The Development Issue
crossword answers

1. currency
2. fourteen
3. nostalgia
4. wildfire
5. developer
6. studying
7. censorship
8. center
9. Granola
10. Indigenous
11. OpenAI
12. semester
13. second
14. division
This is ASU, No. 1 in innovation and No. 2 in lying about how sustainable it is, behind the Environmental Protection Agency. It's a university I attend — on occasion — and chances are you do too in some capacity, unless you are hate-reading this magazine from The Daily Wildcat’s newsroom. In which case, get inspired.

This is the remarkable story about how ASU transformed society and became an oasis of culture and civility. It’s a journey that’s taken me years and hundreds in embezzled funds to write, and it starts at the Nipple of Knowledge.

**ASU, a history**

They say the Nipple was placed where ASU’s (sort of) founder, John Samuel Armstrong, was abandoned and raised by a she-coyote. Like when Romulus got the brilliant idea to build Rome and fill it with pasty marble columns, Armstrong was inspired by Tempe’s stolen land and dust-filled skies to start building ASU’s predecessor, the Territorial Normal School, with his bare hands. A feat only the most clinically depressed architecture student could accomplish today.

When asked about the many similarities between the Roman Empire and ASU, one professor in the history department said, “If we suppose that University President Michael Crow were to be an emperor, you could say he is quite good at providing students ‘bread and circuses.’ With the free concerts and easy access to dining-hall tater tots the University offers, I think he keeps the students just happy and entertained enough to prevent riots.

“Also, the fact that tortillas are banned from Mountain America Stadium because students used to throw them at opposing teams, I think, is very reminiscent of gladiator culture.”

Remember — we’re all just plebs in Crow’s world.

Not long after the Territorial Normal School’s founding, President Teddy Roosevelt blessed the steps of Old Main with his Bull-Moose energy, saying, “It’s a pleasure to see such buildings, and it is an omen of good augury for the future of Arizona that a premium is being put upon the best type of educational work. Moreover, I have a special feeling for this institution, for seven of the men in my regiment came from it.”

Of course, he couldn’t have known that the future of the school was 20-year-olds bathing and urinating in the fountain at his feet. Or maybe he did, and it was his men who were the first to do so. We may never know.

(For those wondering, the definition of augury isn’t worth looking up. You’ll just be more confused.)

Over the years, the school suffered several identity crises. No one could agree on a name — the school’s title cycled from the Territorial Normal School to the Arizona State Teachers College to the Arizona State College — until 1958, when “Arizona State University” became the official name after students marched around with signs because, naturally, that’s what needed protesting in the ’50s.

“They marched to remove the word ‘teacher’ from the school’s name,” a professor at the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College said. “At that point in time, the engineering college and other budding STEM programs had been added, and those students didn’t want anyone to think that they were teachers.”

What we should take away from this is that men in STEM have always been insufferable and there’s a reason not a single engineering teacher has more than three stars on
In 2005, in between learning to run and to use a spoon, I was wrapped up in the news of ASU announcing its fourth campus in downtown Phoenix. Naturally, my thoughts were along the lines of “Is this necessary?” What's going to happen to affordable housing? What will happen to the people experiencing homelessness downtown when the area becomes gentrified? I was quite advanced for a 2-year-old.

But all seriousness aside, even before President Crow came into power in 2002, ASU was on a mission to conquer the state. And now, ASU is on track to spread our dry-campus customs not only to the rest of the country, but to the entire globe. “It's projected that by the year 2036, 1 in 10 people globally will know who Sparky is and have an opinion on whether or not his mustache is creepy,” a source in the athletics department said.

On campus

Most people don’t know this, but ASU is actually home to a working torture chamber and death ray.
The torture chamber, officially known as Mountain America Stadium, roasts fans and players alive. The design actually came from one of Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks, where he proved that a stadium with an open roof in the middle of a desert mixed with students consuming mass amounts of alcohol can and does lead to near-death experiences.

Beneath the stadium is where Emperor Crow keeps the Division I athletes in cryotherapy chambers, only to be brought out for training, games and the occasional finance exam. Think about it: Have you ever seen a student-athlete walking around in the wild? The more you know.

As for the death ray, it's in the basement of the Biodesign Institute, and that's all I'm at liberty to say.

If you keep walking east from the death ray's general vicinity and manage not to get run over while crossing Rural Road, you'll eventually hit the Greek Leadership Village, a 33,000 square foot palace of sobriety and ASU's crowning glory.

By building one structure that displaced hundreds of revelers and miscreants throughout Tempe in
their prime, the University was able to catapult itself to a new level of respectability. So much so that media coverage and popular culture references cover ASU’s work to save coral reefs only and no longer mention diseases that used to infect its students.

“Essentially, the University had several marketing experts and scientists come in to address ASU’s brand image and found that all problem areas led back to fraternity brothers running around with paddles on Wednesdays at 7 a.m.,” an ASU brand ambassador said. “But instead of completely exterminating and ushering them off campus entirely, we thought it was best to corral them into overpriced communal housing. It was all very civilized.”

If you follow the excised fraternity brothers or hordes of sorority girls wearing slight variations of the same outfit, you’ll eventually make it to Mill Avenue, a bustling bazaar that has everything from mediocre sports bars to a taco place that sells literal croutons in a tortilla.

At some point, you will be led into the welcoming, if sweaty, embrace of C.A.S.A. When mentioned in conversation, you might think C.A.S.A. is an adorable Hispanic grandmother’s home, complete with plastic wrapped furniture. But it’s actually where blackout-drunk 21-year-olds are carried out by burly bar bouncers on any given night and where 35-year-olds go to relive their college glory days, making the sea of 2000s babies very uncomfortable.

It’s here where you’ll first notice a glitch in the carefully constructed matrix ASU has spent years working on and thousands of dollars in embezzled funds to build.

Back when the COVID-19 pandemic was ending the world, ASU saw it as an opportunity to implement maximum innovation and launch Zoom university, the start of a dark path.

Over the past four years, ASU has been hurtling toward and pushing for technological singularity faster than the rest of the world. For those who aren’t chronically online sifting through Reddit posts, technological singularity, or simply, singularity, is a hypothetical future point at which technological growth becomes uncontrollable and irreversible, resulting in unforeseeable consequences for human civilization.

Scary stuff.

By partnering with OpenAI, offering more online degrees and using virtual reality in classrooms, ASU has already achieved this. That’s right: We are living in a simulation.

That means you can blame AI when you have to tell your parents you failed your Sociology 101 class — again.

The good news is somewhere between your second and fifth bucket at C.A.S.A. and after you’ve met your fifth Kaitlin of the night, you will realize this supposed “reality” is all a lie — only to forget it five minutes later.

So let me remind you. Everything is a carefully constructed lie, including this article.
For many women, returning to girlhood isn’t just a trend. It’s an unanticipated liberation.

by Leah Mesquita
Illustrations by Andrea Ramirez
My 20th birthday brought many changes — some expected and others unwelcome. When you're born two days before Christmas, there's always a lingering tension in the air as your family packs every long-standing holiday tradition into 48 hours — and crams your birthday on top of it all. But every year, I yearned for the tension to come around because that meant it was my birthday. I can recall the excitement, the restlessness and the eagerness I always felt to put another year behind me and continue growing up — except when I turned 20 last December.

