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Editor's letter

As the 2021-22 school year crawls to a close, we’re reminded of the hurdles it took to get here. This year has been no exception to the ravaging impact of the coronavirus on the lives of many, this magazine’s staff included. We have sought to cover the pandemic’s infiltration into various pockets of the ASU community, but also highlight the communities that have shone through its cracks. Reporters buried their noses in artist sketchbooks and online spaces to feature the creatives that have documented the past year through art and communication. And due to this issue being the school year’s last, we acknowledged some of our favorite businesses.
Commuters: How we get to campus

Three ASU community members on their daily commutes, urban infrastructure and accessibility

by Alexis Moulton

Graphics by Nick Devor

At 6:30 a.m. the sun isn’t quite up yet, but Autumn Baker is. It’s Monday, and the sophomore studying biomedical sciences is getting ready for a day of classes that will last 12 hours and span two different campuses, 20 miles apart.

For many students, a 12-hour school day would be more than enough time to get ahead on their homework and study for an upcoming exam. But Baker will spend between four to five hours of her day locked in a liminal, unproductive limbo, commuting between her home, West and Tempe campuses.

Jc Porter has already been up for an hour. He hit the road at 6 o’clock sharp. Hopefully, he’ll make it to his office at ASU Parking and Transit Services by 7:15 a.m., just in time to shower and cool down before work.

For the past eight years, Porter has biked to work every day. When he travels to Tempe, he cycles 20 miles each way, a total of 40 miles over two-and-a-half hours.

Cody Wright, on the other hand, is in no rush. The junior psychology student lives in an apartment adjacent to the Tempe campus and can make his way to the Memorial Union in just 10 minutes — which, he notes, is significantly faster than many of his peers.

“I can cruise in this at 6 miles an hour,” Wright said, gesturing to his motorized wheelchair with a grin. “That’s a little more than double the walking speed of most people.”

Thousands of students, faculty and staff commute daily to ASU’s campuses; Baker, Porter and Wright represent a microcosm of the community. Their experiences shine light on a variety of urban and social issues facing ASU community members today, from rent inflation to accessible and sustainable transportation.
Baker leaves the house at 7 a.m. to make it to her 8 a.m. on the West campus by car. At 11:30 a.m., she takes the ASU shuttle from West to Tempe for her 1:30 p.m. class. Afterward, she grabs the 4:30 p.m. shuttle back to West, then drives home. She’s usually back in time for dinner at 6:30 p.m.

In all, she spends around two hours of the day in her car. It’s a tedious and monotonous ride, hardly a relaxing experience.

About two more hours are dedicated to waiting for and riding ASU’s intercampus shuttles. This is when Baker attempts to find some “me time;” she listens to music, scrolls on TikTok or works on her latest crochet project, trying her best to reclaim some of her day lost to her commute.

“The days that I forget my headphones are the worst days,” she said. “You just have to sit there and you can’t do anything.”

Her commute is mostly sedentary, but it can be hard on her body. Baker has medical issues with her hips and knees, which can make long bus and car rides miserable.

“Sitting in one position for a long amount of time is really painful,” she said. “When I’m coming off the bus, I’ll be hobbling back to my car just to sit for longer.”

Though her commute is draining, she essentially has no choice in the matter — several of her required courses are only available on the Tempe campus. She’s one of many ASU students who take classes on and commute between multiple campuses throughout the week.

Baker lives in her childhood home in Glendale, saving money on rent and caring for her grandparents. She pays for college using scholarship money, which doesn’t cover the cost of on-campus housing.

“It would be a lot simpler to live on campus or near campus, but it’s not particularly a choice,” Baker said. “It’s mainly the money.”

With the exorbitant and rising cost of housing in Tempe and Phoenix, living close to campus is becoming less and less accessible for many students.

Tempe is currently facing an affordable housing crisis. Across the Valley, the cost of housing is skyrocketing, increasing by 20-30% in some areas. Metro Phoenix rents had already risen by nearly 80% from 2016-2021, and a national inflation boom ushered in by COVID-19 has devastated the market even further.

On top of her commute, Baker also works between 18-to-25 hours per week. Freetime is a luxury for her; she frequently has to cut into her sleep schedule, doing homework “really late at night” just to keep up.

“I think that living on campus is a privilege, for both schoolwork and being able to make friends and meet people — to get the full college experience,” she said.

About 80% of ASU students live in off-campus housing, according to U.S. News and World Report. The University encourages freshmen to live in University housing if they’re able, citing research that shows higher success rates among on-campus students.

Baker would love to be more involved and make more friends at school, but her commute and living situation leave her feeling detached from the on-campus student body. People often don’t talk to her during class or on the shuttles. She said it sometimes feels isolating.

“I wish that people knew how hard it is to talk to strangers.”
You get a little bit of me-time back when you’re on your bike, whereas when you’re in the car, frustrations and everything else can still be in there with you, built up,” — JC Porter

If Baker’s commute is characterized by discomfort, boredom and a lack of agency, Porter’s is nearly the opposite. While cycling at the beginning and end of his work day, he finds a peaceful, sometimes euphoric headspace.

“You get a little bit of me time back when you’re on your bike, whereas when you’re in the car, frustrations and everything else can still be in there with you, built up,” Porter said.

He spends over two hours commuting every day, but he doesn’t see it as time wasted or lost — in fact, he figures he’s actually saving time others might dedicate to the gym. The 40 miles he bikes each day make for a more-than-adequate daily exercise regimen.

When asked whether there is an environmentalist rationale to his cycling habit, Porter chuckled.

“I mean, one could be made, but that’s not the reason I do it.”

As associate director of commuter services at ASU, Porter oversees the University’s bike program and tries to “walk the walk.” He also estimates he’s saving money by not driving, though regular maintenance and tire replacements are still a significant expense over time.

Over the past eight years, Porter has worked with the city of Tempe and ASU to improve and synchronize bike routes throughout the area. In 2019, the city was declared a “Gold-Level Bicycle Friendly Community,” with around 4% of residents cycling to work.

