The President’s seat at the University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College was filled earlier this month by a lifelong resident of Gallia County, Mr. Ryan Smith.

Smith, whose name you might recognize as a former Ohio state representative and Speaker of the House, assumed the role on October 14, 2019.

Since then, the President’s focus has been meeting challenges currently facing Rio. These include stabilizing the budget, growing enrollment, and addressing infrastructure needs. In an open meeting with faculty and staff, Smith explained he is focused on strengthening the budget and taking inventory of both human capital and physical capital at Rio Grande. He is enthusiastic about working with his colleagues to find solutions to problems, and turn those into positives.

With his vast financial and business background, leadership roles, and a list of contacts and connections he brings with him from the State, Smith’s message is all about “changing tomorrow’s”. He feels strongly our region needs a two and four-year degree granting institution, and will strive to keep Rio moving forward so its impact is long-standing.

When asked what his message to alumni would be, Mr. Smith replied:

“As a lifelong resident of Gallia County, I fully understand and appreciate the vast impact Rio Grande has made on so many lives in our region, and well beyond. As alumni, you tell Rio’s story better than anyone else, which is why I am asking for your help. I would love to have you email me (rsmith@rio.edu) a quote or your thoughts regarding your experience. We need everyone telling “their story” about Rio Grande and what it meant to them and the direction of their lives. Every time I hear someone say “it changed my life” or “it was the best four years of my life” it reminds me of what Rio means and excites me for the future. You see, I came to Rio to be a part of this great place, to be part of something special. We have challenges, but the opportunities far outweigh the obstacles, and with your help we can take Rio to a better place!”

Colleges and universities across the country are facing declining enrollment. The changes you are seeing, especially with the recent changes to program offerings, help Rio to be more streamlined and nimble in the challenging times ahead. Recruitment and retention remain high priorities and our efforts have led to an increase in private university students for this fall semester.

Your support of Rio remains as critical as ever. We welcome President Smith and will look for many ways for you to engage with him as Rio Grande moves forward to a prosperous future. My work will continue to keep you informed and engaged, and I always hope to see your #RioPride wherever you may be.

Personal Note: Smith’s wife, Vicki (Dillon) ’92, graduated from the University of Rio Grande with a nursing degree. The couple have four children together.

Article By Delyssa Edwards, Alumni Director
A total of 44 former athletes and students were on campus for the very first Alumni Weekend. Held during the same weekend as Bob Evans Farm Festival and Rockets over Rio, the weekend boasted a full schedule of activities for those attending. The weekend events kicked off with the Rio Alumni Softball Game in which 18 players took the field. Playing each other, the former RedStorm Women had a wonderful time catching up with each other and Coach Chris Hammond. The Rio Alumni Soccer Game was also Saturday afternoon. Just six alumni showed up but enjoyed playing against the current team, led by Coach Tony Daniels. Following the games, the Rocktoberfest Beer Garden opened and the Southeast Ohio Chapter Event (held at the President’s House) followed. Saturday night concluded with a spectacular fireworks display seen from all over Rio Grande. On Sunday morning, the baseball field came alive with 20 former players and the current Junior Varsity team. Coach Brad Warnimont had a great time with the crew, and everyone in attendance enjoyed a cookout following the game (which was won by the JV team).
Founders’ Day is always a special time on campus, and this year was no different as the day was for remembering the Founders, and honoring those alumni and educators who have given so much to the institution and their respective communities.

Those honored included Ellen Brasel and Dr. Ivan Tribe, both Educators’ Hall of Fame inductees. Tribe, who could not be in attendance, sent his wife Deanna to receive his award. Deanna read what Tribe had prepared, and many of Tribe’s former students were in attendance. Brasel talked about her former colleagues and how they shaped her experience at Rio. But what she felt was special was seeing so many of her former students in attendance, getting awards themselves.

For the Alumni Awards, five were honored including Bethany Dixon-Wolfe who received the first ever Rising Star Award. Annette Ward received the Distinguished Service Award; Margaret Evans – Distinguished Alumni Award; and Robbie & Tessa Pugh received the Atwood Achievement Award. Each honoree spoke about their experience at Rio and how wonderful the staff and faculty treated them. Each credited their success to the University of Rio Grande.

Keynote speaker for the event was Donald Cox ’76 who spoke about his time at Rio and how it shaped his life.