For the first time, I wasn't happy about getting older. Don't get me wrong — I'm fully aware 20 is not considered old and in hindsight, it seems ridiculous to complain about it, but it's not the age itself that bothers me. It's the unwarranted shift that inexplicably follows once a girl turns 20. Because once she's 20, she's a woman.

You see, girlhood is over for me. I am now in the beginning stages of what everyone calls “womanhood,” an unpredictable experience that will supposedly grant me the wealth of opportunities girlhood lacked, like childbirth, pap smears and menopause.

But now that I'm a “woman,” I look in the mirror and wonder how society could expect me to part with my teenage years so suddenly. Although I now have more agency over my life than I did in the past, being a teenage girl comes with a unique sort of freedom that womanhood lacks — because you are just that: a girl. A girl whose identity is perfectly packaged by the media, whose stories are told and retold on her own behalf. A girl whose identity can be molded like air-dry clay, whose shape can be changed however others please. A girl who can learn from her mistakes before they become regrets.

My body will never be as tight, and my skin will never be as smooth as it was at 15. Give me a few more years, and men will soon regard me with disgust and discard me as overused. Fewer and fewer books will be written about the defining challenges I endured in my so-called “prime,” and one day, I will donate all my miniskirts to Goodwill.

But I'm not ready to part with the hallmark events that defined my girlhood. I know there's so much I have to learn and unlearn; so many people I have to meet who will destroy or revolutionize my life. Despite the lifetime of possibilities that womanhood brings, I still want to gossip, shop and fight with my mom. I want drama. I want uncertainty. I shouldn't be expected to have a plan. Because I'm still just a girl.

**Girls will be girls**

Like many young women my age, I've become accustomed to a special “girl” lingo that has infiltrated my everyday speech. For instance, when I go to the kitchen and grab a cheese stick, three grapes, a slice of turkey and exactly six dark-chocolate almonds at 7 p.m., it's no longer a snack, but rather, an entire “girl dinner.”

When I pay for my coffee in cash, it doesn't affect my financial well-being because, according to “girl math,” spending cash doesn't impact my bank account. “Girl's girl,” “clean girl,” “cool girl” and even “girly girl” are all different gendered terms to categorize our
revived these buried girlish roots.

My closet is splashed with shades of pink. Instead of Barbies, I now spend my money on Sonny Angel figurines and Sanrio trinkets while a growing collection of Squishmallow plushies inhabits my bed at all times. And I’m not alone — why is this wave so poignant among young women in today’s society?

“‘Inadequacy’ is probably the best word for how people feel about feminism right now,” Kilby said. “It feels kind of out of touch for a lot of people, especially after we’ve seen the capitalization of it and the marketing of it and so many branches kind of pushing this idea.”

Kilby believes that these feelings of regression have stemmed from women’s realization of the value in “choice feminism” — the popular belief that any choice a woman makes is inherently feminist. Essentially, rather than only striving for powerful, traditionally male-dominated roles, many feminist young women are taking pride in buying tchotchkes, indulging

personalities, although the singularity of the female sex remains the most defining characteristic.

“I think right now, we’re seeing a very big backlash against modern-day feminism,” said Raenna Kilby, a graduate student studying psychology. “I can definitely see this feeling in modern feminism where there’s a kind of pressure to be super successful (as a woman). You have to desire to be a CEO, and you have to desire to be the same as a man, rather than be equal and have equal opportunities and desires and passions that are respected.”

The resurgence of girlhood undercuts the traditional societal pressure on women to utilize the agency gifted to us by older feminists, but the catalyst behind the shift remains a mystery. I am no stranger to these changes either — while I often say now that I’m “just a girl,” I can remember a time when I too rejected stereotypical aspects of femininity.

There was the usual love-hate relationship with the color pink, the monumental discarding of my Barbie dolls and the purging of my beloved stuffed animals. But now, at 20, I’ve
in pink and cultivating stuffed-animal collections.

“A lot of women are kind of rejecting this idea that womanhood means that they have to be a man,” Kilby said. “They (reject) having to have knowledge on mechanics. They (reject) having to emulate certain confidence and goals they just don’t want to do or don’t feel a calling towards.”

While the “just a girl” trend might serve as a counterproductive way to cultivate feminist awareness online, the deceptively simple “girl” trends have been criticized for infantilizing and trivializing womanhood.

“I think this trend kind of originated as a pun to get back at the whole ‘Boys will be boys’ phrase,” Kilby said. “Whereas women are now using ‘I’m just a girl’ as a way of shifting responsibility in a similar way, blaming these kinds of societal roles and expectations as a reason for their lack of knowledge or skills, rather than something intrinsically inadequate about themselves or about women in general.”

**Navigating girlhood as a woman**

Maybe I’m a contributor in this ongoing regressive shift. Maybe I’ve taken comfort in the seemingly helpless role that this trend of “just being a girl” justifies. Maybe I do want to stave off adulthood.

But it’s not responsibility that frightens me. I live on my own. I can properly dice an onion and parallel park, even on a Saturday night in downtown Phoenix. I understand tax forms. I’ve traveled to new cities alone, and I am never late to long-standing appointments.

But past all my maturity, carefully constructed walls and thick layers of skin lies the girl who’s always lived inside me. She holds my earliest memories, hopes and wildest dreams in the palms of her hands. She comes
out as I drive through neighborhoods we once resided in, smiling wistfully as each familiar landmark flies by. Forever pure and unbothered, she reminds me of simplicity, of a time before 20. She must be nurtured, loved and protected at all costs because she's all I have left. I'm not ready to let her go.

"I think for women and men, wanting to hang on to elements of your childhood is understandable," said Aviva Dove-Viebahn, an assistant professor in the film and media studies program. "Your 20s can be a particularly fraught time because suddenly, you're being asked to be a responsible adult (when) you don't feel like a responsible adult."

Dove-Viebahn, who previously taught a course on women, power and media, said the "just a girl" trend is ultimately about shirking responsibility. Because everyday life is naturally plagued by chaos, many young women could be turning to girlhood as a coping mechanism for the natural chaos of everyday life.

"On an individual level, it makes sense that women or anyone really would have these feelings, right?" she said. "(They think) the world is too much. It's too crazy. 'I don't wanna have to deal with it, so I'm just a girl and I don't want to have to think about these things.'"

Although the trend presents itself as silly and unserious on the surface, Dove-Viebahn said girls should be wary of its possible repercussions.

"Once that starts to filter broadly into popular culture and starts to become an assumption that young women are still girls and are more irresponsible, that's when it starts to become a problem," she said. "That's when we start to get problematic backlash."

But some men have already started to mark their territory in the female-dominated, "just a girl" corner of the internet by mocking our complicated and ever-evolving relationship with girlhood.

You are allowed to disagree. You are free to hate the color pink, criticize us when we drive poorly and laugh as we justify our purchases through irrational loopholes. But please, do not belittle our precious identities just because you do not understand them.

Let us keep the girls inside of us alive because without them, we may never properly grow up.