A significant percentage of ASU community members get to work without a motorized vehicle at all. According to a 2021 ASU survey provided by Porter, in 2019, 33% of students, 26% of faculty and 13% of staff commuted to work by “carbon-free” means, such as walking, cycling or skateboarding. In 2021 the numbers were reduced in all categories due to COVID-19.

Porter has also found community among other cyclists. “You meet the nicest people while biking,” he said. He encourages everyone to try it out if they can, though he’s quick to acknowledge there are some physical and financial privileges inherent in the activity.

“You should see the world at bike speed,” he said. “It’s a whole different world when you’re going 15 or 20 miles per hour and really interacting with the environment.”
Wright's commute is the shortest of the three by far. After leaving his apartment, he only has to cross two streets before he's on the Tempe campus and on his way to class, all in a matter of minutes.

Overall, Wright said ASU's Tempe campus is well designed for navigating in a wheelchair, though it's not perfect. As a member of the Accessibility Coalition, he has helped advocate for more accessible infrastructure, such as fixing broken elevators or automated doors.

Even on his brief commute he has encountered obstacles, such as poorly designed curb ramps on the intersection of Rural Road and Terrace Mall. He thinks the bumpiness of the ride could potentially be dangerous if he wasn't as experienced with operating a wheelchair.

But ease of travel is hardly the only concern for wheelchair users on a college campus. In his three years at ASU, Wright has only found two restrooms adequately accessible for him. One is in Hayden Library and the other in the Memorial Union — two centrally located buildings directly adjacent to each other.

Unlike most students, Wright can't just duck out of class for a few minutes to the nearest restroom down the hall. Though each building is required to have some form of accessible restroom, most don't fully accommodate his personal needs, so he has to make his way back to central campus whenever he gets an opportunity.

Wright said he's satisfied with the library and Memorial Union's facilities — especially in comparison with other public spaces in Arizona. He would like the University to invest further in accessible restrooms, but he isn't holding his breath.

"I wish there were more of them, but that probably won't happen," Wright said. "Things like that don't usually happen. They cost money."

His cynicism comes with a lifetime of navigating the world with a disability. Wright was born with a genetic disorder called osteogenesis imperfecta, also known as brittle bone disease; in his 22 years, he has had more than 200 broken bones.

Having used a wheelchair to get around from a young age, he said he has "grown numb" to the social difficulties of having a visible physical disability. Other pedestrians often don't know how to share the space with a person in a wheelchair, he said.

"In most public spaces, I typically have at least one encounter where someone's coming my direction, and they just stop and freeze because they don't know what to do," Wright said.

On average, he has an encounter with a stranger like this multiple times each week. In his experience, the ASU student body has been generally inclusive and accepting — still, "people are scared of disabilities," he said.

After he completes his undergraduate education, Wright plans on starting a master's in social work on ASU's Downtown Phoenix campus. He has never taken the ASU shuttle before but hopes it will be convenient and accommodating for his disability needs.

Like Baker, Wright could become a long-distance commuting student, traveling between campuses throughout the week and doing his best to make up for lost time in the process.

For some, this might be a step into the unknown, but for Baker, it has all begun to feel painfully mundane and familiar.

"College for me feels eerily similar to high school," Baker said. "You go to class, you go to work, you go home, you do it all over again."
Researchers at ASU keep up with potential for contaminant exposure in cannabis cultivation
by Kiera Riley

There’s a print of cannabis sativa hanging on the cork board next to Maxwell Leung’s office at ASU’s West campus.

On one of his first days on campus, Leung forgot his key, so he tracked down a campus security guard to unlock the door.

As the two stood in the faculty hallway, the officer shot a look from the art print to Leung, insinuating some unspoken grief or, at the very least, confusion about the illicit plant adorning his office placard.

The key turned. Leung entered his office and went about his day. It’s nothing new.

Cannabis continues to be a point of contradiction.

Recreational and medical marijuana sales bleed across the states at breakneck speed. Cannabis and hemp agriculture follow suit. But the plant itself remains federally illegal and seldom researched, creating undeniable blindspots in assessing potential risks.

Leung, a toxicologist and assistant professor at ASU, is most concerned with contaminants used in cannabis cultivation.

There are no unified regulatory guidelines governing cannabis contaminants. And when left unchecked, pesticides, metals, solvents and other toxins pose health hazards to both recreational cannabis users and medical patients, especially those with susceptible neurological diseases.

The lapse in understanding led Leung to create the Systems Biology and Toxicology Laboratory, a collaborative cannabis research effort encompassing three projects — one of which holds a coveted schedule I research permit, a license with the highest restrictions for storing, handling and testing a substance.

The network of cannabis researchers spawned work on the neurotoxicology of contaminants and cannabinoids, the potential of contaminant exposure for Parkinson’s patients using CBD and a comprehensive geospatial analysis of how cannabis and
hemp production and use affect environmental and human health.

“We are definitely one of the leaders in this field,” Leung said. “I’m very fortunate to have really, really good people joining my group.”

Weed worms

A wire silently slides across a petri dish scattered with some dozen millimeter-long roundworms. It leaves liquid pearls in its path. The residue left suspended on the gelatin ranges from pesticides to insecticides to THC.

Now confronted with a string of toxicants or intoxicants, the worms recoil, shrivel up or slow down into a somewhat stoned stupor.

Laura Jameson, the lead lab technician, sits eye to the microscope, tracing the line and recording each reaction. In every wiggle or wither, she comes one step closer to piecing together the relationship between cannabis, contaminants and brain function.

The lab’s microscope transmits videos of each chemical test. Jameson monitors how cannabis and contaminant exposure disrupts activity in the brain, namely cellular respiration, mitochondrial dynamics, synaptic transmission and motor control.

“You have to learn how the brain works and then how to break it,” Jameson said.

