

state press magazine

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW KEOUGH

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Editor's letter

As we stumble, dazed and stunned, out of a full year under COVID-19's traumatic reign, we are left with countless questions: How did we get here? Where did we go wrong? Is this the new normal?

Most importantly, we are left with the question heavy on everybody's mind: What comes next? In this issue, we do our best to flush the past away, to leave it behind and look to the future. We look to how we will continue to feed those who can't feed themselves, how we will move forward as a student body, how we will protect ourselves as workers and how we can be sure that things like January's attempted coup never happen again.

This is what comes next.

You're not listening

BIPOC communities warned about where
Donald Trump's rhetoric could lead

by Raphael Romero-Ruiz

Brothers Scott and Steve Leader walked to a train station after a Red Sox game in Boston in August 2015. The brothers found a 58-year-old man, homeless and sleeping outside of the train station. They proceeded to urinate on him, assault him and break his nose with a metal pole, leaving him with multiple other injuries.

According to the Boston Globe, Scott told police it was okay to beat this man because he was "Hispanic" and homeless. He was inspired by the then-GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump, allegedly telling police, "Donald Trump was right, all these illegals need to be deported."

Trump never apologized nor took responsibility for his role in this hate crime. He was elected the 45th President of the United States in November.

This instance of violence surfaced in my head when I saw the January 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol; the crowds of Trump supporters enraged by an election result that confirmed their fears of a changing America. I remembered that hate crime in 2015 and thought about how so many people warned about Trump's potential to incite violence.

I continued to ask myself the same question – why didn't people believe us? Then I realized that by "people," I meant white people. It was not Black and Brown people who were surprised at how that day unfolded. We were not shocked at the violence perpetrated by people that Trump called "very special" Americans.

When I flipped through the cable news outlets, I noted a lack of surprise on Don Lemon's face. His white counterparts were the ones who could not believe that an insurrection was unfolding live on television.

In order to understand why, we must revisit the past and understand how, from the very beginning, the events of January 6 were destined to happen.

When Trump first descended the golden escalator in the summer of 2015, so did the beginning of the next tumultuous five years. When Trump announced his bid for the presidency at the Trump Tower in New York City, his first words at the podium were, "Wow. Woah. That is some group of people. Thousands!" as he looked on to the crowd. However, as a report from the Guardian reflected, this was untrue. This was the first of many lies to come from Trump during his entrance into the political sphere which elevated his platform and sent the country into a spiral of misinformation.

And it wouldn't be the last, and certainly not the most inflammatory. At the same rally Trump said about Mexico, "They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people," he said.

This comment sparked major controversy, catching the eyes of media corporations as coverage for the candidate grew.

Kermit Brown, an instructor at ASU's College of Integrative Sciences and the Arts,

said he was surprised Trump had decided to run for president.

"(My colleagues and I) didn't really know what to expect, but from a personal perspective, when I heard about him running, it didn't make sense to me because he's not a politician. The things that really alarmed me were that one, Trump is not an educated man, two, he's not a politician, and three, he had with him a track record of failed businesses," Brown reflected on those early days of the Trump campaign.

Brown explained that by substituting political experience with the ability to talk down his opponents, particularly his presidential predecessor Barack Obama, Trump was able to win over many voters.

"Fear is a powerful motivator. A more powerful motivator than acceptance or love or any of that," Brown said. "I think he knew exactly what he was doing. He was like, 'Let me give the American public something to worry about and speculate on and watch how it divides us.'"

Capitalizing on this fear, the campaign continued to push out offensive, "politically incorrect" assertions with the goal of making headlines. Trump's viability for the Republican nomination was first seen as a joke, with journalists and political pundits laughing at the mere idea. But support for candidate Trump grew in white America as he voiced the frustrations of many who grew tired of the country changing at a pace where they felt their privilege threatened.

Targeted disenfranchised communities grew alarmed at the dangerous rhetoric, which was now given a major platform. Activists warned this would inspire violence as Trump continued making false accusations, stereotyping and vilifying Mexicans. The fear of violence became reality that August night in 2015, just three months after Trump's campaign kickoff.

BIPOC communities protested Trump's election with marches all across the country and through social media, which would become a primary platform for people to



Illustration by Nghi Tran

share their dissent.