They are not yours for the taking.
Toby and I have been best friends for as long as I can remember. We both liked sea creatures. It’s funny how simple friendship can be when you’re young. All you had to say was “You’re my best friend now,” and just like that, you were best friends.

The problem is Toby wasn’t your typical best friend — he wasn’t someone whom you could play tag on the playground or trade your lunch with. Toby was a little green turtle stuffed with sand.

We went everywhere together. We wore matching outfits I handmade, I talked to him incessantly, and I planned his wedding to another little sandbag turtle — typical kid things, until you remembered he wasn’t real. I didn’t feel comfortable outside without him, which is something that should have troubled my parents. But they chalked it up to an overactive imagination, and to be fair, I definitely had that too.

I’ve always had a very difficult time socially. Up until I was 7, I interacted with adults only. They seemed to like me. They called me precocious. Wise beyond my years. A 30-year-old trapped in a little girl’s body. Any other way to describe a socially incapable child without uttering the word “autistic.” And, God, how I wished they just would’ve said it.

**Recipe for disaster**

The first time I consistently attended school was in the third grade. I never cared for it, so before then, my unconventional parents didn’t make me go. Looking back, that couldn’t have been healthy for my social development.

When I finally did go to school, I was a strange little kid. It turns out other kids didn’t really like 30-year-olds trapped in little girls’ bodies. They liked kids who didn’t demand eye contact. Kids who didn’t fidget constantly or have meltdowns. Kids who didn’t carry around a little green sandbag turtle everywhere they went. If I were neurotypical, I probably wouldn’t have liked me either.

I was many things, but most of all, I was self-aware. I started to recognize that I was on the fringe of social normality, and for some reason, this revelation made me shut down.

So when I started fourth grade, I just stopped talking at school. Nobody could figure out why. I don’t think I
even knew why, but perhaps it was because I couldn't handle what people would say if they knew who I really was. I was particular. Emotionally unstable. Socially awkward. Too mature for my age. And yet, too immature in other ways. A complete recipe for disaster friendship wise.

To encourage me to talk, my school gave me a “spirit award” — a meaningless participation certificate that would hopefully fix my lack of social skills. It didn't work.

The school’s next move was to assign me a friend. I probably should have seen through this, but honestly, I was happy to just have any kind of friend, even if they were essentially being paid off. Slowly, my dependency on Toby faded away.

It was through this forced friendship that I finally started to open up, and when I did, I realized something crucial: I was funny. Where I didn't fit in, I carved out this niche for myself: the neurotypical’s jester.

The mask

By the time I got to middle school, I started to mask. I left the authentic version of myself at home and traded it for a perfect neurotypical girl every time I went out. For the neurotypical readers, masking is a strategy employed by some people with autism in which they suppress their neurodivergent traits in an attempt to blend in — and I was becoming an expert.

I learned to stop flapping my arms and quoting television shows. I no longer carried a little sandbag turtle with me everywhere.

Instead, I tried to make new best friends. Unfortunately, I was largely unsuccessful, and whenever I did succeed, I built friendships based on lies. Inevitably, they all crashed and burned.

I didn't know how to relate to kids my age, so I adopted my friends’ personalities and interests. They liked Justin Bieber, so I liked Justin Bieber.
They liked to draw, so I liked to draw. Their opinions became my opinions until there was nothing left of me. I had hidden myself away, a sacrifice that felt worthy just to stop eating lunch alone in the bathroom.

I've never had a firm grasp on what's considered “normal” socially. Some might say this makes me “unique” or “quirky,” but really, all it did was make my life a living hell. In the seventh grade, I trimmed my hair into an ugly little pixie cut just for a change. All I got for it was social isolation. My gym teacher interpreted my haircut as a sign that I was coming out, so she stood me up in the middle of class and had my peers clap for me.

She may have been right, but it was torturous nonetheless.

Up to that point in my life, my friendships had been intense. After I'd adopted a whole new self out of my insatiable craving for connection, there was nowhere to go but down.

In seventh grade, Alice was my best friend. I met her in the lunch line. She noticed the Twenty One Pilots pin on my lanyard, and from there, I just followed her around. That's how I made most of my friends in life. We would bond over something, and then I would just never leave.

But Alice didn't like me very much. She didn't like that I liked whatever she liked. She didn't like how much I liked her. She especially didn't like it when I took off my mask. I wanted to be cool like her, but I was a baby gay with undiagnosed autism — not exactly the coolest kid on the block.

It’s difficult to tell the story of our failed friendship. What was holding me back from deepening our friendship was not only my stunted social skills, but also my queerness. Our friendship ended because I was in love with her, on top of my lack of social skills. The ultimate gay panic.

So in eighth grade, I dropped out of school.

**An emotional tether**

After a year off, I rejoined the public school system for high school. It was around this time that I met my new best friend. His name was Gil. He didn't talk much, but he was my best friend all the same.

He was also my dog.

I know it sounds cliche. “My dog is my best friend,” says everyone ever. But Gil truly is mine. Friendships have always worked best for me when only one of us could speak. He's the only one in the world who doesn't judge me when I have meltdowns, nor does he find me too clingy or think I'm too weird.

I didn't know this when I met him, but he would become a support animal for my myriad of mental illnesses and would change my life forever in the best way imaginable. Through every failed friendship, I always had Gil. At the very least, he was a little closer to a human friend than Toby, who had long been buried in the back of my closet — hidden, but never forgotten.

Having autism made it difficult to understand what my boundaries were, so in high school, I had none. Someone would show me an ounce of kindness,
“I had hidden myself away, a sacrifice that felt worthy just to stop eating lunch alone in the bathroom.”
and I would spill my guts right then and there. I never realized sharing all your secrets was a bad idea; I just wanted a connection. But people used it against me.

How could they help it? It’s human nature to hurt the ones you love. Especially when they give you every weakness they have.

Because of this, I ended up in very unhealthy friendships. When a friendship is solely based on shared trauma, it’s easy for things to go south. I became multiple people’s only reason to live — or at least, that’s what they told me. Very quickly, I learned being someone’s only tether to reality is exhausting.

The worst part is by that point, I had made true friends. I had finally found people who loved and accepted me through the good and the bad, but I was too stupid to appreciate them. Instead, I wasted time on the people who only wanted to control me. I couldn’t recognize who my real friends were, and I’m ashamed to admit I didn’t see it for so long.

**Clarity**

By the end of my senior year, I realized for the first time who really mattered in my life, and I felt hopeful for the future. College could be my chance to break this vicious cycle, which I still didn’t know the root cause of at this point.

But when I got to ASU, I became people’s plaything once again. Slipping into the role of the jester was practiced, comfortable, familiar — something I was too accustomed to. I was the strangest thing my freshman-year dorm neighbors had ever seen, so as always, I was treated like a pet.

I was baffled. How had I let this happen again? Why couldn’t I just make friends like a normal person?

Then, something shifted. I started to make a few true friends at ASU, and one of them happened to be neurodivergent, just like me — even though I was still undiagnosed. My friend pointed out that many of my behaviors were traits of autism and encouraged me to look into what that would mean.

