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The
ROTUNDA

Trying to get a picture with Elwood since 1920

BUILDING OFF OF SUCCESS

SOFTBALL LOOKS TO CLAIM 4TH BIG SOUTH TITLE

FEB. 19, 2018
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This week in SGA

EVA WITTKOSKI | THE ROTUNDA

SGA strives to better mental health on campus with the final vote on the mental health clause in their meeting on Feb. 13, 2018.

by Rachael Poole | Opinions Asst. Editor | @rapoole17

In this week's Student Government Association (SGA) meeting, the SGA did a second reading of a proposed mental health clause that can potentially go in professors' future syllabi.

The mental health clause was also voted on by SGA unanimously, meaning that it will be recommended to faculty as a standard brief of information on mental health services available to students.

The clause includes information on where Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is and what other resources students can use in case of anxiety, depression and other student stressors.

During open forum, Senator Chyanne Correa asked what the standard was for relating mental health to the Office of Disability Resources (ODR).

Correa said there may be instances where students cannot get their work done efficiently due to mental health problems and expressed that there should be accommodations surrounding that issue.

Senator and Vice Treasure Joseph Atkins said that there are mental health accommodations, but students must have to see a psychologist for a mental health examination.

Senator Kiersten Freedman said there's a problem with dryers in Longwood Village apartments, and made the point that the problem with laundry equipment may be a campus-wide problem.

President Kevin Napier said if there's a problem with a specific dryer, students should take a picture of the identification number on the dryer and email it to Associate

Director of Residential Operations Doug Howell.

Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life Representative Catherine Swinsky brought up the concern among students on fire marshals possibly not giving proper notice before entering rooms for inspections.

Swinsky suggested that SGA reach out to Residential and Commuter Life (RCL) to get a better understanding of the procedure that takes place with fire marshals so students can make sure to be better prepared for inspections.

Senior Class President Praise Nyambiya responded by saying the purpose of the fire marshal inspections is to make sure that students are abiding by not only Longwood policy but state policy as well.

Nyambiya said with fire marshals coming with little to no notice, it ensures that students don't necessarily have time to get rid of items that are not permitted by Longwood or state regulations.

Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Tim Pierson said no one can enter a student's room without any notice.

Longwood University Police Department (LUPD) Chief Robert Beach also told SGA the room entry policy states that fire marshals can't enter a room without two people or an RCL advisor.

Hannah Prem, Jack Harmon and Haleigh Pannell were sworn in as senators.

The next SGA meeting will be Tuesday, Feb. 20 at 3:50 p.m. in the Martinelli Board Room located in the Maugans Alumni Center.



Student org pledges 16 good deeds

On Feb. 6, Hayley Pannell proposed her new student organization to the Student Government Association.

EVA WITTKOSKI | THE ROTUNDA

by Jesse Plichta-Kellar | News Staff | @JesseKellar

With a goal to bring awareness to mental health and suicide awareness, student organization Promise 16 was approved by the Student Government Association (SGA) on Jan. 30 according to psychology sophomore Haleigh Pannell, the founder and president of Promise 16.

The group aims to help supplement existing mental health resources on campus, according to Pannell.

“I created a group for a safe space to talk about mental health issues and raise awareness for suicide,” Pannell said.

The group meets once a week and currently has about 40 people, according to Pannell.

“We have once a week meetings that are more about the support group. We talk about universal and personal mental health issues,”

Pannell said.

Emma Giambalvo, a sophomore communication studies major, said she joined Promise16 to promote mental health on campus.

“I joined Promise16 because it is super important for Longwood students to be able to have access to mental health resources other than CAPS, there are not many other resources to take advantage of,” said Giambalvo. “I appreciate that Haleigh was able to create this organization, because our campus will surely benefit.”

The organization was named Promise 16 because every 16 minutes someone in the United States commits suicide, per Pannell.

According to Pannell the specific theme varies week to week.

