

Gas Prices At An All Time High

COLIN RICCARDI

Centurion Staff

The fuel crisis has spread all over the country as gas prices are at an all-time high with the national average at \$3.39 per gallon, putting a tremendous strain on working adults and college students alike.

Gas prices have not reached this high in 7 years, and some are blaming President Biden for the spike. However, the supply and demand of oil has been the root of the problem for quite some time.

It is hard to mention the rising gas prices without referring to the impact that Covid-19 had on the economy. Gas prices saw an all-time low during the peak of the Covid-19 shutdown with averages being as low as \$1.77 per gallon.

While the urge to return to normalcy since the shutdown has been immense, the oil and refining business has not had the time to keep up with the growing demand for gas in this country.

Adults returning to work, and students starting to return to the classrooms has created a massive influx of drivers on the road. Simply stated, having more people than anticipated on the roads has put a strain on what the oil industry can produce at this time.

Former student Josh Hornick expresses his frustration with the



Courtesy of Unsplash

surging gas prices, stating, “My car constantly eats up gas and I end up having to get it filled every week. I used to spend about \$32 per week on gas but now I’m spending over \$50.”

Rising prices are causing the working class and students alike to struggle to keep up with little to no hope of a resolution in the near future.

“Spending about \$100 every two weeks just for gas is awful,

and it’s what most of my paycheck goes towards.”

Pennsylvania has some of the highest gas prices in the country with the average gallon of gas costing \$3.58. Although Pennsylvania has a large workforce, some must travel to neighboring states for work that include New Jersey, where the average cost of a gallon of gas is \$3.44.

“I work in Trenton and have about a 30-minute commute to

work every day which is becoming costly,” says Brad Koch, a Bucks County resident.

Koch states, “My Charger runs through gas, so I have to fill about twice a week. A fill up costs me \$50 which only lasts me a week.”

This problem has been going on far longer than anyone could have expected which has sparked massive debates over the role President Joe Biden has. Earlier this month, President Biden declared

that he would release 50 million barrels of oil for America’s reserve in an attempt to combat the rising prices.

With those 50 million oil barrels expected to hit local gas pumps in mid to late December, there is still a bit of time before we will see improvement. Although we will see lower gas prices soon, there are still a few weeks before students will see a significant decline in spending at the pump.

Supply Chain Issues Threaten Holiday Season

ALYSSA ALLEBACH

Centurion Staff

Global supply chain issues have made holiday shopping more difficult for shoppers this year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the global supply chain negatively, creating less supply during a time of increasing demand.

Much of the problem comes from cargo ships being unable to dock. The ships are sitting idle at ports with unloaded goods.

Unloading the ships requires a lot of workers and truck drivers, which themselves are in short supply due to staffing issues.

People are being forced to start their holiday shopping early to ensure they get the products they want in time for the holidays. Whether people are buying in store or online, they will still experience issues with product availability and delays.

Students and shoppers seem conflicted on how they are going to buy gifts for the holidays with shortages arising. Some are resorting strictly to shopping online to get all their wants and needs, while others are opting to buy in store.

One individual that feels passionate about buying their gifts online is Brittany Cooper. She works as a veterinarian.

She says, “I find it easier to do my holiday shopping online. I don’t have to waste my time run-



Courtesy of Unsplash

ning from store to store because the business does not have what I want.”

“Online shopping is great for me because it offers more options of what I want. Shopping online also gives me the opportunity to compare prices on items from different businesses to see which has the better deal, so I can save money” Cooper continues, “It is great being able to save on items because prices are increasing on everything.”

Shopping online seems to benefit consumers in a time where store shelves are clearing out and cannot be restocked.

Another advocate for online shopping is Lauren Hoffman, a 19-year-old Doylestown native.

Hoffman claims, “I haven’t even started my Christmas shopping, but I plan to do most of it online. I like the convenience of finding everything I want in one place.”

She continues, “I enjoy being

able to find unique gifts that are personal for the people I am shopping for.”

Sue Caffrey, a cook, is opposed to online shopping and prefers to shop in person because she has had some issues with buying products on Amazon.

“I do plan to buy more items in store, instead of online to make sure that certain items are real,” she explains, “I don’t want to risk getting something online and having it arrive not matching the

description of the listing.”