So I began my journey of realizing I have autism. It started like most things do — online quizzes and obsessive reading — until I spiraled down a deep rabbit hole that caused me to question every moment of my life.

Later that year, I was diagnosed with autism. And in an instant, I forgave myself — for everything. Before I considered the possibility that I was neurodivergent, I was convinced that I was just out of my mind, that I was the only person in the world who struggled so much with making friends for no possible reason. For 18 years, I had hated myself. And then in an instant, compassion for my younger self flooded
through me. I finally forgave myself for all my weird tics and habits. I finally understood why my earliest best friend was a little green sandbag turtle.

This isn't to say that being diagnosed with autism is the only path to achieving this clarity. I understand people experience different obstacles in the health care system, especially regarding mental health concerns. I was simply privileged enough to be able to get diagnosed.

But for me, I think I needed the external validation my diagnosis provided. I spent my whole life invalidating myself, and it was life-changing to have someone look me in the eyes and affirm what I suspected — that I just had autism. Everything suddenly clicked into place, and I could think clearly for the first time.

After years of feeling unlovable, I'm proud to say I love my friends and they love me. But most importantly, I love myself.
Do you lie awake at night worrying about the future of your college experience? Are you feeling lost in the world of innovation? Look no further! The Game of Life: ASU Edition has just made “getting a life” much easier. Spin the wheel (pull up a 10-sided spinner or some dice on Google) and let the numbers decide whether you’ll enroll in Barrett, the Honors College, join Greek life or break your ankle on an electric scooter.
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Attend ASU (through Barrett program) You save $1000!

You overslept class! :(

Free ice cream!

You enrolled in that class you needed

The Barrett sign got stolen. Again.

Disneyland trip with your dreamsfor your thesis!

The speaker visited Barrett for a Q&A

Free M&G!

You nailed your thesis defense! Congrats!

Your group members didn’t do their part of the project

ASU shuttle breaks down

Get overcharged for drinks on your 21st

You forgot to register for graduation!

You received a scholarship from ASU!

You made a new friend in class!

You got posted on Tempe Barstool

A celebrity speaker visited Barrett for a Q&A

You got heatstroke on the first day of summer in Arizona. Bummer.

It’s pay day! Spend your money at the P.O.D. market

Get overcharged for drinks on your 21st

You’ve got a bad case of senioritis

You aced your finals!

Graduation
Best of ASU: Parking lot edition

You may be thinking, “Who would want to read a ‘best of’ list about parking lots?” To that I say, shut the hell up! This is Arizona — our main attraction is parking lots! How else are we supposed to maintain our glorious reputation as an urban heat island? Don't underestimate the grand and glorious world of ASU and ASU-adjacent parking lots.

Think about it: You spend so much time in them, regardless of whether you even own a car. Sometimes, it feels like ASU campuses are 75% asphalt, especially when you’re walking to class and feeling the 110-degree heat searing your skin.

As a public service, I decided to definitively rank the best parking lots on or near the ASU campuses because cars are king of the concrete jungle, and you’ll inevitably walk across 25 of them to reach a dorm party on the other side of the Tempe campus anyway.

Best parking lot to be violently ill in: Raising Cane's on Rural Road and University Drive in Tempe

Let’s start on a high note. This Cane’s is in a prime spot for ASU students who are craving chicken fingers and Texas toast during the late hours of Friday and Saturday nights — foods that are made for blackout-drunk students to devour in 35 seconds after not eating for seven hours straight. Unfortunately, greasy chicken mixed with all the vodka cranberry C.A.S.A. buckets in your stomach is a recipe for disaster. Pro tip: At least try vomiting behind the “Raising Cane’s” sign in the parking lot before entering your Uber home. The Uber cleaning fee can get up to nearly $200, and I know you don’t have that kind of money lying around after a night out on Mill and two Box Combos.

Best parking lot to stare at while slowly cooking in 120-degree weather: Gammage parking lot

Waiting for the ASU shuttle should be a punishment in the seventh circle of hell. No matter what the weather’s like on any given day, the area around the Tempe campus’s shuttle stop is always 98 degrees. To top it off, it’s filled with hordes of sweaty students getting eaten alive by mosquitoes, and everyone else is just as pissed off as you are. The only way to grasp onto your last sliver of sanity is by staring out at the vast Gammage parking lot across the street. Spice up your wait by seeing if you can spot a giant Broadway poster with white people grinning widely at you. Even better, try judging everyone’s shitty parking jobs. Sometimes, people actually get in their cars and drive! I’m so excited for them that I occasionally feel the need to get up from lying on the concrete in a fetal position to cheer.
**Best parking lot to “hang out”:** Chase Tower Garage

This is the best place off the Downtown campus to engage in totally school-sanctioned activities! University President Michael Crow would be so proud. Please don’t look into any cars parked off in a corner. They are NOT fogging up, and there are NO handprints on the windows. That would be preposterous! Also, there’s no reason why this garage smells like cigarette smoke and the shittiest weed on the planet! Why would you even think that? You’re crazy. This is absolutely not the prime spot for freshmen to congregate in the late hours of the night. No, of course I’m not lying. Do I look like someone who would gaslight you? What are you talking about? Chase Tower Garage doesn’t even exist in the first place…

**Best parking lot to reevaluate your life in:** Roosevelt Point’s parking garage in downtown Phoenix

If you attend the Downtown Phoenix campus, you for sure know someone who lives in this rathole lovely residential complex. Not only is it the go-to apartment for students on the Downtown campus due to its concrete-core aesthetic, prisonlike dormlike appearance and the constant sound of people screaming through the halls, but it also houses the go-to parking lot to have an existential crisis while sitting in a car talking about nothing — and everything — until 3 a.m. If you’re feeling edgy, feel free to discuss deeply rooted childhood trauma on the top floor in the rain while smoking a drunk cigarette. Your secrets are safe here between you, God and the rats.

**Best parking lot to realize that life is worth living:** Parking lot behind Songbird Coffee & Tea House in downtown Phoenix

Let me paint you a picture. A cute little coffee shop housed in a white cottage with spring-green accents. A chair swing attached to the porch. Gorgeous flowers. A bunch of queer baristas making your coffee. A black cat roaming the parking lot in the back who happens to be the shop mascot and often sneaks inside to sleep on the couch. This is the beautiful sight you’ll behold from Songbird’s parking lot. Surrounded by the concrete jungle of downtown Phoenix, this place seems like an oasis in the deep desert (actually, it kind of is if you think about it). No matter how much those B-session classes make you want to drive into Tempe Town Lake to never be seen again, seeing that little cat sitting on a car while lightly sniffing your hand can make it all worth it. Trust me.

**Best parking lot to wait for your “21-year-old” friend who is totally named “Wormman Wigglebottom”:** El P’s

You know those C-list safari excursions led by some underqualified teenager armed with a BB gun where people hunker down in a near-broken Jeep and watch wild animals walk around sluggishly for hours? That is how I would describe the experience of camping out in the El Paisano parking lot for 20 minutes while your friends make small talk with the cashier to distract them from the Trader Joe’s gift card they’re calling an ID. You’re trusting someone extremely unqualified to provide for you, and you’re left with only the thin metal of a vehicle’s doors to protect you from the wild creatures wandering around the ol’ Tempe water hole.

