Faculty union votes to approve contract
Fifteen month negotiation ends, but new round starts next month

By Drew Munich & Tim O'Boyle
Reporters

After 15 months without a new contract, Mercer’s full-time faculty members have voted to approve contract terms proposed by the administration. With approximately 80 percent of faculty voting, the vote taken during the first week of September was 81-2 in favor of accepting the terms which will give a 1.65 percent raise for last year—while the negotiation was taking place—and a 1.75 percent raise for the current academic year.

Many Mercer students have remained unaware of the conflict, despite the "No Contract But Still Working" signs faculty have posted across campus. The disagreement over a contract may not seem to have any overall effects on students but it can result in a focusing of resources on matters outside the classroom, and create a tension between faculty and administration.

According to faculty union president and Mathematics Professor Art Schwartz, there are 110 full time faculty members and they all a part of the K-12 NJEA Teachers Union. The NJEA is one of the largest unions in the state.

Nearby community colleges have faced similar situations with some resulting in much worse outcomes, like Essex County College where after years of negotiations and tension between their faculty and Administration the president of the college and 21 faculty were fired.

Professor Schwarz told The VOICE: “What’s different here is there’s only been two, possibly three, times where we had a contract that has expired. There have been some times where we have not had a contract for a time. Once it was seven or eight months, the other time for about four or five months, but in this case it has been almost 15 months.”

The VOICE covered the last difficult negotiation, which occurred in 2013. The seven month stand off included faculty taking the "No Contract but Still Working" signs and picking an annual gala hosted by the college primarily for local business people and the board of trustees.

The current contract fight included no such protests and the administrators, including the College President and Chief Business and Financial Officer are new and not the same ones involved in the previous dispute.

When a contract expires the old contract continues

puis. The disagreement over a contract offer proposed by administration.

DACA and immigration on many minds at cultural celebration

By Maria Ramos
Senior Reporter

After seven years without any parade, Puerto Ricans celebrated their heritage and culture with their traditional parade and Boricua Festival in Trenton on September 8. Mill Hill Park was full of live music and all kinds of different foods from Latin America.

This year the idea of celebrating the Puerto Rican parade wasn’t just about throwing a party and celebrate their cultural heritage. They wanted to show support to their people and all of those minority groups who had been attacked by the current administration. To emphasis the importance of staying together and strong as a community in these days.

The VOICE talked to the current Puerto Rican Grand Marshall Paul Perez, who is involved in the Trenton community and lost a runoff election with the current mayor, Eric Jackson, who was also present at the parade.

Perez said, “We need to participate in these kind of events with the purpose of keeping our community together and letting the people know that we are here for help each other no matter their race, skin color or political views.”

This year marked the fortieth celebration for the Trenton Boricuas, but organizers say it was a challenge to collect the money needed to pay all the expenses to run the parade. The costs were almost 12,000 dollars according to Jorge Tapia, this year’s event coordinator.

“This year we had to pay all this money to make this happen, when other years this was all on the house. But thanks to all the sponsors, the jeep clubs, the Partnership for Trenton, and some other who contributed, this was possible.” Tapia said.

As the parade was being celebrated, one woman was holding a sign, “Support DACA” referring to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, the policy established by the Obama Administration in June 2012 which allows people who entered to the country illegally as minors to avoid deportation and be eligible for a work permit. President Trump announced his intention to end the program, a move that has drawn sharp criticism from many people, especially Latinos.

The VOICE asked people around the parade about their thoughts on DACA and the current administration.

Jorge Tapia said, “I don’t want to go too political, but as soon as he got to office he started eliminating a lot of programs that were helping undocumented people...it looks like he wants to take all of us out, those who don’t have blond hair, blue eyes, and white skin in

Fuller's Fall in Princeton, Mountainaire Gallery, Lambertville, restaurants, galleries and a river walk a half hour from campus. PG. 6

FACULTY EXHIBIT
The Gallery at the West Windsor campus displays faculty work. PG. 2

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Day Out .................... 4
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Day Out: Lambertville, restaurants, galleries and a river walk a half hour from campus. PG. 6

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Trenton Thunder roll to Eastern League Championship...again

Thunder records historic feats in opening round playoff series against Binghamton

By Jackson Thompson & Dan Gerber

After tallying an Eastern League best 92 wins, the Trenton Thunder are headed back to the Eastern League Championship series with a three games to one ELDS victory over the Binghamton Rumble Ponies on Saturday Sept. 9.

This marks the seventh time in the past eleven years the Yankees minor league affiliate has made the Eastern League Championship, but the Thunder did not run through the ELDS in 2017 without making some runs at Eastern League playoff history.