Online shopping can have its issues with product sizing and sellers trying to scam people. People can experience products arriving late or not matching the description or quality of the product on the website.

Regardless of the pros and cons of each method, holiday shopping has proven to be a more difficult task this year than in the past.

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Native American Heritage Month

work on the voices of indigenous people, as we address the missing and murdered indigenous people’s crisis.”

US indigenous population has doubled to almost 10 million for the 2020 census; Twenty two percent live on reservations. Unemployment and those living below the poverty level are consistently nearly double that of all Americans even though the federal budget allocates billions for Native American programs. Despite education subsidies, only 14.5 percent graduate from college.

A 2015 National Congress of American Indians found that as much as 40 percent of sex trafficking victims identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, or First Nations (AIANFN) and indigenous women suffer more violence and are murdered at 10 times the national rate.

Chief Vincett Mann, Chief of the Bucks Lenape, reminded us via video that our

Bucks Newtown campus is housed on what was Lenape/ Delaware Indian land beginning 12,000 to 15,000 years ago. The Lenape are indigenous, people who have historic ancestral and cultural ties to the land.

The Delaware river was the Lenape Indian lifeline providing transportation, water, and food, so some also call the Delaware the Lenape.

Native Americans developed three-sisters-farming: first planting corn, next beans to grow up the corn stalks and provide nitrogen, finally squash to cover the ground and prevent weeds. All work together for a balanced garden and diet. The Chief hopes that Point Breeze gardens in Bordentown will provide a foothold for

Lenape people in the region.

Lopez, identifying herself as Mayan, says that “the indigenous people’s land is theirs. Laws and policies abrogate historical rights and create obstacles to rights of language, culture, mobility and education.”

She committed herself to indigenous people living “under borders” (her term for indigenous people whose land crosses borders) when she was mistaken for a Belizean Mayan trying to cross the border into Guatemala where only Guatemalan Mayans were allowed to work.

Many of the world’s 370 million indigenous people live “under borders,” crossing international borders to perform religious and work ceremonies as part of their daily life. Examples include the Tohono O’odham in Arizona, Mari in Russia, and the Sami in Norway

The UN enacted its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in 2007. The US has multiple treaties to protect indigenous people and allow access to their land before borders.

Lopez focuses on the Akwesasne whose reservation straddles the United States-Canadian border.

Though the seven roads and two waterways that cross the border are unmarked, individuals can be fined if they don’t check into the border station 25 minutes inside the Canadian border. Because the border runs through the reservation and even through some houses and buildings, checking into the station takes extra time and effort and may not be realistic.

Native Americans on reservations govern themselves and make their own passports, but their land

is owned by the federal government. The complexity between federal, reservation, and international jurisdiction and laws, makes economic development, tracking people and crime, and traveling “below borders” much more difficult.

As Haaland points out, the problems of AIANFN are all of our problems because

“Native American history is American history and it’s only by recognizing that history that we can build a future that is equitable and inclusive.”



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Entertainment

Chappelle’s “The Closer” Receives Mixed Reviews



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

NICK COSENZA
Centurion Staff

Comedian Dave Chappelle released a new Netflix comedy special titled “The Closer” on October 5, 2021. The special is the sixth, and final, edition of a six-part series deal he signed with Netflix in 2016.

Chappelle, best known for his stand-up comedy and self-titled, satirical sketch comedy show, is no stranger to backlash. He has a long history of making controversial jokes, and has often received mixed reactions.

The 72-minute comedy special lives up to Chappelle’s controversial standards. He pokes fun at a variety of sensitive topics,

spanning from police brutality and racial injustice to HIV and vaccinations.

The main target of Chapelle’s jokes in this special were members of the LGBTQ+ community, specifically transgender people. They remained the butt of his jokes throughout the entire length of the show. The special received widely mixed reviews.

Some people felt the special was distasteful and insensitive. Bryonna Trimarco, an 18-year-old early-education major from Southampton, did not find much humor in the special.

“I’m a big fan of comedy, so I can appreciate almost any joke, even if it’s at the expense of my-

self or others.” laughed Trimarco, “But honestly, I didn’t really find ‘The Closer’ particularly funny. He was way over the top with the gay jokes, and they just weren’t funny.”

Not everybody hated it, the negative reviews were met with some positive feedback. 18-year-old psychology major, Carly Kimball, found humor in Chapelle’s jokes.

