

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN RIVER FALLS STUDENT VOICE

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Student makes memories with UWRF's International Classroom

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I've always been told that studying abroad for a semester would be an experience I'd never forget, and that could not be more true. After spending time with 11 amazing students, seeing the world, and exploring new cultures, I have not only been able to grow in my education, but as a person.

It's scary to cross the globe with a group of strangers, knowing you won't be returning for 88 days. You miss your home, your family, your pets, and your wardrobe, but giving it all up for just a short amount of time is more than worth it. If I could do it again, I absolutely would.

Exploring new and different cultures can be intimidating, but when you let go of that fear and really soak it in, it's one of the most incredible experiences you can have. Every day, I find myself remembering small details of what I experienced during those 88 days and wish I could go back and experience them again. To sit under the shining Eiffel Tower at night with people you have grown close to is something everyone should experience in their lives.

During the 2022 fall semester, I studied abroad through the UW-River Falls International Traveling Classroom. On Aug. 31, we touched ground in Edinburgh, Scotland. After a long wait for our bus to pick us up, we headed to Newbattle Abbey College, where we stayed for the next month. During our time here, we experienced everything there was to do in the little town of Dalkeith, Edinburgh, and the highlands of Scotland.

The program was well-structured but allowed time for independent travel as well. While in the United Kingdom, I was able to spend a busy weekend in London, see the shores of Oban, experience Glasgow and its Celtic Park, spend a day in North Berwick, and climb to the top of Ar-



Anna Gunderson in front of the Eiffel Tower. (Photo courtesy of Anna Gunderson)

thur's Seat.

The scenery was great, the food was questionable, and the people were kind. Then, one event that shocked the world happened only 80 miles away from Newbattle Abbey. On Sept. 8, Queen Elizabeth II died at Balmoral Castle and the announcement was shared while we were sitting in class.

The weekend of Sept. 11 was when some of us took a trip to London. We stood in a four-hour line that day through St. James Park to see Buckingham Palace. Flowers were spread all over the park and along the gates of the palace for the Queen; it was an extremely historic occasion and I'm very lucky to have been able to have seen it.

We were back in Edinburgh on the 12th to see the procession along the Royal Mile to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, where we

could see the Queen's casket and a glimpse of the new King.

As our time in Scotland came to an end, we spent our last weekend exploring the Highlands with an amazing tour group. We saw some of the most beautiful sights of the entire trip: The Clava Cairns, Lake Loch Ness, the Isle of Skye, the Jurassic Coast, the Three Sisters of Glencoe, and some highland cows just to name a few. It was a rainy weekend, but we had some of the most fun of our entire 88-day trip.

Our next destination was Amsterdam, but not before a quick weekend in Bruges, Belgium. Only a few of us went, but speaking from experience, there's nothing better than only having coffee, waffles, chocolate, and fries for a few days.

Amsterdam ended up being my favorite location. Our hostel, Generator, was modern and a lot of fun. While here, we toured the International Criminal Court, spent an afternoon in Delft, went to the markets, took an evening canal boat tour, and walked through the Anne Frank House and Van Gogh Museum. Amsterdam is beautiful, and I promised myself I will return someday.

Our transition trip leaving Amsterdam was spent in Prague. The Prague Castle was stunning, and in the evening we walked through the world-famous light show. Our walking tour took us through all the most important areas of the city, and we were able to watch the medieval clock, the Orloj, change to the next hour in the Old Town Square.

Classes continued in Berlin. We stayed at a Youth Hostel about 20 minutes outside of the city. All of the World War II history was extremely moving. It's obvious the city works to keep its history alive, but does so very carefully. The beautiful autumn colors of the trees are forever ingrained in my memory.

We were busy this week, touring the city by bike, visiting the Sachsenhausen Death Camp, walking through Sanssouci Palace, and going to the Berlin Olympic Stadium for a football game. The walk along the East Side Gallery is unforgettable, as well as the döner kebabs.

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At the end of our mountainous weekend, hours were spent sitting in the hot tub with some others we met at the hostel. We stayed at Balmers Herberge, which was one of the coolest hostels of the entire trip. I will never forget the bowls of pasta the pizza restaurant served next door.

Although we were sad to leave Switzerland, our next location for classes was Paris, France. In short, the Eiffel Tower is as awesome as everyone says. I have never walked



The International Traveling Classroom in Berlin, Germany. (Photo courtesy of Anna Gunderson)

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As new vice chancellor, UWRF alumna to focus on reversing enrollment decline

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As part of UW-River Falls' ongoing efforts to increase student enrollment, Laura King was named the vice chancellor of strategic enrollment on Nov. 17, 2022, and took office on Jan. 3, 2023. The vice chancellor of strategic enrollment is a new position, and follows enrollment strategies such as the UWRF rebrand, the new website, and the College Tour.