The Thunder put together three straight wins after dropping the first game of the series in Binghamton 4-1 on Wednesday Sept. 6. Against Eastern League pitcher of the year Corey Oswalt, the Thunder’s only run of the game came off a wild pitch in the first inning.

But was a different story for the Thunder offense the following night. Two the Thunder put up nine runs off of eighteen hits for a 9-6 victory and even up the series at a game a piece.

Trenton Thunder Manager Bobby Mitchell told The VOICE, “If we would have lost [that game] we would have been in trouble.”

At the center of the Thunder’s offensive efficiency in game two was 21 year old Venezuelan infielder Thairo Estrada, who became the third player in Thunder history to hit for the cycle and the first to do so in the postseaon. Estrada accounted for five of Trenton’s nine runs with three RBIs and two runs scored.

Third baseman Dante Bichette Jr. said, “I knew the way that we were swinging the bats we were gonna put up a lot of runs so I wasn’t really worried about yesterday.”

The Thunder left Binghamton with a split and brought the series back to Arm & Hammer Park. Left handed pitcher and top Yankees prospect Justus Sheffield took the mound for the Thunder in game three in only his third start since coming off the disabled list with an oblique strain.

The only other pitcher the Thunder used that night was reliever Taylor Widener who made his debut for the Thunder in unusual circumstances. Widener, who had spent the entire 2017 season in Tampa Bay with the Yankees single A affiliate, came up with the rest of the Tampa players after being forced to evacuate due to Hurricane Irma.

“It was pretty hectic just leaving kind of last minute. There weren’t any flights out of Tampa so I had to drive to Atlanta.” Widener told the VOICE, continuing, “After a nine and a half hour drive with traffic, I got two hours of sleep and flew up here the next day.”

Sheffield and Widener went on to throw a combined no hitter, only the third in Eastern League playoff history.

“Obviously the pitching was unbelievable,” manager Mitchell said. He added: “Widener who we’d never seen before…when’s he been?... It’s kind of crazy that he can do so well his first time out.”

But the historical prominence of the no hitter did not come without controversy. A hit was officially ruled for Binghamton when catcher Tomas Nido hit a ground ball a half step shortstop Thairo Estrada.

It was not until the seventh inning that the ruling was officially changed to an error, allowing both teams to play under the impression that no hitter was not at stake for the majority of the game. Sheffield who was originally credited with giving up the hit to Nido, doesn’t believe that the ruling had any effect on his or the team’s performance.

“I was locked in the whole game because this is payoffs. No hitter or one hitter, I mean, you know, I’m still locked in cheering on my team out there.” Sheffield said.

Widener, relieving Sheffield, was not even aware that he was part of a no hitter until after the game was over. After recording the final out of the game he was confusionly mobbed on the mound by his teammates ignorant to his feat.

“You don’t expect to have back to back games where someone hits the cycle, and then we throw a no hitter... It’s a testament to what each person on this team is capable of.” - Yankees rookie Clint Frazier

“After the game, honestly I had no clue what was going on, or why everyone was so excited.” Widener said.

“The Thunder scored in the first inning of each game of the series and their first inning run in game three made the difference. That came off the bat of Yankees rookie and top 30 prospect in baseball Clint Frazier, whose double in the first inning scored center fielder Jeff Hendrix, giving the Thunder all the offense they needed for the win. Frazier, on a rehab stint with the Thunder after a left oblique strain, was playing his first game in Trenton as a member of the Thunder. According to Frazier, taking part in the historic series was comparable to his experience in the majors as part of the Yankees earlier in the season.

“You don’t expect to have back to back games where someone hits the cycle, and then we throw a no hitter so it’s really cool. It’s a testament to what each person on this team is capable of.” Frazier said.

He went on to say: “I think that last at bat I had where guys were on first and second, it felt like I was in the big leagues for a second. The crowd was getting into it, the pitcher was giving me everything he had...It was fun for me tonight. I’m not hitting the way that I want, but that’s not the reason why I’m here. I’m just here to try to get my feet back under me, and I’m slowly starting to feel like myself again, so it’s fun to be a part of the team with these guys right now.”

Now with a two games to one advantage in the series the Thunder parlayed the momentum of their historic wins into their fourth and final game of the series on Saturday Sept. 9. The Thunder won game five 9-1 and clinched the ELDS against Binghamton’s 28 year old knuckleballer Mickey Jannis, the Thunder scored their five runs in the first three innings. They tallied just two hits before Jannis was pulled from the game.

Third baseman Dante Bichette Jr. told The VOICE: “Drawing the first blood is very important I think, and that’s what our team can do...If our offense wins it will win games.”

The Thunder scored their nine runs in the first five innings, aided by a sequence of errors, wild pitches, and passed balls by the Binghamton defense. Trenton right hander Will Carter pitched through six and a third innings giving up three hits, one run and striking out five.