“Comedians poke fun at everybody. Their only goal is to make you laugh.” Kimball said, “Afterall, it was a comedy special. I imagine it’s pretty difficult being a comic in the world we live in today.”

Following the backlash that Netflix received, the Chief content

officer, Ted Sarandos, defended the company’s actions of publishing the special. He believes Chappelle is guaranteed the right to “artistic freedom” and comedy should not be censored.

Similarly, the family of the late transgender comedian, Daphne Dorman, defends Chappelle’s special. Dorman’s sister recalls that Chappelle is a long-time ally to the LGBTQ+ community and a good friend to her sister. Trans comedian, Flame Monroe, also defends Chappelle’s comedy, emphasizing how sensitive the world has become.

Other comedians, like Mx. Dahlia Belle, believe his jokes are a window into his own intolerance

and that his comedy becomes less meaningful when he speaks on topics like these in a disrespectful way. Comedian Jaye McBride believes his approach was distasteful. She believes jokes about trans people can be funny, even if made by straight people, but not when they come from a place of disrespect like Chappelle’s did.

Chappelle responded to the backlash with a willingness to meet with representatives from the trans community, but he warns that he will not bend to anybody’s demands. Chappelle strongly defends his work as a comedian and remains unapologetic about the special.

Faculty Member Ringel Publishes Two New Novels

JAMES BONNEL
Centurion Staff

Faculty member Harry Ringel is promoting his two most recently published novels, “The Phantom of Skid Row” and “Shemhazai’s Game.”

Both books are available through Amazon, Kindle, and Barnes and Noble.

His latest novel, “The Phantom of Skid Row” tells the story of a young man named Tito Scaffone living in 1965 Philadelphia.

Tito is fascinated with classic horror movies like “The Phantom of the Opera”. His best friend Jan Klosek’s uncle happens to run a distribution center for low-grade quality films. Through Jan’s uncle, Tito is given a chance to run an all-night theatre that plays just the films he likes.

Soon, Tito finds that living alone in a theatre full of budget horror films might be too much to handle. It doesn’t help that the theatre also happens to be haunted.

Harry Ringel moved to Philadelphia in the late 1960s and was immediately drawn its old theatres. It was during this time that he developed his appreciation for the low budget, usually horror films, that would play in these old theatres.