“FDT” is a song by Los Angeles rappers YG and Nipsey Hussle where they speak of their frustration with Trump’s rhetoric. For people from South Central Los Angeles, it was an anthem to express their rage with the Trump administration.

“FDT” became a protest anthem, and many people from similar socio-economic backgrounds also adopted the song as a message to Trump. In voicing their anger against the Trump administration, many made connections between his rhetoric and the white supremacist groups who were further emboldened by it.

There is a long paper trail of BIPOC voices warning the country of the danger of Trump’s tactics. But instead of acknowledging it, supporters of the president instead created an echo chamber void of any input from our communities.

Marginalized communities have been painted to be biased, unfair and whiny for their opinions while groups on the far-right grew bold and took violent actions. BIPOC voices were stifled as they attempted to warn others of the threat the man in the White House posed to our communities.

BIPOC saw this coming for years. This great divide in understanding parallels the devaluing and silencing of voices on matters of race, class, inequality, experience and so much more from the communities who feel the pitfalls of society the most.

So, why were our voices ignored?

“When we scream, not everybody hears us,” answered Brown. “The unrest that we’ve been seeing, the protests that we’ve been seeing with all the movements — that’s Black and Brown communities screaming. We tried to tell America that Black lives mattered when Rodney King was beaten, and for the last few decades, we’ve been screaming Black lives matter, but they haven’t heard us.”

The years of lies, of conspiracy theories, of a president who weaponized people’s fear all reveal the power Trump has on white

“Fear is a powerful motivator. More powerful motivator than acceptance or love or any of that”

— Kermit Brown

America; after a rally on the National Mall, the sitting president refused to acknowledge he had lost the 2020 election.

Trump was the motivator for the mob. Videos surfaced the following days depicting rioters demanding to be let in at President Trump’s request. The court cases of those arrested after the insurrection all name Trump as an instigator, following his orders to storm the Capitol.

Though Trump bears the brunt of the responsibility, I believe that we should not excuse those who allowed him to wield this power so irresponsibly, that includes those who continually platformed dangerous falsehoods.

Brown said media played a consequential role in the rise of Trumpism, entertaining the administration’s most extreme claims and finding the “middle ground” to defend some of the most violent actions it took.

“Media fans the flames,” Brown said.

He believes the media worked to divide the American people, alluding to corporations like Fox News or CNN, making it a battle of red vs. blue, Republican vs. Democrat.

In this industry, in order to truly inform the public of what is going on in the world around us, we must first educate ourselves. Journalists and media pundits alike must commit to an anti-racist approach to the news, where we do not accept the status quo. I often reflect on the idea that news writing is the first draft of history books. If that is so, then how will history remember the Trump administration? Will it be remembered by the reporting of Fox News, where they glorified a man who encouraged an insurrection, who was supported by white supremacists?

