



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN STUDENT VOICE RIVER FALLS

April 2021

uwrfvoice.com

Pandemic increases bias toward Asian Americans

Brooke Shepherd

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As a child, a UW-River Falls graduate said he remembers facing discrimination in school, and sometimes being one of the only Asian students in class.

“From my personal experience growing up, it’s not anything super new,” said Zachary Vang, who graduated from UWRF in December of 2020.

Vang majored in marketing and communications, and currently runs a photography business. The recent rise in hate crimes against Asian-Americans has Vang reconsidering his future path.

“Originally, I was searching for a job at a marketing agency in the Twin Cities,” said Vang. “But then I recently switched to the non-profit route in something that’s more passionate about improving the community and having a direct impact. Additionally, my family is Asian and these attacks tend to be pretty sporadic. So it is scary to think about my parents and my grandparents potentially just being out in public and being attacked for simply being Asian.”

Discrimination and attacks against Asian-Americans have risen since the pandemic. Data from the Stop Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Hate national report found that over 3,700 incidents have been reported since March of 2020, and this number doesn’t account for unreported incidents.

Vang participated and photographed a Stop Asian Hate rally in St. Paul back in March. He said he thought the crowd would be mostly Asian, but it was a diverse group in terms of both race and age.

At UWRF, AAPI students make up about 3% of the campus population, according to the 2019-2020 enrollment data.

Martin Olague is the director for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (DIB). Olague said campus had done a lot of programming focused around the increased crimes against Asian-Americans last year.

“Coming back to campus, a lot of our attention was pulled toward COVID,” Olague said. “Recently we’ve been re-looking at this situation. I know we’ve been having talks at the cabinet level of what our campus should do and what our response should be. So we’re still trying to figure that out.”

Olague said these hate crimes are suspected to be tied to the racist remarks made by the former president, calling the coronavirus the “Chinese virus,” and other offensive names. Olague sent out a statement to campus after the recent shooting in Atlanta, Georgia.

“My wife is also Asian,” Olague continued. “So when this popped up last week, I was trying to write a response from my office. Let’s just say the first draft looked pretty bad because sometimes the situation gets too personal.”



St. Paul rally in March protesting discrimination against Asian-Americans. Photo courtesy of Zach Vang.

Increased violence against the Asian community can cause anxiety. Mark Huttemeir is a licensed psychologist in the state of Minnesota and a licensed professional counselor in the state of Wisconsin. He works at UWRF counseling services. Huttemeir said for students who feel that what they are doing to manage anxiety is not working or is making things worse, it may be time to seek counseling.

“Counseling is ultimately about supporting students in problem solving next steps and some of those steps may include advocacy or engagement at the community, state, or national level,” Huttemeir said. “That’s true for all students no matter the background.”

Students can set up appointments with Counseling Services by calling 715-425-3884 or emailing counselingservices@uwrf.edu. Olague said the DIB staff is also available to support students in need.



Photo courtesy of Zach Vang.

UWRF officials hope sci-tech center to get funding

Melissa Thorud
Falcon News Service

Construction of highly anticipated \$117 million Science and Technology Innovation Center for UW-River Falls, part of the state's capital budget proposed by Gov. Tony Evers, may have to wait just a bit longer.

Campus officials are predicting the building may be completed by as early as 2025.

But the State Building Commission failed during a March 17 meeting to come to an agreement on the governor's capital budget, which totals \$2.4 billion. The proposal now moves to the Joint Finance Committee, where the package is expected to be challenged by Republican lawmakers.

Campus Planner Dale Braun is in charge of overseeing the planning of new buildings at UW-River Falls campus.

"If all goes well, we will hopefully be opening the building by the spring of 2025," Braun said. "That's when I estimate, but this is a big building."

The plan that was proposed to the UW-System is that the new building replace Hagestad Hall and will be the new home to four science-related departments: psychological sciences, physics, chemistry and biotechnology, and biology.

