

Ganther Says Bucks Must Boost Enrollment

JAMES BONNELL

Centurion Staff

With national higher education enrollment reaching historic lows, mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic, budget deficits that are seemingly impossible to overcome, and a future as uncertain as ever, many institutions find themselves searching for methods to turn it all around.

Bucks President Dr. Felicia Ganther is more than aware of what the college has faced, will face, and how it intends to ensure its success in the future.

While an estimate from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center claims higher education enrollment across the country has declined by 5.1 percent over the last two years, the drop at Bucks is actually even higher.

Bucks saw an enrollment decrease of 8 percent from 2019 to 2020 and a 12 percent decrease from 2020 to 2021.

In response to those numbers, Dr. Ganther points out that, “We’re still lagging in Fall and Spring enrollment, so those numbers kind of hold.”

However, she also notes that the college has seen, “...a 30 percent increase in summer enrollment over the same time last year and a 10 percent increase over the same time two years ago.”

Unfortunately, since enrollment just opened up for the Fall semester, there aren’t any comparisons to previous Fall enrollment at this time.

Although we can look at the fact that national enrollment has actually been on a steady decline since before the pandemic, there are many obvious aspects of the outbreak that were specifically influential in continuing the decline.

Dr. Ganther believes that, “... opening back up the campus, people knowing that we’re open, and people feeling more comfortable with being back,” will almost certainly have a positive impact on enrollment.

Aside from recovering from the pandemic, Bucks has been involved with an enrollment consulting firm known as Ruffalo Noel Levitz for some time now.

The commitment with the firm will last 12 to 18 months and will feature a number of recommendations aimed at boosting enrollment.

While the college is hopeful some of these recommendations may be implemented sometime during the summer of 2022, the real objective is to have the recommendations used to increase the Fall 2023 do you mean 2022? enrollment.

According to Dr. Ganther, “This work is very critical to our accreditation, to our strategic planning, and of course to revenue generation due to tuition.”

When Dr. Ganther mentions the various levels of importance this relationship with the firm will bring, she’s stressing the value of taking the necessary time and

conducting the correct amount of research to be able to gain a significant increase in future enrollment.

Bucks wants to be able to have a variety of unanimously agreed upon recommendations before mass implementation.

One particular implementation that is already decided upon revolves around the student information system.

In the near future, Bucks will be turning to the ERP Workday for student information services.

ERP stands for enterprise resource planning, which is software created to collect, log, manage, and translate many forms of information.

Where Workday is a means to simplify and efficiently provide information for students and faculty, there are unfortunately some future recommendations that may be hindered by the software.

“A lot of the functionalities that we would need in order to support enrollment are a part of the implication of this student information system. So, some of the recommendations may have a lag time, because they will be dependent and predicated upon successful implementation of the various components of Workday,” explains Dr. Ganther.

Perhaps not the most encouraging information, we must remind ourselves that large changes take time, and tend to have periods of stasis before success.

Outside of the research from the Noel Levitz firm, Dr. Ganther and other Bucks administrators have been looking at numerous ways to be accessible to anyone interested in an education.

When looking into course scheduling and offerings, it became clear that students with specific timing engagements are unable to complete full time programs on the current Monday/Wednesday, or Tuesday/Thursday class schedule system.

To combat this issue, the college hopes to launch weekend course offerings that would be part of an 18-month degree program in January of 2023.

Many people who participate in New Year’s resolutions tend to look into pursuing education in hopes of bettering their careers.

“We want to right there to support those who may be thinking about doing that,” Dr. Ganther half jokes.

Another portion of this accessibility relies on institutional partnerships. A student who is able to remain in a similar location, with a similar course schedule, and a similar time frame will be more likely to pursue a degree after acquiring their Associate’s.

The more comfortable students feel about accessibility, the better the chance is of increased enrollment and institutional funding based in tuition and other areas.

As we continue to face a \$7 million budget deficit at Bucks, it’s no surprise that finances and funding are extremely crucial in



positively moving forward.