"My position is to help grow and strengthen enrollment here at the institution," King said. "And that means helping recruit new students, and then, helping retain students once they're here." King is a UWRF alumna, and, during her time as a student, was a resident assistant and a hall director, and participated in various student organizations, including Greek life and music ensembles. "I was a very involved student on campus," she said.

King was a music performance and pre-medicine student; however, after she obtained a position as a Certified Nursing Assistant, she decided to pursue a different occupation, and was recommended by her adviser to look into the field of student affairs.

"I always credit River Falls with spurring my interests in the world of student affairs and student services," King said. She said that her involvement at UWRF was a major factor in her decision to work in this field. "The institution holds a really special place in my heart."

From there, King earned a Ph.D. in educational policy and administration from the University of Minnesota, and a master's in College Student Development and Administration from UW-La Crosse. Before coming to UWRF, King held the position of Vice Chancellor for Enrollment and Strategic Initiatives at UW-Stout. She was also Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Institutional Research, Planning, and Grants at Saint Paul College.

"One thing that I've been tasked to do is work on a strategic enrollment plan," King said. King mentioned that she developed a strategic enrollment plan at UW-Stout: "So

50-some strategies is what we started with, and then we prioritize down to ten that we would include in the plan." King said that these ten were strategies they thought would have the best impact on student enrollment and retention. UWRF's enrollment plan will follow a similar approach.

King mentioned the collaborative process of the enrollment plan. "[It's] bringing the campus community together to talk about our opportunities for enrollment, and what we can offer prospective students," she said. "My role will be to coordinate that."

King also commented on the reasons for UWRF's push for enrollment. The main reason, she said, is the enrollment declines that have occurred, and continue to occur, across sectors of higher education in the United States. "The push for enrollment is a stabilization to help sustain the institution as a whole and make sure that we're here for future generations," King said. "I think part of it is that consistent decline that we've been seeing."

A report published by Wisconsin Public Radio said that UWRF has "seen consistent enrollment declines over the last three years." According to UWRF Institutional Research data, enrollment has declined by around 2% to 3% each year from 2019 to 2022.

In September 2019, there were 5,902 students enrolled at UWRF, in September 2020, there were 5,774 students, and in September 2021, there were 5,268 students. In September 2022, there were 4,902 students enrolled at UWRF.

"I'm really hopeful that the efforts that we've been doing are going to help us kind of turn that corner and turn that curve around," King said. The first step in developing the strategic enrollment plan, King said, is gathering institutional research. "I'm hoping that this summer we'll be able to use for data analysis and getting ready to kick things off in the fall."

King said that, after this institutional research has been completed, she will develop specific strategies for the enrollment plan. For now, she mentioned other efforts that UWRF is making to increase enrollment, including the UWRF e-sports team, the UWRF marching band, the new first-



Laura King. (Photo courtesy of UW-Stout)

year experience, and the first-year seminar, all of which will launch next fall.

King also mentioned the importance of retention. "[Retention] is one of the largest areas of enrollment at an institution," King said. "The structure I'll set out will have different groups that work on strategies specifically around different areas of [retention]." These areas, she said, are market-

ing, branding, and recruitment; finance and financial aid; and student success.

King said that she feels confident in the future of UW-River Falls and in the effort to increase enrollment. "My hope is to do that foundational work this summer," King said. "So then in the fall, we have all the information we need to have those really good conversations."

Earth Fest highlights wellness and sustainability

Chih-Yin Hung

Falcon Neew Service

The second annual Earth Fest is going to be held Saturday, April 22, at Glen Park in River Falls. The South Kinnickinnic Farmer-Led Watershed Council will participate for the first time with a soil health activity called "Soil Your Undies."

The festival is coordinated by Hope for Creation, a community group working for sustainability, and over 50 organizations will gather with live music, family activi-

ties and food sampling. The Earth Fest last year was more related to environmental sustainability, but this time will have more events related to wellness.

The purpose of the event is to re-engage the broader community on sustainability topics. Other local festivals, such as Bacon Bash and River Falls Days, do not focus on sustainability. The main idea of Earth Fest is getting people to think of what sustainability is and letting them have access to a wide variety of sustainable topics, according to event organizers.

"This event not only provides methods on taking care of our city, rivers and parks but also taking care of our people as well," said Mark Klapatch-Mathias, sustainability coordinator at UW-River Falls. "Creating a well-connected community is also a goal we are looking forward for."

The South Kinnickinnic Farmer-Led Watershed Council will prepare some soil samples and allow kids to spray the soil samples to mimic rain to show the impact of soil health practices on water infiltration and flooding. There will also be many

booths at Glen Park, where each stand will show an action related to environmental protection.

Other activities will include meditation, a nature walk, and several that will be family friendly.

Earth Fest 2023 is scheduled from noon to 4 p.m. on April 22. Further information is available online at www.hope4creationrf.org.

What is your definition of success?

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Yasmin Ugalde

“Being happy with what you have in life and having a good career and being at a good place in your life.”