“We usually watch a video about some type of theme, last week we watched a video...from BuzzFeed, about a guy who jumped off the Golden Gate bridge, tried to commit suicide. He survived so he’s a motivational speaker. This week we’re going to talk about self love, because of Valentine’s day,” said Pannell.

The organization is local only to Longwood and not nationally affiliated, according to Pannell.

“This (Promise 16) is the original version of the group, it’s not anywhere else,” she said.

According to Gimbalvo, they have only had two meetings for far, but they have been impactful nonetheless.

“Promise 16 is something I look forward to every week,” said Gimbalvo. “I have already met so many new people, so it means a lot to know that I have a kind and caring support system around me.”

In addition to the weekly meetings, Promise16 helps with out of darkness walks and a video project, according to Pannell.

“We are sponsoring the out of darkness walks,” Pannell said. “It’s a night time walk, you walk a mile. There’s glow sticks and it’s

“I created a group for a safe space to talk about mental health issues and raise awareness for suicide.”

Haleigh Pannell

really cool ... Some members of ours are going to do that, we’re working with COPEs (Club and Organization Preventing Every Suicide).”

The major project that Promise 16 is creating on its own is a video project, based off of the organization’s name, according to Pannell.

“We’re doing our own project, which I came up with,” Pannell said. “It has to do with the name, you promise to do 16 (nice) things.”

The goal is to have people do 16 nice things, record them and then Promise16 will create a video, according to Pannell.

“So you promise to do 16 nice things, like giving 16 high-fives or (16) cupcake(s),” Pannell said. “Then you record yourself doing it once, send it in (to Promise 16). I’m going to put all of it together in a video of all the good things that we’ve done for the day.”

Gimbalvo praised the organization’s impact on her life.

“Promise 16 helped me because I know there is a group of people that will always be open to talking with you, no matter the subject,” said Gimbalvo. “You’re guaranteed a support system.”

According to Pannell, the organization is on social media and has Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts.



ALAINA JACQUES & NICOLE DEL ROSARIO | THE ROTUNDA

Pannell named the organization Promise 16 to encourage people to do 16 nice things.



Citizen Leadership Institute builds a "philosophy of leadership"

Laura Parker instructed the Citizen Leadership Institute on Monday February 12 at 4pm.

TAYLOR O'BERRY | THE ROTUNDA

by David Pettyjohn | Features Staff | @PtjDav

The Citizen Leadership Institute is one of Longwood University's programs for fulfilling its goals of developing its students as citizen leaders. It is similar to many of the credited courses at Longwood and has a similar classroom environment.

Laura Parker is the assistant director of leadership and development programs for the Citizen Leadership Institute, which is part of the larger Office of Citizen Leadership & Social Justice Education. She has been in this position since July, having arrived after finishing graduate school at the University of Greenville, where she helped to contribute to the Leadership Institute at that school. She said that this is a way of serving the community.

Parker explained there are four different levels to the Citizen Leadership Institute coursework:

Level I – Becoming Yourself

Level II – Becoming Together

Level III – Becoming a Change Agent/
Becoming a Community

Level IV – Becoming a Citizen Leader

These different levels take place each semester, starting with Level I – Becoming Yourself in the fall semester, and Level II – Becoming Together in the spring semester, and so on. In Level III, participants choose one of subsets of the larger program to focus on. They have to either choose the social justice program (Longwood's webpage for the Citizen Leadership Institute refers to this as "becoming a change agent") or the "community engagement" program ("becoming a community").

Arin Young is part of the class of 2019 and a

social work major who has been helped by the Citizen Leadership Institute's programs. On top of being a peer mentor, Young is an intern at the Citizen Leadership & Social Justice Education department who has been with the program for two semesters now, including this current semester. This places her in Level II for this semester. She credits Parker



TAYLOR O'BERRY | THE ROTUNDA

The institute's mission is to help develop students into citizen leaders, according to Longwood's website, and the Director of Citizen Leadership and Social Justice Education, Johnathan Page, for introducing her to the Citizen Leadership Institute curriculum. She and Parker have a personal connection, since they are both from

North Carolina.