Referring back to our conversation last year, Dr. Ganther still maintains that all employees of the college need not worry about programs losing funding, or individuals losing employment in order to cover the deficit.

Currently, we are exploring interim structures. This is to say the college is searching for individuals already employed by the institution who would be able to serve in alternative capacities.

“Next year, we’ll have an interim provost, interim academic vice presidents, and interim deans,” expresses Dr. Ganther.

This process will allow the college to determine what is actually affordable before hiring new employees.

With regards to changes to academic departments, the kinesiology and sports studies programs will be moved to the health sciences department. This integration will keep the faculties of said departments intact.

As someone who does not

believe it cutting things unnecessarily, Dr. Ganther has also been looking into external funding. This can include grants and scholarships.

“We have been working hard with some of our partners to see if they can step in and provide a service, in lieu of us trying to pay for that service,” she adds.

Her hope is to be able to redirect traditionally set aside funds for programs and services to areas in need.

At the end of the day, Bucks will need to be present in the community in order to reach desired success in the future.

“The community has to see the value proposition of why the college exists, how the citizenry can benefit from the fact that we are not necessarily just an institution that beings in traditional aged recent high school graduates...,” expresses Dr. Ganther.

She finishes the interview reminding us of the importance of accessibility.

“I think the success of Bucks

is going to be predicated on our ability to meet the needs of people where they are at this moment and not continue to project a traditional college environment. That’s core to who we are, but we’re more than that, and we have to be more than that. We have a lot to offer and we’re going to have to blow our own bugles. People have to see us because we are showing people who we are.”

Even though nothing is promised in these trying times, we at Bucks should be confident that Dr. Ganther and her administration has the institution’s best interests at heart, and that she fully intends to lead us out of the depths of the last few years.

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COLIN RICCARDI
Centurion Staff

Looking around campuses around the country can be a dreary sight as of late. Seeing few groups of students scattered around a school is very different when compared to the pre pandemic era.

Gone are the days when hundreds of students would remain on campus to study between classes or get in some extra practice. Now, students are staying in the comforts of their homes while they cram practice reviews for upcoming exams.

Many factors are being talked about as it pertains to the recovery of student life at community colleges. It is no secret that over the course of the pandemic, enrollment at community colleges has not been able to keep up with major four-year schools.

However, the days where those hundreds of students would populate community college campuses may soon return. Plans to rejuvenate student life here at Bucks are already in motion and it is only a matter of time before we see a resurgence in student engagement.

Damaged student life as a result of Covid is evident in the number of students who are taking remote classes rather than in person learning. While remote learning provides its own sets of benefits, it is clearly a drawback for a healthy student life on campus.

“From my own experience, I can say that the convenience of remote learning has allowed me to schedule my class work easily around the rest of my life,” says journalism student James Bonnell.

Remote learning has proven to be effective in keeping students taking classes, but it has also taken away from engagement in person.

Director of Student Life and Athletic Programs at Bucks, Matt Cipriano, believes it is just a matter of time before student life is back to normal.

“People are still transitioning back to being in classrooms and being comfortable on campus and all that. We are going to be getting back to the things that we used to do sooner than later.”

Plans have already been set in motion to try and get students to engage more with students and clubs. For starters, Bucks has recently filled the position of Coordinator of Student Engagement in an attempt to connect with students more.

“I think it’s very exciting. That person’s responsibility is to be working with student organizations, doing programming, engaging with students in a variety of ways whether it is through leadership opportunities or other programs,” Cipriano explains.

Student engagement remains a top priority amongst the top members of the college, such as Cipriano and President Ganther.

Finding new ways to get students involved has been a priority even before the pandemic hit. The addition of the Coordinator of Student Engagement is just the first step in the plan.

Athletics at Bucks have also suffered greatly from the pandemic and lower student engagement has proven to be challenging to navigate.