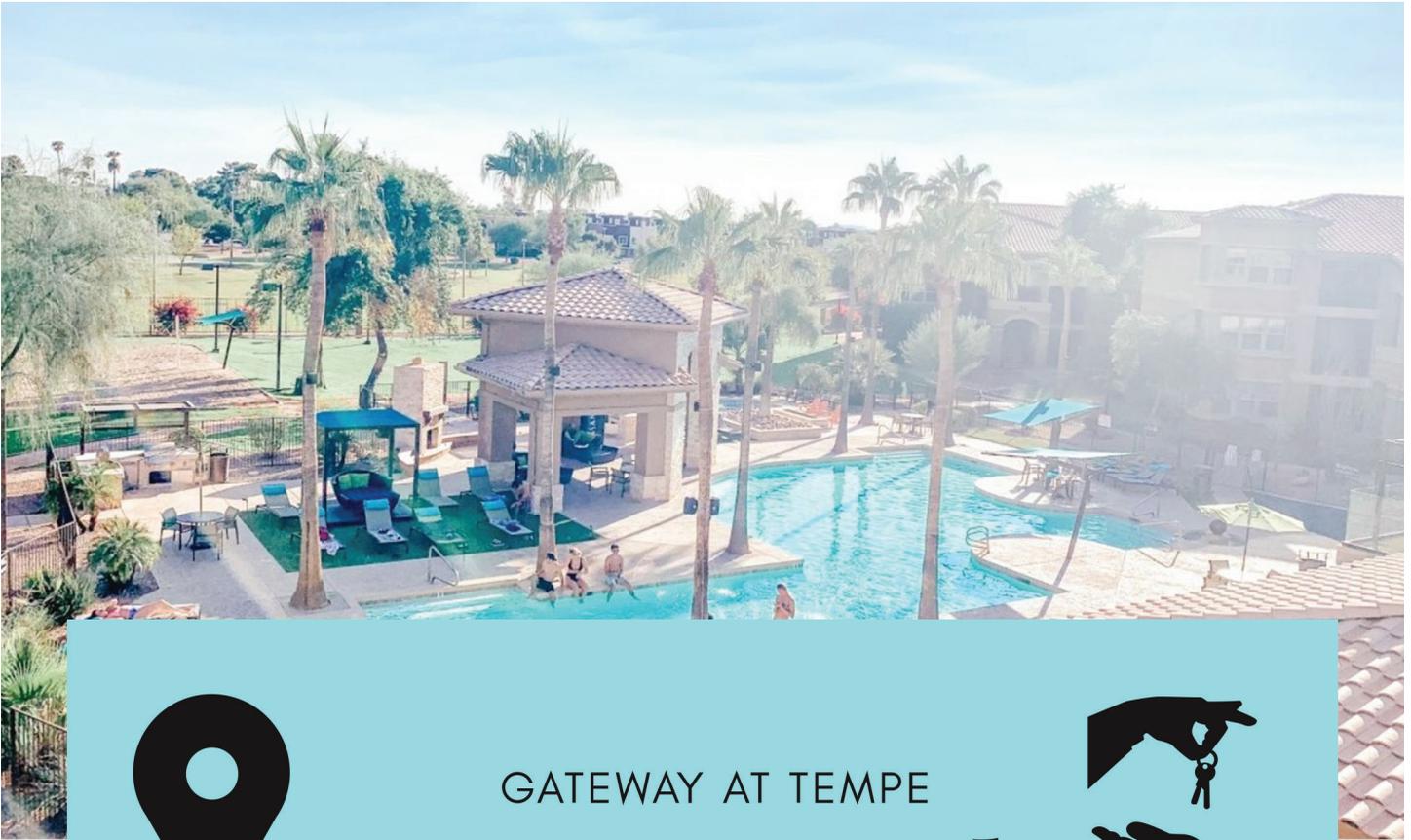
President Biden was confirmed by Congress the same night of the insurrection,

yet, members of the GOP continued along with their baseless challenge of the results. President Biden was sworn in on Jan. 20, preaching his focus on bringing the country back together.

But in order to truly create unity in this country, leaders must work to acknowledge and reconcile with its past and present violence against BIPOC communities. That work starts with committing to an anti-racist perspective while reworking the widely racist institutions that have historically harmed BIPOC communities.

I posed the question to Brown of how to move forward. His answer was simple:

“Listen.”



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Pitchfork Pantry pushes to remain a resource for food insecurity against all odds

by Mia Andrea

photography by Matthew Keough

Six years ago, Meg Bruening — an associate professor at ASU’s College of Health Solutions and former faculty advisor for the Pitchfork Pantry — researched food insecurity among college students. What she found inspired the creation of the downtown Phoenix campus’ student-run food bank.

Bruening’s survey asked participants if they were “worried about whether (their) food would run out” before earning the money to buy more or if the food they bought was lasting long enough. Although the sample size of students only consisted of 209 responses, 37% of participants reported experiencing food insecurity, which was defined and measured by the U.S. Household Food Security Survey Model.

She focused on ASU freshmen in her study, recognizing the stressors and effects of the transitional period of adulthood, especially while adjusting to a new environment and learning how to make decisions without assistance. As a result of these temporary but difficult adjustments, students faced higher risks of substance abuse, depression and financial and food insecurity. After noticing a concerning lack of academic research on this topic, Bruening was determined to make a change at the local level and established the first Pitchfork Pantry location.

Now, nutrition professor Maureen McCoy serves as the faculty advisor for the Pantry and continues combating food insecurity among students.