Coach Morrissey

University of Rio Grande men’s soccer head coach Scott Morrissey is among seven athletes and coaches who have been selected for induction into the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Hall of Fame.

The announcement came Monday from the national office as part of the annual NAIA National Awards Day.

Morrissey, now in his 31st season as the head coach of the RedStorm, has built one of the most dominant programs in the history of the NAIA. In his 30 seasons prior to the current campaign, Morrissey compiled an impressive record of 480-120-34 (.760). The 480 victories rank third all-time in the NAIA and his .760 winning percentage is the second-best among active NAIA coaches.

Morrissey’s 2019 squad currently sits at 6-0 overall and is ranked No. 2 in the latest NAIA coaches’ Top 25 poll.

“When you receive an honor like this, you quickly get reflective - and then it gets overwhelming. I’ve got a million thoughts in my head regarding how it’s come about,” said Morrissey. “Usually, this is the kind of award you receive at the end of your career, but I still feel like I’ve got a long way to go. I’m blessed to do what I do. I don’t know that I’ve worked a day in my life yet.”

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Dr. Raymond C. Matura (right) receives the Ohio Association of Gerontology and Education 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award from Dr. Daniel Van Dussen, (left) Professor and Graduate Director of Gerontology, Youngstown State University and President of Ohio Association of Gerontology and Education.

Rio Grande, Ohio – The University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College is proud to congratulate Professor of Sociology Dr. Raymond C. Matura for earning the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award presented by the Ohio Association of Gerontology and Education (OAGE). The organization’s goal is to promote the importance of gerontology and the study of the aging process. The OAGE recognized Matura for his leadership in several national and state gerontology organizations. He has been president or an executive officer for several organizations, received several outstanding educator awards, been awarded research grants, advocated for policy changes and aided with the establishment of Area Agencies on Aging. Additionally he has mentored faculty and served as the outside reviewer on other institutions’ committees for tenure and promotion, and has been a member of students’ thesis and dissertation committees. Matura said he is grateful to be recognized for his efforts with this award.

“I am humbled that the OAGE selected me to receive this award. I was also very surprised because to me being active in the field and taking on leadership roles has just been part of what I was supposed to do. I have also always felt it was important to encourage others as they do their own research in the field. I am honored that my colleagues in the field felt I deserved to be recognized for my work,” Matura said.

“The aging process is the one thing we all experience, so gerontology is something we really need to understand. As the population grows and our generations age, we look into different aspects of aging to learn how we can improve the process along the lines of health, biology and social aspects.”

Matura also serves as chair for the School of Health and Behavioral Sciences. He first joined Rio’s faculty in 1971, Dean for the College of Professional and Technical Studies Dr. Donna Mitchell said she is proud of Matura’s accomplishments in the field.

“Dr. Matura is very deserving of this award and I congratulate him on this great honor. He has been a dedicated faculty member for many years,” Mitchell said. “Dr. Matura is very interested in the success of his students even after graduation; he is a scholar and an amazing educator.”

Matura said he believes advancing his own knowledge of the field helps provide his students with quality education in the classroom.

“The role of an academic is not only to teach, but also to continue learning. One of the ways to continue learning is by research and activity in the field. Consistent practice makes us better educators,” Matura said. “I am grateful that Rio is supportive of our efforts to continue our own education of the field. We become more effective in our teaching when we keep up with the changing world and the new knowledge available in our fields.”

Dr. Matura, thank you for the support you have given to your students over the years. You made a real impact on my life. I will forever be grateful for your contribution to my professional career! Enjoy this chapter of your life because you deserve the very best!”

–Tammy McCarty

• When I was hired (at the University of Rio Grande), the first piece of mail in my faculty mailbox was a welcome note from Dr. Ray Matura. I have remained appreciative of his kindness as I transitioned to the campus and larger community.

I have learned a great deal working with Dr. Matura. His insights into teaching, collegiality, and faculty expectations have been influential on my professional career. He will always remain a much valued mentor.

–Dr. Heather Duda

• Ray was a couple years ahead of me at Rio Grande College, but he and I both remember when two of the infamous Chicago 7 radicals, Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin came to campus to lead a protest against the Vietnam War from the steps of the library. Jeanette Albiez Davis rolled over in her grave and Rio Grande would never be the same again.