The new building would feature many new spaces for students. Braun said, "We have a neat collection of spaces that we are calling the university business collaboration space,

and what that is it gives students the opportunity to work on real-world problems with our partners in the business industry."

Chief of Staff Beth Schommer is anticipating that whether the full budget is approved will be known by June.

"Once the governor has finished making any edits to the budget bill, he will sign it into law and that will become our budget and that is usually hopefully by the end of June so at that point we would know the fate of our project," she said.

The building will resemble the architecture and design of newer buildings on campus such as the University Center, Rodli Hall and the Falcon Center. Once the approval process is concluded there is still a time period for planning and designing before the actual construction for the building begins.



A conceptual drawing by St. Paul-based BWBR Architects Inc. shows what the proposed Science and Technology Innovation Center might look like.

Student Government Association introduces a new segregated fee

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The Student Government Association (SGA) at the UW-River Falls is planning to institute a new segregated fee for a Green Fund starting in the fall of 2021.

This segregated fee, which will be allocable, meaning that the funds would be supporting mainly student-organized activities, was passed by SGA as well as the student body by virtue of a referendum.

Student Body President Adam Leseman said that the fee will be five dollars per semester for each student, and the money would be going towards things such as educational and promotional items, non-academic research, energy, food, building design and construction, grounds and water conservation.

Leseman said that the Green Fund fee was introduced to SGA in Feb., and that it is something that they have been working on for a while. SGA worked with the budget office on campus to create their allocable budget for this fee, which should generate approximately 50,000 dollars according to Leseman.

After the guidelines and budget for the fee were passed in SGA, the fee then became subject to a referendum vote. In order for the fee to move on in the approval process, 15% of the student body population needed to vote, with a majority of those votes being in support of the fee. Both of those benchmarks were achieved.

"We got actually over 1,000 students, which was awesome," said Leseman.

According to Leseman, of those students who participated, approximately four out of five of them voted in support of the

referendum.

The last time SGA pursued this type of segregated fee it did not make it past the referendum stage due to a lack of participation. The turnout this time around was a result caused by a stronger marketing approach.

"There were a lot of giveaways, and we added more giveaways to that, we just wanted to get as many students as possible to vote," said Leseman.

Now, the Green Fund segregated fee proposal will be presented by Chancellor Constance Foster to the UW-System Board of Regents for their approval. Leseman is not concerned about this final stage of the process because of the fact that multiple other UW-System schools, such as UW-Eau Claire, already have segregated fees for green funds in place.

Leseman is expecting to hear back from the UW-System Board of Regents before July 1, 2021.

Student Voice wins 8 awards in statewide contest

The Student Voice at UW-River Falls has won eight awards for its journalism in the 2020 Collegiate Better Newspaper Contest, the Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation announced April 13.

The winning stories were all published last year.

Brooke Shepherd, a senior from Stillwater majoring in journalism and animal science, won two awards for public affairs reporting: second place for a May 25 story, "Respecting pronouns part of gender awareness," and third place for an Aug. 14 story, "Reaction to Floyd's death will shape class discussions, professors say."

Shepherd previously served as editor of the campus newspaper and currently is the general manager. She also received awards for arts and entertainment coverage: third place for a March 13 story, "Gay Straight Alliance hosts drag show," and honorable mention for a Dec. 3 article, "UW-River Falls Stage and Screen Arts produces film instead of live show this semester."

Isabella Forliti, a junior communication studies major and current assistant editor of the Student Voice, won second place for her

March 11 feature story, "Greenhouse offers multiple learning opportunities." Forliti is from White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

Melissa Thorud, this year's editor, earned third place for a March 12 breaking news story, "Coronavirus leads to class suspensions and alternative classroom methods." Thorud is a senior in the journalism program from White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

Reagan Hoverman, a 2020 graduate who recently joined the weekly Inter-County Leader in Frederic, Wisconsin, earned honorable mention for his March 11 sports story, "UWRF men's baseball works to become official team."