Maybe I should stop talking about illegal things in this list. Whatever!

**Best parking lot to (insert joke here):**

Look, I tried. I wanted to make this whole list inclusive for all ASU students and have some funny little jokes about a stupid parking lot on every campus. But after spending two entire days racking my brain, I really can’t think of anything for the West Valley or Polytechnic campuses. What the hell even goes on over there? Does anyone reading this know a single person who lives there? Have any of you ever even been to either of those places? Honestly, I’m starting to think they don’t exist and Crow has been lying to us this whole time. Secretly, these campuses are giant voids with tumbleweeds rolling around. If you actually exist on one of these campuses, email me at Gibissexxyandawesome@hotmail.com, and I’ll write a whole other list about their parking lots. For $100. Pay up.

With all that being said, I hope you can find your emotional support parking lot. Next time you’re crawling on all fours from exhaustion after wandering through Phoenix’s desolate sea of asphalt, just remember, it’s not like you have anything better to do. I mean, you just spent your time reading a whole list about PARKING LOTS for God's sake. You must have a lot of time on your hands. Anyway, every place on this Earth has a story, even the ones you’d never expect. Walk through this asphalt sea with pride. Just remember — live, laugh, lot.
Songs are like snow globes. A lifetime of music listening amounts to a cavernous room full of the glass orbs, perched upon shelves teeming with the memories contained in each.

Some fall and break. A few are brutally shoved off the shelves, shattering and leaking glitter onto the floor. Those are the ones that you’ll never listen to again, that got left behind for some reason or another. A breakup. A change in taste. A loss.

Others are hidden away in deep corners, left to collect layers of dust and cobwebs, the water yellowing with time. The favorites gleam with the evidence of care and attention. Those sit at eye level, always within reach. When these globes are shaken, the snow inside sways and settles in a graceful, practiced dance. They’re beautiful, or weird, or funky, or silly or all of the above.

In my head, the snow globes hold the songs, the shelves hold the eras, and the whole collection holds my entire life.

For this story, I asked State Press Magazine’s spring 2024 team to show me a few of their favorite snow globes from their collegiate collection, compiled in a playlist you can find here:

Scan this code with the camera in the Spotify app to listen to SPM’s college experience picks.

In return, I decided to share a few of my own. These are my defining songs from my university experience — so far.

‘Someone you love, ‘someone you need’

For my first choice, I wanted to choose a song whose snow globe is immovable. Supreme. One of the heaviest on my shelves. “Somebody Else” by The 1975.

In my collection, this snow globe is in its own glass case, shining and locked away. I like to think only I know the passcode.

I can’t really pinpoint why I love this song so much — I just know I always will. It keeps coming back to me, no matter how many tunes pass through the revolving door in and out of my life. This one is different; this one is important.

Maybe I decided on it one day in middle school because I thought liking The 1975 sounded cool. This may be a cheater choice because “Somebody Else” represents me more than it does my college years, but it’s a consistent, lifetime kind of love.
‘Every grocery store receipt’

I wear the same three yellow-gold rings almost every day.

The first, which is decorated with a blue topaz stone, is my great-grandma Alice’s high-school class ring from 1918. A few weeks ago, it slipped off my finger into a crack along the sidewalk outside my apartment. I lost it for only half an hour, but my tears came around minute eight.

The second belonged to my Mimi, Beverly Thomason. She was my mom’s mom, and I never met her. It has an interesting look, carrying a band of garnets and a fan that spans half the length of my pinky.

The third is my most recent acquisition — my mom’s original wedding band. She switched the diamond originally embedded in its center to my birthstone, aquamarine, after I was born.

These pieces are all connected by one invisible, gentle thread — they were given to me by my mom, a woman who loves all things beautiful and sees the possibility for splendor in every place, person and item.

My next song is “marjorie” by Taylor Swift, who my mom and I saw in concert together on my 20th birthday. Without a doubt, my love for my mom stems from her love for my Mimi and so on. “marjorie,” Swift’s ode to her late grandmother, also reminds me of all the women in my family who came before me, who raised one another to create a path for me to not only exist, but to be right here in this moment, and the next and the next.

This snow globe holds all my rings in grandeur. When I shake it, they spin around but never clank against the glass or the edges. Instead, they lift and fall. Gracefully.

As Swift does with “marjorie,” I continue to carry the memories of the women of my family with my rings.

I spin my blue-topaz ring when I’m nervous. I kiss my Mimi’s ring when I remember the powerful unconditionality of a mother’s love. I watch my aquamarine ring glint in the sunlight and reflect on the years of history it represents.

I settle in the knowledge that a 20-something, years from now, might do the same thing in memoriam of me. With all the rings I haven’t received yet.

‘All the world that you see’

College is defined by rapid change. First, there’s the nonstop moving — from your childhood home to your dorm, to back home, to the dorm, to back home again, to an apartment. The ‘pack, unpack, repack, purge, shop’ cycle perpetuates.

There’s also a shift in relationships. I call my mom most days. I rarely see my dogs. I miss the way I was so close to friends in high school and saw them every day. What do I do with myself when love transforms and when friends are categorized by the different times they dominated my life?

It’s dizzying, really. A snowstorm, an unrelenting whirlwind of life happening too fast.

Whenever I feel like that, that’s when I pop out “Alive” by Empire of the Sun, a song that will always make me think of college.

I get caught in spirals, and this snowglobe is the center of gravity that stills me. Amid all the horrible weather within me, there’s this tether, reminding me that, yes, college is a lot, but within that mass, there’s a great deal of good to be experienced.

There’s dance parties to be thrown. Books to be read. Road trips to go on. Friends to be made. Mistakes to laugh at. Card games to be played. Wine to be drank. There’s so much good.

Rather than getting caught up in the moving on, I feel this snowglobe lets me bask in my gratitude for these moments that matter. It pushes me to refuse to give any energy to anything that makes me feel any less than full-to-the-brim alive.

One day, I’ll miss reorganizing a new room every few months, circling through the revolving door of odd jobs and scraping together change just to attend a concert, or the state fair or a bar.

I don’t want all this to pass me by just because I was so focused on getting to the next shiny thing.

Instead, I’ll hold this snowglobe, and I’ll shake it up and down in my living room with reckless abandon. It won’t break — it never does.
Attention, Sun Devils —

It is with a heavy heart that we announce U.S. News & World Report named ASU No. 2 in innovation this year.

The sun no longer shines. Birds are falling from the sky. Famine is sweeping the globe. We repeat — ASU has been named No. 2 in innovation.

We understand this may come as a shock to Sun Devils everywhere. In fact, several faculty members and students have died from broken hearts since the decision was announced. We would wish their families well, but they also keeled over from pure disbelief.

In response to this decision, ASU is preparing to launch missiles directly into the U.S. News & World Report headquarters. This is a declaration of war. Yes, U.S. News & World Report — our innovation missiles are aimed at your coordinates, and University President Michael Crow is hovering over the big red button. 38.903480, -77.060400, by the way.