Nixon was President then and it was our mutual disdain for him and the Vietnam war that originally bonded us as friends. Ray and I talked endlessly about the current events of our time.

Ray and I will recall the time when we went to hear a talk by Ohio Attorney General William Brown. Ray stood and asked him a respectful question and Brown exploded in some kind of a meltdown rant. We were all shocked. Brown, it seemed, was not amused about questions from shaggy college students!

Ray came from Philadelphia and I was a small town Ohio boy but somehow or other we became fast friends. We both served in student government and both became resident assistants because it paid better than washing dishes. In fact, Ray became the head honcho of Boyd Hall. He used a master key to enter my room one day and found me in bed with a live girl—an infraction that was frowned upon by college deans in those day. Ray, of course, had a more refined sense of humor. Indeed we shared a similar sense of humor. Ray had a strong intellect and helped accelerate my own. He cared deeply about the subject of gerontology and taught me things about growing old that I have come to appreciate today.

He married well. Pam was also a good friend and once they met they were inseparable. In Megan, I see the best of both of them. As Ray retires, it is not difficult for me to imagine that he influenced and enlightened hundreds of young minds over the course of his career . . . and the world is better for him. He lives on, I hope, in happiness and good health.

–Larry Landaker, Class of 1973

Former Student Body President
Former Field Admissions Officer
I started my academic journey at URG in Fall of 2010. I graduated with my BSW in Spring of 2015. There were many good teachers at the school. Although, Dr. Ray Matura is by far the best in my opinion. I would like to contribute to his tribute with these statements:

Your endless encouragement taught students to believe in their abilities. Your continual guidance taught students to follow their dreams. Your unlimited support taught students how to be better people. Thank you, Dr. Matura for sharing so much of yourself by caring so much about your students.

—Kindly, Kelly S. Keaton, L.S.W.
Area Agency on Aging, OHCW, CM

Dr. Matura was one of my favorite professors. He cared about me both as a student and an athlete and would often come to cheer the softball team on. He taught me to be an advocate for change and allowed me to go to the statehouse to advocate for teachers rights instead of taking his class that day. He wanted his students to take what they learned in his class and apply it in everyday life. I wouldn’t be the social worker I am today without having him as a professor. Congratulations on the well deserved honor Dr. Matura!

—Marissa Hammon (previously Lennox)

I have known Dr. Ray Matura for at least 30 years, both in capacity of working with him at Rio and sitting beside him as a sports parent. Oh what stories I could tell, but I won’t since they usually revolve around him getting me out of a mess that I had created for myself, as a sports mom. It is very easy to submit this tribute about Ray. He is quite the gentleman, is very thoughtful, and has a ton of patience with a little bit of sarcasm thrown in. He is well known across campus as well as in the community – always the one to volunteer when needed and to send e-mails concerning my loved ones when he had issues himself. What a most wonderful, classy, and beautiful (inside and out) wife you had. Remember all the good memories. Ray is just a great all around guy who I feel privileged to call “my good friend.”

—Karen Jones

When asked to write a few sentences for a tribute to Ray Matura, I was left wondering what to say to honor him and show people who he is and what he means to others. I cannot do that in a few sentences, it would take a whole book to explain who he is. To the people who have had the pleasure of having him in their lives.... they already know. I am a better person for having him present in my life and I am honored to know him. Ray is hands down one of the best men I know.

—Katy Seitz

Dear Ray,

You have been my colleague, my friend, and a source of inspiration for many years. I admire and respect you as an outstanding professional who is every thing an educator should be. I love you as an amazing friend. You are there to share the good times with your bright smile and warm laugh. You make the celebration even better! You never fail to be there for us in the most difficult times. You have been a rock. You are a never failing source of comfort and strength. God bless you with all the most beautiful blessings in life. YOU are a blessing to us!

—Karen Elliott

Ray Matura is one of those rare individuals who is both an inspiration and model to others. His high expectations of others and of himself, his service to others and to Rio Grande, his scholarship and professionalism, his social advocacy and political engagement - throughout his distinguished career Ray set the standard for all of us to follow. He’s been our leader and wise counsel. But especially, Ray’s been our own Socrates and the moral conscience of our institution – the person with the courage to question and hold those in power to account. I call him my friend as well.