“Ain’t a playoff game you always need a little more, but every time I go out there I’m gonna give it everything I have,” Carter said.

Clinching the series in game four gave the Thunder the added benefit of an extra day of rest before batting the Altoona Curve for the start of the Eastern League Championship series. Altoona will be heading into the series on a three game win streak of their own after sweeping the Bowie Baysox three games to none.

The Thunder seek their fourth championship title against Altoona in a best of five series spanning from Tuesday Sept. 12 to Saturday Sept. 16.
Students had the opportunity to view their professors artwork at The 2017 Visual Arts Faculty Exhibition at The Gallery starting on Aug. 30.

Photography and Digital Imaging Coordinator, Professor Michael Chovan-Dalton’s work is on display in both The Gallery’s windows and the hallway outside the exhibits. Chris Dubois, currently studying Graphic Design at the School of Visual Arts in New York, was the first intern. I assumed there were more...[It was] fun and challenging. I got to learn everything from hanging stuff to the publications,” Dubois told The VOICE: “I did not know I was the first intern. I assumed there were more...[It was] fun and challenging. I got to learn everything from hanging stuff to the publications.”

Dubois said, “I like the Passaic River photo because it reminds me of if you have ever been to Grover’s Mill where they have the monument for the War of the World’s, the little pond there. It’s neat,” Lawrence said.

Professor Kelly became the director of the Gallery last semester.

“Having different people steer the gallery at different times allows for there to be different viewpoints, allows for us to have the gallery touch upon different elements that one director for a long time, wouldn’t do,” Kelly said.

Prof. Kelly has introduced is the Side Space gallery which allows student volunteers to gain hands-on experience curating their own shows in a space of the current gallery. The volunteers also have the opportunity to earn an internship at The Gallery in marketing and design positions.

Chris Dubois, currently studying Graphic Design at the School of Visual Arts in New York, was the first to receive that internship in 2014. Dubois is the designer of The Gallery logo hung in multiple colors in the hallway outside the exhibits.

“Wonder Woman” by Prof. Ingrid Jordan attracts curious onlookers.

“This one is absolutely gorgeous. And I really couldn’t tell if it was a photograph or if it was drawn because there are little details that look like paint,” Palmieri said.

Lawrence said his favorite piece is Professor Dalton’s aforementioned Passaic River photo. “I like the Passaic River photo because it reminds me of if you have ever been to Grover’s Mill where they have the monument for the War of the World’s, the little pond there. It’s neat,” Lawrence said.

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Puerto Rican parade in Trenton draws diverse crowd

Continued from page 1

this country he wants to ship us to the countries he feels we should be at. This is a country that is composed of all of us, we all make it America.”

Another parade attendee, Moraima Santan, a Puerto Rican who has been in Trenton for more than 32 years also responded to the current immigration issues saying, “No es justo! It’s not fair! We deserve all to be treated equal and especially all those kids who are studying and helping the economy of this country.”

Not only Puerto Ricans but other Latinos attended the event and also had the President’s immigration policies on their minds. One of them, Jose Ruiz, a Guatemalan man raised in Trenton since he was 12 years old, told The VOICE, “You know, I have a friend who is now worried because of this thing going on with DACA. He told me he is afraid since his kids are DREAMers and the government has all of his information.”

The Boricuas encouraged other minority groups to celebrate their heritage and to be proud of their cultures. “Trenton is a great place to live and what makes Trenton a great city is our people, our mix of traditions, this is our home and we are going to take care of it,” Grand Marshall Paul Perez said.

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Lively river town offers nature and culture

Just 30 minutes from Mercer’s main campus, the last exit on Route 202 before you travel into Pennsylvania, is the town of Lambertville, New Jersey. Lambertville sits alongside the Delaware river and allows easy access to its sister city of New Hope, PA on the walking bridge at the heart of town. Lambertville is a cultural hub of art, food, and a diverse group of people.

Street musicians perform on benches in front of Lambertville Trading Co. Coffee Bar or Full Moon Restaurant in Lambertville’s downtown area located on Bridge Street. Visitors hear the music as they go in and out of art galleries like Robin’s Egg and Highlands Art. Restaurants like Lilly’s on The Canal and the Lambertville Station play on the D&R canal advantages and offer outdoor seating where guests can look out at the water and watch hikers and walkers on the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Trail, known to locals as the "towpath." BELOW: The Lambertville-New Hope Bridge where pedestrians can easily cross state lines.

By Jasmine Santalla & Drew Mumich Reporters

TOP: Saxophone player entertaining local residents. TOP LEFT: Local coffee shop on Bridge Street. RIGHT: Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Trail, known to locals as the "towpath." BELOW: The Lambertville-New Hope Bridge where pedestrians can easily cross state lines.