Jakiyah Brewington

“If you feel like you have accomplished your goal, and that if you feel successful in yourself you don’t have to ask anyone else.”

Bailey Ahlers

“Achieving all your goals and making sure you are getting there in the way you want to.”



Bobby Churchich

“If I am at the end of the road and I am happy with what I have done, then I think I have done a pretty good job.”



William Thomson

“Achieving your goals, whatever that may be.”



Kenzie Schutz

“Accomplishing goals in ways that you can handle. You want to give yourself enough time to accomplish those goals.”

Kacie Duval

“Following your dreams and going out for whatever you want to do in life.”



Kenzi Meyer

“Achieving my goals in a manageable amount of time.”



Memories span several European countries

Continued from page 1

through so many museums or drank so many cappuccinos! Here, our class was Arts and Ideas II, and I saw enough art to last me a lifetime.

My fondest memory while in Paris was the night of Nov. 1, when we headed to the Eiffel Tower after dinner to sit and play cards under its famous light show. Some of us reserved tickets to head up, but I enjoyed sitting at the bottom to enjoy the peace. This was one of my “a-ha” moments, where the reality of my surroundings really sunk in. I will never forget that night.

Our next location for class was Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, but we only had one day to get there from Paris. A group of us rented an Airbnb in Colmar, France, for the night where I slept in the most comfortable bed yet. We were so excited to have a TV to watch from.

Freiburg was the perfect location to wrap up our schoolwork. It is a small town in the Black Forest of Germany and is well known for the Freiburger Münster and the narrow canals that line the streets, known as Bächle. These were used to supply the town with water during the middle ages, but today, mythology says if you fall in, you will find love.

Everyone loved Freiburg; we would have classes in the morning until noon, then head right into town for the market by the Münster to get a cheap lunch. Every day it was a different kind of wurst, a glass of homemade wine, and a cappuccino from various food trucks.

Until this point, all of my travel had been with others. But once our time was up in Freiburg, I had to catch an early train to Amsterdam to meet up with my boyfriend, who flew in to spend some time with me.

After classes wrapped up, we had about two weeks to travel independently and see what we wanted. After a long day of sitting on the train, I was finally able to see my boyfriend again, and the moment was as magical as I expected. At this point, I had been in Europe for 72 days.

We spent the day exploring some of Amsterdam, and the next morning we went to Lucerne, Switzerland. The next few days were spent exploring the town and eating lots of chocolate. Switzerland has one of the best water resources in the world, and the town was full of free-flowing water fountains that were safe to drink from.

These free travel days were some of the best days of the entire trip. Being able to explore on my own schedule and do what I wanted was freeing, and doing so with my partner made the whole experience even more incredible. My dad



Front (left to right): Josie Johnson, Emma Wawracz; back (left to right): Alison Ruest, Allie Schramel, Anna Gunderson. (Photo courtesy of Anna Gunderson)

It was hard being away, but leaving the people I had grown so close to was making me sad. I had adjusted to this way of life and knew I would miss the adventure.

was flying into Zurich to meet us, so we headed there a few nights early to pick him up. We took advantage of all the free chocolate the Lindt museum offered during its tour and took the night to catch up on some laundry.

We headed right to Genoa, Italy after my dad arrived in Zurich. On the train, we were able to enjoy some last-minute sights of the mountains and catch up on what happened during the last 78 days. We had four nights to spend here at

our nautical-themed hostel and I ate all of the pesto pasta I could. This city was relatively walkable, so we didn't have to rely on public transportation at all.

On the first day, we stumbled across the world-famous aquarium and saw most of the main tourist attractions by the water. We took it slow and enjoyed the sights at our own pace, seeing Porto Antico, Piazza de Ferrari, and some of Museo di Palazzo Reale.

I had to return to Amsterdam to catch up with my group again before flying home, so I decided to head there a day early so I could show my dad and boyfriend some of the city before they left. I booked us tickets to the Anne Frank House and reserved us seats on a boat tour of the canals. I was most excited, however, about taking my boyfriend to Luuk's Coffee.

Leaving Europe was just as hard as it was leaving home 88 days prior. On our last day, we went out for a group dinner at the Hard Rock Cafe in Amsterdam and I was so thankful to be where I was. It was hard being away, but leaving the people I had grown so close to was making me sad. I had adjusted to this way of life and knew I would miss the adventure.

I am thankful to have been able to sit under the Eiffel tower, walk in the Swiss Alps, stroll over Amsterdam's canals, and tour the old alleys of Edinburgh. While indulging in reality across the world from my home, I was taken back in time to learn about the past and prepare myself better for the future. I am lucky, I am blessed, and I am forever grateful to the people who pushed me to pursue my dreams of going abroad.

The study abroad programs at UWRF gave me the best three months of my life, and I would not have been able to do so if the pandemic prevented travels any longer. Going abroad during my senior year was not my original plan, but I'm thankful I had the opportunity. The Office of International Education does awesome work to provide any student with the opportunity to explore and see the world. The biggest point I would like to get across is this: if you want to go, go. Don't hold back and risk regretting it in the future. The money is temporary, but the memories are forever.