Over the course of the pandemic, every sport has seen a drop in student involvement or has had their season canceled all together. Athletics have had to crawl their way back into the spotlight while overcoming some unique challenges, some of which are still being faced.

“Women’s teams have been affected the most for sure. Low numbers were always an issue with them and not having students on campus made it difficult to spread the word about our teams,” says Assistant Director of Athletics, Justin Burroughs.

“We lost some of our history and traditions. We had a good connection with high schools about our programs, now we need to re-establish it with the current classes.”

The connection with high schools has been important in recruiting new student athletes into programs at Bucks. “We are sending out marketing materials to them about the benefits of a community college education as well as the ones for athletics here,” says Burroughs.

It is essential to have new students coming in and for those students to eventually pass information along to other student athletes.

Plans are already being discussed about how athletics can improve. Matt Cipriano believes an overhaul of intramurals would be a great place to start getting students involved in sports, but this of course will take time. “Students who may not be going full time and are going part-time should have opportunities to compete, so we created a club sport model that will help solve some of those problems,” Cipriano said.

Faculty and staff are doing everything in their power to help elevate student life, but students can help too. Burroughs and Cipriano stress that spreading the word about clubs and sports is crucial to sustaining student engagement.

It is important for current or graduating students to communicate with newer and incoming students about the benefits of some of the sports and clubs here at Bucks.

Cipriano cites things such as marketing, public relations, and even social media as great tools for getting the word out. “I think that helps students go, ‘Oh yeah. Okay, cool. They are doing things. I had heard otherwise, or I didn’t realize.’ You know, it is a multi-pronged approach.”

While student life has appeared to be looking down, behind the scenes Burroughs, Cipriano, and others have been working to keep them afloat.

“We all play a role in it and I’m very optimistic about next year and I’m excited to see where we go from here,” cites Cipriano.

It is not an easy task, and it will certainly take time, but with the overhaul of intramurals, more outreach to students through marketing, and the recent addition of Chris Seifert as the new Coordinator of Student Engagement, we will soon have a student life to rave about.



Matt Cipriano, interacting with students courtesy of the Bucks student life Facebook page

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Building Back Post-Pandemic

How Covid Affected “The Heart of Good Teaching”

LUCAS DARLING
Editor-in-Chief

When the pandemic first hit, professors were given very little warning that they were about to spend more than a year teaching through their computer screens.

“On Thursday Bucks called the faculty and said they were going to do some deep cleaning, and on Friday they said we had to learn how to use zoom,” said professor Diane Rice, a criminal law and state and local government professor at Bucks.

Matthew Metcalf, the coordinator of Bucks’ historic preservation program who also teaches history and geography, echoed Rice’s sentiment. “It was a fast transition. I remember us being in the training literally the week before we went remote.”

As the coronavirus took the world into its grip in 2020, schools across the world had to take steps to make sure that their students were safe, but still learning effectively. Like every other school across the nation, it was the first time Bucks’ staff and faculty had to navigate the choppy waters of lockdown and online learning.

The way that professors teach, and the way students learn had to change drastically, and during that transition, much of the human element that happens to come with learning was lost. With students and professors miles away, a decent human connection was hard to come by.

Metcalf said, “The heart of good teaching doesn’t change whether I’m in a classroom or on zoom but how I connect with students does, I did not feel at connected with my students, I was

present, I was available but with a physical distance it was different.”

It was not just professors that had a tough time connecting with students because of the pandemic, other departments, like the library, were hit just as hard.

Jana O’Grady, a library technician for Bucks said, “Our job is very physical and mostly face-to-face. Going virtual was a big change and it caused a lot of backup in processing materials for the library. Thankfully, we were able to start curbside pickup and drop off where students, faculty, and staff could check out books, drive up to the Gateway Doors, and we’d come out to their car and hand them their books. We wanted to be there for the students, and I think we accomplished that.”

She added, “Not being able to see our students in person was very bizarre. We were able to email back and forth but it’s not the same as face-to-face.”