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Studyng: Funeral Service

"The first weeks have been challenging but exciting. Challenging because I've been out of school for so long, and exciting because I'm starting a new career."

International student from Australia

"It's my first year and I'm still making friends but being on the soccer team gives me a starting ground."

Major: Criminal Justice

"There are some really nice people...I joined the criminal justice club so it's been great because I feel like the purpose of a club is to meet more people with similar interests and help each other out."

Major: Communication

"It's been a lot easier than I'd thought. I was nervous about setting up classes but I had a lot of people around to help."

"I cracked up after my first professor said 'fuck' for the first time in his lecture."

In the midst of cleaning up after a sequence of devastating national disasters, including Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma the nation paused to remember the 9/11 attacks.

Preparation for Hurricane Irma required the careful shut down of two Florida nuclear power plants, including St. Lucie which was cracked during Hurricane Andrew despite being built to withstand much higher winds.

The United Nations voted to approve strict sanctions on North Korea in response to their demonstration of nuclear muscle. Only China and Russia rejected the measures.

The White House made no mention of the president’s meeting with new Russian Ambassador Anatoly Antkowiak. The press revealed it only when Russian officials posted about it on Twitter.

Two White House insiders, former Chief of Staff Reince Priebus and current Communications Director Hope Hicks have secured the same legal council, even though their testimony in the Russia investigation may be contradictory.

The president met with authoritarian Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, who is under investigation by US Justice Department for abusing his power to form a kleptocracy.

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By Zolzaya Ganbold
Reporter
Bumba Bat is a recent Rutgers graduate who lives in Ewing Township. His family brought him to the United States from Mongolia in 2003, when he was just 9, and then they overstayed their visa making him one of a group now known as DREAMers, undocumented citizens who were brought to the U.S. as children and know no other home.

There are an estimated 200,000 DREAMers in the country with approximately 22,000 of them in New Jersey and until 2012, when President Obama introduced a program called DACA, they faced limited prospects and significant uncertainty. DACA, which stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, offered DREAMers a chance to avoid deportation and be eligible for a work permit. Almost 800,000 people are protected by DACA according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The program requires DREAMers to fill out a lengthy application and pay $465 every two years to maintain their status.

Bat told The VOICE, “Life before DACA was just a big mystery, it was difficult to tell what was going to happen after I graduated high school. It made things like driving, and the chance of going to college very difficult. With DACA, it gave me a sense of security and hope that I could accomplish things just like every other kid in the school.”

But on September 5, President Trump announced that he plans to “rescind” DACA, as part of one of his many promises to close borders, reduce immigration, and increase deportations. Now the president has given Congress until March to come up with something else in place of it, if they decide to.

The VOICE asked Bat how he felt after the announcement, he says he was: “Not surprised, but a bit confused because [President Trump] said before that he was going to tend to this matter with ‘heart’.”

With his work permit expiring this October, Bat is not eligible to apply for an extension. What does this mean for his future? Bat is unsure, but says he wants to talk to a lawyer to review his options. He says those may include, “Going to grad school if it allows me to stay here, then that might be the route I take.”

Aside from DREAMers like Bat who already had their work permit, there are those soon-to-be DREAMers who now see their options disappear. Bat’s cousin, A.G., who was asked to be anonymous, says he feels that “it is not fair that President Trump plans to rescind DACA and says he hopes that “Congress will pull a miracle and really think about us kids, coming here without having a say in the process.” Indeed, there have been recent signals by congressional Democrats that they may have struck a deal with the President to protect DREAMers from deportation, but it is not clear that this would mean extending any version of DACA.

A.G.’s mother, Munkhjargal says she is terrified for the future for her children. When she first came here with her husband, A.G, and their daughter, she says they did not plan to overstay their B2 visitor visa but at the last minute they decided to take the risk and stay in order to give their children the best possible education. “We could have gone the right way about it and got the green card to come live here legally but it was all very last minute decisions that now brought us here,” she added. When asked if she ever blames her parents for their situation, A.G says “No, I understand that my parents were just thinking of me and my sister, and I am forever grateful for them. Being undocumented does not define them, or me.”

Disclosure statement: Reporter is a DACA recipient.
Mercer community rocked by DACA dilemma

Many students and their families face uncertainty as President signals intent to dismantle immigration program for youth

What does the future hold for him and his family? His mother said “we don’t know what to do, what to think, where to go, and are just very upset. I brought my son when he was 4 years old, he grew up here, he learned the language, he is accustomed to the culture...Do I take him back to a country he barely remembers and a language he barely speaks?”

Here at Mercer there are posters around the campus offering counseling services for DACA students. The counselors are Fred Weiner and Martha Gunning who told The VOICE they have open hours in their offices in SC 226 for students looking for emotional help.