The International Traveling Classroom in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. (Photo courtesy of Anna Gunderson)

Falcons devour Blugolds, win O'Brien Cup

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The UW-River Falls women's hockey team became WIAC Tournament champions after sacking the UW-Eau Claire Blugolds 5-1. The Falcons and Blugolds have now competed for seven straight WIAC titles, with River Falls winning five in that time. Eau Claire has failed to capture a title since 2019 and looked lost against the ferocious Falcon attack.

Throughout the season, River Falls had outmatched their conference opponents, going 10-0 up until facing Eau Claire in their final two regular-season games. River Falls ranked No. 1 in the USCHO DIII Women's Poll but fell to Eau Claire 4-7 on the road. The following day, the Falcons narrowly defeated the Blugolds in an overtime shootout. River Falls became regular-season conference champions, but dropped to No. 3 in the rankings.

The Falcons and Blugolds ensured their spots in the WIAC semi-finals, and both took care of business before the championship. Eau Claire faced UW-Stevens Point and defeated them 2-0 in both matchups, while the Falcons handled Northland College.

During the regular season, River Falls met Northland three times and led with a total score of 25-0. The Falcons didn't waver in the playoffs and defeated them twice for a combined score of 16-2. River Falls is now 19-0 all-time against Northland.

Hunt Arena held over 1,000 in attendance for the championship game, its highest all season. The packed house looked on as River Falls confronted Eau Claire for ultimate supremacy over the WIAC.

River Falls opened swiftly and gave their fans an immediate spectacle. Forward Aubrey Nelvin scored the Falcon's first goal



The Falcons held onto the O'Brien Cup after their victory. (Photo by Pat Deninger, University Communications and Marketing)

at 2:47 into the game. Eau Claire stumbled early and committed multiple penalties, setting up River Falls with three power plays. The Falcons cashed in when Forward Bailey Olson put them up 2-0. River Falls closed the first period, leading by two, with thirteen shots on goal next to Eau Claire's six.

The Falcons opened period two on their fourth power play and continued to create opportunities deep in Blugold territory. Forward Madison Laverne cashed a pivotal third goal for the Falcons only 1:23 into the period. The Blugolds appeared as a shell of themselves from past matchups. Through the second period, River Falls had put twenty-six shots on goal, next to fifteen for the Blugolds, and only committed two penalties next to Eau Claire's five. The Fal-

cons led 3-0 entering the third period and looked in control.

Early into the third period, Madison Laverne added an insurance goal for the Falcons to take a 4-0 lead. Eau Claire led a desperate comeback attempt and finally put one through Goalie Sami Miller with 13:30 remaining. The Falcons responded, and their leading scorer Maddie McCollins put a grave on Eau Claire's season. Maddie's late goal brought her season total to twenty-eight, and she set a new UWRF single-season record for goals scored. The Falcons defeated the Blugolds and posted a final score of 5-1. For the fourth straight year, River Falls won the conference title and the O'Brien cup would stay locked away in Falcon territory.

The Falcons continue to overpower

teams on offense, scoring five against the #7 ranked Blugolds. As of March 7, River Falls is the highest-scoring team, with 159 goals in twenty-eight games this season.

On March 5, the NCAA released their DIII Women's Ice Hockey Championship bracket. The Falcons are of the 11 teams competing and will face off in the quarter-finals against the Gustavus Adolphus Gusties. The Gusties were last year's championship runner-up and defeated the Falcons in the quarter-finals. In their three meetings this season, River Falls leads 2-1, with an overtime win in game three. The Falcons were scheduled to travel to St. Peter, Minnesota, on March 11, hoping to reverse last year's early exit and defeat Gustavus for a third time this season.

Annika Gunderson breaks indoor pole vault record

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Freshman Annika Gunderson is only in her second semester at UW-River Falls, but she has already become one of the prominent faces in the athletic program and cemented her legacy by fracturing a long-standing school record. Gunderson broke the UWRF women's indoor pole vault record at two separate meets this year, first at the height of 3.68 meters and second at an astounding 3.81 meters.

The NCAA took notice, and on March 5, Gunderson qualified for the 2023 DIII Indoor Track and Field Championships. When diving into her history of physical commitment and prolonged success, it's not difficult to conclude how she's quickly become one of River Falls's most accomplished athletes.

Gunderson comes from Forest Lake, Minnesota, where she saw athletic achievement throughout high school. She came from a gymnastics background, and her coach recommended track and field to condition in the offseason. This eventually took her away from gymnastics and revealed her potential to become a track and field star. Gunderson developed a passion for pole vaulting during her freshman year of high school, which soon became her main athletic ambition. She broke the Forest Lake High School wom-

en's pole vault record during her senior year and set a new standard for her future meets. After graduating, Gunderson was unready to give up her athletic career and committed to River Falls for her future.