Finally, the Student Voice staff earned honorable mention in editorial writing for a March 11 piece, "UWRF policies may be infringing on free speech of students."

The student-produced newspaper, which mostly published online last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is financially supported by segregated fees and advertising. For further information, contact the newspaper's faculty advisor, Associate Professor Andris Straumanis, at andris.straumanis@uwrf.edu or (715) 425-4645.



Student Voice staff members display the eight awards the campus newspaper won during the 2020 Collegiate Better Newspaper Contest sponsored by the Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation. From left to right are Brooke Shepherd, general manager; Melissa Thorud, editor; and Isabella Forliti, assistant editor. (Photo by the UWRF Department of Communication and Media Studies)

Scholarship honors former Student Voice editor

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“Mothers and daughters are connected. In ways we don’t even know.” Tricia Burger told me this about her mom, Helen Alexander Kuyper Evans. A UW-River Falls Journalism and English alumna from the class of 1969, Evans is remembered by her family and friends as someone who could light up the entire room as soon as she walked in. Evans had a whirlwind of a college experience and left a mark on River Falls that is still remembered today.

UWRF provides a system for current and incoming students to apply for a variety of scholarships that assist in funding education. After these scholarships are awarded recipients are encouraged to write thank you letters to contributors of these funds.

For fall semester, I was honored to be awarded the Helen Kuyper Evans scholarship for the Student Voice. I wrote a thank you note to the contributors and sent it off through the university system. A few weeks later I heard back from one of Evan’s college friends, Susan Delaney.

Delaney was eager to tell me a little bit about her dear friend Kuyper Evans, she said, “She was one of my closest friends. She embodied energy. We were all young and active, but Kuyper Evans could keep on working, or playing, or dancing, long after everyone else had to stop.”

I gave Delaney a call to hear more about her friendship with Kuyper Evans. Although she did not have any classes with her, Delaney knew that Kuyper Evans’ energy was similar to sipping out of a fire hose and could keep moving even after the sun went down. The instant impression I got from talking with Delaney was that Kuyper Evans impacted everyone around her and brought positive energy wherever she went.

Delaney got me into contact with Tricia Burger, Kuyper Evans’s daughter, who she happened to give birth to during her time at UWRF. Kuyper Evans met Gary Alexander, Burger’s father, during her first couple of years at the university. While maintaining the role as Editor for the Student Voice, Kuyper Evans newspaper in 1966, Tricia Alexander was born on Oct. 6 of that year. Both Kuyper Evans and Gary were 20 years old when they had Burger and divorced when she was three. Both Delaney and Burger had faint but fond memories of friends that had babysat each other’s children while mothers, such as Kuyper Evans, went to class.

Kuyper Evans went on to remarry to a man named John Evans, who she also met at UWRF. Although Evans passed away about five years ago, Burger knew Evans well and he played a significant role in her life, and he was married to Kuyper Evans at the time of her

passing.

Kuyper Evans was on a skiing trip in Breckenridge Colorado with Burger and her friends Bob and Nan, two days after Christmas on Dec. 27 in 1974. Burger mentioned that her mother was an avid skier and taught Burger to ski the same way she taught her to walk.

Burger spoke of Kuyper Evans and Evans, “They were often up at the crack of dawn to ensure they were the first ones on the slopes, they were just those types of people.” The day they went skiing, Kuyper Evans needed to take a small trip to Boulder to fix some skiing equipment. While Burger stayed back with their friend Nan, Bob went with Kuyper Evans. Burger remembers this day clearly as they got the message while at the ski resort saying there had been an accident. Kuyper Evans and Bob had unfortunately been side-swiped by a semi-truck and fallen off of a cliff into an icy pond. Although Bob made it out with a badly broken arm, Kuyper Evans was not wearing her seatbelt and sadly passed away on impact. To this day, Burger says, “If I ever catch my kids not wearing their seatbelt, they know there is absolutely no excuse.”