“Now that ASU is No. 2 in innovation, I have decided to immediately step down from my role, crawl into a big hole and stay there forever,” President Crow announced in a statement. “My life’s purpose has turned to dust before my very eyes. I can no longer go on. Please, somebody, save me from this prison of my own making.”

It’s long been debated what being first in “innovation” means, and honestly, we’re not entirely sure. We just knew ASU was finally No. 1 in something, and really, that’s all that mattered.

Many students have claimed ASU’s former No. 1 in innovation status was an obvious cover-up to conceal our past party school reputation. And to that, we say yes. Yes it was, okay? Is it a crime to bury your past? Well, it’s definitely a crime to give alcohol to underage students, but ignore that.

“We’d bow out gracefully if MIT or Harvard beat us out for the No. 1 spot,” President Crow said while tearing up. “At least that would be fair — they’re objectively better than us. But Alaska Pacific University? Really? They must have bribed the judges. And that was our idea first!”

In an embarrassing backtrack, ASU has reluctantly decided to return its trademark on the word
“innovation.” We told President Crow not to trademark it, but the man's going to do what the man's going to do. This is President Crow's world, and we're all just living in it.

To Sun Devils everywhere: All hands on deck because a LOT has to change. In place of class time, students will be forced to correct all materials touting our former No. 1 status. They'll be placing "No. 2" sticky notes over every billboard, shuttle, sign and pamphlet, as we no longer feel innovative enough to actually change them.

Additionally, funding has dried up at the University, as many alumni have withdrawn their donations and hordes of students have dropped out entirely. We would still have money if we hadn't spent it all on our “No. 1 in innovation” branding. Because of this, some major changes will be made to how the University maintains its revenue stream. To the dismay of many student-athletes, we will no longer be paying a salary to our biggest money-makers. Oh wait, we already don't do that.

Construction on our newest buildings has also screeched to a halt, leaving countless road closures and architectural eyesores behind. Hundreds of construction workers are now destitute, and we couldn't care less. If you're not President Crow, you may as well be dead to us.

Lastly, in a tragic turn of events, ASU has decided to close its doors at the end of the year. All incoming students have not been refunded and will never be. Say goodbye to the tens of thousands of dollars you've spent on tuition because we're not giving it back.

To all current students, classes will continue until then — just without teachers. Or supplies. Or curricula. Now that we're no longer No. 1 in innovation, we've decided to give up entirely. If you're not first, you're last — am I right?

We will, however, still be handing out degrees at this spring's convocation ceremonies. They just won't mean anything anymore. All graduation garb will now include a rainbow wig and a red foam nose, and students will be transported to the event in a comically small clown car. You'll be the laughingstock of the workforce, so we figured we'd help you get used to it now.

We thought we had contingency plans in place in the event of any disaster possible. Bombs, zombies, climate change-induced hurricanes, you name it. But this, this we never could have imagined.

As our team prepares this notice, layoffs have already begun. In fact, this release is the product of unpaid labor. We've already been fired, but President Crow is hovering over us with a baseball bat, and we're afraid of what he'll do if we stop writing this. Please help us.

With love and fear,
Arizona State University

PS.

Seriously, though, what do we do now?

We're completely screwed. Our entire identity is based around one arbitrary ranking that means who knows what.

As I write this, the lights on campus are flickering on and off. We can't even afford to pay our workers. In fact, we can't even afford to print any more words in this releas-
Best of ASU: Characters of the ASU shuttle  

by Savannah Dagupion  
Illustration by Andrea Ramirez

With ASU divided into four main campuses, the shuttle is like a lifeline, transporting students and faculty across the Valley in roughly 30-minute intervals — depending on the traffic.

Whether you ride the shuttle every day or have hopped on only once after wondering if the West Valley campus is a myth, you know there are some classic archetypes you’ll always see on the shuttle.

So here’s a handy little guide on what to expect when you get on the shuttle. Maybe you’ll relate to some of these, or maybe you’ve never even touched the inside of a bus and breathed the same air as 80 other students. Regardless, you should tag yourself because no one is innocent here.
Frilly scraps of lace embroidered with the words “Heaven Sent.” Esoteric photos shot with a digital camera. Side-by-side comparisons of a ballerina’s beautiful pink slippers and their battered feet. Little excerpts of songs like “My Kimono” by Polvo. All these tokens are scattered throughout the Tumblr accounts of photographer Maya Spangler, known to her followers as “Stolenbesos.”

Spangler, who rose to fame for snapping photos of the internet’s it girls — from Addison Rae to influencer Devon Lee Carlson — grew up spending her summers in Arizona, finding resonance with the desert and the winding drives she’d take through the dust.

“I’m inspired by the person in front of me and their energy and the way they occupy space,” Spangler said. “I hate moodboards. Hardly any of my own work is premeditated. I like to just play and see what we — the model and I — can make together.”

The 24-year-old’s artistic vocabulary, which is littered with words like “moodboard” and “aesthetic,” reflects the time she spent surfing the internet at a young age, which still shines through in her use of social media to promote her craft.

Even though Spangler has cultivated a large following on major social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok and X, the early 2010s staple Tumblr has been her go-to place to showcase her work since she created an account at 12 years old.

During the early to mid-2010s, she first found artistic inspiration from Tumblr as a place for her to “dump (her) thoughts online in a stream of consciousness.” Now, Tumblr has become a place where she posts “chronically.”

Tumblr, founded in 2007, experienced a meteoric rise, hitting 100 million blogs just six years later. By the early 2010s, the so-called “Tumblr aesthetic” had users in a chokehold. During its heyday, it served as a place for teenagers and young adults to make blog posts about the interesting, the mundane and everything in between.

Although a range of aesthetics and subcultures flourished on the website, grainy, grungy photos depicting young girls in ripped jeans captioned with Nirvana lyrics seemed to dominate the platform. If users wanted to romanticize their “#beautiful sadness,” alternative pop queen Lana Del Rey was often their muse. If a girl had a feeling, Tumblr had an aesthetic for it.

Although Tumblr peaked over a decade ago and many of its former users now consider it dead, its aesthetics and spirit are experiencing a renaissance in modern photography and art.

Making a comeback

Growing up, Justin Lavilla, a fall 2023 architecture graduate, photographer and co-founder of ENVY Magazine — a Phoenix-based publication focused on telling the stories of up-and-coming queer artists of color — turned to Tumblr as his safe haven as he began to figure out his sexuality. Like Spangler, he would also spend hours as a child perusing the platform’s spellbinding pages.

“At the time, I didn’t know what queerness even was, but depression and flourishing on Tumblr gave me a glimpse of a more authentic and inclusive future,” Lavilla said. “The platform had a profound influence on who I became.

Lavilla noticed that today, Tumblr is “making a comeback,” but not exactly as a social media platform.

“I don’t necessarily think that Tumblr … is coming back, but I think the aesthetics that existed on the platform are coming back,” Lavilla said. “(So) it’s not coming back to the
platform. It’s in other social media platforms that we use.”

Today, his work as a photographer still resembles many of the posts users would see on Tumblr — while his pieces fit the Tumblr archetype of vulnerable and sensitive, they still showcase the bold and empowering style that was popular among many Tumblr users.