Wiener told The VOICE, “I think some of them, if not all, might be afraid of being singled out, and here at Mercer we welcome everyone and want them to succeed. That’s why we are here for the students.”

Not only counselors but also professors are reaching out to help DACA students.

Professor Linda Bolis, a Libyan-American professor who teaches international sections of ENG 101 and 102 says, “My opinion is that DACA recipients are not like other undocumented immigrants. They were brought to the U.S. by their parents as children and have grown up here. Compassion and common sense tell me that these young people are part of American society, having known no other reality, and so the U.S. government should acknowledge this reality and give them a pathway to citizenship.”

Although Bolis says she does not ask her students if they are DACA recipients, she assumes that some of her students are under this program.

Bolis says, “President Trump has greatly added to the burden of DACA students who are now very unsure about their future in this country. This is simply cruel. There was no need to rescind this policy. Adding to the anxiety, this President has come out with mixed messages about his supposed ‘love’ of DACA recipients. Once again, unnecessary, irresponsible, and cruel.”

Bumba Bat says, “I am no different than 90 percent of the kids that I went to school with. I think if you are a good citizen and hope to do something well for the economy, the country, your family, and for yourself, you should be given a fair chance at being a DREAMer.”

Since the President’s announcement, many groups have lead large scale rallies to protest his decision, including highly visible ones outside of Trump Tower in New York City.

Bat says, “I am happy to see so many Americans fighting for DACA kids like me, with multiple protests and several different states now suing him for his decision.”

CONTINUING COVERAGE

The VOICE will continue to cover developments in regards to the President’s and Congress’s handling of the DACA program as they unfold.
East Stroudsburg University has 55 bachelor’s degree programs to help you reach your career goals. And ESU offers some awesome scholarship opportunities for full-time and out-of-state students. Look into our programs that include Additive Manufacturing and 3D Printing in the University’s Stratasys Super Lab (one of the first three in the world), wildlife forensic work in the Northeast Wildlife DNA Lab, Public Health, and Business Management with a new Bloomberg Lab coming this Fall. Schedule a visit or attend an upcoming open house and see for yourself why you belong at ESU. For more, go to ESU.edu/transfer or call 570-422-3542
Mercer women’s soccer hits the skids with four losses in a row

By Jackson Thompson
Reporter

The struggles continue for Mercer’s women’s soccer team. Since opening their 2017 campaign with a victory against Bucks County Community College, the team has lost each of their last four games. The latest of which came against Sussex Community College in a 0-3 home loss on Wednesday Sept. 13, 2017.

The shutout loss also marks the third time in four games that the team has been unable to score. Coach Elyse Diamond, who led the women’s soccer team to the Region 19 semi-finals in 2016, says she is still looking for chemistry and leadership among her players.

“There’s no chemistry yet. We were looking for that chemistry, were looking for people to step up and be leaders on the team, and we have our work cut out for us,” Diamond told The VOICE. Mercer and Sussex, teams that both played in the region 19 tournament in 2016, and both lost to the eventual champion Harcum, coincidentally both entered the game with identical 1-3 records. Sussex head coach Frank Vernaccio says he was looking to get his team out of a funk of their own with a strong win against Mercer.

“[Mercer] beat us last year 7-3 on our home field, so today was a big day to come out and prove a point. So I think we did that and they have a quality side. I know they’re struggling but so are we, so it was a good battle between two good teams here in our region,” Vernaccio told The VOICE. Sussex freshman Bree Land Cusano put Mercer in an early hole with a first half goal. Kellyann Krepp had an opportunity to tie the game later but missed her shot with a ball off the post.

“If I had scored that one it would have been a tie game and the momentum definitely would have changed. It would have been different,” Krepp said.

Krepp said, “Everyone has a strong responsibility of their position and the responsibilities there shouldn’t be any further input from the faculty. Honestly, there are some real mixed messages here. We have a difficult negotiation coming up soon and it’s hard to feel confident in the process now.”

IN FOCUS

Faculty accept terms of new union contract

Continued from page 1

ues to be followed, but faculty do not receive raises or adjustments in their salaries.

“Whatever we were getting paid for 2015-2016, is what we are getting paid now,” says Schwartz.

Although some New Jersey community colleges have faced similar struggles over contract negotiations, others, like Raritan Valley Community College have been able to achieve faster resolutions. In 2016 faculty there secured a four year contract with two percent raises each year and significant reductions in health care costs in two of the four years.

The primary faculty negotiators included Schwartz and English Professor Ed Carmien. According to Carmien the faculty were ready to negotiate in 2015 but didn’t start until March. The holdup was related to the fact that the union, able to agree on terms offered by administration which was to offer no raise at all. Fact finding by an outside representative was recommended in order to determine if the college was in a financial position that would make a raise impossible.