Spring and Summer 2020

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing and preventing food insecurity became more necessary than ever before, and members of the Pitchfork Pantry constantly prioritized their community’s well-being — no matter the obstacle.

Like many members of the ASU community during the spring 2020 semester, the Pitchfork Pantry faced numerous uncertainties about its plans for the future in the face of lockdowns and closures.

Lindsay Pacheco, president of the downtown Pantry and a junior in medical studies, said issues regarding space and foot traffic were some of the Pantry’s recurring obstacles despite its attempts to expand across all campuses.

As the Pantry began expanding from downtown Phoenix to Tempe in February 2020, the organization opened at the Sonora dorms, ultimately providing more accessibility for students by being on a ground floor. However, this location lacked student engagement, proving to be too far from central campus.

Pacheco said the Pantry adapted by securing a spot in a small office at Interdisciplinary B next to the Memorial Union.

“We’ll take whatever space we can get,” she said.

After constant adaptation to physical challenges and believing they were entering a new stage of growth, members of Pitchfork Pantry had to adapt to the most difficult obstacle yet in March 2020: COVID-19 closures. Within months, foot traffic shifted from a long-term goal into a pressing concern.

Once COVID-19 safety precautions became priorities and in-person classes paused in March, there was no “fully functioning Pantry” due to a lack of volunteers and accessibility, McCoy said. The Pantry was temporarily closed, but student leaders living nearby knew they had a mission to continue serving their community during a time of financial and health crises.

“We had always talked about doing pop-ups,” McCoy said. “But it just never came to fruition.”

As members of an organization built with the mission of addressing food insecurity and spreading nutrition education, student leaders and faculty advisers took time out of their daily schedules over the summer in 2020 to gather and deliver food packages to students and community members in need. McCoy said students commuted across the Valley during brief breaks in their own

schedules to collect materials from local food banks and organize drive-through events.

McCoy worked closely with ASU administration to permit the use of Lot 82 West as an accessible, drive-in distribution site on weekend mornings. She said the idea for pop-up distribution events served as an “on-campus substitute” to the normal Pantry during the organization’s pause beginning in the spring.

“We don’t have a ton of resources, so we kind of make do with what we do have,” she said.

The Pantry hosted their first pop-up event at Grace Community Church, about three miles south of the Tempe campus. But as the volunteers learned in months prior, distance from campus mattered when planning events, especially when some students had difficulties finding transportation or lived far from campus.

Transportation played an important role in volunteers’ creation of Pantry pop-up events, and McCoy described how difficult the process can be for food banks in





the Valley to add new stops to their food delivery route. This left students to commute between cities on their own time, especially when traveling continuously from Phoenix to Matthew's Crossing food bank in Chandler — the Pantry's main supplier for food items.

"The pop-up markets are very low-key for us," McCoy said. "We basically open up our trunks and have all the non-perishable food for the students."

Roxanna Lopez, president of the Tempe Pantry and a junior studying economics, understood the faculty's reasons for avoiding a busy Pantry — many faculty members working in Interdisciplinary B were at a high risk for complications from COVID-19 or immunocompromised. Student leaders felt uncertain about how to provide for students in the future after losing the original location at the Memorial Union, but knew safety came before anything else.

"We didn't know how the fall semester was going to work," Lopez said. "It's not unreasonable, some people just didn't want a ton of students."

Gabrielle Ducharme, a junior studying sports journalism, said she utilized the Pantry after being exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19. During

her isolation while waiting for her test results, she began to run low on groceries in her apartment. Her roommate, who was familiar with the Pantry, utilized the resource and brought home the necessities Ducharme needed.

"All this time in my room, I was going stir crazy, and then I walked out of my room," she said. "And I looked on the table and there was this entire stock of food and toilet paper."

Ducharme hadn't used the Pantry prior to her period of isolation, but after experiencing the benefits of the student-run resource, she realized firsthand the positive impact the organization could have on assisting students in need.

"It probably couldn't have come at a better time," she said. "It was a blessing in disguise for sure."