Kuyper Evans maintains a wonderful legacy that is kept alive through a variety of stories and things such as the UWRF scholarship in her name. The scholarship is awarded to a female member of the Student Voice, just as Kuyper Evans was. As mentioned, Kuyper Evans worked for the Student Voice newspaper during her time at UWRF and even worked in the role of Editor for a small period. Delaney shared with me that Kuyper Evans took her newspaper experience from UWRF and brought it across the sea. Before her passing in 1974, Kuyper Evans worked with her second husband John Evans for the US Army in Heidelberg, Germany, where she wrote and edited for the Armed Forces newspaper for multiple years before coming back to the states.

Legacies and memories such as Kuyper Evans’ are kept alive and keep connecting people across time through different ways such as the scholarship at UWRF. I am honored to have learned and shared more about Kuyper Evans’ story after becoming connected through this scholarship.

Although the time to apply for these scholarships has passed, students are encouraged to apply every year and information can be found on this portion of the website, <https://www.uwrf.edu/FinancialAid/TypesOfAid/UWRFScholarships.cfm>

Those who knew Kuyper Evans or want to donate to scholarships that make impacts on students at UWRF can find donation information here, <https://www.uwrf.edu/Give/AboutUs/>



Helen Kuyper Evans pictured in 1968 yearbook



Student Voice staff photo from UWRF 1968 yearbook

Are online classes providing quality education?

Melissa Thorud and Isabella Forliti

Now that we have been taking many courses through distance learning and online methods, it may be time to look at what we have actually learned during the past 10 months. Though there are many challenges that come about with online learning, in a global pandemic it was necessary.

Online learning has been a learning curve for everyone, professors and students alike. Not having social interactions with other students has been detrimental for some students’ mental health while other students have enjoyed the flexibility of the new way of learning.

Some say that hybrid classes are the “class of the future” and believe that hybrid classes will stick around long after

the pandemic ends. This may be true but how can students choose what they want?

Some kind of online or hybrid classes will be involved in our education and professional system for the rest of our lives. We recognize that the efficiency of being online and connecting with people from different states without the travel barrier is a plus for the virtual side of things.

But how do you find the balance? Are we overworking ourselves? Some students have found that due to the flexibility of online classes, there is a wavering line when it comes to the start and end of their day. With the lack of synchronous classes, they can do their work whenever they want, causing procrastination and stress when overwhelmed with the feeling of needing to get everything done in one day.

Alternatively, many students have found this flexible schedule beneficial regarding their paycheck. Because of classes not being at a certain time or on a certain day they can pick up extra shifts at work and do classwork afterward. Students are now able to work their jobs at home that most commonly will only work during the summer or on weekends. The issue runs into the fact that it means these students are not on campus and missing out on their time at UW-River Falls, is that okay with people?

There does seem to be some optimism with the idea that it is only for a short period of time and eventually we will all be back to normal. The University recently announced the promise and hope of a more “normal” looking fall semester.

It's safe to return to campus, but students should have options

Student Voice Staff

UW-River Falls administration is planning to have an in-person fall semester. With many midwestern states currently experiencing spikes in coronavirus cases, this decision raises questions about the safety of this decision.

In a press release from February, Chancellor Connie Foster said, "UW-River Falls is feeling very hopeful about our intended return to a more traditional fall semester. We know that this is what we do best: supporting our Falcons' success by interacting with them in person in a multitude of ways, inside the classroom and beyond."

Foster released various statements, she said in the upcoming months she hopes that UWRF will return to campus in the fall alongside many other UW-system schools. Vaccination rates have been increasing in Wisconsin, and according to the Wisconsin department of health services, 38% of Wisconsin residents have received at least one dose.

According to the university, vaccines will not be mandatory for any employees or students at UWRF. The campus will offer an on-site vaccination clinic once the state deems them eligible.

As of now, there are still mask requirements and testing requirements of those on campus.