The library was not the only thing at the college that missed being hands on, Metcalf’s program was also affected, “With historic preservation, we do a lot of hands-on work, and not being able to meet made that very difficult, I had students that were working on a bridge in Perkasio and suddenly we couldn’t be on site, we were all forced to adapt.”

One of Rice’s classes also ran into a problem regarding lockdown. “State and local was impacted because of the assignment to go attend meetings.”

While we all think mainly about how the pandemic negatively affected students and professors, and rightly so, Metcalf has found a silver lining, “Am I presenting



Courtesy of Unsplash

material that is meaningful? How can I reach students in new and meaningful ways? That was all forced upon us by the pandemic. It made me a better teacher despite the challenges.”

Rice also found a way to turn the pandemic into a way to teach her class, as the pandemic had forced the federal government into action, “Federalism was going on right before our faces.”

Both professors are aware that some people would benefit from the continued use of zoom classes. “I would absolutely teach

another zoom course. I think it’s a very important resource for people who learn better in a live environment. If you work during the day or have childcare or elder care responsibilities you can’t go to campus two or three days a week, I think it will never disappear.” Metcalf said.

Rice shared a similar opinion, “Do I think it should be offered across the board every term every semester, no. Maybe add night classes that way.” Rice said that it would be good for students who work during the day to have class-

es that start around 7 or 8 p.m. to also allow them to deal with other responsibilities such as childcare.

Students would be given more flexibility if Bucks were to continue zoom classes as well as in person classes

As the coronavirus begins to loosen its hold on the world, much of the world looks different, and Bucks is no different. As Metcalf says, the heart of good teaching does not change, but the way that the heart of good teaching connects with the hearts of students had to.

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Building Back Post-Pandemic

Covid Was A Gamechanger For Students

JUDITH RUSSO

Centurion Staff

Remember when we were told to wear masks, sanitize everything and socially distance just for two weeks “to flatten the curve?”

That was more than two years ago and, “things aren’t normal yet,” says Marmonee Cooper, 28, journalism major.

During the dark days of covid, Bucks students dealt with virtual school, work, isolation, and financial difficulties along with fear and anger. Every student’s experience and how they coped during the last two years has been unique.

“Anxiety was up a lot,” says Bucks Counselor James Gilligan.

People went crazy staying home too much,” says Cooper. She worked six days a week as a Burger King manager with less than half her normal staff throughout the pandemic.

“People are rude,” she says, “... when they have to wait, or we don’t have an item because of supply chain issues, and we still have supply chain problems.”

“I tell them, come to work. We’re hiring, but it seems like no one wants to work anymore.” Cooper said.

She was glad to attend one of her three classes in person last semester because she learns better that way, but “it was like a ghost town,” she expressed.

She came back to school to finish her degree in journalism during the fall of 2021 after a five-year break.

Alyssa Moore, 21, Editor-In-Chief of the Centurion for 2020/2021 school year, now studying communications and journalism at Temple, edited and published Bucks award-winning Centurion without missing an issue from her bedroom.

“I felt like that entire school year of fall 2020 to spring 2021 was a blur,” remarks Moore.

“I tried to do different things to distract myself. Go on walks, do puzzles, write, work. Since I was home a lot during that time, I felt like my bedroom turned into my classroom, and I wanted to escape it, which I never thought I would feel that way about my room because normally it’s my favorite spot,” Moore adds.

“Other students were worried about catching covid for themselves and their families,” says counselor Gilligan.

“I had immune system issues until the age of ten, and my immune system is still weak compared to the average person, so the thought of getting Covid took up a lot of my brain for the first few months of the pandemic,” says Lucas Darling, 20, current Centurion Editor-In-Chief.

Bucks student James Bonnell, 31, says, “While I can say most people were scared for their safety and the health of their loved ones, I can also say I found myself worrying about making people feel uncomfortable. Everyone had their own rituals and attempts to remain safe through the pandemic and it was always really hard for me to figure out what those rituals or attempts were. People deserve to feel safe, and I want nothing more than to respect that. When it all first started, I remember how angry people would get because so much was unknown.”