Regardless of all of this year's sudden changes and hardships, the Pitchfork Pantry remained resilient through their creative solutions and various campus partnerships, such as a partnership with the University tutoring centers and, most recently, ASU's American Indian Student Support Services. As the Pantry balanced managing foot traffic and fridge space, and maintaining student engagement, volunteers began to find

new partnerships. As a result, new spaces in close proximity to students living on or near campus came available.

"We're so thankful for them, we've been able to solve a little bit of that space issue," Pacheco said. "Space is precious at ASU — it can be a little hard to get."

Adjusting and planning for future semesters

For now, Pacheco and McCoy recognize the Pitchfork Pantry won't end food insecurity, and Bruening's study acknowledges higher education's need for more accessible meal plans as a long-term solution. But in taking steps to prevent food insecurity, they prioritize awareness and education.

As student interest and involvement grows this year, McCoy said the Pantry plans to continue to find partnerships with other campus organizations, host virtual education sessions and regularly utilize more facilities such as refrigerated trucks for the pop-up events. But she recognized the conflict of minimizing foot traffic on campus due to space limitations.

"I don't foresee the building at Tempe wanting us back in there," said McCoy.

Members of the Pantry hope to continue raising awareness about the topic of food insecurity throughout the spring semester. Additionally, they reflected on their current availability of items for students, noticing a lack of fresh produce and proper materials. According to McCoy, the organization hopes to expand their fridge facilities through campus partnerships in order to provide students with items that aren't exclusive to nonperishable food and hygiene products.

"We know that we're one organization," Pacheco said. "And we're doing what we can to help and improve the little, tiny piece of the world we're in."

Wall to Wall

Union members across campus voice opposition to University plans, find community

by Chase Hunter B.

In ASU's downtown library, senior library information specialist Jackie Young helps students get information: taking students' inquiries, researching topics and managing a never-ending shuffle of books.

When her elderly father tested positive for COVID-19, Young knew she must have been the source. She empties the book drop-off most days. Library administrators who established the quarantine period for books at ASU failed to follow guidance from the CDC who recommended a 7-day quarantine period.

"My administrators were only quarantining the books for three days," Young said. Administrators thought of eliminating the 3-day quarantine, too, Young said, because of complaints from students worried about being fined for books in quarantine.

Young is frustrated with this sort of top-down decision-making. Many other ASU workers are frustrated too. So when workers at the University of Arizona formed their union, ASU workers eagerly joined.

Ken Jacobs, the chair of the Labor Center at the University of California, Berkeley, said the share of instruction by adjunct professors – who have little job security – at colleges and universities has "grown dramatically."

A 2018 report by the American Association of University Professors found that only 27% of instructional positions were tenured in 2016.

Young noted that during the Great Recession, the University made changes to its new-hire process to create a separate design

nation with less job-protection for workers.

Hiring more adjunct instructors gave the University more "flexibility" to lay off staff for budget belt-tightening, but Young said the University made this change without workers in mind.

"I've seen other instances of that during the COVID-19 pandemic with employees voicing concerns about safety and the University just going forward with in-person classes regardless," she said.

A union, Young and others theorize, will make for a seat at the table. Not just one for professors and full-time employees, but for student workers, too. And though the union is barred from collective bargaining by Arizona Board of Regents' policy, speaking collectively has power, said Richard Newhauser, a professor of English and leading figure for ASU's members of the union.

The new challenge is finding more union members.

ASU's administration did not respond to multiple requests for comment on this article.

Origin of unionization

It's hard to imagine that just a year ago, tens of thousands of students flooded the campuses of ASU each day. And in March and April last year, it was hard to imagine returning to campus with the outside world so dormant.

But it was also unimaginable there would be momentum to form a union a year ago.

When ASU announced it would be creating plans to host in-person classes, Newhauser

– a tenured professor who took a sabbatical year to avoid risk of COVID-19 – said staff members were "unhappy and suffering and afraid. Afraid of getting COVID, afraid of losing their lives."

In the month before students would return to campus, Arizona was coming off its worst month in the pandemic as a global hotspot for new infections. The state's 7-day average never fell below 2,000 new cases of COVID-19 per day, according to the New York Times database.

A new group called the Community of Care Coalition formed in August and called for ASU to "slow the fork down," in reference to the University holding in-person classes that fall. While the Community of Care Coalition is not part of the union, their work aided in the union's attempts to organize.