Leung was heading from University of California Davis to ASU around the same time Jameson graduated in 2020. He needed a technician familiar with roundworms, known as caenorhabditis elegans, or C. elegans, to get a lab up and running.

Jameson has worked with C. elegans since the summer after her senior year of high school. As a minted molecular biologist and neuroscientist, surveying reactions to brain-changing chemicals just seemed to make sense.

She now serves as the lead technician in the neurotoxicology lab, where, aside from testing samples, she handles everyday operations like overseeing lab safety, training students and writing grants and research papers.

Though trials are well underway, the lab did not go off without a hitch. Jameson and Leung spent months waiting on supplies; when they arrived, stacks of boxes crowded the laboratory for weeks.

Then came the bureaucratic hoops necessary to secure the schedule I permit to store and test cannabis compounds.

Jameson and Leung needed to quadruple lock a fridge containing the substance and secure approval from the Drug Enforcement Agency, which sent two agents to give the lab the green light amid the cardboard-box chaos.

The two find it funny, though, that the THC compounds remain locked up in a magnetized, chained and bolted mini fridge while more dangerous compounds and chemicals sit in unlocked glass lab cabinets.

Now, Jameson spends hours in the lab testing, monitoring and timing different reactions. She’s also in the middle of interviewing for Ph.D. programs and prepping the lab to pass on to another technician.

“My legacy is in the students that keep the lab running after I’m gone,” Jameson said. She turned to Leung, “But you’re not allowed to change the labels that I have on all the drawers. My handwriting must live on in the lab.”

Parkinson’s patients

Thomas Cahill sits in his office, the shelves behind him set with plants, geodes and sun-bathed amethysts.

Cahill, an environmental chemist and associate professor at the school of Mathematical and Natural Sciences, is one of the researchers looking into the presence of contaminants in CBD and its potential risk to patients with Parkinson’s disease.

CBD, or cannabidiol, has taken on a generally positive reputation as it delivers the “therapeutic” properties of cannabis without the psychoactive presence of THC.

But researchers are increasingly concerned about the true scope of pesticides, metals, solvents and microbial contamination in CBD products, especially as it’s used to treat neurological disorders.

What’s most concerning to Cahill, Leung and their colleagues is the lack of data and information on the subject entirely.

“We know very little,” Cahill said. “And that’s worrisome.”

Collaborators on the project include Cahill, Leung, Daniel Peterson, an assistant professor at the College of Health Solutions, and Majia Nadesan, a professor at the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences.
The group is developing surveys to understand and study the scope of CBD usage among patients with Parkinson’s. Then, they hope to determine the levels of contaminants in CBD products and assess public perception of contaminants in cannabis and CBD.

Leung submitted a separate bid for another schedule I research permit in hopes that researchers can start testing contaminant levels themselves. In the interim, the team is outsourcing data from cannabis and hemp testing labs, though they feel it’s still not enough.

“There’s so much business and resources put into this,” Leung said. “But so little information comes out.”

Leung is also writing a grant to partner with the Mayo Clinic on the research, which will hopefully provide the project with more resources.

“There are ways we can mitigate hazard if we know about it,” Cahill said. “But the lack of knowledge is our main problem.”

Geospatial analysis

The map lights up red with bright yellow points freckled all over. Each fluorescent dot represents a hemp or cannabis growth location in the greater Phoenix area, the shades of red indicate levels of population density.

Cannabis sativa cultivation bloomed in Arizona in the last four years after the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, a piece of legislation which legalized the cultivation and production of hemp.

The plant also has properties capable of sequestering minerals and chemical pollutants from the environment. But, the emergence of industrial hemp can affect the chemical and environmental exposures in water, soil and food and can both positively and negatively affect human health.

Researchers at ASU are using geospatial analysis, a mapped out data visualization method, to derive assessments on socio-ecological implications of the emerging cannabis and hemp agriculture and market.

Amy Frazier, associate professor at the School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences, and Ken Sweat, principal lecturer at the School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences, are focusing on how density and distribution of hemp agriculture are driven by region-specific socio-ecological factors.

Madeline Meier, an associate professor in psychology, is looking into how dispensary locations in Arizona correlate to socio-economic factors and health outcomes on a local scale.

Leung is leading students in learning the ropes of geospatial analysis through analyzing cannabis sativa’s impact on the environment in a special topics lab, specifically looking at the potential application of industrial hemp in environmental remediation.

Students are tasked with creating their own geospatial analysis given environmental data. They are specifically looking at sites where selenium and arsenic are present.

Leung views geospatial analysis as an invaluable tool for communicating complex data. He said throwing a bunch of numbers at someone does not always relay the impacts in a concise and engaging way.

“You have to relate,” Leung said. “That’s the power of data visualization.”

The lab recently won the Presidential Graduate Assistantship grant under ASU’s LEFT initiative, a University program looking to support Black students, faculty and staff at ASU.

The Presidential Graduate Assistantship would financially support one Black trainee.
to pursue Ph.D. training in the environmental health impact of cannabis. The grant covers tuition, student health insurance and a 50% TA or RA position at the minimum rate of pay or higher each year.

Leung, once a first-generation student himself, sees the grant as a palpable way to support students. He also recognizes the ripple created by furthering research on cannabis with social equity in mind.

“Social equity is about empowering people,” Leung said. “Research and teaching has got to be a part of the conversation.”

*Photos by Kiera Riley, Microscope images courtesy of Laura Jameson.*
Best pho — Pho Avina
Hidden in the corner of a small food district on Thunderbird and 49th Streets, Pho Avina stands politely, knowing that without much advertising, we will saunter in anyway. Approximately a 10 minute walk from ASU West, it becomes a little too easy to slip into their stiff chairs and order yourself a soup that feels as if it’s half your body weight. The counter served space is never particularly loud, but your own cacophony of slurping noodles — or maybe tearing into their delectable eggrolls — will make up for it. The locale closes at 8 p.m. or 8:30 p.m. on the weekends, out of respect for our tummies that will need the extra few hours to digest before we hit the hay.