Carmien explained that a key reason faculty needed a raise, besides increased cost of living in New Jersey, was because of Chapter 78, a policy passed by Governor Christie which requires public employees to pay into their own healthcare costs. This was previously not the case. The payments have increased each year and can add up to several thousand dollars per person on average.

Reached for comment by email, Mercer’s Communications Director, Jim Gardner told The VOICE: “While the faculty has approved the contract, it’s not final until approved by the Board of Trustees. The Board meets next week. It would be premature to comment on behalf of the College prior to the board vote.

In the time between when the faculty voted to approve the contract offer, before the Board’s vote, a new contractual question was raised according to several faculty members.

“We have been told that the College will follow a different academic calendar next year. The same calendar was proposed by the administration last year and was not endorsed by faculty,” said a faculty member who asked to remain anonymous. The faculty member continued, “The calendar has some benefits because the school year would start after Labor Day. This is better for students in terms of timing, but they get less instructional time in the classroom. And the faculty still have to be here the same amount of time. It seems odd, just as this difficult negotiation seems to be ending, to make a sudden change without any further input from faculty. Honestly, there are some real mixed messages here. We have a tough negotiation coming up soon and it’s hard to feel confident in the process now.”

Faculty accept terms of new union contract

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the college
### Life after Mercer

#### Brazil to Mercer to Masters degree to dream job

**Mariana Braz**

This story doesn’t end with me being the most popular girl at the party, but it ends with me, the girl who used to stay in the corner the whole time, landing my dream job. I’m also a former Mercer student and that’s not a fact I hide. I’m proud of it.

My career trajectory started when I moved to New Jersey from São Paulo, Brazil. I decided to attend Mercer because it was the closest place to where I was living at the time, and the college offered the courses I was looking for. I also thought that attending a community college would be good for me since I was still learning English. And I was right.

During my three years at Mercer, I tried to make the most of my time and the resources that the college had to offer. There are a number of clubs and activities to get involved in. For me, the most interesting things were the TV and the newspaper. Being part of MCTV gave me a taste of how a TV station works and what kinds of skills you need to make it in that environment.

At The College VOICE, which was where I dedicated most of my time, I had the opportunity to experience the very rewarding chaos that it is to make a newspaper and its online version. It was insane at times, but looking at your work in print is priceless. I also was able to go to conferences in Chicago and New York, won awards and made friends for life.

Being part of these two clubs helped me decide what I wanted to do with my life. I was accepted into Baruch College in New York after graduating Mercer. I already had a BA in Journalism from Brazil so I was able to enter their Master’s program in Public Relations, which was the area of communications I wanted to pursue for my career.

Before I entered the world of PR I imagined it would be red carpets, camera flashes and paparazzi. In reality it is usually a room full of people furiously typing press releases, monitoring social media and figuring out way to get clients out of a crisis. Simultaneously you have clients pressuring you to deliver results on deadlines not even George Stephanopoulos would be able to meet.

That’s my life now, and I love it! While attending Baruch, I worked at an internship which allowed me to meet the greatest of the greats in the PR field. I met executives from Fortune 500 companies, PR Agency CEOs and professors from the most renowned schools in the world. But I struggled to learn how to make meaningful connections.

Networking is one of the most valuable skills in life and I had always been afraid of it. The thought of walking into a room full of highly successful people, ones who did exactly what I wanted to do, made me sick to my stomach. At first when I showed up for networking events I would only talk to people I knew. I wasn’t sure how to approach or hold conversations with anybody else.

Over time and with a lot of practice I figured out that successful people are just like any other person and if they are at networking events, it means they are open to talk to anybody that approaches them with good conversation. And that’s really how I went from being a student-journalist to a Jr. Account Executive at one of the largest PR firms in the world.

I would ask the people I connected with for advice on my resume and so on. This showed them my interest and put my name on their radar, so if they ever came across an opportunity that fit my profile, they would remember me.

Another trick I learned was to research who was going to be at the event so that when I got to the event I could show that person my genuine interest in their work and the level of respect I hold for what they do.

I know I was lucky to get an internship where I did, but you but anyone can start learning these skills to move themselves forward. Start with the resources you have at hand. The College VOICE, for example, is a great lab and so is MCTV. The VOICE even takes a group of the hardest working staffers to conferences each year where there are hundreds of industry professionals to meet and workshops to attend.

The bottom line is, use what you have to help you move forward.

Mariana Braz is a Jr. Account Executive at Weber Shandwick Brazil.

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#### South Africa to Mercer to Ph.D. program

**Nikki Pellew**

American Ph.D. programs have rigorous criteria and are not easy to get into. Not only is the application process tedious, but if you are one of the few massochists lucky enough to gain entry into one of the four to eight year programs, you have to be prepared to pull out those cobweb filled brain files tucked away since kindergarten.