Gunderson said that the track and field program was a major factor in her decision to attend UWRF. She describes college athletics as a bigger physical commitment than high school but also recognizes the benefit of extra practice. Gunderson described her team as "supportive" and filled with people who "show that they care about you." She also recognizes the difference in dedication levels at River Falls compared to high school, saying that "everyone here wants to be on the team" and that she, especially, is "grateful for the opportunity."

Gunderson said that she knew of UWRF's pole vault records and ultimately hoped to break one of them. "If you're coming here, you might as well know what the best of the best have done," she said. "My goal was to break one before graduating." Fortunately for her, it wouldn't take four years, only four months.

UWRF participated in an indoor track meet on January 21 at UW-Superior. Gunderson gave River Falls their best vault on record, beating the former holder Riley Claude by 0.01 meters. Gunderson said that before the vault, her coaches advised her to raise it slightly above the record.

Once over the bar, Gunderson described the descent as "feeling unreal." She became the new record holder, vaulting over a height of 3.68 meters.

Only three weeks later, on Feb. 11, Gunderson broke the record again at a River Falls home meet. This time, she increased the record to 3.81 meters. Gunderson was named Female Falcon of the Week twice in one month and officially became one of UWRF's highest-performing athletes.

Gunderson's school records highlight significant achievements, but they also highlight substantial work. At UWRF, she's double-majoring in Elementary Education and Spanish Education while also hoping to graduate early. Track and field practices run five days a week and throughout the school-wide breaks. During the one-month winter break for students, Gunderson frequently drove the two-hour round trip to attend practice. Gunderson described her track career as a "healthy obsession" and recognizes the heavy workload that accompanies her legacy.

Though already highly accomplished, Gunderson's passion and drive outweigh her satisfaction. She never wants to quit pole vaulting and has serious plans to become a coach after graduation. As for her remaining years at UW-River Falls, she'll be looking to increase her school record, ensuring that it remains untouched for years to come.

Turning Point USA returns to UW-River Falls

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Turning Point USA (TPUSA) has become a prominent organization on college campuses across the United States, with chapters in universities and colleges in all 50 states, including a chapter at UW-River Falls.

The organization was founded in 2012 by Charlie Kirk, and the River Falls chapter was founded in the fall of 2019 with the help of the former president and current vice president, Lisha Fairbairn. The River Falls chapter disappeared at the time when the COVID-19 pandemic hit but returned in the spring of 2023 with the help of the current president, Jalyssa Beaudry.

TPUSA aims to educate young people about conservative principles, including fiscal responsibility, free markets, and limited government. TPUSA has been both praised and criticized for its activities and views. Supporters see it as a vital organization for promoting conservative ideas and values among young people, while critics argue that it promotes divisive and harmful policies.

Vice President Lisha Fairbairn and President Jalyssa Beaudry stated that the strongest value the club aims to promote on campus is freedom of speech. Lisha states that

Turning Point is “a good space where students can come to have discussions about stuff that they may feel uncomfortable talking about in the classroom because of the stigma around it.”

According to TPUSA, the organization has been successful in attracting young conservatives because it has tapped into their desire to push back against what they see as a liberal bias in higher education. The organization also uses slogans and social media to create a sense of belonging and camaraderie among its members. The River Falls TPUSA Facebook page has over 2,000 followers and counting. They also work to attract and engage students on campus by tabling in the University Center and also via word of mouth.

One of the prominent things that distinguishes TPUSA as an organization and the UW-River Falls chapter is its approach to student involvement. President Jalyssa Beaudry said, “we would love to see students who don’t already hold conservative values here because there aren’t political clubs on campus and we want to have those discussions.”

One of the main goals of TPUSA’s campus chapters is to promote open dialogue and free speech on college campuses. The organization believes that conservative voices are often marginalized or silenced on college campuses, and

it seeks to provide a platform for these views to be heard.

Vice President Fairbairn shared her idea to get more students engaged through a “free speech ball.” This gives students the opportunity to take a marker and write whatever they want on the ball. “Students can express whatever they want on this ball and at the same time will bring attention to free speech,” Fairbairn said.

TPUSA has also faced criticism for its tactics and approach to political activism. Some have accused the organization of being too extreme and divisive, while others have questioned its commitment to free speech and open dialogue. Critics have also accused TPUSA of promoting conspiracy theories and spreading false information.

Despite the criticisms, TPUSA continues to be a major force on college campuses. According to TPUSA, the organization has been successful in creating a network of conservative activists who are passionate about promoting their beliefs.

Beaudry states the UW-River Falls chapter “wants people to come in here and share their different points because we may believe different things but at the end of the day we are all humans, we are all students and we can connect on those things.”

Officials up flood threat for western Wisconsin

Michelle Stangler

Falcon News Service

With recent snowfalls, western Wisconsin is above a normal flood threat for the Upper Mississippi, Minnesota and Chippewa river basins, according to the National Weather Service.