Best local art gallery — Art Hacker
If you find yourself needing to walk off the beaten path the next time you attend a First Friday in downtown Phoenix, making your way to the Art Hacker Gallery is well worth it. The sometimes gallery, sometimes studio of the local artist known as Art Hacker frequently features Phoenix’s young and upcoming creatives, from graphic designers and portrait photographers to self starter streetwear brands. The set of rooms that make up the gallery are large enough to accommodate multiple artists’ exhibitions, but not so big that the space doesn’t feel intimate. Art Hacker’s own work is eclectic and expressive, graffiti blasted over renaissance era paintings and sculptures half dipped in paint are dotted around the walls, but his ownership of the space never takes away from the other artists he hosts. Walking into the gallery is like being given a shot of creative juices, and you’ll leave with a feeling of having been a part of something new, fresh and exciting.

Best place to develop submechanophobia — Tempe Town Lake
Submechanophobia is the fear of submerged man-made objects. Some say it takes a special body of water to transform an average object into nightmare fuel. I say Tempe Town Lake has that wow factor. Perhaps it’s the water’s perfect level of murkiness, or the fact that at its deepest, it plunges down 19 feet. Or maybe it’s the 227 recovered dead bodies giving the lake its black magic. But whether you’re looking at a sunk swan boat, a spare shopping cart or a loose Bird scooter (or five), I’d be willing to bet a scuba diver’s eye’s view of the relics stashed away at the bottom of Tempe Town Lake could make even the strongest souls cower in fear.
Best vegan lunch — Cha Cha’s Tea Lounge

You’ve been working remotely at a coffee or tea shop and you notice it’s been five hours since your last meal. But you already paid for parking, so you end up ordering from the coffee shop, usually to end up more hungry with crumbs down your bra from a mediocre pastry. Cha Cha’s Tea Lounge breaks the stereotype with a full menu of vegan delights that actually sustain you. Despite a recent relocation, Cha Cha’s Tea Lounge is always filled with customers, studying at small tables with headphones in or perched on the Japanese style eating space. So don’t be shy, tear into their chickpea and arugula sandwich with zesty, citrusy notes on crunchy ciabatta bread. The crumbs in your bra will be worth it.

Best soggy produce — Tempe Farmers Market

If you’re looking to choose from a dozen brands of kombucha or craving a vegan deli meal, the Tempe Farmers Market is the spot for you. Located on the corner of Farmer Avenue and University Drive, this little store hugs the railroad tracks and offers some of the soggiest produce in town. However, it should be noted that their green onions are truly unmatched in size — and the employees won’t hesitate to let you know. If you’re not feeling peckish, the Market has a jungle of vintage goods, from olive glass ashtrays to leg lamps.

Best reading room — Wasted Ink Zine Distro + Palabras Bilingual Bookstore

Rainbow wings lead the way to Nurture House, the literary epicenter of Phoenix. A small sunroom juts out to meet the sky on Roosevelt Street and Ninth Avenue. Inside lives Wasted Ink Zine Distro, a zine library and store front housing four decades worth of independently published works of art, literature and other creative musings. Patrons can peruse the library, shop the latest zines and print pages of their own. And across the courtyard, Palabras Bilingual Bookstore boasts a wall-to-wall collection of books printed in Spanish and English. The smell of baked goods from Por Vida Bakery ushers you in and the comfy chairs scattered throughout makes you stay. The space is also home to two independent zine presses, Pachanga Press and Abalone Mountain Press, leaving visitors nowhere short of inspiration.

Best hangout place — Pemberton PHX

The eclectic collective of food, drinks, art, music and more produces an atmosphere perfect for a casual hangout or stop on a bar crawl. Pemberton PHX produces that atmosphere by blending different energies within its tight-yet-expansive space. You are greeted with a beaming ambiance in front of what used to be the house of Sarah Pemberton, the namesake of the venue. Trucks and other lights illuminate neon in the middle area to simulate your favorite nightclub. Walk toward the back and you will find a tunnel tailor made to liven even the drabbest Instagram feed and a courtyard quiet enough to get away from the noise on some days, and becomes the place to be for live music on others. While you will have to pay a vibe tax for the many great food and drink options, it is one worth paying to make a good time a great one.
BEHIND
The Screens

Amid Yik Yak’s recent resurgence, controversy continues on the ethics behind anonymous apps

by Savannah Dagupion and Kiera Riley
Illustrations by Bronson Soza
Tyler Bednar was a frequent user of Yik Yak. Until he got name-dropped.

Bednar, a freshman studying sports journalism, had just gotten back to his dorm room in Taylor Place when his friends sent a screenshot of a Yik Yak post calling Bednar and his friends out for being rambunctious in the 12th floor lounge.

Yik Yak is a social media platform where people send a post — or, "yak" — to be seen by everyone on the app within a five-mile radius. The appeal, to many, is Yik Yak’s complete anonymity. Without usernames or aliases, the newly revamped app has become a breeding ground for gossip and misinformation.

“Another user had commented saying that we’re irrelevant anyway, so who should care about us,” Bednar said.

Bednar said he used to check the app around 20 times a day and post semi-regularly. While he claimed his posts never said anything bad about others, Bednar admitted he often used the platform to exaggerate and post false claims simply to get upvotes.

And it seems he is not the only one. Yik Yak’s recent revival has brought online anonymity back into the spotlight, reigniting the debate on the ways anonymity shapes interactions and the spread of information across campuses.

**Looking back**

Anonymous apps and sites have been around since the late 90s and early 2000s, with 2channel, an anonymous Japanese text board, being one of the earliest examples.

In 2003, 4chan popularized online anonymity. 4chan is known as a hub for incubating memes formative to internet culture. But at the same time, 4chan has been noted as a hotbed for cyberbullying, disinformation and misinformation.

Posts on some sects of 4chan were often reactionary and addressed almost every -ism, which contributed to making the site one of the most controversial anonymous platforms to this day.