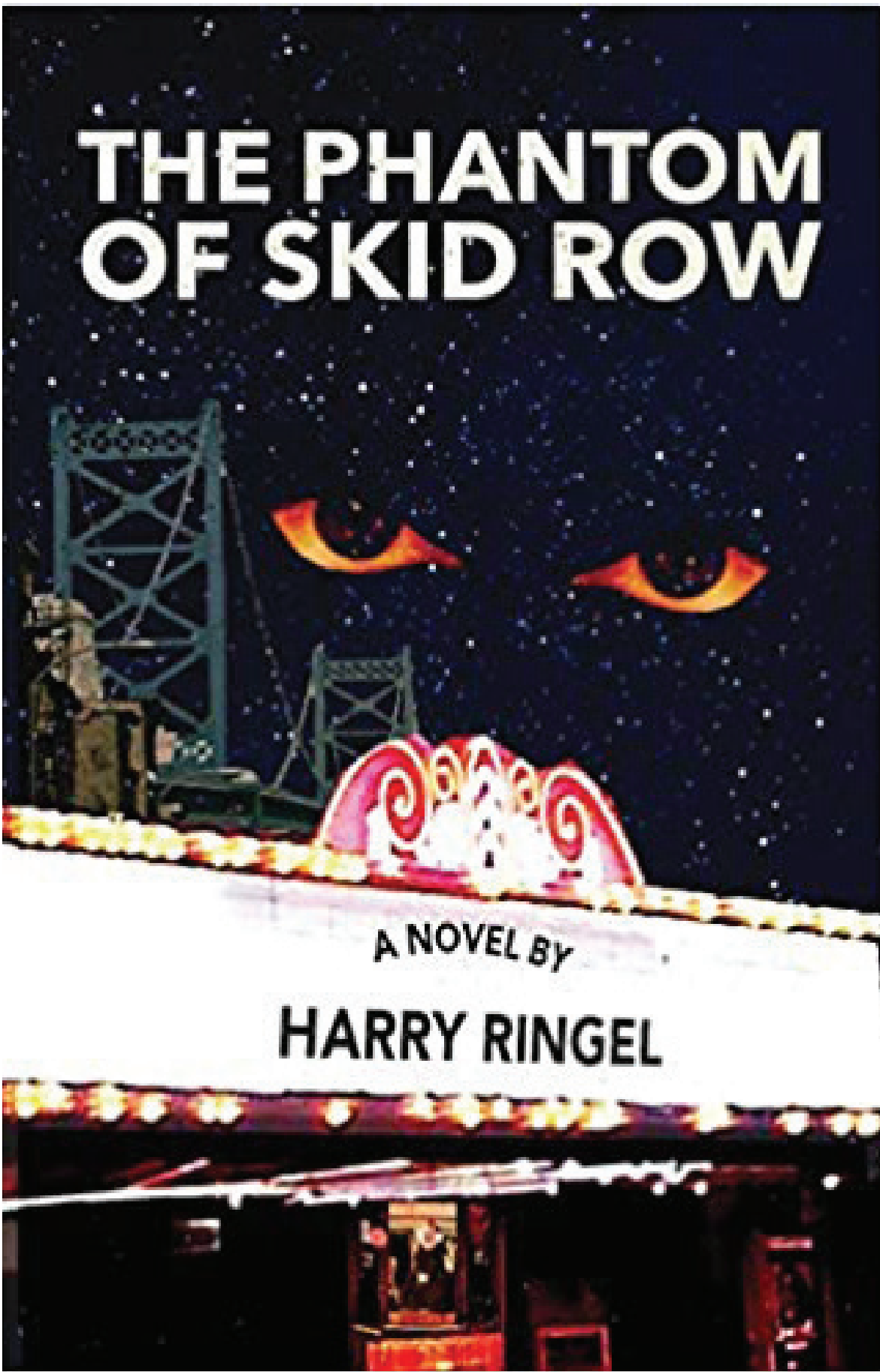
“I once drove 100 miles through a blizzard from Philadelphia to New York to see a horror film by Tod Browning,” Ringel shares.

While living and going to school in Philadelphia, Harry was more than happy to be able to access this world of film as well.

“I’d finish my homework, and at 1a.m. I wouldn’t do it now, but I’d hop on the subway and head down to the Palace, or the Family, or the News, or the Center.”

Ultimately, the influences for “The Phantom of Skid Row” can be summed up into three parts.

“Number one was the old films, old quality films, mostly horror. Number two, the old theatres, with their personalities,” Ringel



explains, “And number three, there was a poetry about the old Philadelphia that I plugged into heavily, and still am plugged into though there’s not much of it left.”

His previous book, “Shemhazai’s Game” is the story of a middle-aged brother Jacob and sister Debbie, who “...don’t get along at all.” Jacob is mentally handicapped, and Debbie has been taking care of him for a long time.

Shemhazai, the fallen angel, enters their lives and forces the siblings into a video game. Throughout the game, they come face to face with a variety of mystical beings, such as Lilith and Azazel, and their relationship is further put to the test.

Harry’s purpose with this novel was heavily influenced by his Jewish faith and his interest in learning about the stories involved. His parents were part of a reformed Judaism community in Atlanta. At that time, Atlanta wasn’t predominantly Jewish, and Harry found a lot of his childhood focused on, “...reaching out across the cultural and religious divide”.

It was when he moved north that he began researching and practicing more traditional values within the religion.

“I started to keep kosher,” he explained.

As he studied and read more about the faith, he became interested in the world of Jewish Mysticism, often referred to as Kabbalah.

“Kabbalah is just full of these elements that brought to me a sense of wonder and wanting to explore more the mystery of what it was all about.”

“Shemhazai’s Game” is Harry’s ode to the stories of Jewish Mysticism, presented in a form that appeals to those who are even the slightest bit interested.

As Harry says, “It is a user-friendly approach to Jewish Mysticism.”

Education

Why You Should Consider a Major In Music

JAMES BONNELL
Centurion Staff

As we move through our theme of reasons to major in specific studies, faculty in the music department at Bucks would like to point out the many benefits of a major in some form of music.

In order to provide some insight, Associate Professor of Music Jeff Baumeister was available for comment.