Craig Schmidt, a senior hydrologist in the Twin Cities office of the National Weather Service, studies what the spring flood season may look like and communicates with emergency managers to make preparations for the season. He said that a few weeks ago the situation was different and anticipated a fairly normal spring.

“The last two weeks, we changed that a little bit when we added a lot of snowpack and some rain into the snow that’s already down,” said Schmidt. As of March 9, the flood outlook “has been upgraded to well above normal,” according to the National Weather Service.

Michael Rogney of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources agreed. Rogney, based in Eau Claire, is a water management engineer and works with dam safety and the

floodplain program.

“I think what we’re seeing is slightly above probability of potential flooding,” he said.

Continuing into the spring, he will communicate with dam owners with data he is seeing and recommends to have plans in place.

Schmidt reiterated similar thoughts and said residents should be prepared.

“If you’re in an area near a river that does some flooding in spring, this year we have a pretty high threat we’re going to see some flooding,” he said, and added to look at flood insurance especially if you are a business owner. “You have to have some insurance for 30 days before it goes into effect.”

In western Wisconsin, the Kinnickinnic River will be monitored by a gauge and local officials will respond accordingly when the snow melts, said Schmidt.

The last two years, the western Wisconsin area has been in a drought during the spring, but Schmidt said that may help this year to reduce the potential of flooding.

“The drought might actually have helped us a little bit in

terms of this year because the early part of the melt is all going to go into the soils before it starts running towards the rivers,” he said.

Additionally, with the recent snowfall, the area may be considered not in a drought for the spring, said Schmidt.

“The Climate Production Center is looking at alleviating our drought conditions in the spring in all of western Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota,” said Schmidt.

Flooding predictions look at many different tools, including measuring the amount of water that is contained in the snow, according to Schmidt.

“This year, what we’re seeing is quite a bit more than what we would normally see at the end of February,” he said.

Depending upon the next few weeks of rainfall and snow melting, there may be flooding and both Schmidt and Rogney said to be prepared for what’s to come.

More weekly information, graphs and up-to-date information about the area’s spring flood outlook can be found on the National Weather Service Twin Cities website, weather.gov/mpx.

Former Burger King site to become Dunkin’ franchise

Maxwell Rekela-Jasper

Falcon News Service

The former Burger King location on Main Street and West Quarry Road in River Falls will become a Dunkin’ franchise and is projected to be open for business in May.

The building has been sitting vacant and boarded up for nearly two years. Bee Furlong and her husband Scott are the new property owners. Bee Furlong said that the property is being partitioned into two suites, one being the new Dunkin’ location with the tenant for the other suite to be determined later.

“I can’t speak for what’s going in (the second suite) because we haven’t signed any agreements yet,” Furlong said. “We’re looking for something that’s going to complement the coffee shop and be high-traffic, because it’s not necessarily the most pedestrian-friendly spot in town.”

Rumors spread about the space due to a post on the River

Falls Community Facebook page.

“Someone saw the Dunkin’ van parked out front during one of our meetings and put it on the Facebook page,” Furlong said.

Despite the rumors, Furlong said it has been a “positive thing” to see the word about the location spread fast.

“It’s been nice that the word has spread fast, and I hope it’s generally received well in our community,” Furlong said. “We are very excited to have our new tenant in the space, and think he will provide a positive influence on the community.”

The property has a valuation of \$961,000, according to St. Croix County records.

The new tenant of the space is Sahil Taneja St. Paul, who has been a Dunkin’ franchise owner for five other locations in the last three years.

“This will be my sixth franchise,” Taneja said. “The goal of the (River Falls) location remains the same as my other

ones, which is to provide a quick and convenient way for people to have coffee on the go, and even a doughnut too.”

Both Furlong and Taneja agree that Dunkin’ is “much needed” in the River Falls community.

“We hope a drive-thru coffee shop supports the entire town of River Falls, and satisfies the needs of people who commute,” Furlong said. “We love and appreciate our community, and we hope that people receive this well.”

Construction on the site began in the first week of January and is projected to finish towards the end of April to the beginning of May. The construction will not interfere with traffic on Main Street and West Quarry Road.

According to Taneja, the franchise is looking for interested job applicants and will begin the hiring process in April.

“We are looking for about 40-50 team members to serve in all kinds of roles,” Taneja said.

UNIV 101: Will it boost retention?

Retention, retention, retention! Many of the newest developments and big projects at UWRF have been focused on retention. The new first-year experience is one of those new developments that is focused on helping freshmen adapt to college and find their place.

University 101 is a class that is being proposed under the first-year experience umbrella. Currently, this class is a three-credit elective that will be offered in the fall of 2023. The class has three main focuses: learning more about what the university has to offer, group work, and information literacy.