Online anonymity was evidently still sought after when developers created forums like Reddit, Secret, Whisper, Sarahah
"While the reworked version of the app has made efforts to foster a new environment — one of community, enjoyment and positivity — it’s hard to say if the attempts at moving away from the app’s sordid past have taken root."

and Fizz. Today, Yik Yak is a source of both positive and negative communication on campus.

The app launched on Nov. 6, 2013. On April 28, 2017, the company announced the app would be closing that week. Backlash arising from a slew of anonymous threats and hate messaging compromised its popularity, and investors didn’t see a reason to keep funding the project.

In less than four years, Yik Yak became the ninth most downloaded social media app and was wildly popular among high school and college students. However, the ability to post anonymously on the app spurred cyberbullying and death threats.

College and high school campuses across the nation have seen arrests and evacuations as a result of threats on the app for years.

Related issues happened in every “herd,” or five-mile community. The app received social retaliation and went offline for years. But on Aug. 16, 2021, the app announced its relaunch. According to TechCrunch, Square paid $1 million for Yik Yak engineers and rights to some of the company’s intellectual property in 2017 but provided no information about their involvement with the relaunch.

The revamped Yik Yak got rid of user-names and now provides “Stay Safe” and “Mental Health” resources to attempt to address issues the app faced in the past.

“Yaks” with five downvotes are removed from the feed so users can attempt to hold each other accountable for cyberbullying or inflammatory statements. “Play by the rules and you’re free to express yourself however you like,” reads an excerpt from Yik Yak’s mental health resources section of its site.

Yik Yak has taken the route of “essential-ly relying on the community to take control over the content that people are posting,” Liesel Sharabi, an assistant professor at the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, said. In an ideal world, the app would correct itself.

While the reworked version of the app has made efforts to foster a new environment — one of community, enjoyment and positivity — it’s hard to say if the attempts at moving away from the app’s sordid past have taken root.

“The Yak is back”

Despite the slight improvements, the same problems responsible for its negative reputation have resurfaced since the app’s resurgence.

In the 2021 fall semester — the first semester since the revamped Yik Yak app went live — rumors about an HIV outbreak on ASU’s campus originated on Yik Yak and spread across social media.

The rumor was eventually dispelled by ASU Health Services, but it brought attention to how quickly misinformation can spread, especially on a location-based app in an area filled with college students.

Within ASU’s Tempe campus “herd,” students in Greek Life often dominate conversation. In February, controversial conversation surrounding an alleged hate crime in the Greek Leadership Village took flight. Every minute, dozens of new posts flooded in. Users were quick to take sides, calling out two students by their full names with derogatory or supportive messages.

It makes sense that Yik Yak is so popular on college campuses; the app satisfies the curiosity we all have about the people around us, Sharabi said.

The app’s convenience and accessibility allows some in a certain campus “herd” to take up gossiping about their peers while others post from the heart. “Yaks” made around ASU’s campuses range from rants to jokes to confessions to snarky comments to outright harassment.

“It’s a gossip girl platform, a bunch of p----- behind a screen,” wrote one user responding to a “yak” asking for hot takes on Yik Yak.

Another user seemingly wanted to get some things off their chest: “1) Ghosting people after hooking up with them is such an odd concept. 2) Physical intimacy should be celebrated, not hidden. 3) Casual intimacy doesn’t detract from the beauty of emotional intimacy.”

Sharabi explained two avenues anonymous “yakkers” can take: One with positive effects, another with negative ones.

The online disinhibition effect is where people feel a lack of restraint when communicating online, often anonymously. This can lead to benign disinhibition, where us-
ers feel comfortable expressing their true self and getting online support from others.

But it can also lead to toxic disinhibition, where users feel free to say derogatory things they would never say to someone in person; they feel protected by anonymity, so they say things out of character which may be harmful to others.

Yik Yak users often zero in on particular people, with some full names popping up more than others.

Dominic Contini, a sports journalism major, is not on Yik Yak himself, but, by way of friends, has seen his full name attached to false and derogatory posts across the platform.

One user alleged Contini had sexually transmitted diseases, another speculated on his sexuality, while others called him names. Some users have posted his location before, which he said can be especially alarming when anyone within a five mile radius can access the app.

Contini said his Yik Yak notoriety often precedes him when he meets other students on campus and can strain relationships with his peers.

“They see my name with these negative comments,” Contini said. “They already have this preconceived notion of me that’s not true.”

**Staying anonymous**

Yik Yak’s website says it’s a space where “communities are free to be authentic, equal and empowered to connect with people nearby,” largely because of the platform’s innate anonymity.

Sharabi sees the potential benefits Yik Yak touts; without a connection to real-life identities, like on Facebook or Instagram, there’s no reason to compare. Detached from online self-images, users no longer need to “engage in these overly positive self-presentations,” she said.

But Sharabi still advises users to remember the real people behind the screens. If users pretend they are interacting with people they could meet face-to-face, it goes a long way toward correcting negative behaviors.

“Have fun with Yik Yak, but also be really careful and mindful of how what you say is affecting other people or could affect them,” she said. “Be responsible on Yik Yak.”
Four ASU artists discuss their work, lives and experiences

by Roxanne Banuelos

State Press Magazine spoke with some of ASU’s art students who share inspirations across mediums. With diverse backgrounds and distinct emotions, all of them reach within themselves to create works they hope will shape the world around them.

Jacey Coca, Philip Steverson, Everett Milloy and Bethany Jean Larson each discuss their backgrounds, inspirations and artistic processes and share their hope for the future of art.

Jacey Coca

Jacey Coca sits in her bedroom, talking about the time she joined a band in high school with a group of people she didn’t know.

“It was very uncomfortable,” Coca recalls, but she said it was the push she needed to get out of her comfort zone and into a creative mindset. She began to feel less guarded toward performing and sharing her creations with the world.

Coca, a senior studying photography, works with several mediums; singing, writing lyrics and drawing are all part of her creative process.