“I found myself really only putting myself in public or social situations when absolutely necessary. I figured not only would I (and everyone else) be safe if we weren’t around each other, but also the chances of a confrontation or a lack of comfortability amongst us would be nonexistent,” Bonnell adds.

“Many students had trouble with the virtual environment and didn’t get as much out of classes because they couldn’t stay after class or attend review sessions



Courtesy of Unsplash

and ask questions,” says Gilligan. He helped them to contact and interact with instructors.

Moore recalls that she “...did a video project for one of the journalism classes at Bucks where I interviewed a couple of students about how their mental health was affected by the pandemic and virtual learning, and the students agreed that they felt this big disconnect when it came to virtual learning, like they felt like they weren’t retaining as much as they would at an in-person class.”

However, for some it was easier.

“I think the biggest stressor due to covid was the uncertainty of everything. No one really knew what was happening or when it would end which made it difficult to plan something as big as college, especially my first year of college. In terms of strictly schoolwork, I found covid and quarantine easier and more peaceful I guess,” says Colin Riccardi, 20 Bucks student.

Due to the pandemic and safety protocols, Riccardi has only been on campus once.

Gilligan offered students ways to deal with anxiety such as breathing, meditation, getting enough sleep, exercising, and eating right. He said, “some may need to take medications ordered by a physician.”

While Cooper worked out and Moore did puzzles and took walks, Darling connected with friends, and Bonnell decided to do some soul searching.

“I read more books this past year than in my whole life and I loved every minute of it. Being able to focus on the relationships around me and go back to school were also very helpful. I lost my job because of COVID, but it allowed me to take a step back and find what I really wanted to do,” explains Bonnell.

Some think that enrollment dropped during covid because people decided to take a year off instead of going to school and then they got a job and did not come back. Others thought it was the virtual environment, and

others that the school needed to offer more financial promotions or discounts.

Bonnell thought that enrollment had already been dropping for several years because of the student loan problems and recession of 2008.

Often students said they took classes at Bucks trying to figure out what they wanted to do because it is cheaper. Others want to transfer to a four-year-school as Moore did.

Bonnell chose Bucks because he had read that the journalism program was very good, and the tuition is very reasonable.

Along with student counseling, Bucks offers other support services such as Advisory and Transfer Services which help students to plan for transfer so that their courses count. Some-

times if a student signs a transfer agreement, they can even get a scholarship.

Bucks also offers numerous extracurricular activities through sports, clubs, panels, the fitness center, meditation groups, and much more.

Bucks continues to innovate to provide value, support, and community for the diverse needs of its students as covid stabilizes and students come back from the pandemic.

“Anyone who believes they have long-term psychological effects from covid should see a therapist to be evaluated. Especially if the long-term psychological effects from covid prevents them from going about their daily routine,” says Gilligan.

He adds, “...these effects from covid may lead to a mental health

diagnosis such as depression, anxiety disorder, etc. Some individuals are more predisposed to psychological disorders. For example, if they come from a family with a history of mental health disorders, addiction, and any kind of abuse.”

Here are some links for student support services at bucks:

<https://www.bucks.edu/resources/counseling/>

<https://www.bucks.edu/academics/transferplanning/>

<https://www.bucks.edu/resources/career/>

<https://www.bucks.edu/resources/facultyresources/professional-development/foodassistance-foodinsecurity/>

<https://www.bucks.edu/student-life/>



From Left to Right, Colin Riccardi, Lucas Darling and James Bonnell

Ukraine

The Ukraine War Still Rages On



Courtesy of Unsplash

AILEEN F. GORMAN LEONG

Centurion Staff

The Russia-Ukraine war, now in its eighth week, has seen Europe and the U.S. united in their condemnation of the war, with economic sanctions and diplomatic efforts continuing to try to put an end to the war, but is it enough?