—Chris Pines

I’ve known Dr. Matura for about 10 years as a secretary for Liberal Arts & Behavioral Science. He is the chair for Behavioral Science.

Of the many faculty that I took care of he was the only one that when each of his classes are completed he writes a note to encourage each & every student. He was enjoyable to work with. When I couldn’t find a faculty person to work with a student he would volunteer to work with them and their schedule.

He was always very enjoyable to work with. He made working at Rio a joy!

Rio has a treasure with Dr. Raymond Matura!!

—Brenda Loucks

When I think of the University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College I immediately think of the people I have known over the years and the first one to come to mind is Dr. Raymond C. Matura. He was a professor when I began my employment with Rio in 1982. He sincerely cares about his students and follows their careers long after they have left Rio. He is a wonderful faculty member and has served as an outstanding Co-chair of the School of Health and Behavioral Sciences. I know many Rio students have a better life because Dr. Matura had some part to play in their educational journey.

—Dr. Donna Mitchell
Ray Matura epitomizes all that is good in educators: genuine concern for his colleagues and the university. He is a man of gentle spirit but strong in support of his colleagues and an encourager to all who know him. Through personal crisis, he has exemplified courage, dedication to our profession and a selflessness that is not always found in educators. Ray is the University of Rio Grande. Thank you for your support during my tenure in the Social Work Program. Go Gaters except when they play my Seminoles!

—Dr. Barb Boley

I have known Dr. Ray Matura for roughly 18 years. In those years, he has served many roles in my development as a person and professional. As a social and behavioral sciences major, I took several of his classes. I remember feeling energized and empowered through those classes. Ray helped ignite my desire to go to graduate school and he wrote recommendation letters for my entrance to my master’s program as well as doctoral program. After being accepted into my doctoral program, Ray provided invaluable mentorship and encouragement. He was one of the first people I reached out to after passing my comprehensive exams. He has played a large role in my educational ventures and successes. I now have the privilege of working with Ray. His honest feedback, unwavering support, and mentorship remain unmatched. Ray’s dedication to family, students, and colleagues is inspiring.

—Kristin Chamberlain

Ray’s unfailing devotion to the University of Rio Grande has benefited generations of students, faculty and the institution as a whole. In my nearly thirty years at Rio Grande, I have found Ray to be a valued role model both as a teacher and a colleague. He’s often been called a gadfly, and this is a label he should wear proudly because he is a gadfly who always has the welfare of the students and the institution at heart. He is a supremely gifted teacher, a most supportive colleague, a kind and generous friend, and a loyal Rio graduate. An old-fashioned expression, in its best and broadest definitions, applies: Ray is a scholar and a gentleman.

—Beth Brown

I was pleased to hear that a surprise recognition has been organized to celebrate your career as an educator, mentor and one of the faces that I (and many others) will associate with my time at the University of Rio Grande. The sociology classes that I completed during my time at URG were not only educational, but also entertaining and dynamic. From being known as “Heather” for an entire quarter to many laughs from your quick witted humor, I can say that the time spent in your classes was unforgettable. Thank you for your support as I continued on to become of one Rio’s part time faculty members. Your words of encouragement meant a lot to me. I wish you much happiness and success in your present and future endeavors.

—Nicole (Dixon) Waldron, Class of 2001
Alumni Publishes Book

Reo Rio: ‘60s Illusions is a coming-of-age story that reflects the myths and realities of the late 1960s, debunking the usual sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll stereotypes. The Holden Caulfield-like character transfers to Rio Grande in 1967 with an anemic 1.8 GPA and a ton of naivete. He assimilates into a healthy diversity of characters from places like the Jersey shore, the Pennsy coal fields, and the fringes of Appalachia. His adventures are often humorous, sometimes irreverent, but always tinged with the specter of the War, political upheaval, and cultural changes.

Older Rio grads will recognize references to the Blue Willow, Filthy Frank’s, the Grande Cafe, Abbie Hoffman’s visit, and many others. The characters’ names are fictitious, but to some readers, recognizable.

One of the book’s features is that every chapter begins and ends with cultural images, statistics from Vietnam, poignant quotes, and music icons of the time period.