Students will learn more about the degree audit report (DAR), advising, library resources, FAFSA, financial aid, health and wellbeing resources, career services, and “resources for the development of effective student success,” according to the class proposal.

For the other two learning outcomes, this will be

dependent on course sections. Professors will be able to decide how to teach the course to achieve the course objectives of information literacy and teamwork. The end goal is to make UNIV 101 a general education requirement.

“Faculty will be all working towards those same objectives but the course is designed that they would do it within the realms of their own specialties but achieving common objectives,” said Doug Margolis the University Curriculum Committee Chair.

The real question is: Will this work? At the Student Voice, we like the idea of having a class that will better help students adjust to college life. It’s a noble goal but if a student knows what major they are interested in and is confident enough to ask for help from their advisers this required class could feel like a waste of time or busy work.

Breaking it down, this class is around 5 weeks of learning about the college’s resources which

could be learned at freshmen orientation, and 5 weeks’ worth of group projects. It would feel like the university is spoon-feeding students this information or that we are not really learning anything.

The Student Voice thinks that this would make more sense for it to be a department or college-based course because many of those students will be your colleagues for the next four years. This would give you a chance to interact with people you will be seeing quite often while learning material that could be better applied to one’s major.

If the college continues with the UNIV 101 class the Student Voice thinks that this course would be better suited to stay an elective rather than have it be a general education requirement as the students who would like to take it would be able to and those that adjust faster are able to move on to classes they see are a better use of their time.

STUDENT VOICE

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN RIVER FALLS

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

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

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

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

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

Grass roots effort promotes ‘final five’ voting plan

Joshua Brauer
Falcon News Service

In a dimly lit suburban home in Menomonie, Wisconsin, a recent event featured cheese, bread and wine. The reason: final five voting.

Leading the affair was Bob Maline, a Hudson-area resident and board member from the western Wisconsin grass-roots organization GROWW Action.

In the audience were 14 individuals from the Menomonie community. They gathered in the living room on couches and chairs to listen about one of GROWW Action’s projects called “Bridge the Divide.”

“Bridge the Divide” seeks to implement a ranked choice voting system in Wisconsin, according to Maline.

“This is in order to reduce the divisiveness in elections, and really in our communities,” he said.

The system, called “final five voting,” is a combination of two features, Maline said.

“One is a multi-party, multi-winner primary. The other is an instant runoff or ranked choice general election,” he said.

Final five voting is not just a project for GROWW Action, but also the focus of a bill expected to be re-introduced in the Wisconsin State Legislature, Maline said.

Last legislative session, State Senators Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick) and Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield) introduced SB 250, which called for top-five primaries for certain national offices. Despite picking up 20 bipartisan co-sponsors, the bill did not make it out of committee.

Although the bill did not pass, there is a chance of it being re-introduced, Maline said.

“The sponsors of this bill are planning on making a push in the fall,” he said.

To demonstrate how final five voting works, Maline had all the guests in Menomonie participate in a ranked choice vote amongst five of the cheeses which were presented to them at the beginning of the presentation. The five choices of cheese were parmesan, gorgonzola, cheddar, Colby and gouda. From those five, audience members ranked their favorite to least favorite and submitted their vote on a sheet of paper. Maline then tallied and reported the results in accordance with final five voting.

Similar house parties have been held around western Wisconsin.

During the mock election with the cheeses, every ballot filled out by guests was valid, according to Maline.

“It gives people more of a voice, I feel like it’ll free up a lot of people to vote for who they really want to and not feel like they’re throwing out their vote,” an individual at

the presentation said.

“The No. 1 reason that individuals give (against final five voting) is that it’s too complicated,” Maline said. “We have evidence that it’s not. We have done this demonstration election for 8-year-olds to 80-year-olds. It works.”

Ranked choice voting is present in other U.S. states. Alaska utilizes ranked choice voting in its state elections, and other cities around the nation also partake in this voting system, Maline stated.

“Twenty-three cities in Utah use ranked choice voting for their municipal elections. Minneapolis and St. Paul and some other Twin Cities suburbs use ranked choice voting,” he said.

“Americans are tired of only having two viable choices,” Maline said. “This is a real tangible thing that we can do to help give people more hope that their voice really matters in elections.”

If passed, the final five voting bill would affect the U.S. Senate and House of Representative races in Wisconsin.

“They are looking at doing this piecemeal,” said Maline. “The first law would apply to our federal offices.”

To learn more about GROWW Action or final five voting visit gro-wwaction.org.

UWRF students win 5 awards for broadcast projects

Falcon News Service

uwrjournalism.org

Students at UW-River Falls were presented a total of five awards during this year's Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Student Seminar in Middleton, including two first-place honors.

The seminar took place Saturday, Feb. 25, and brought together students and educators from across the state. The seminar was capped by presentation of this year's Student Awards for Excellence.