As an international student from South Africa, coming to the States to study was a BIG deal for me. I mean how many students worldwide really get the opportunity to learn in the “land of opportunity”? Having been accepted to academic programs easily in my home country, I thought “oh this shouldn’t be difficult at all;” but boy was I wrong!

After two graduate programs turned me down I realized harsh rejection was a reality in U.S and being accepted into a Ph.D. program would be a b*tch! My goal is to teach at the college level but as the rejections piled up, it seemed as though my dreams might be dashed.

With my confidence about as low as it could get, I decided to hang in there and keep applying and applying and applying. In the meantime, to avoid both dying of boredom and getting sent back to my home country if I didn’t maintain a student visa qualification, I enrolled in Mercer. I figured it would be easy for me. I had already completed an undergrad degree after all. I was totally wrong.

I found out I had to actually put in a massive amount of work and effort to succeed in the Ph.D. program at Mercer! Life has a funny way of slapping us in the face when we need it. Attending Mercer for two semesters was one of the best decisions of my life.

M Mercer took me back to my academic roots, and cliche as it may sound, it broadened my horizons. Mercer gave me the opportunity to become involved, I worked on the student newspaper and engaged with my peers in the classroom.

I was finally accepted into a Ph.D in Health Science at Seton Hall University, where I started this semester.

Looking back at my time at Mercer, I find that the connections I made during my brief time at The VOICE, the lessons I learned, the writing and social skills I gained, are all proving invaluable to me. I received faculty support and made valuable friendships that give me a support network I know I can rely on at any time.

Mercer may not be perfect, but few places are. My time there taught me skills that go beyond the classroom, lessons that have made me a stronger person and Ph.D. student.
You may have seen them if you are stuck on campus after dark or arrive for classes early. I’m talking about the cats that live on the Mercer campus.

The cats have been here at least since 1989, when Collin Kuklish, one of Mercer’s security officers, can remember. The referring story said there were a “couple at first, but babies have babies...” He’s right, of course, feral cats often have kittens when they’re only a year old, so the number of cats in a colony can rise exponentially.

Kuklish estimates there are now least 15 cats on campus, but notes that it is hard to be sure. It is hard enough finding a house cat that doesn’t want to be found, finding cats in a forest is nearly impossible. Personally, I’ve been able to find 5, a mother and her four kittens.

If nothing is done, these kittens are likely to die within the year according to statistics provided by the ASPCA. If they survive the winter their life expectancy still isn’t much better, only about another year at most.

There is a protocol called “TNR” (Trap, Neuter, Release). It’s simple. First cats are trapped into cages set with food. Then they are brought to a TNR friendly vet, who neuters them, or prevents them from having babies. Kittens that are young enough to be neutered are taken to a shelter. Once neutered and made into housecats they can be taken to a fosterer and adopted. Finally, any cat too feral to live a domestic lifestyle is released back into the wild.

However, the fate of neutered feral cats changes drastically. According to TNR advocate Alley Cat Allies, tomcats that have been neutered no longer feel the need to engage in dangerous behavior like fighting to impress lady cats (how similar cats and humans are!). They’re also able to gain more weight extending expected life span to at least 10 years. While TNR cats are neutered, the vet also vaccinates them against rabies.

Kuklish says that the cats haven’t caused any problems yet, but he noted their poor health. “Some are obviously not too healthy. And others merely not too healthy. And there’s the health of everybody else you know?”

One student, Gabrielle Feinstein, says she has taken matters into her own hands. She told The VOICE, “I called the vet clinic on campus, and they said they won’t do anything. So I’ll just trap them myself soon.”

Another student, Stuart Kuklish, realized and made sure that these cats and get scratched or bitten. Then Mercer will have a serious problem on its hands.

As a cat lover myself, I welcome the sight of cute kittens, but I know they are done without intervention. A trap for TNR costs about 50 dollars, and each neutering is done cheaply by TNR-friendly vets, the price is roughly 50 dollars a cat. If a Mercer cat takes action now the cost will be more dollars lower than it will be in a few years. Without TNR, the number of cats will double each year.

Mercer could be the community college that better practices TNR. Can Bergen County boast that? When asked if the college had any plans to deal with the feral cats, Kuklish said “I don’t know...but I hope so.”

I do too. I want those little girls and boys thinking about the homeless community for those in the Bachelor’s program. Everyone from Leonard Winogora to Dr. Robert Robb, everyone who always asks, “Are you a phone call or email away and I’ve never felt like I was dealing with any problems or discrepancies alone. I’ve never had to deal with problems I don’t know how to solve alone.