Alumni Chapters to Extend Past Ohio

The Rio Grande Alumni Association is hoping to extend its chapters past the borders of Ohio. So if you are living outside of Ohio, and want to see about a potential event in your state, let us know! We would love to hear from you and see the likelihood of our office coming to you! Please send us an email at dedwards@rio.edu. We are already looking into Florida, Texas, California, the Carolina’s and the Mid West.

Battle of the Decades Update

If you haven’t already participated in the Battle of the Decades, it’s time to send in your support and survey. You can get online at this link https://www.rio.edu/alumni/battle/, or request a form be mailed to you.

So far, the 1970s are in the lead with gifts and amount of participation!

Again, you have until June 30, 2020 to support your decade!

GIVE ONLINE: https://www.rio.edu/alumni/battle/
Since 2001, Morrissey has led Rio Grande to 18 consecutive NAIA Men's Soccer National Championship appearances, including two NAIA National Championship red banners (2003, 2015) and two NAIA National Runner-Up finishes (2008, 2016). The RedStorm advanced to the NAIA semifinals on six occasions, while also making 10 appearances in the quarterfinals.

Under the direction of Morrissey, the RedStorm have won 18 conference championships, including 10-straight from 1998-2007, for one of the most dominating runs in NAIA men's soccer history. The RedStorm have been a fixture in the NAIA rankings under Morrissey, having appeared in 118 consecutive top-25 polls - which is the second-most all-time - and also churned out an unbelievable 112-game regular-season unbeaten streak from October 21, 2000, to September 16, 2006.

“Coach Morrissey’s enthusiasm and professional demeanor has always been over and above. Scott is a highly-motivated, hard-working, dedicated family member of Rio Sports,” said Rio Grande Athletic Director Jeff Lanham. “In addition to performing his coaching duties at an exemplary level, Scott demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to the University of Rio Grande community as well as to the game of soccer.”

Morrissey has been named conference Coach of the Year 11 times (four times in the America Mideast Conference, three times in the Mid-South Conference, once in the Kentucky Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and each of the last three seasons in the River States Conference), while also earning NAIA National Coach of the Year honors in both 2003 and 2015. He has produced a total of six NAIA National Championship Most Valuable Players (two Championship MVPs, three Defensive MVPs, and one Offensive MVP), in addition to one NAIA National Player of the Year (William Paulino, 2015).

The University of Rio Grande has produced a total of 58 NAIA All-American selections since Morrissey’s arrival in 1989, including 29 first-team honorees.

“I’m really grateful for the players who took a chance on coming to play at a place like Rio...and we’ve had some phenomenal kids come here,” Morrissey said. “Tony Daniels was my assistant for 25 or 26 years and we built this program together. He deserves a huge thanks for his hard work and effort. I’ve had other assistant coaches who’ve made massive contributions. You can’t forget about the support we’ve received from our administration, as well as the support and contributions that Evan and Elizabeth Davis have made to our program. This is not an honor you receive without a lot of great, great people alongside you and I thank each and every one of them for believing in me.”

In addition to his tremendous success on the soccer pitch, Morrissey has been an active member of the NAIA Men’s Soccer Coaches Association, serving on the NAIA All-American Selection Committee, functioning as a national rater and also as the Major League Soccer coordinator for the NAIA.

Before joining the coaching ranks, Morrissey was an outstanding soccer student-athlete at Tiffin University from 1985-88, earning conference player of the year honors in 1988, and was also a two-time NAIA All-American (1987, 1988). He is a member of both the Tiffin University Athletic Hall of Fame as a student-athlete and the University of Rio Grande Athletic Hall of Fame as a coach.

“Rio has had many stories regarding the success of athletics at this institution. Scott Morrissey and Rio Soccer is one that needs to be told,” Lanham said. “The 30 plus years at Rio have shown me Scott’s tireless dedication, reliability and how he demonstrates these qualities to young men from all over the world. It’s a huge leadership characteristic he has confirmed throughout his time at Rio Grande.”

Morrissey, who also serves as assistant director of athletics and director of compliance at the school, currently resides in Gallipolis, Ohio. He has two daughters, Allison and Samantha, and one son, Brenen.

Morrissey, whose induction will take place during the 2019 NAIA Men’s Soccer National Championship, which takes place Dec. 2-7 in Irvine, Calif., will join men’s basketball legend Clarence “Bevo” Francis as Rio Grande’s only members of the Hall of Fame.