Michelle Stangler, a journalism and agricultural marketing communications major from Watertown, Wisconsin, earned first place in the news series and documentary category for her summer 2022 long-form radio story, "Dairy Farming Not as Simple a Life as it May Seem." The documentary, which aired on the student-run radio station WRFW, was produced with support from UWRF's Donovan E. Rasmussen Broadcast Journalism Fellowship. The documentary may be heard online at uwrjournalism.org.

Stangler along with fellow WRFW members Emily Marsolek and Jacob Jensen won first place in the live special category for

the radio station's October 2022 program leading up to the inauguration of Chancellor Maria Gallo.

Stangler also earned second place for her radio air check. An air check is a demonstration recording that showcases an announcer's abilities.

In addition, Stangler was one of four university students awarded WBA scholarships. She received the \$1,500 David L. Nelson Scholarship.

Students in the Music and Stage and Screen Arts Department won two awards in the special television programming category for short films produced during 2022 as part of the Advanced Field Production course.

Austin Albright, Tyler Buss, Sevki Cevik, Matthew McCarthy, Wesley Papp and Kat Peine earned second place for "Ghost Light," a film about a young woman dealing with the death of her mother. "Ghost Light" may be viewed on Vimeo or YouTube.

Third place went to Ben Brannon, Zoe Palmer, Bradley Horwath, Cam Wallace, Irene Yoshizumu and Logan Carlson for "Consequences," a comedy about bullying in school. "Consequences" may be viewed on YouTube.



The award-winning UW-River Falls delegation poses for a photo during the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Student Seminar, which was held Feb. 25 in Middleton, Wisconsin. (Photo by UWRF Journalism)

Stage and Screen Arts premieres 'Miss Havisham'

Jack Van Hoof

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The UW-River Falls Stage and Screen Arts (SASA) Program held a red carpet premiere of the short film "Miss Havisham" on Feb. 16. The screening took place in the Davis Theatre in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building, and featured other short student films as well.

"Miss Havisham" is inspired by characters from Charles Dickens's "Great Expectations," and, according to the film's

promotional website, "explores a tortured mind bent on a twisted form of vengeance." The film was adapted and directed by Kathy Welch, the Stage and Screen Arts Associate Lecturer, who also directed SASA's renditions of Mary Shelley's "Mary Frankenstein," and Shakespeare's "The Tempest."

The film "utilizes stylized movement, original music, and creative cinematic techniques." This original music was created by the UWRF Music Department in collaboration with SASA.

The screening included a selection of

films from Casey Palbicki's Multimedia for the Performing Arts Class: the short commercials "A Beer" and "Rad Brad's coffee," the YouTube tutorials "How to Ollie" and "How to Hide a Dead Body," and the short horror film "289."

In addition, the screening included two short films from Erik Johnson's Advanced Field Production class, the comedy film "Consequences" and the horror film "Ghost Light." These two films were produced in collaboration with Joe Rein's Screenwriting class.

"Miss Havisham" starred Sophie Hilo as Miss Havisham, Adrienne Quinlan as Estella, Billy Chester as Pip, and Laura Klein as Miss Havisham's cousin. Casey Palbicki served as the Executive Producer, the Director of Photography, and the Music Composer, among other roles.

"Miss Havisham," as well as "Consequences," "Ghost Light," and "Mary Frankenstein," can be viewed online at the UWRF Stage and Screen Productions YouTube channel.

Bluegrass, Bourbon, and Brews Festival set for April

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The bluegrass and folk Americana band High & Rising includes Laura Farley (upright bass and vocals), Jym Farley (acoustic guitar), Ben Rohde (percussion) and Harrison Olk (banjo). The band released its debut album, Howl, in 2021.

The River Falls community is preparing for the annual Bluegrass, Bourbon, and Brews Festival, which takes place from April 21-23. This year's festival will include performances by High & Rising, The Last Revel, Armchair Boogie, and much more. There will also be beer, wine, and bourbon tastings throughout the event.

All headliners, and a majority of the shows, will require a wristband, but there will be a few free venues for guests to enjoy. All wristbands include a shuttle bus pass for transportation, and some packages also include merchandise from the event. Tickets for guests who just want to experience the tastings are available as well.

According to Emily Kovach-Erickson, the event and program manager at the River Falls Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism has provided a JEM Grant to expand

the event. With the money, Kovach-Erickson and the other event organizers were able to add more music, venues, and tastings, and are hoping to make the festival self-sustainable this year.

Kovach-Erickson said, "the Bourbon and Brews piece was added to highlight the growing craft beverage creators in our area." Tattersall Distillery is the spirits sponsor this year, and Swinging Bridge Brewery is the beer sponsor. There will be a "Beer and Bloodies" tasting and a "Bourbon and Spirits" tasting, both on April 22.

The host band for this year's festival is High & Rising. According to Kovach-Erickson, the host band helps with band booking, focusing on local bands from Wisconsin and the Twin Cities area, but also bringing in national acts as well.

The schedule of all of the acts will be made available shortly on the festival website, riverfallsbluegrass.com.