Editorial: Rider symbol makes like a tree

Who would have thought low-grade deforestation would ever hit Rider? Oh, don't worry! All of the trees lining the walk to the academic quad are still there. And the campus mall trees, the trees conglomerated around the Bart Luedeke Center and the rest of the arborial adornments across the campus are still standing proudly. It is the Rider elm tree — the friendly, leafy symbol of our university that is being rendered almost obsolete. A new billboard on I-95 is advertising Rider without the recognizable tree, and many objects — from security vehicles to business cards to oratory lecterns — bearing the Rider insignia are now sans the familiar elm tree.

While tradition is a valuable aspect of college life, we need to keep in mind that the elm tree was only adopted as part of the Rider emblem just over 10 years ago in 1994; compare this to the 129 years of the University's history when the elm tree was not visually synonymous with this institution. Additionally, the tree after which the symbol was modeled died in 1997 and was removed from the campus property. Since it's safe to assume that most of Rider's current students were not enrolled at this University during the three years of the tree's reign, maybe we shouldn't be getting all up in arms over the change.

We did not witness Rider's old symbol, a seal, give way to the tree, nor do we remember what it was like the first time we walked past the lonely, barren spot where the grand elm tree once stood. But for most of us, Rider's insignia has always included the tree, making it a quiet part of our college experience. Since so many of us seemed to be so attached to this tree, it was a little jarring the first time we noticed that the I-95 sign shirked the comforting symbol.

The problem is not that we are attached to the tree as though it was some kind of security blanket that was supposed to stay with us all through college. A vocal majority of Rider students actively sought out ways to keep the tree from being stricken from the University's image, thus leading the President's Council of the Student Government Association to draw up a resolution that, among other things, expressed the students' unwillingness to let their tree be dropped from Rider's insignia. Alas, not all stories have a happy ending. The SGA's attempt to save our tree proved to be a futile one, as its resolution fell upon deaf ears; therein lies the real problem. What kind of message is sent to the student community when we make the effort to speak out against an unwanted change, only to find that such protests were given neither the attention nor consideration they deserved? We the students are the lifeblood of this university and while the issue may have been a small one, it doesn't look good when our voice is so blatantly ignored.

According to Jonathan Meers, head of the marketing committee that headed the decision to change the symbol, President Mordechai Rozanski offered his apologies to the campus community for not taking its reaction to heart. While this action is appreciated and shows that our opinions are at least acknowledged, it would have meant more to hear Rozanski apologize himself. And we're still losing our elm tree to private school developers. And we're still losing our elm tree to private school developers.