RIDER’S NEW PATRIOT ACT

New profs to face criminal background checks

By Randy Townsend

The university’s Human Resources Department has instituted pre-employment criminal background checks on candidates for faculty positions. According to Dr. Jeffrey Halpern, sociology professor and contract administrator of the faculty union, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), faculty and staff received “no official notice” or discussion about this policy. “We received no prior knowledge before this was instituted,” said Halpern. “I first learned about it as a rumor. When I made an inquiry, I discovered the policy had gone into effect some time over the summer.”

Associate Provost James Castagnera cites the policy of criminal background checks as a step towards making the University a safer environment. “If you’re hiring a faculty member, that faculty member is obviously going to be in close contact, often one-on-one, with students,” said Castagnera. “All of our faculty are advisers. If there was a conviction for some violent crime, how do you decide whether this person should be hired?”

An applicant has to give permission for a criminal background check to be performed before any such action occurs. If the candidate refuses, that will not automatically disqualify the person, but it will be taken into consideration, Castagnera said.

According to Castagnera, if something comes up that seems to be of significant seriousness, there would be a discussion with that applicant about whatever the issue is. There, the applicant would have an opportunity to explain the circumstances of the issue.

The AAUP has filed a grievance with the university, citing the practice as a counterproductive intrusion into the privacy of potential employees. According to Halpern, the pol-

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A look at ‘the fabric of the country’

By Randy Townsend

The annual Unity Day Celebration was held from Tuesday, Oct. 5 to Wednesday, Oct. 6 and included many on-campus events aimed at uniting the Rider community. Sponsored by the Unity Day Planning Committee and Student Entertainment Council (SEC), the celebration opened with a keynote speaker, and included an international luncheon with The Steel Kings band, a lunch box colloquium, a community service workshop and a SEC multicultural food fest. The event concluded with the play Platanos and Collard Greens.

This year’s Unity Day Celebration opened up with an address about the historic Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, allowing attendees to reflect on diversity at Rider.

The keynote speaker, author and journalist George Curry, shared his experiences growing up in a segregated Alabama, and how the Civil Rights Movement, including