“My photos sort of operate on sort of a sense of desire,” Lavilla said. “A lot of my photographs are sort of bare in terms of the style and the subject that is being photographed. … I shoot a lot of nudity in my work, focusing on the body and how queer desires translate into the photos that I’m taking.”

For Lily Moskowitz, a senior studying English and a writer for ENVY Magazine, Tumblr ruled her early high school years. Feeling as if she couldn’t relate to her peers’ styles and music tastes, Moskowitz sought refuge in Tumblr’s “casual openness.”

“Yes, everything was very aesthetic, but it was a little bit grungier and messier, and things could be a little less (about) wellness, clean, ‘I have everything together,’” Moskowitz said of the gritty Tumblr mainstream in comparison with the slick “clean girl aesthetic” that rules TikTok today.

As a teenager, she would use Tumblr to find media that inspired her, like runway fashion designs, film and feminist performance art, like that of Marina Abramović. These materials from her Tumblr era have still served as her muse in her work today.

#aesthetic

It’s impossible not to notice the clear connection between the material Spangler reposts on Tumblr and the photographs she takes. Both her Tumblr pages and her art usually combine innate beauty with a grotesque, gritty component, a style described as the “dissociative pout” aesthetic.

Actress Chloe Cherry stretching across the laminate counter of a lifeless suburban-home kitchen. Models dressed in the fashion label Sandy Liang standing in a line, as still and lifeless as dolls.

“I think I myself am rough around the edges, and most of the girls I shoot are too,” Spangler said. “I’m not interested in cleanliness or beauty as much as realness.”

“Realness” is a core value for Tumblr users. Because the website emphasizes creativity, yet is free for all to use, the photos and styles that have stemmed from it often incorporate elements of amateur photography, doused with grit and painted in shades of pastel.

Because online trends are cyclical, like history, Boyanton said it makes sense that popular Tumblr trends, like the glamorization of grunge or an infatuation with vaporwave themes, like pastel colors and electronic music, have made a resurgence.

Along with the cyclical life cycle of online trends, Moskowitz cited Gen Z’s cultural obsession with nostalgia as a major reason behind Tumblr’s aesthetic comeback.

“It’s kind of like reliving their own adolescence or teenage angst because I think, like, a lot of our stage of Gen Z is coming into real adulthood now, and we’re on this weird precipice of entering the job market and having all this economic pressure and chaos.” Moskowitz said. “It just gets very comfortable to kind of go back to what feels familiar in a sense.”

This angst many young people are harboring, combined with the rise of the internet, has pushed Gen Zers to go online more than other generations ever did, said Megan Ulu-Lani Boyanton, an adjunct professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication who teaches...
about issues in pop culture and media. “Gen Z is kind of known for its off-the-wall, sardonic humor,” Boyanton said. “And I think that’s because there’s a lot that the younger generations are dealing with right now, kind of like, ‘How are we going to address all these problems in our country?’”

The dark side of Tumblr

For Moskowitz, Tumblr flourished because it reflected the true meaning of creativity: collaboration. It was a melting pot for creatives to give each other ideas and inspiration — one moodboard at a time. But on the flip side, Lavilla and Moskowitz argued the platform’s “uninhibited” nature turned it into a cesspool of harmful rhetoric, leading to its demise.

Until Tumblr implemented a ban on what it called “adult content” in 2018, pornographic material ran rampant on the site alongside blogs and images glorifying abuse and eating disorders — a “4chan for the left,” according to Lavilla.

“Historically, a constant issue with Tumblr is the fact that there’s just been a lot of glorification of like, fitness, eating disorders and mental illness to a degree of promoting self harm,” Boyanton said. “There is definitely a dark side to Tumblr.”

Because of this, Lavilla is glad the platform itself isn’t experiencing a renaissance. Instead, the aesthetics that proliferated on it, as well as the Tumblr impulse Spangler said, are living on in many artists’ work today.

Before Tumblr became a place for social commentary and discourse, it was a platform for creatives — everyday amateurs and professionals — to share their artistic endeavors, from photography to poetry, Boyanton said. It was a testing ground for young amateur artists to evolve and find their footing creatively, and it lives on to the present.
Welcome to college, the golden years — or something like that

A letter to my freshman-year self — and a guide for all the newbies

by Abigail Beck
Designs by Anna Olp
Make sure you don’t study too hard,” they say. “Go out sometimes — have fun!”

“They” being the countless adults giving 18-year-old me the sage, grown-up advice they wish they had during their college days.

“This will be the best time of your life, I promise,” they told me time and time again.

Despite this, I truly believe college was never supposed to be the “best time of my life.” At least, I never entered freshman year with that thought process. I wanted to get in and out of university as quickly as possible.

But instead, I learned that while college is not supposed to be a golden era, no time in your life should be a blip in time.

For me, the best part about college is that it’s a trial run of adulthood. I go grocery shopping. I work. I clean my apartment on Sundays. But I know I have my parents to fall back on whenever I need them.

I’m figuring it out as I go, and so is everyone else. There’s no one right way to navigate the dense jungle that is college — no tour guide, no map.

I just turned 21, and for the first time, I feel like I’m finally settling into myself. But I can’t lie — that has been far from easy. If I could talk to my bright-eyed and bushy-tailed freshman self, I’d want her to know a few things. So listen up, incoming freshmen: You might have a few things to learn from me because, whatever you’re worried about, I’ve probably been there.

1. Yes, college is hard

For me, the first semester of college was easy academically, especially because I had been conditioned by a demanding high school whose curriculum was stuffed with Advanced Placement and honors classes. My first-semester workload was fairly light, granting me a lot of free time outside the classroom.

But this breeze of a semester veiled the reality of a typical college workload from me. I was falsely convinced that it’d be smooth sailing from here on out, and I’d graduate college in no time.

When my second semester came around, school started to weigh on me. Suddenly, classes were more demanding, and I could no longer rely on my adviser to hand-pick my schedule. I can admit that at that point, I was putting myself through too much.

I hyper focused on making the most out of college — meaning that I had to juggle frequent outings, making hordes of friends and maintaining stellar grades — to the point where I started to feel overwhelmed all the time. Slowly but surely, these pins I was juggling slipped from my grasp, and I was left scrambling to pick them up from the ground.

I was sad, and I felt like I could only watch as my friends flew past me. The pressure I had imposed on myself was suffocating me, and every missed assignment and poor grade scarred the high achiever in me who was once on top of everything. Shame burned through me, and I felt stuck in time, defined by these errors.

But the best part about this experience was that it wasn’t forever. I realized the seemingly world-ending mistakes you think you’re making will become distant memories with time. I promise you that.

Know that when you think you’re falling behind, most of the time, no one else can tell. In fact, they might think you’re doing really well while being terrified that you know they’re flailing.

So keep pushing forward. Do what you can to improve your academic situation but know it’s not forever. Stewing in anger and self-hatred won’t do you any good in the long run.

2. Put yourself in situations to meet people. Keep trying — some will stick

Finding friends in college may not be easy, but it is important.

I met one of my best friends, Ava, after propping open the door of my dorm room freshman year. I taped a scrap of paper to it that read “Come in!” (Little did I know, this broke a fire code, but damn it! I just wanted to meet people!)