"It's an eight-week program," Young said of each level of the course. "(Level I) has the goals of helping you build your self-reflection and your awareness of yourself, and then also helping you build a philosophy of leadership."

Young has not yet decided on what her "philosophy of leadership" is. Unfortunately, she is not able to go forward with the program, due to a timing conflict with her classes.

"I mean, it's a four-level program, so I think I would have to work on it a little bit more," she said. "You separate on the tracks later down, so I wasn't divided yet."

However, Young found she learned the values from the institute's courses dovetailed with the principles that she was encouraged to develop as a social work major. She also noticed that there were many of her fellow social work majors enrolled in the courses. She also found that what she learned from the Citizen Leadership Institute has helped her in other areas of her life.

"I'm actually on (the executive boards of) two organizations now, so I think it helped build some confidence and some courage," Young said. "But other than that, I think it's helped re-instill what I already knew about myself."

Young overall feels a sense of pride towards to Citizen Leadership Institute, and described it as "a really beneficial program." Through her internship with Parker, she has spoken with her about advertising it more to freshmen, and how it can promote more campus involvement among freshmen. She said that, since "the mission of Longwood is to build more citizen leaders, this is a kind of program that should be more emphasized to students."



by Jacob DiLandro | A&E Staff | @spongejay1

COURTESY OF COMIC BOOK MOVIE

With the character's introduction and importance to the story of "Captain America: Civil War," many fans were left equal parts concerned and excited for what the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) could hold for T'Challa, the Black Panther. Now, director Ryan Coogler ("Fruitvale Station," "Creed") and co-writer Joe Robert Cole ("American Crime Story") have brought T'Challa back to the nation of Wakanda and delivered one of the most visually striking and nuanced films the genre has ever seen.

Unlike past Marvel films, which have been centered largely in pre-established worlds, like Earth, or have featured other worlds for only

Colorful visuals in both the costumes and designs lend to some of its inventive action sequences.

short periods of time ("Thor: Ragnarok"), "Black Panther" faces challenge of establishing the Afrofuturistic nation of Wakanda as a living, breathing world. It succeeds thanks to Coogler's attention to the smaller details of worldbuilding, with the citizens' outfits, mannerisms and development of people living on the outskirts of the nation.

The costumes and visual designs are particularly strong. The wonderful mixture of African designs and futuristic technology delivered a unique look to the world. The filmmakers clearly have a reverence for this nation that shines through, thanks to the strong worldbuilding and performances,

strengthened by the excellent camerawork from cinematographer Rachel Morrison.

The film's timely themes and story is never forced. While there are certainly real world parallels to the events, the movie overall carries a kind of family drama overtone like those found in films like "The Godfather" and even "The Empire Strikes Back." Chadwick Boseman's calm and collected performance as T'Challa is excellent, though he's almost overshadowed by the bravado and extravagance of Michael B. Jordan's Kilmonger, an electric villain.

Jordan succeeds in delivering the best villain that the MCU has seen since Loki in "The Avengers." They say a good villain is one the audience can sympathize with, and Kilmonger is draws a empathy. He's a hurt individual and shares the same wishes as T'Challa, but with differing ideas for solutions. However, as imposing as Kilmonger is, he isn't even remotely the scene-stealer.

That honor belongs to the women of Wakanda. The strength and power of Danai Gurira's Okoye, the leader of T'Challa's guards, matches perfectly with Lupita Nyong'o's Nakia, T'Challa's former lover and Wakandan spy. They steal the limelight for just about every scene they're in, but it's his little sister, Letitia Wright's Shuri, who steals the entire film. Her sense of fashion, sibling goofiness and overall sense of pride in her inventions pushes the film into a new realm of character storytelling that elevates it beyond other superhero films.

Time is balanced equally throughout the characters, preventing the sense of fatigue that normally comes from the focus on one character these kinds of films. It's replaced with an excellent sense of pacing that makes

sure the film never drags, and ends up leaving this two-hour-and-fifteen-minute epic feeling closer to an-hour-and-a-half.