According to a statement from the university, face coverings, physical distancing and regular testing may not be needed, however, they are monitoring the situation and those factors will be revisited closer to fall semester.

Overall, it does sound safe to return to campus as long as the university enforces safety measures, like mask wearing and hand washing. Four months is a long time in a pandemic and a lot can happen between now and fall, so being proactive and making the safest decisions should ultimately continue to be a priority.

Although it may be safe to return to campus and there is

a lot of excitement about a "return to normalcy" we think that there should still be options in place for those who may not want to return to campus so soon.

During the past year that we have been in this global pandemic, life has changed for everyone. Online classes have been more beneficial for some students, those who have full time jobs, commute or are non-traditional students might enjoy the flexibility that online and distance learning provides for them. Hybrid classes may be more appealing to these students going forward and offering that alternative may allow for students to continue in their time at UWRF.

However, other students may be struggling with this type of class structure. Students might be experiencing burn out, exhaustion, struggling with managing their online classes and missing the social aspect of being in class with peers. The deprivation of social environments has impacted the mental health of people everywhere and going back to campus may help with this.

People are longing for that routine, but are also overwhelmed by the idea of returning back at full force. The combination of some classes being offered in person while a majority are back in the classroom, provides students with the ability to ease back into some type of normalcy.



Students spent spring semester in a virtual format. Photo by Brooke Shepherd.

We found that online schedules can be deceiving for some students, presenting the illusion of having more open time to complete the work for classes. The difference is that students are now going over classwork and then moving on to homework, which takes an additional amount of time.

There are different needs for different students and we think the university should acknowledge and pay attention to those needs. Space should be created for these conversations and knowing what is best for everyone will create an even more inclusive community at UWRF.

Post-pandemic world raises lifestyle questions

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After over a year of masks, social distancing, and living in a mainly online world, we are starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel. With vaccines becoming increasingly available to all age groups, some more relaxed guidelines are being put into place. People are anxious to get back to some kind of "normal" without knowing what normal means at this point? After months of not having to get ready to go out, how do we all adjust and "re-enter" the world?

Sweatpants have become the norm for zoom meetings and online shopping but as many people head back to the office and college students back to campus, there is this struggle of figuring out how to dress for the occasion. Having to put outfits together and pack a lunch the night before seems so far in the past, but will be back before we know it.

While we struggle to find a pair of work pants after months and months, the new societal struggle will be the lack of masks. Although the pandemic isn't over yet, and the CDC encourages those who have been vaccinated to not get ahead of themselves and still wear masks, someday they will be a thing of the past. When that day comes we will all struggle with holding back our funny faces and mumbling phrases without the protection of the mask.

Masks not being encouraged anymore will be the first of many strange factors of social interactions we will have to endure in public. Figuring out when it is socially acceptable to shake someone's hand again instead of awkwardly asking for an elbow bump, may take

some getting used to as well.

Think back to when you have had a cold and your nose is plugged up for a few days, it feels easy to forget what it was like before to ever have a clear nose. I think of this pandemic in a similar way in the sense that it is hard to remember what before even was. At this point, new routines and habits have already been established and a new "normal" has come into play. However, there will be a big sigh of relief when we don't have to worry about accidentally coming into contact with a positive COVID-19 case ever again.

This concept of a new "normal" is also being brought up in a variety of companies across the country who have realized the benefits of having remote workers and not paying for one large office space. Many of those who have been anxiously awaiting the return to the office, may have to start decorating their home work space a little bit more.

The same concept for college students apply as they develop new habits that align perfectly with the online school format. Having to wake up early to get ready for class and step out into the world will be a difficult adjustment for those students who have been rolling out of bed one minute before class begins.

Regardless of how many strange little things that we will notice once we can all relax a little bit, we need to recognize that we can never go back to the "normal" we had before. This pandemic has opened up so many doors to important conversations that we cannot stop having. The conversation surrounding topics such as mental health and social justice are just a few examples of things that should remain on the table.