As more harrowing pictures emerge from Ukraine many are asking if the sanctions are working. Are war crimes being committed? Is this genocide? Is enough being done by Europe and the U.S. for Ukraine? How does this play out internationally with other countries? When will it end?

In Ireland, Ben Tonra, Professor and Head of University College Dublin's (UCD) School of Politics and International Relations (SPIRe) resigned as vice-principal for internationalization and global engagement over his college's initial statement where it expressed "concern" about the "situation" in Ukraine, rather than issuing an outright condemnation of the war.

Tonra believes UCD were half-hearted in their statement because they did not want to damage their relations with China, as UCD has a Chinese-backed Confucius Institute since 2006, and if they were to condemn Russia's aggression, they may have to do the same with China at some later stage.

"There's a serious amount of money, prestige and institutional commitment already made to the government of China and to Chinese higher education. And so, anything that might endanger that, or might color that or might bring that into danger would be something that UCD management would be very anxious to avoid," he said.

When asked about his thoughts on whether the U.S. was doing enough for Ukraine, Tonra, whose expertise has been sought throughout Europe, was very adamant that the U.S. was doing everything it possibly could, and that Europe was very grateful to President Biden.

"There's a huge sense of gratitude and satisfaction that the U.S.

is where it is. Without Joe Biden, God knows where we'd be right now," he said.

While President Vladimir Putin of Russia warned early in the war that any countries attempting to interfere would lead to "consequences you have never seen," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine has continued his call for help and military aid.

"The U.S. is doing almost everything practically possible, in respect of supporting Ukraine," said Tonra. "Live intelligence data, arms exports, political and moral support, and diplomatic support. Short of putting US troops in the air or on the ground, I can't honestly imagine much more the U.S. could be doing at this point in time," he said.

After Russian attacks in Bucha two weeks ago, Zelenskyy described it as genocide: something many world leaders have been hesitant to do.

"These are war crimes and will be recognized by the world as genocide. It's very difficult to talk when you see what they've done here," Zelenskyy said.

Tonra is hesitant to use the term genocide right now, due to its historical significance, but understands why Ukrainians do.

"I'm very, very slow to use that word, because it has in my head, it has a very particular historical resonance. There's a reason genocide isn't the same as war crimes. I would not use that word as of this moment. But I do understand why Ukrainians use it," Tonra said.

"At the same time, in talking about genocide, in terms of what Russians have said about Ukraine, the absence of a Ukrainian nation, the non-existence of a Ukrainian nation, their desire to de-nazify, to cleanse, to get rid of, certainly that is language which is redolent of genocidal tendencies," Tonra said.

Biden used the term genocide last week for the first time after initially being very hesitant to use it, like many other world leaders.

"I called it genocide," said Biden, "because it's become

clearer and clearer that Putin is just trying to wipe out even the idea of being Ukrainian. The evidence is mounting," he said.

"Certainly, in terms of war crimes, we're certainly seeing some evidence of that. And that is something that the United Nations, the International Court of Criminal Law, and others are going to have to prove, prosecute and pursue," said Tonra.

Many people of Ukraine claim that this is not a recent war that only began on February 24. This war has been ongoing since 2014, but the world did not react then. World leaders did not react, nor did they join in condemnation of the war as they have now, perhaps choosing to ignore what Russia was doing before the escalation of this war of 2022.

"This is the second invasion of Ukraine; the first invasion was 2014. Russia illegally occupied and annexed Crimea," said Tonra.

"They subvented and continued supporting irregular forces in eastern Ukraine, in Donetsk and Luhansk. There's clearly been Russian engagement and involvement in that from the get-go. So, this war absolutely started in 2014. There's no question whatsoever about that," he said.

In addition to 2014, this is not a new strategy on Russia's part, as they have shown the world that they have done this before.