"The state of Arizona is #slowingthespread and the rate of transmission has dropped. But @ASU is returning to in-person instruction too soon," the Community of Care Coalition said in their first post on Twitter on Aug. 9.

Later that day, the coalition posted a petition urging the University to re-examine its opening practices and the following recommendations before reopening:

1. Establish public, scientifically determined metrics, informed by rigorous testing of all students, faculty and staff, that create a transparent standard for resuming in-person instruction.

2. Grant accommodations for all faculty, staff, and graduate students who have requested them regardless of reason.

3. Create a formal and transparent process whereby a committee representing all stakeholders (including track and contingent faculty, staff, and students) in the ASU community can advise the executive leadership team on questions pertaining to COVID policy.

"And out of that beginning, first at the University of Arizona and then later at ASU, people realized that a kind of loose coalition was a good start, but more organization was

needed,” Newhauser said.

In September 2020, the United Campus Workers of Arizona formed against the “austerity measures” implemented at the University of Arizona and the lack of COVID-19 regulations to keep on-campus workers safe.

UCW Arizona joined the national Communication Workers of America union and other higher education unions at the University of Colorado and the University of Tennessee.

By joining this group of unions, Newhauser said, the UCW Arizona union has been able to set up Zoom calls with leaders in other states and pursue what he calls a “wall-to-wall” union.

A wall-to-wall union seeks to unite all workers – from tenured professors and full-time staff to graduate students and under-

graduate laborers – to create the most robust solidarity possible.

All union members are required to pay dues, but with a progressive due structure, Newhauser said, the lowest-paid workers at ASU would pay as little as \$8 per month for union membership.

“But even that can be worked out with the union,” Newhauser said.

Solidarity

Young grew up near Detroit, a historically strong union city that arose in the 1930s with the automobile industry and the “Big Three” manufacturers Ford, General Motors and Chrysler.

“Unions made for higher wages,” Young said. “They made for better working conditions and they helped historically establish the 40-hour workweek, the minimum wage.

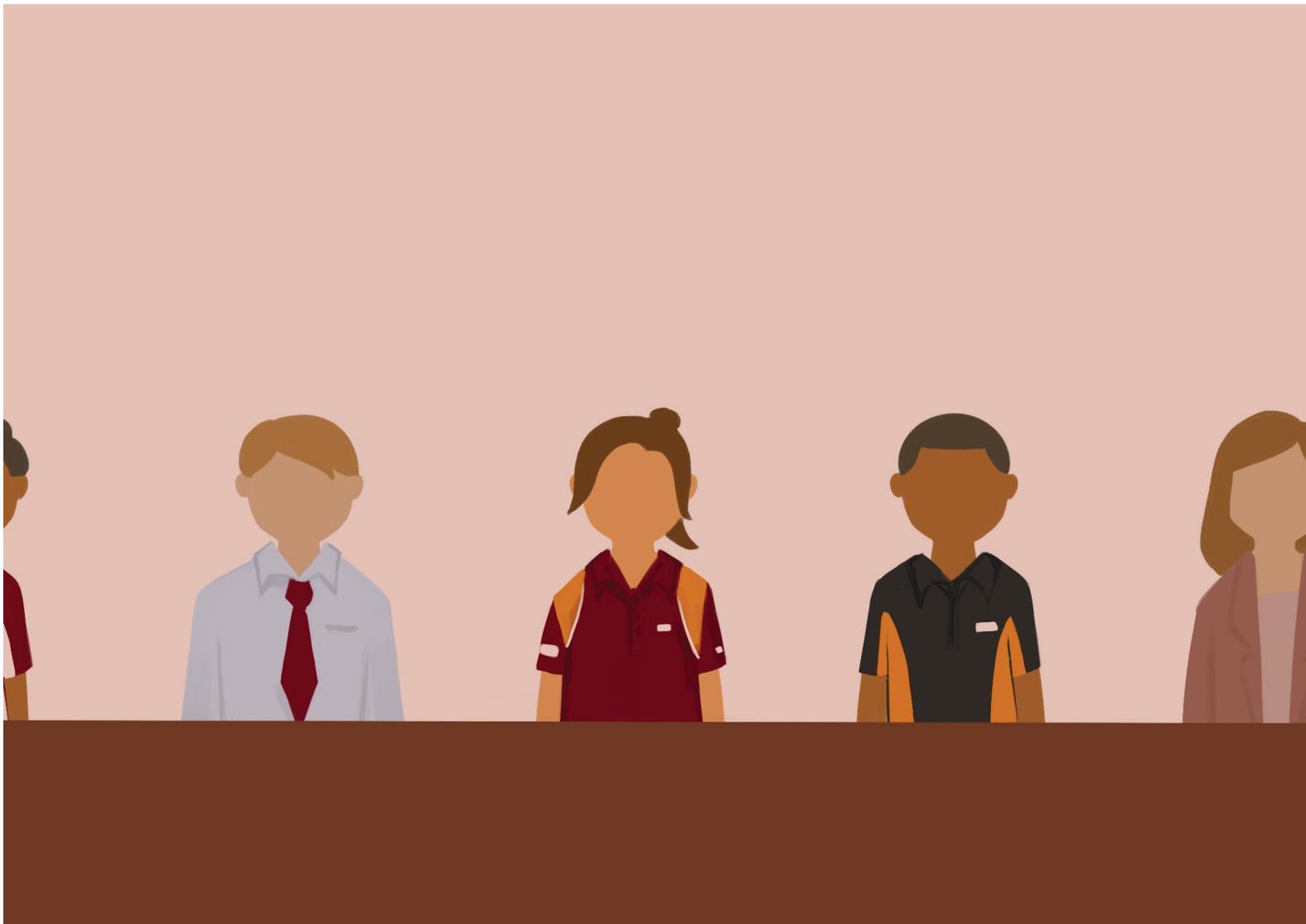
They helped end child labor.”