Coca also works with lumen prints, a process that involves creating images by setting objects on photo paper and exposing them to the sun.

For one of Coca’s recent projects, she took lumen prints of her whole body and stitched each piece of paper together with her own hair. The process involved sitting on photographic paper in the sun for up to an hour at a time, which left her sunburnt every time. She said the development changed her relationship with her current and previous work as she grappled with the reality that prints were harming and killing the subject being photographed.

“The images that come out are really pretty, but the process of putting myself as the subject matter is very violent,” Coca said. “I put a lot of emphasis on the process, a lot happens there. It’s just you and the medium. You can record it, but the viewers will never know how much time and effort it takes.”

Much of Coca’s work is centered around change, nostalgia and death. Creating art allows Coca to explore her thoughts in a safe space. While intrusive thoughts can be dangerous when trapped inside her head, putting them on the table and assessing them proves therapeutic for her.

“I make work to help me get through existing. I’m just exploring right now and trying to learn about myself through art,” Coca said. “There’s a relationship you build with the thing you’re working with, that’s between you and the work. Once I put it out, then the viewers can do whatever they want with it.”

Report

Photos by Zach Van Arsdale
Everett Milloy’s photography did not begin with the purest intentions. When he was in high school, a girl he had a crush on did photography, so he began pursuing the craft. “She’s married now,” he shrugged and laughed. While his attempts to capture the girl were unsuccessful, he discovered his love for capturing images.

Milloy, a junior studying photography who has been photographing for five years, said he experiences personal growth through his work as he aims to create more meaningful images. During his early years, Milloy recalls copying famous artists, like Richard Avedon, an American photographer known for his portraits of strong characters.

“A professor told me ‘there is no reason you should be even remotely photographing like him. You need to make work that stands out and doesn’t play into the past,’” he recalls. “There’s thousands of years ahead of us, especially with photography. You aren’t going to make a mark by copying someone who’s dead.”

As he weans off taking easy portraits of conventionally attractive people, he aims to capture more important societal messages. One series he worked on, titled “We All Talk About Leaving,” highlights the tale of Washburn, North Dakota, a dying town experiencing the effects of one of their largest employers, a coal plant, shutting down as the town switched to natural gas.

Another series, titled “Bare,” a series of portraits centered around the premise of shaving your head, was featured in Vanity Fair last year as one of their best spring art books.

“You have this loss of innocence where you hold so much identity within your hair, and as you shave it, you become a different self than what you used to be,” Milloy said, describing the project.

When Milloy shoots, he brings five or six cameras. Each photo, after the price of film, developing chemistry and scanning or printing, costs him on average about $5, forcing him to photograph with intention.

“A lot of my work has to do with this understanding of ephemerality. Like, ‘it’s gonna be great, but it’s gonna die soon.’ I want to capture a history as well as a looming departure,” Milloy said. He aims to create photos that are so “deeply, richly human that you just can’t help but gawk and share a feeling of pain and understanding with them.”

Taking skillful photos is not easy, and growing as a photographer calls for discipline and dedication. Milloy describes nights when he goes to the photo-lab, works until 2 a.m., falls asleep on the couch in the photo-finishing room, wakes up at 5 a.m. and keeps printing.

All in all, Milloy finds delight in photography. “It’s a gorgeous medium that we’ve had for such a small amount of time in human existence,” he said. “I’m more excited to see where this medium grows throughout my lifetime.”

Photos by Zach Van Arsdale
Philip Steverson

Philip Steverson began writing around the age of 10. His first love was poetry. Soon after, he began exploring sketching and later became enamored with fashion. Now, as a fashion design and creative writing student, Steverson describes how visual arts held a strong grip on his life over the past three years.

Steverson finds inspiration in all aspects of life and relishes in his process of gathering information, partially from research on the internet and partially through inspiration he finds from the common, and often mundane, images of everyday life.

“Inspiration hits randomly — I’ll be on my way to bed or just outside, it comes together like a puzzle,” Steverson said.

Steverson said he is adamantly against gatekeeping tips from other artists-to-be and describes his relationship with other artists as an ebb and flow of information and ideas.

“We elevate each other. I want everybody to know these things.” His biggest goal for his art is to simply inspire others to explore opportunities for creation themselves.

A self-proclaimed graduate of “Youtube University,” Steverson said the majority of what he knows about painting he’s taught himself. His work serves as a snapshot of his inner self, emotions and traumas.

One of his most recent pieces is a self-portrait of him squatting while he wears a memorial T-shirt for his mother who recently passed away. The piece mixes painting with textile art as he stitched elements of the piece into the canvas.

While the piece is adorned with charming roses and gold accents, a closer look at his face shows his red eyes filled with pain and exhaustion.

Steverson’s art has helped him find his voice to say the things he can’t. “I have trouble speaking about the traumas that I have in my life and the stigmas that hit me in the head every day,” Steverson said. “But if you don’t embrace your background, is your art really that genuine?”

Photos by NFN Sonkwaataroroks
Bethany Jean Larson is a multidisciplinary artist currently getting her master’s in fibers at ASU. She works extensively with quilting, creating designs by stitching scraps of fabric together into intricate patterns.

Larson pursued her undergraduate degree in Asian studies and studio art at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. During undergrad, she worked on large transient sculptures she would assemble at the beginning of the year and slowly dissolve by the end.

After graduating, Larson moved to Japan for six years. She soon began pulling from her upbringing in rural southeast Iowa, where quilting was a part of her childhood, and began working with textiles.

“It started when I found a bunch of quilt squares that my mother had started two years before I was born. She has since passed away, so I saw it as a conversation spanning 30 years,” Larson said. “Two years before I was born and six years after she passed away. I started making this big quilt out of the remnant fabric.”

Larson aims to explore the juxtaposition of craft and contemporary art, finding ways to combine the two through her work. She is also learning more about the rich history of quilting and craft art.