Ava happened to see my open door while walking down the hallway, and thank GOD she came in.

Ava and I grew close — but not immediately. There were bumps in the road, but at the end of the day, we both wanted friends at the same time. And with time, we became so close that she’s
now my roommate.

This simple act of putting myself out there isn’t entirely why we’re friends now, but it is the reason why we stumbled upon each other’s paths. The beginning stages of friendship, I’ve found, are particularly difficult for many of us in college, especially as freshmen. But remember that you’re not going to make new friends if you don’t try, and at the end of the day, everyone in college wants to find someone.

So join an extracurricular or cultivate a new hobby. Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there at any opportunity, and maybe you’ll meet people with the same interests.

In particular, try to force yourself out of your comfort zones in places where there are people outside your major or faces who aren’t in your classes. College is not supposed to be an echo chamber — so don’t make it one.

3. TALK TO YOUR PROFESSORS!!

I know everyone says this, but you really should talk to your professors. Don’t just be a fly on the wall in the back of the class. But also don’t take this advice as an encouragement to answer every single question in class. No one likes a know-it-all who dominates the class conversation. Just saying.

Take the time to connect with professors who have made an impact on your college experience. It’s these small interactions — not the obligatory ones — that matter and show you care. Be authentic, and your connection with your professor will be authentic too.

If it’s necessary, go to office hours. If you know an answer, raise your hand. If you’re able to, show up early to class and strike up some small talk. You really never know when you might need a connection or a recommendation from your professor.

This is a lesson that took me a while to learn. While I’m still figuring it out, I realized as I’ve put more effort into the dozens of hours I spend in the classroom each semester, my professors have noticed.

Once, a professor for one of my larger classes crossed the lecture hall and sat next to me to ask how I was doing. I had missed the past two class sessions, one due to sickness and another because my car wouldn’t start. I had gone to his office hours one time very early in the semester, and I participated enough that he knew who I was.

He had no idea why I missed those classes, and he didn’t seem as concerned with knowing why I had been absent as he was with how I was doing. For me, his small gesture proved that my absence in the classroom made a difference.
At the end of the semester, I sent him an email thanking him for the class — it was challenging, but wonderful. He told me my words would stick with him for a long time.

When it comes down to it, it’s not just the impact that your professors have on you. It’s equally, if not more, the potential impact you can have on them. But you’ll only know if you take the time to make one.

4. Be honest with yourself and everyone else

Despite what you may think, you’re not doing yourself any favors by pretending to be okay all the time.

In October, I got into a crash on the highway in which I totaled my car. It added a new stressor on top of the weight of my heavy, difficult course load.

There was insurance to deal with, and I needed a new car, and I was struggling with the pulsing weight of neck pain, and, and, and, and, and, and.

This cacophony of seemingly infinite “ands” to deal with fell squarely on my shoulders.

The thing about car crashes is that if you are not severely or visibly wounded from one, I learned the people around you stop caring after a while.

Every time I’d get in a car, I’d feel sick to my stomach. I’d imagine every single scenario involving every car around us and how it’d cause my untimely death. They ran a red. I ran a red. A pileup. A rear-end collision. A T-bone accident.

Unfortunately, this line of thinking doesn’t fade away forever after a car crash — it just comes and goes in waves, as every other type of thought does.

But I didn’t let anyone know that: For a while after the crash, I did pretend I was okay being in cars. However, I was so secretly upset at the person driving me sometimes. They’d speed or swerve or text, and I’d get so angry: How could they do this to me when they knew what I had to deal with after the crash?

The truth is it wasn’t their fault. They couldn’t know how I actually felt because I didn’t express it.

It’s important to be honest with how you’re feeling and to express it when the time is right. Although being honest with yourself doesn’t just mean confronting your feelings. It also means removing yourself from situations that you know will make you upset or uncomfortable.

In the end, your college experience will be defined by what you put into it. That’s because there is no one “right” way to do college — there’s just your way, and that’s enough.
This past year of State Press Magazine has been incredibly exciting to witness and be part of. Reporters were unafraid to shed light on severe injustices at the University and in the community, and multimedia staff pioneered changes to the mag’s layout and made bold design choices all year. I am in awe of the work that has come out of this team.

Editing a magazine is something I have wanted to do since I read American Girl Magazine in the 2000s and Teen Vogue online in the 2010s, and it came to a fever pitch when I was editor-in-chief of my high school’s yearbook in early 2020.

Beginning college in the middle of a pandemic was scary, confusing and disappointing, but it allowed me to pour my being into reporting. State Press Magazine was there for me throughout the majority of my college career, providing a stable creative outlet that trained me to be a strong reporter and editor. My understanding of journalism is leaps and bounds from where it was freshman year, thanks to having the opportunity and responsibility of reporting and editing through incredibly fierce elections and important social justice movements.

I am honored to have been given the privilege to lead this publication and humbled to have worked with an incredibly talented, tight-knit staff.

Leah Mesquita graced SPM’s pages with storytelling so bold that it led to her first story of the year going viral and reigniting a TikTok trend. Audrey Eagerton and Claire Geare never failed to make us laugh — and sometimes sigh — with their unabashed sharp wit and criticisms of the University and student culture. Fatima Gabir was unwavering in her pursuit of awareness and justice for marginalized communities in her stories, and Gib Manrique told the stories of his community while balancing grace with tongue-in-cheek humor. Zach Bradshaw brought sports coverage back to the magazine for the first time in over two years. Keetra Bippus and Sam McGee demonstrated their deep understanding of student culture and students’ interests. Abigail Beck’s inquisitive nature led to some of the strongest research and reporting the magazine saw this year. Finally, Hajin Lee’s mind-blowing eye for beautiful photography and Andrea Ramirez’s marriage of her enormous imagination with her clear and distinctive illustration style brought the issues to life.

A special thank you to Monica Navarro for stepping up to design 40-plus vibrant pages per issue with her unbounded creativity and versatile design style, as well as Sydney Huyge and Anna Olp for taking their unique designs from the magazine onto our social media.

Thank you to the rest of The State Press’ leadership team for trusting my team to forward the organization’s mission within our pages.

To my managing editors, Savannah Dagupion and Madeline Nguyen, I can never thank you enough for your dedication and devotion to this craft. Savannah’s deep passion for community-engaged reporting informed everything from the issues’ themes to the stories we selected and the copy within them, and the satirical story she wrote about her Native Hawaiian heritage prominently displayed her brilliant personality. Maddie’s jaw-dropping reporting skills with her easily distinguishable writing voice masterfully told a vital story about unpaid internships, while her penchant for precise editing polished each issue’s copy until it shone brightly. Nothing this year — from the magazine’s stellar work to the amazing culture developed within the team — would have been possible without them.

To our audience, thank you for trusting us with your stories and for coming back to read our new issues each month. We do all of this for you and are eternally grateful for your support.

Lastly, to all aspiring reporters, do not be afraid or discouraged. Good journalism is necessary now more than ever, requiring us to remain steadfast in the pursuit of knowledge and accountability to help shape a just future.

Very sincerely,

Camila Pedrosa
Editor-in-Chief, State Press Magazine
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