Marvel's overindulgence in humor is also not an issue here. While it works in films like "Ragnarok," "Black Panther" is not a comedy. It's a serious superhero tale, well-balanced on the spectrum of the overt silliness of a film like "Ragnarok" and the dire situations of a film like "Logan." Its careful construction removed the need to cover up spotty worldbuilding with jokes at every turn.

Colorful visuals in both the costumes and designs lend to some of its inventive action sequences. The car chase through South Korea is a highlight, thanks to unique mechanics introduced by Shuri's inventions, and the third act feels epic and breezy, mainly because the action isn't broken up every few minutes for a joke.

The supporting cast of engaging characters, like Martin Freeman's Agent Ross, Winston Duke's M'Baku, Forest Whitaker's Zuri and Angela Bassett's Queen Ramonda helps to flesh out an already engrossing story and engaging world by giving it even more character and internal conflict. Simply put, the film is so engaging purely because it has so much character.

"Black Panther" has so much excellence packed into one film. Its timely and nuanced plot is bolstered by an engaging villain and a cast of delightful characters who breathe life into an already excellently built world. With swagger, style and character to spare, "Black Panther" leaps over expectations to deliver a film that truly belongs at the top of the genre. Long live the king.

★★★★★ 5/5



"BLACK PANTHER: THE ALBUM" SETS THE TONE FOR THE MOVIE

by LeDaniel Jackson | Contributor | @xidjoeker500

Released with the new Marvel movie "Black Panther," its soundtrack came out of nowhere, following the movie's themes and potentially inviting for viewers to see the film.

"Black Panther: The Album" was created by record label Top Dawg Entertainment; including raps by artists Jay Rock, Schoolboy Q, SZA, Isaiah Rashad, Ab-soul and "Kung Fu Kenny"-himself, Kendrick Lamar.

Combined, these artists collaborated with a few features created to create an album that can be viewed as more than a movie soundtrack, producing just a fun album in general.

The opening theme track named, "Black Panther" starts with a quiet chant with African roots and followed by African drums. Then, the melody of the song kicks in accompanied by a beautiful steel drum.

Then, Kendrick comes in rapping, "King of City / King of my country / King of my homeland / King of the culture / King of the soldiers / King of the bloodshed." The lyrics translate to representing that T'Challa, the Black Panther, is the king of the Wakanda - a fictional city created by Marvel. As it continues, the song splits into two perspectives of the characters; starting with the pleasant king of Wakanda T'Challa before the beat turns darker with the ego of the Black Panther.

While the album's theme song set the tone for what was to come, there were some clear mistakes that need to be addressed.

One would be the song "Kings Dead" which has Kendrick, Jay Rock, James Blake and an annoying appearance from Future. The song was clearly created as a cash grab laid over a well-produced beat.

Beginning with an African chant, it drops into an impressive African-trap fusion beat that was wasted by lyrics that were underwhelming at best. The artists took a mumble rap approach with the repetition of "I gotta go get it / gotta go get it / I gotta go get it / I gotta go get it," further trashed by featuring Future's grandma-infused voice.

Across the album, sadly Kendrick's performance fails to meet expectations. With K-Dot being on of the best hip hop influences to date I felt like he could added a little more lyricism to some of his songs.

Nevertheless, all of the songs used in the film fit with the mood well, including a couple of the album's features in "All the Stars" and "Pray For Me."

"All the Stars" fit the movie scene really well providing a club type feel to the song. This track featured SZA which her voice and the beat meshed really well with the beat. Kendrick's voice added another layer to the song as well with techno sounding voice.

"Pray for me" featured the artist The

Weeknd who provides some texture to this with his vocals. This song goes into one of themes of the the movie which I will not go into because we do not spoil movies here. However, the message behind this song was really inspiring.

Now my favorite song on this album which was sadly not in the movie was "Big Shot," featuring Travis Scott. The beat is crazy with a flute playing in the background merged with trap throughout the song. I also like how Kendrick played with flow on this track using his lyrics from his feature on the popular song "New Freezer" by Rich the Kid. Travis Scott stayed with same flow as Kendrick but using his distinct voice to make it distinguish the two.

