's point of view, there is a lot of productive conversations that can be achieved from discussing the issues. Once both people respect each other, I think it's also important to be an active listener. A lot of people are hearing each other, but they're not listening to each other. The bottom line is that politics is something that should not be avoided in relationships. If two people are together and the end goal is marriage, then I don't see a realistic way to avoid political conversations forever. It's an important part of our lives and I think it's beneficial for everyone if the issues get discussed. Avoiding it does no good and doesn't advance the conversation or open people up to new and potentially better ideas. The entire key is honestly not "coping" with political differences. Instead, it's having those tough conversations about political issues and being respectful enough with each other to have those productive discussions fairly, respectfully and openly. Not everyone is going to agree and that's OK. We just need to have tolerance for people that don't have the same views as we might.

What is the impact of corona virus on sporting events?

The last 24 hours have been some of the most hectic, confusing hours of my life as a die-hard sports fan. It was just a couple of days ago that rumors started circulating that college basketball and the NBA would be playing games without fans. Social media was an uproar about how it was such an overreaction to the coronavirus. Even LeBron James said that he wasn't going to play games in an empty arena. However, everything has changed. The ability of the coronavirus to spread like wildfire has caused sports leagues all over the world to shut down or play without fans. Reality is finally setting in on sports fans in the United States that the virus is no longer an issue that is happening across the world. Cases are being found in more and more states each day and it's leading to a complete shutdown of sports in the United States. Wednesday night it was confirmed that Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert had tested positive for the coronavirus. Because of that, the NBA decided that it was no longer safe to play NBA games and an entire slate of contests were postponed on Wednesday night. The NBA announced that the league was being suspended and that no games would be played for the foreseeable future. The sports world is feeling the effects hard. Perhaps the biggest sporting event each year is March Madness where 68 college basketball teams are picked to compete for the national championship. If the pace of the coronavirus continues, the entire college basketball tournament will likely be canceled in the next several days. There is another sporting event that hits close to home for me – the Masters. Played each year in Augusta, Georgia, it's the world's biggest golf tournament. Each year I look forward to the roaming fairways, the blooming flowers, and the crowd roars of a Sunday afternoon major. If the Masters were to play without fans or cancel the tournament, it would be devastating to the golf community. For fans like me, it's our favorite sports event of the entire year and with no crowd, it wouldn't have the same impact as it usually does. The coronavirus has crushed the sports community in the last couple of days and there's a good chance that we haven't even seen the worst of it yet.

Stay up to date and Visit the Student Voice website at: uwrvoice.com

We have hidden one of Freddy Falcons feathers somewhere in the newspaper! If you can find it, you can win movie tickets! Email us at: editor@my.uwrvoice.com

Maddie's Mad: Staying home for spring break

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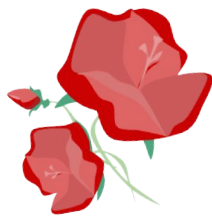
March means one thing to most college students: Spring Break, duh! I know we are all so excited to have some time off of classes in a little over a week.

Many Falcons will be packing for days next to a glorious beach with their toes in the sand. However, some of us here on campus are simply just looking forward to not having to travel to our lectures Monday through Friday.

Some of us have work that we cannot afford to miss or school projects that need to be done. What I am trying to say is, not all of us have, unfortunately will be able to put on our

bathing suits and catch a quick tan. In all honesty, I know that I for one am upset knowing I will be staying in Wisconsin and the furthest I will go for a little vacation will be across the border to Minnesota. Maybe for some of you this sounds like an ideal, even a luxurious, spring break knowing that you will not have to go and sit in lectures all week long!

However, I am sure that some of my fellow Falcons will be able to relate the jealousy, resentment and a bit of rage also, that I am currently feeling with being unable to travel during Spring Break. Although you might not be sunbathing on a Tuesday morning with a nice iced tea, or beverage of your choice. I am hopeful that you will still be able to find activities that bring you joy and relaxation before having to hit the books for the remainder of the semester.



Spring Drag Show



Photos taken from UWRF
drag show on March 7.
Story on page 7.
Photos by Andrew Iverson.