In the U.S., quilting began as a functional means of providing warmth, but as it evolved, it became an integral part of women’s history. While sewing was an extremely common art form in women’s lives, in the art world, it has been considered less notable and esteemed.

Through Larson’s exploration of craft art, she learned how much she enjoyed the actual process of creating, which helped her understand the roots of her passion for art.

“It is very satisfying when I’m working, to see nothing and slowly build something until you have a finished product. The progression — that alone is satisfying,” she said. Larson rarely has a set idea when she creates, adopting a go-with-the-flow approach.

“Some things just need to be material explorations,” Larson said. “I learn just as much from things that I’m not so happy about as I do with the things I am.”

Larson doesn’t usually aim to transmit a specific message through her work; rather she tries to create a space for her to work through her emotions. Through her art, Larson has found comfort in imperfection.

Larson hopes to help others reconsider the everyday objects surrounding them.

“Reconsider the quilts in your everyday lives,” she said. “It can be very special for someone to make you a quilt. It’s not some old fussy thing.”

Photos by Kevin Hurley
The classroom in Florence State Prison is sparse. Where a typical lecture hall might have multiple projectors and personal computers, ASU professor Nazila Brewer’s calculus course for incarcerated students is equipped with a whiteboard and a handful of textbooks.

“You’re not allowed to have a lot of types of technology in there. Some calculators aren’t even allowed.”

Brewer is a co-director of ASU’s Prison Education Programming (PEP). When she began volunteering in prisons in 2018, she quickly realized she would have to alter her typical teaching methods to the new environment.

Technology limitations, content censorship and administrative conflicts characterized her experience, but her students often seemed unphased, determined to learn under any conditions.

“Most of it is pen, paper, approved books and your mind,” she said. “It’s amazing some of the things they can calculate in their head where most students would be using their calculators.”

According to Brewer, the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADCCR) is “really particular” about which books are approved for educational purposes. Like most state correctional systems, ADCCR screens the literature brought inside prison walls, including the course materials educators can use.

But before instructors can begin to worry about resources and censorship, they have to overcome numerous and substantial structural barriers to incarcerated education. Over the past two decades, a small group of ASU volunteers have contributed to the prison education movement, pushing for more postsecondary education opportunities for incarcerated people.

Recently, the shock of COVID-19 has left many educators demoralized. But a handful have not given up, driven by a firm belief in the social benefits and moral imperative of education in prisons.

**Teaching behind bars**

ASU’s PEP places University instructors within prisons and gives some inmates the opportunity to take college-level courses while incarcerated.

PEP is run by volunteers, drawing from a blend of faculty, graduate and undergraduate students across various departments. English professor Joe Lockard has taught in Arizona prisons since 2009.

Lockard said new instructors typically have to adjust to the limited resources in prisons because they are accustomed to sophisticated technology in university classrooms. In most cases, outside devices are forbidden within prison classrooms.

“In prisons, you go back to the basics of teaching,” Lockard said. “There is no fancy equipment. You are reliant on whiteboards, at best, and your own wits and teaching personality. It makes us better teachers.”

Lauren Paxton, a senior psychology major who volunteers with ASU PEP, has taught courses in both men’s and women’s prisons and worked as a tutor at Adobe Mountain School, part of Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections.

Some of Paxton’s most significant pedagogical problems have stemmed from con-
Other instructors have found incarcerated teaching platforms with less censorship. The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, ASU’s second prison education initiative established in 2016 by criminal justice professor Kevin Wright, typically offers more flexibility and leniency.

Barrett professor Rachel Fedock’s award-winning “Men and Feminism” course is part of the Inside-Out Program. The course pairs ASU students with incarcerated students in the same classroom, where they read and discuss feminist theory and literature.

“It brings up challenging conversations,” Fedock said. “Sometimes both the inside students and the outside students struggle with those conversations.”

Lockard noted that prisons and correctional facilities are spatially unique sites for teaching as well. He recalls one ASU biology course where the 10 students were each confined to individual steel cages for the duration of the class. “How do you organize a classroom where all your students are in cages?” he asked.

“Teaching in prisons demands creativity, persistence and a strong awareness that we are guests,” Lockard said. “Other people control the environment.”
**Foundations of a movement**

The past three decades have been tumultuous for postsecondary education in American prisons.

In the early 1990s, there were over 700 college-in-prison programs in the U.S. In 1994, the Clinton administration’s crime bill banned incarcerated Americans from receiving Pell Grant aid, devastating college-in-prison funding. By 1997, only about eight such programs were left.

According to Lockard, these conditions are important for understanding the current landscape of prison education. He said the movement is entering a “renaissance phase.”

Lockard founded ASU’s prison education initiatives in 2009 when he began teaching English and literature in Florence State Prison. The next spring, he recruited more ASU graduate students to lead writing courses in the facility, and the Prison English project was born.

Over the following years, Lockard’s project grew to incorporate science and mathematics courses, bringing in student and faculty instructors from multiple departments. In 2015, it was renamed Prison Education Programming.

Paxton views education as essential to an effective rehabilitation process, especially for minors. She thinks ensuring incarcerated people have access to education can help end criminalized cycles of addiction and abuse.

The majority of Paxton’s students come from low-class backgrounds or foster care and have had limited educational opportunity. Lack of education is a major predictive factor in incarceration — around 64% of prisoners in the U.S. do not have a high school diploma.

A 2021 study found that education attainment is also a preventative factor for incarceration.

In Lockard’s view, providing quality education is one of the best means of addressing incarceration, but prison education is more than a statistical anti-crime strategy. Educational opportunities have been shown to have positive effects on inmates’ psyches and health.

“Our brains need to keep working to keep functioning wherever we are,” Lockard said. “People in prison want to learn.”

Despite the tumultuous ’90s, Lockard is optimistic about the future. He hopes postsecondary prison education can be bolstered by the Second Chance Pell experiment.

Implemented in 2015, the Second Chance Pell experiment has reversed the 1994 crime bill by allocating federal funding to 131 colleges and universities. It is set to expand to 200 schools across the nation by the 2022-23 academic year.