Overall, this album has a few bangers and the album does connect with movie in good ways and bad.

When this album is good, it's great; however, some of the songs fail to connect with the overall theme. Wakanda deserves a little better than this.

★ ★ ★ ★ 3.5/5

PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT

POOLE: A MENTAL HEALTH OR GUN PROBLEM?

by Rachael Poole | Opinions Asst. Editor | @rapoole17



People attend a candlelight vigil the day after a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, U.S. Feb. 15, 2018.

JONATHAN DRAKE | REUTERS

On Feb. 14 in Parkland, Florida, a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. As a result of the shooting, seventeen people were killed and fifteen others were taken to the hospital for injuries.

The number of casualties makes the shooting one of the world's deadliest school massacres, having common parallels with the Columbine High School shooting in 1999 and the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007.

Mass shootings are defined as "four or more shot and/or killed in a single event (incident), at the same general time and location, not including the shooter," according to the Gun Violence Archives.

The perpetrator of the shooting is 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz. According to reports from childhood friends and classmates, Cruz has been known for torturing and killing small animals and was even expelled from his high school for bringing bullets to school.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a person close to Cruz reached out to the FBI's Public Access Line (PAL) to report concerns on him. The report was made on Jan. 5, a month before the shooting.

The FBI said in a statement on the Parkland shooting that the caller expressed concerns about Cruz's behavior, specifically his gun ownership, desire to kill people and how he had labelled himself as a future "professional school shooter."

FBI Director Christopher Wray said that the FBI will figure out why nothing was done about the call made concerning Cruz, saying the agency "deeply regret(s) the additional pain this causes all those affected by this horrific tragedy."

According to CNN, Cruz's mother often had to call the local police in response to his behavior. Police documents include more than 30 reports since 2011, ranging from misbehavior and some from his younger

brother.

However, even after the mass amount of reports, Cruz was still able to pass a background check and obtain an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle to shoot up his school.

In the light of this report, how could this have happened? With a history of violence and threatening behavior, how could someone as seemingly deranged as Nikolas Cruz be able to obtain a gun?

With this being said, the common debate returns on gun control: is this the time to talk about it? Thoughts and prayers are no longer enough - they aren't going to prevent this from happening again in the future.

People such as Tomi Lahren and President Donald Trump are arguing that this is a mental health problem, and not a gun control problem. I argue that it can be both.

People with mental health problems shouldn't be able to obtain a gun whatsoever, but it also shouldn't be as easy as it is to get one. That's where those two ideas come together.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-V), 4 to 5 percent of mass shooters are considered mentally ill. I feel that in order to kill people, one has to have some type of mental problem to begin with.

Roughly 40 percent of all the world's firearms are in the possession of Americans, according to the Small Arms Survey. Not only that, but it's incredibly easy to buy a firearm in the US.

You could go to your local Walmart and purchase a gun with a simple background check. All it takes is a simple form to fill out, and the background check goes to the state police. Sometimes it takes half an hour, but other times it could take a few days depending on certain criteria.

Background checks need to include stricter regulations and have more emphasis on both mental health and past reports on behavior.

During a speech on Feb. 15, US Attorney General Jeff Sessions called for "effective enforcement on gun laws - focusing on