Professor Baumeister actually began his career right here at Bucks as a music major. Not long thereafter he was the proud owner of a Bachelor of Music from William Patterson University. He went on to complete a Master of Music program from the University of the Arts and eventually ended up back where it all started teaching music at Bucks.

Throughout the exchange, we discussed his life with music, what kinds of goals he had, and what he gained from becoming a music major.

“I didn’t have any career goals. I just loved music and wanted to learn as much as I could about it. My goal was to become a better musician,” said Baumeister.

Beginning with piano in the 7th grade, Professor Baumeister and his friends started a band and his love of music never stopped. While he started reading music around 13 or 14 years old, it was more just about playing music and having fun.

Many musicians spend years working in one field before transitioning to another, equally as rewarding field.

“It wasn’t at first, but teaching at Bucks was a goal when I



eventually went for my master’s degree,” Professor Baumeister shared.

With this in mind, it’s worth noting the sheer volume of careers in musical settings that can be followed outside of performance and teaching. Live concert technicians, sound and light coordinators, music journalists, recording engineers, instrument repair workers, music therapists, DJ’s, music managers, and entertainment lawyers are just a few of the many people who could major in

music and go on to other related careers.

If you are wondering if anything essential to everyday life can be learned by majoring in music, or even just playing music, Professor Baumeister says “Absolutely! Especially in music ensembles where you learn to listen to everyone and work as a team.”

The connectedness of music is something that can be seen all over. To any aspiring music majors or even just musicians, the connections you will make will

stay with you.

“As my skills improved, many of my teachers eventually became colleagues that I gig with still to this day. Also, there were so many awesome, like-minded students that I met while majoring in music. I still gig with many of them today too. Majoring in music connected me to an amazing network of people.”

Professor Baumeister has earned much praise for his musical arrangements and was even in charge of a ten-musician jazz

suite for Bucks’ 50th anniversary. The piece is named “Portraits from the Pub” and it debuted in 2014.

Aside from being a professor and performing musician, Jeff has also published numerous transcriptions and analytical essays in DownBeat magazine.

Photo Courtesy of Unsplash

Digital Marketing Certificates Offered at Bucks



JUDITH RUSSO
Centurion Staff

Social media and digital marketing are skills that are in such demand that “people with degrees are coming back to earn the Social Media and Digital Marketing Certificate from Bucks,” says Kelly Sell. Sell teaches MKTG230 Social Media Marketing, one of the six required courses for the certificate.

“Students in my class develop a social media marketing plan for their ‘client.’ They choose from one of the small businesses highlighted in the Small Business Revolution Hulu Series created by

Deluxe Marketing,” Sell says.

“Bristol Borough, PA. won the contest in the Season Two episodes. It was a very exciting time because my husband and I lived in the borough back then!” Sell continues.

Along with Social Media Marketing the certificate includes Digital Imaging, Web and Interactive Design, Digital Marketing and Cooperative Education Marketing.

These classes teach students how to “plan, create, and implement effective social media and digital marketing campaigns for small businesses, corporations,

government agencies, or non-profit organizations.” from the Bucks Catalog.

Digital marketing expertise can increase marketing salaries an average of \$7000 because digital and media marketing can reach more targeted customers, more often and cheaper, with retention and feedback since responses can be tracked according to a Forbes August 2021 article.

Of course, this can have negative consequences. Computer algorithms track customer responses to send them more and more extreme versions, such as a recent instance on Instagram

where a thin woman looks at thin women and keeps getting pictures of thinner and thinner women creating an unrealistic body image.

“This is a problem users need to be aware of,” says Sell.

Users need to be wary and should never assume pictures from the internet represent actual truth without checking additional sources. Any photo could be photoshopped.

For example, numerous celebrities including Lady Gaga, Kate Winslet, and Keira Knightly have protested against photoshopping of their photographs to make them thinner or shapelier, a Time article

reports.

Despite the challenges, digital marketing is a fact of life in the current world. Samantha Walter, Director of Digital Marketing at Bucks has even created a Bucks presence on TikTok and is looking to expand it. To be competitive, any business will need a digital presence and Bucks is preparing its students to thrive in this environment.