"It's a Russian tactic we have seen in Georgia, it's a Russian tactic we've seen in Moldova, it's a Russian tactic that we have seen in the Caucasus. This is a long-standing Russian strategy," Tonra said.

Perhaps, then, there can be a reasoning, if not perverse, for Russia being shocked at the world's reaction when Russia has been doing this for some time now and yet nobody said anything or reacted so strongly until now.

"And it is to it is to Europe's and the United States' enduring shame that so many red lines were crossed so repeatedly in Chechnya, in Syria and in Ukraine previously, and we didn't see a response; we didn't see a credible

response. So, we are reaping what we sowed in terms of our failed earlier responses," Tonra said.

Tonra does not, however, diminish the sustained efforts and risks the U.S. and European countries have now taken against Russia.

"It is real. It is substantive. It has serious costs. So, they don't do this lightly," he said.

While some have ventured into Putin's reasons for pursuing this "military mission" as Putin calls it, Tonra does not lay claim to being either a psychologist or someone with a crystal ball to predict what will happen next in this war.

Putin has an unwavering sense that he must "unite what he refers to as 'Russkiy Mir,' the Russian world. He has a very particular vision as to what that Russian world looks like, which is very traditionalist, very conservative, arguably sort of veering into the fascist sort of notion of an eternal flame of nationhood," said Tonra.

With an aging Putin, many have argued that he wants to carve his name into the Russian history books, acutely aware of what legacy he leaves behind.

Putin "does clearly see this as part of his historical mission, to correct the mistakes that were made at the end of the Cold War," Tonra said.

Tonra sees this as a European problem, and yet Europe is very grateful that Biden is in power.

"Europe has been exceptionally lucky to find someone like Joe Biden in the White House. And I think a lot of the European conversation now is, just what would it have been like and how badly we would have been exposed without Biden in the White House," he said.

He concedes, however, that Europe cannot rely on nor predict who will be in the White House in the next election, and what their foreign policy will be, so must become more self-reliant.

"That's why conversations in Europe are centering on the notion of a more robust common defense, a more robust European foreign policy, Europe working

much harder at defining its own security defense, and paying for its own security defense, and not in the future having to rely on who the current occupant of the White House is," he said.

Experts, including Tonra, have said that Putin will seek to declare some sort of victory for the so-called Russian deadline of May 9 and Victory Day in the Russian Confederation.

"I think clearly what the Russian ambition is, is to redirect the conflict to the east to secure Luhansk and Donetsk republics, so called republics as independent entities with Russian military support. I think that's a very difficult conflict; it could be a very costly conflict on both sides, particularly the civilian side," Tonra said.

Reports have come through today that Russia is attacking the eastern side of Ukraine, as many predicted.

"Now we can state that the Russian forces have started the battle for the Donbas that they have been getting ready for a long time," said Zelenskyy.

As the battle for the Donbas begins, many wonder when this war will end. Concerns of how desperate Putin will become, and what he will do next. Fears of a nuclear war. WWII. So many lives have been lost. Many more have been displaced. The human face of war. Has history taught us nothing?

Sports

Softball Season Starting At Bucks

TYLER PAGANO

Centurion Staff

Softball season has officially started at Bucks, and even though we are now a club team and lost our first match, this is what you must look forward to this season.

The softball season has just started yet the team has already dealt with many struggles. But the team is prevailing and becoming stronger because of it.

One of the main struggles that the team has been going through is the transition to a club team this year. Coach of the team Meagan Finnerty said, “Because we switched to a club team there are no playoffs, and we still have no set schedule, but we are picking up games as they come. We are playing TCNJ, Arcadia, and Delval.”

Because of this uncertain schedule there is the chance that our softball team will get to play more games against schools like those. When I asked coach Finnerty what game she is most looking forward to this she mentioned the game at Rider University.

She said, “I am most looking forward to the game at Rider, because both Dana Sensi, the assistant coach and I played at Rider, and we are looking forward to returning there.”

Not having a set schedule is not the only struggle they have faced so far. Another one of the softball teams struggles was a loss in the opening game.