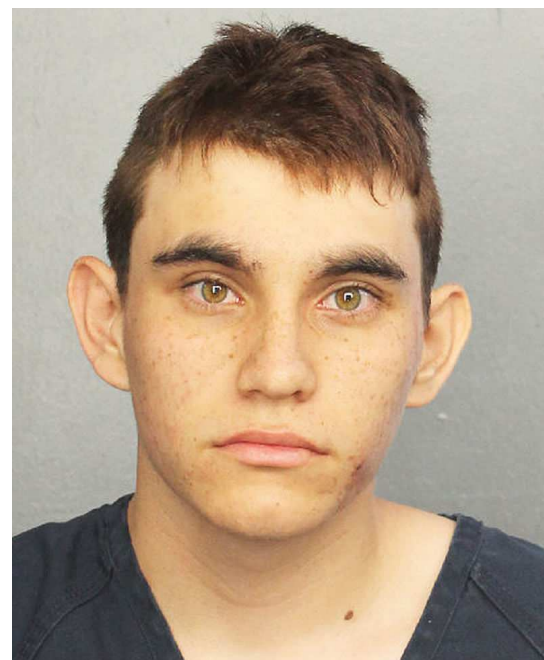
criminals and dangerous people, mentally ill people."

In response to the shooting, Sessions said he directed the office of Legal Policy to work with Health and Human Services, Education and Homeland Security to study mental health and how it intersects with criminal behavior.

As a country there needs to be more discussion on what we can do to prevent these shootings from happening again. Too many people have lost their lives because of gun violence.

Schools should be safe places for children, and the children in the United States shouldn't be scared of whether or not they will make it home. Parents shouldn't have to worry about if they'll get to see their kid again after they walk out the door to get on the bus.

The United States needs to step up and realize there is a problem. Children's lives are more important than gun rights.



The 19-year-old gunman Nikolas Cruz was arrested and taken into custody after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.



"CREATING A LEGACY"

LACROSSE SET FOR BOUNCE-BACK SEASON

by Kurt Martin | Sports Staff | @lamKurt14

Longwood lacrosse ran some offensive and defensive drills while working toward their next game against George Washington University.

CARRIE BAILEY | THE ROTUNDA

The Longwood women's lacrosse team's motto for the new season is "C.R.E.A.T.I.N.G a Legacy," an acronym in which stands for Communicating, Respect, Executing, Attitude, Trust, Inspire, No excuses and Gratitude.

The Lancers ended last season with a record of 7-11 (3-4 Big South), and entered the Big South tournament as the fifth seed. Their season came to an abrupt end in a loss to fourth-seeded Liberty in the quarterfinals.

Longwood finished in the top half of the Big South in numerous stats last season, such goals per game with 11.67, assists per game with 7.4 and points per game with 19. Additionally, they led the Big South in shot percentage with .507.

The team is right on track to achieving a great legacy, starting the season on a high by avenging last season's loss to Lafayette, defeating the Leopards 13-12 this past Sunday, Feb. 11 in Farmville.

Madison Stair lead the way for the Lancers with four goals, while Riley Dolan, Dana Joss, Molly Barkman and Charleigh Kondas each had two.

Through all the hard work during the offseason, senior midfielder Madison Stair said beginning the season on a high note is a huge confidence builder for the team.

"It feels really good, we prepared as much as possible all week and our mindset was 'we're going to go out there and get after it.'" she said. "After last season we had nothing to lose and I think everyone came out and executed well and it was a really good feeling."

After missing most of last year with an injury, Stair returns to the active lineup this season for the Lancers.

"Everyone has supported me and I have had teammates tell me 'you can do it' so finally getting out there and proving that I can get back to my old self feels really good," said Stair.

There is a high level of experience on the field for the Lancers this season as their roster consists of seven seniors. They hope the experience pays dividends for them both on the field and in mentoring underclassmen.

"I think we have a very strong senior class. We have seniors in all aspects of the game to lead and to help the underclassmen find their way in the game," said senior defender Charleigh Kondas. "I think with our strong senior class, we are going to see a lot of success this season."

Sophomore midfielder Molly Barkman was the lone member of the team to be named to the Preseason All-Conference Team. She looks to continue her already successful career with the team after being named Longwood's Female Freshman Athlete of the Year last season, and also the program's first 2017 All-Big South First Team selection as a freshman.

The team wants to put an emphasis on being faster this season and having better execution each time they step on the field.

"Every day in practice we have a set plan, and we try to go through everything as fast and accurately as possible, and doing those things is really going to help us as we take the field for games," said Stair.