Photo Courtesy of Unsplash

Bucks News

Perks of Joining Honors@Bucks



PATRICK NALTY
Centurion Staff
“There is real desire on the part of lots of Bucks students to be academically pushed and challenged,” said Stephen DoCarmo, PhD, who oversees Bucks County Community College’s Honors@Bucks Program. The program’s mission is to challenge “high-ability, intellectually curious students” through honors coursework that emphasizes scholarly research, critical thinking and experiential learning.
In the spring of 2014, Provost

Annette Conn asked DoCarmo to captain a team of faculty members who were studying the possibility of launching an honors program at Bucks. DoCarmo, who is a professor in Bucks’ Department of Language & Literature, helped found the program in 2014 and has since served as the program’s coordinator.
Honors@Bucks Program includes students, said DoCarmo, who “genuinely enjoy school and want a little extra challenge and attention from their professors.” He said that most hard working

students who match that description are eligible.
DoCarmo also says the program provides students an opportunity to be in smaller classes with “terrific faculty members and other hardworking, intellectually curious students.”
Like the Centurion and the Future Teachers Organization, Honors at Bucks won Organization of the Year this year for continuing to operate even at the peak of the pandemic.
Through his tenure, DoCarmo has seen students regularly trans-

fer to “name-brand” colleges and universities. “They finish there with the same degrees they would have gotten had they been there all four years,” he said. “Except they owe radically less when they’re done.”
The program includes dedicated-honors sections and “honors by contract” work in regular academic sections, as well as scholarship opportunities and the opportunity to earn an Honors@Bucks Associate’s Degree.
Students who earn the Honors@Bucks Associate’s Degree

can make easy honors-to-honors transfers to Rider University, Delaware Valley University, Cedar Crest College and Gwynedd Mercy University. DoCarmo says that even Honors@Bucks students who aren’t interested in one of those schools can benefit. They receive honors coursework on their Bucks transcripts, which he says makes them more desirable to admissions officers at all four-year colleges and universities.
Photo Courtesy of Bucks Facebook

Bucks Employee Vaccine Mandate



COLIN RICCARDI
Centurion Staff
In a recent press release, Bucks County Community College states that it will be mandatory for all Bucks employees to be fully vaccinated by January 18, 2022. The recent statement has received positive reactions from students and is seen as a necessary step in returning to normalcy.
It is to no surprise that the vaccine is once again in headlines across the world with new COVID variants being discovered such as Omicron. However, a press release from our very own Bucks obviously hits closer to home.
The announcement that employees must be vaccinated in order to work on campus might surprise

some, but to others this is just another step in returning to a world similar to pre-COVID.
There are some mixed reactions about the announcement, coming from students near and far. Mark Ferris, a student at Bucks, says, “I think it is fair for vaccines to be mandatory, considering in order to attend public schools you have to have specific vaccinations.”
Keeping up to date with mandatory vaccinations is nothing new, however some believe COVID vaccinations shouldn’t be mandatory which has sparked controversy.
“You could argue that the COVID vaccine is fairly new but the amount of conjoined research from around the world accelerated the process and should validate

the vaccine,” states Ferris. The debate over correct information about the vaccine has been relevant since the first vaccine was given in the United States on Dec 14 of last year. Having a year to understand the virus should comfort people into getting the vaccine, but some still have reservations.
A student from Penn State, Evan Kwak, explains a comparable situation going on at state college.
“At Penn State, if you don’t want to get the vaccine, you have to submit a COVID test every week.”
This shows that schools are giving the option to students whether they want to be completely vaccinated or not, but Bucks does not

seem to be doing this for staff.
Students from public schools have been required to have specific vaccinations in order to attend, which validates some in favor for staff to have to be vaccinated. The overall consensus among students is that the vaccine mandate is fair, however there should be an alternative or an incentive for getting the vaccine.
Former student Brad Koch gives his take on the press release saying, “There should be an incentive for the staff to get vaccinated. For instance, if everyone is required to be vaccinated, mask shouldn’t also be a requirement.”
Masks are currently required on all Bucks campuses regardless of vaccination status.
“In order to return back to

normal, we need to start opening things up and not require masks for those who are vaccinated.”
The recent press release was met with mixed views, but overall, it seems most are in favor for employees being required to be vaccinated. It does beg the question of whether we will eventually see a change to the mask mandate once everyone is vaccinated. Students have brought up alternatives to the vaccine requirement, but for now you can expect all Bucks employees to be vaccinated by Jan 18, 2022.
Photo Courtest of Unsplash