In Arizona, only Rio Salado College and Central Arizona College have been accepted to the program so far.

**Upheaval and uncertainty**

In the fall of 2019, ASU’s PEP was thriving like never before. Offering over 30 college-level courses, ranging from English and history to calculus and physics, the program was on track to continue expanding its reach and scope in correctional institutions across Arizona.

In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 changed that trajectory. When the pandemic hit Arizona’s prison system hard, ACDCR temporarily canceled ASU’s in-person course offerings entirely.

ACDVR data indicate a lower percentage of people incarcerated in Arizona take part in inmate education programs than before COVID-19. About 15% of inmates participated in education programs in Feb 2020; only about 10% were participants in Feb 2022.

Lockard, Brewer, Paxton and many more prison educators have been unable to return to teaching with PEP since the onset of the pandemic.

According to Brewer, the ACDVR chose to prioritize accredited GED programs over ASU PEP courses in the aftermath of COVID-19 lockdowns, effectively abandoning prisoners who were seeking higher education opportunities in the process.

“They’ve just been kind of left in the lurch,” she said.

Multiple individuals declined to be interviewed about the current state of ASU PEP, citing concerns with the program’s stability and potential risks to job security. One former volunteer who consented to an anonymous interview expressed frustration with ASU’s administration, alleging a lack of institutional support for PEP.

ACDVR media relations did not respond to interview requests at time of publication.

As of spring 2022, only one PEP program has returned to Arizona prisons: a general, semester-long biology course led by PEP co-director Tsafrir Mor and graduate student Christopher Albin-Brooks.

Originally, ASU PEP classes had a GED or high school diploma requirement, but the ACDVR education administration wanted to expand the courses’ availability. The biology program obliged — their course is now open to non-GED students as well.

According to Brewer, both prisoners and corrections administrators tend to show less interest in programs like ASU PEP when they don’t offer actual college credit. She sees course accreditation as a key factor in the success and longevity of postsecondary prison education.

Accredited postsecondary education programs in prisons have demonstrated unparalleled success in reducing recidivism rates in recent years.

Incarcerated people who participate in postsecondary education programs are 28% less likely to recidivate than those who do not and have 12% higher odds of post-release employment.

Albin-Brooks said he is not aware of any plans for ASU to accredit its prison education programs but thinks it would be “a good move going forward.” He feels the level of rigor in his course is high, and likened it to a non-major biology class at ASU.

“I don’t see how it’s any different from a college course really,” he said.

Overall, Albin-Brooks wishes there were more time and money invested in prison education. In his view, it’s not just a question of policy but a social imperative: educational opportunities are a necessity if prisons are to serve any rehabilitative function.

“Providing tools that can help (incarcerated people) have an easier time getting back into society is great,” he said. “Education seems to be a tool that works really well when given the resources and time it needs.”
State Press Magazine has seen unflinching reporting, relentless editing and imaginative art and design the entire school year. It has been my greatest pleasure to see it all come together and oversee a team of the most talented people I’ve come to love.

When I was gifted a green spiral notebook at 11 years old and began writing what would be the first of many personal journals, I would have never envisioned I would someday become the Editor-in-Chief of my college magazine. As a Mexican immigrant, getting to college seemed like the end goal. Once I was here, breathless and wonderstruck, Joseph Perez, a dear friend of mine, signed me up for the college newspaper. The State Press taught me what it means to be a reporter. And in turn, I spent all my time in that college basement.

But I was never alone. During this past year with State Press Magazine, I witnessed Roxanne Banuelos find and weave her voice into the pages of the magazine. I was awestruck at Alexis Moulton’s and Camila Pedrosa’s unabated pursuit of the truth in every report they turned in. I was able to experience Savannah Dagupion take up community-oriented journalism as a first-semester freshman while Jiyun Lee shared vulnerable perspectives as an international student. Aidan Gamiz increased accessibility in translating stories into Spanish with Brenda Muñoz Murguía’s diligent oversight. Hyeon Jung Yun, Bronson Soza and Sara Windom allowed the magazine to infiltrate their creative minds and soak up beautiful imagery to accompany its pages, while Ruby Moley made sense of our chaos and laid it all before us ever so elegantly.

I would like to offer a special thank you to spm’s managing editors Sam Ellefson and Kiera Riley, who poured their hearts into every story that went into print. Thank you to all of The State Press leadership team for offering help in dire times, and to Nick Devor, for becoming State Press’s creative visionary under the guise of a social media editor. I watched, not only this magazine’s staff, but The State Press as a whole, work harder than ever with guarded optimism and curiosity. I thank every single person who has ever stepped foot in the State Press Magazine’s room.

Thank you to our audience for providing us with accountability and readership. I hope you feel yourself reflected in these pages. I hope this microcosm of American journalism ripples into the change its community needs. I will always hold it close.

Kindly,

Itzia Crespo
Editor-in-Chief
State Press Magazine
Gateway at Tempe Apartments are an easy walk to Arizona State University (ASU) and minutes drive to nearby Maricopa (MCC) and Scottsdale (SCC) community colleges, and offer students high-end features and A-List amenities at a great price. Our off-campus, student apartments feature furniture packages, washers and dryers, private bedrooms and bathrooms. Entertain your friends in the social backdrop of our resort-style pool, grilling areas, fitness center, game room and much more!

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Effective November 2, 2021, Creighton University Health Sciences Campus – Phoenix has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), 3030 Potomac Ave., Suite 100, Alexandria, Virginia 22305-3085; phone: 703.706.3245; email: accreditation@apta.org. If needing to contact the program/institution directly, please call 602.812.3131 or email jameslynskey@creighton.edu. Candidate for Accreditation is an accreditation status of affiliation with the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education that indicates the program may matriculate students in technical/professional courses. Achievement of Candidate for Accreditation status does not assure that the program will be granted Initial Accreditation.

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