Finnerty said, “We can win games. We have a talented team, but we were down a player and players were not playing their correct positions. It has also hurt



Courtesy of Bucks Athletics

that we did not start till January and had to get the girls together quickly as we did not have a fall season.”

However, even with all these struggles there are still many promising things to look forward to this season. Finnerty said, “The team has good chemistry and good utility players, with

the standouts being Riley Worthington who is the team’s pitcher, and Maddilyn Hower the team’s shortstop. I am also excited about our catcher Jules Winglet.”

She said that those players are all outstanding utility players, who can be put at any position and still make outstanding contributions for the team. She believes

that this team will have a lot of success this year.

Finnerty is optimistic about this season, “I think that we will be able to win a good number of games. After the girls not being able to play for two seasons, they are still a little rusty. However, it is just like riding a bike and she believes they will be able to shake

off the rust fast.”

Due to there being no Fall season, the team is still looking for new players. Because of this coach Finnerty said that anyone who wants to is encouraged to come and try out for the team.

Sixers Look To Make A Deep Playoff Run

CHASE ZEMITIS

Centurion Staff

As this year’s NBA regular season came to an end, the Philadelphia 76ers found themselves in what seems to be a commanding position to make a serious run at a league championship.

For fans who have been following “The Process” era of 76ers basketball, this post season looks as promising as ever.

With the playoffs clinched for the Sixers for the fifth straight year, newly added star James Harden has tons of fans hopeful for the franchise’s first championship since 1983.

However, the Sixers are going to have to play tough teams to get there.

Due to the caliber of teams the 76ers will face in the postseason, not every Philadelphia fan is sold on the prospect of a national title.

Kyle Rovny, a 22-year-old Student at West Chester says, “The Sixers will make it to the second round because of the lack of talent on the bench for the squad which during the course of the regular season, they have struggled to put away teams. If the Sixers play the Celtics and Heat over the Bucks or Nets, they have a better chance at making the Eastern conference finals.”

The last time the Sixer’s made it past the second round was in 2001 during the successful era of Allen Iverson’s lineup.

Iverson led the team to the NBA championship series against the Los Angeles Lakers. Unfortunately, that Lakers team was formed around arguably one of the best scoring duos the league has ever seen in Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O’Neal.

While Iverson and his 76ers were able to take game one in overtime, the Lakers went on a four-game winning streak to clinch the series.

In 2019, the Sixers were on a sure-fire path to the finals until Kawhi Leonard and the Toronto



Raptors in round two.

Still tough, the series looked to be going in favor of the Sixers, until Kawhi made the most infamous shot of his career and smashed the hopes of an entire city.

Kawhi and his Toronto Raptors would go on to win the championship in 2019. Which made the loss that much harder for Philadelphia.

The Sixers currently are in second place of the Atlantic division and fourth in the Eastern conference.

With the seeding of this year’s playoffs, the Sixers had a chance at redemption against the Raptors in the first round. This was the third time since 2001 the two teams have faced off in the postseason.

Harden and Joel Embiid’s offense was more than prepared to attack the seemingly impenetrable defense of the Raptors but will be forced to do so without rising star Matisse Thybulle for what could be half of the series.

Thybulle was ruled out for

games being played in Toronto due to Canada’s vaccine mandates that are still in effect.

Thybulle has received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine but needs to be fully vaccinated to play in Toronto.

In game one of the first round, the Sixers dominated the Raptors Saturday night winning 131-111 with Tyrese Maxey leading the scoring with 38 points.

Embiid also put up 19 points in the victory over a tough Raptors team and with James Harden putting up 22 points to help put away the game.

The Sixers also won game two and three, but lost two in a row to bring the series to 3-2.

The Sixers won game six by 35 points, but Joel Embiid suffered a broken orbital bone and a concussion, and it is not sure when he can return. The Sixers will face off against the Miami Heat in the second round, with the first game being on May 2.