With this year's emphasis of being faster, the Lancers will look to force more turnovers after ranking sixth last season in the Big South with just over eight caused per game, coupled with the improvement of shots on goal.

Longwood dropped 16-8 against George Washington University on Saturday, Feb. 17 on the road, their second game of the season. The next home game for the Lancers will be on Wednesday, Feb. 28 as they host in-state rival VCU at 3 p.m.



CARRIE BAILEY | THE ROTUNDA

Senior forward Madison Stair practices plays for the upcoming game at George Washington University.



AN ESTABLISHED DYNASTY

LU SOFTBALL IS BIG SOUTH'S PRESEASON FAVORITE

by Patrick Sanderson | Sports Editor | @psanderson20

The team congratulates freshman pitcher Arleigh Wood after a successful strike out.

CARRIE BAILEY | THE ROTUNDA

A year removed from their third straight Big South championship and fourth in five seasons, the Longwood softball team was picked to win a fourth consecutive title by Big South coaches in 2018, marking the third consecutive season the Lancers come into a season as favorites.

The Lancers 2017 championship run consisted of a 13-2 run to end the season, including wins against top-seeded Liberty and second-seeded Campbell in the Big South tournament en route to their third straight championship.

Head coaching veteran Kathy Riley returns ten position players and two pitchers to her 18-player roster this season, while adding five freshmen to the team. Of the 12 returnees, eight of them were starters last season.

After feeling pressure to win a third straight championship last season, Riley said she's trying not to succumb to the pressure this year in order to keep her team relaxed.

"I've worked hard to make sure I don't (feel pressure), and let my team have their own personality and chance to tell their own story," the 21-year head coach said. "Last year's team is last year's team; this year's team is totally different. It would be inappropriate for me to put even more pressure on them."

Additionally, Riley used the offseason to alter her coaching mentality to give her players breathing room, while also holding them accountable for their roles.

"The hard part about coaching though is to make sure that you're pushing them just enough but keeping them relaxed. I think the big challenge this year is to make sure I don't have them get tight, but also for them to be accountable to do their job the way they need

to," she said.

A big piece returning to their star-studded lineup is junior pitcher Sydney Gay, who boasted a team-leading 2.30 earned run average last year and was a second-team All-Big South selection.

After the team's slow start to last season,



CARRIE BAILEY | THE ROTUNDA

Wood prepares for the upcoming season in hopes of winning a fourth-straight Big South crown.

Gay emphasized the importance of starting off this season strong in order to set the tone for the rest of the year.

"Compared to last year, I'm hoping we have a better start off to this season, but I'm feeling very confident heading into the year," said Gay. "There's always pressure, but I think it's more confidence and excitement more than anything."

On the offensive side, junior catcher Kaylynn Batten provided the Lancers batting order with firepower, posting a team-leading .295

batting average. A first-team All-Big South selection in 2017, Batten hopes to carry her stellar offensive performances into the new season.

"We're just taking (this season) step by step," Batten said. "Personally, I just want to lead my team and put us in the best position I can, and we can see where we can get."

Despite her numbers, among others, the Lancers finished last in the conference in batting average last season with .230, making way for Riley to focus on enhancing their batting performances this past offseason.

"We really worked a lot on vision, and when they do swing, they make sure that it's going to count," Riley said. "I've seen them go through the motions too much when they're in hitting practice, so that now that I've cut down the swings, I think they're taking care of those swings more effectively."

With expectations set high for the Lancers, Riley said her experience, as well as the team's experience, will be the determining factor of if her team is able to reach the summit of the Big South once again.

"I do think it's important that we use the three years that we were successful to our advantage, because there is something to be said if you have got that experience," said Riley. "We just need to use that and maintain our confidence all the way through the rough spots that you're going to have in a 56-game schedule."

The Lancers opened their 2018 season with a doubleheader against DePaul and Northern Illinois on Friday, Feb. 16 in Charleston, S.C. The Cougar Classic consisted of five games, lasting until Sunday, Feb. 18.



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