The Bachelor’s program at Mercer from William Paterson University has done a phenomenal job at making me feel like I’m not just creating the community for those in the Bachelor’s program. Everyone from Leonard Winogora to Dr. Robert Robb, everyone who always asks, “Are you a phone call or email away and I’ve never felt like I was dealing with any problems or discrepancies alone. I’ve never had to deal with problems I don’t know how to solve alone.

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ASK THE VOICE: GOOD ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS

Dear Voice,
Do any of the printers on campus work? If so, where?
-TonerIssues

Dear TonerIssues,
No, none of the printers work! We are in the process of developing a program to train students as monastic scribes who will be available for student printing needs, at a moderate fee.
The VOICE

Classic Peanuts

Dear Voice,
Student Services has threatened to break my legs if I don’t pay them. What do I do?
-NeedHelp

Dear NeedHelpNow,
Get groceries.
The VOICE

Dear Voice,
You see stray cats? I saw a stray dog last week in the West Lot near the pres- school. Know anything about it?
-J<3 Dogs

Dear J<3 Dogs
Due to Hurricane Irma, it has been raining cats and dogs everywhere.
However, if you step in any puddles, let us know!
The VOICE

Dear Voice,
There is some secret that you’ve barely allowed yourself to wish for, but desperately want. It may be material or in the form of a relationship. Prospects are brightening for this development.
-Image

Dear Image
There is something secret you’ve always hoped for, now might just be time to move on.
The VOICE

HOROSCOPES

Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 19
There is something secret that you’ve barely allowed yourself to wish for, but desperately want. It may be material or in the form of a relationship. Prospects are brightening for this development.

Aquarius
Jan. 20 - Feb. 18
Homie, nobility these things you have always aspired to; you’ve always tried to do right, but you probably never knew it would be so thankless. Still, you are a hero to a few who really matter.

Pisces
Feb. 19 - Mar. 20
Once a year you consider doing something radically different with your diet and exercise regimen, but usually this bright idea hits you around January 1st. This year, try starting earlier.

Aries
Mar. 21 - Apr. 19
You’re sick of those “Keep calm and...” signs because keeping calm isn’t your strong suit. Fortunately you’ve arrived at a moment when bringing calm would be the worst decision possible. Lose it!

Taurus
Apr. 20 - May 20
You are always a good time and it is the time of year you try to get yourself invited to as many parties as possible: football nights, turkey fests. This year why not throw one of your own?

Gemini
May 21 - Jun. 20
The good news is you don’t need to go see a doctor about that minor medical issue you’ve been worrying about. The bad news is the problem is stress; sort the other thing. Time for a spa day

Cancer
Jun. 21 - Jul. 22
The universe is in general chaos around you. Fortunately you’re not losing your cool...yet, however, you are losing time and money. Think about getting a second job for the holidays.

Virgo
Aug. 23 - Sept. 22
As the weather cools and the evenings darken, so does your outlook on a particular friendship or association. Forgive yourself for needing your space. You are right, it is time to move on.

Leo
Jul. 23 - Aug. 22
Mechanical failures seem to abound. Although you’ve put it off and put it off, you will finally need to replace something you rely on. Take advantage of end of year financing options.

Libra
Sept. 23 - Oct. 22
What’s love got to do with it? Well, pretty much everything. Without the love and support of those near you, you have had to work doubly hard to find the will to work so hard. Finally the love will be returned ten fold.

Scorpio
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
You may have been down on yourself lately (as usual) but someone near you sees you for the amazing person you are. Listen to what they tell you, because they don’t give praise lightly.

Sagittarius
Nov. 22 - Dec. 21
Ever thoughtful and conscientious you’ve reached the point where you really need to let yourself relax. It is okay to play hookey every once in a while. Preserve your sanity: take a day off.

SUDOKU

2X DILBERT AND GET FUZZY

PREVIOUS SOLUTION

HOW TO PLAY:
Each row, column and set of 3x3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

DIFFICULTY: 3 (of 5)

8 2 7 3 5 1 9 6
4 1 2 3 7 8 6 4
6 8 2 4 3 5 1 9
9 6 2 4 1 8 3 5
4 3 5 8 6 9 2 4 7
3 1 5 8 6 9 2 4 7
1 9 7 8 6 4 2 8
6 2 3 4 1 8 5 7 9
5 8 4 9 2 7 6 1 3
4 3 8 6 7 2 9 5 1
2 6 1 5 9 3 7 8 4
7 5 9 1 8 4 3 6 2

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3 1 5 8 6 9 2 4 7
1 9 7 8 6 4 2 8
6 2 3 4 1 8 5 7 9
5 8 4 9 2 7 6 1 3
4 3 8 6 7 2 9 5 1
2 6 1 5 9 3 7 8 4
7 5 9 1 8 4 3 6 2

SUDOKU