But when she moved to Arizona, Young found that unions had a bad reputation. Arizona is one of 28 states with right-to-work laws. She hopes that the pandemic, as terrible as it has been for working-class families, can also be a moment to change unions’ reputation in the state.

Right-to-work laws weaken the power of unions by eliminating compulsory union membership for new employees, Jacobs said. Without a robust union, the ability to collectively bargain with an employer is greatly reduced.

Newhauser, who used his tenured status to take a sabbatical this year and avoid risking infection on campus, said “it’s incumbent on everybody who has job security to show solidarity with those who are in positions where that’s not granted.”

Illustration by Nghi Tran



Since forming last month, the union gained more than 150 members at ASU and another 500 members at the University of Arizona, Young said, noting that the union “grows stronger every day.”

But there’s a long way to forming a wall-to-wall union with more than 17,700 staff members on five separate campuses.

“That’s the biggest challenge,” Young said about getting members to understand what a union can do for them, and make a financial commitment. “But you have to put your money where your mouth is. I’m paying \$22 a month now for the union because I believe in it.”

The union bug

The union voted in February for members of its steering committee. It’s the first step in setting goals for the union and strategizing the ways to go about achieving those goals.

Newhauser outlined a few goals the union hopes to accomplish: create campaigns addressing rising health care costs and lower health care benefits, make sure all workers

are paid a living wage and that payment is adjusted with the cost of living, and protect workers from being fired without just cause.

“We want employees to have a voice where they’ve often been unheard,” Newhauser said. “We want true shared governance. In other words, what we’re talking about is power-sharing at the University.”

Young was able to successfully lobby the ASU administration to review its rules on the quarantining of books — outside of her union work, she said. But being part of the union emboldened her to address her concerns and advocate for herself.

The unionization effort inside of Arizona’s higher education institutions follows closely behind the effort in Arizona’s K-12 institutions with the Red For Ed movement.

Through organizing and protest, Red For Ed was able to gain attention from the public and lobby lawmakers. And in 2018, Gov. Doug Ducey signed the 20x2020 Plan which would bring a 20% raise to public school teachers over three years.

“Those teachers, by coming together and

acting together,” Jacobs said, “were able to utilize their collective power in such a way that they were able to win, in many cases, greater funding for schools and pay increases for teachers who are woefully underpaid.”

The unionization bug that Arizona’s public school teachers caught a few years ago seems to have mutated to infect the workers at the state’s colleges, Jacobs said. Public opinion has been moving in favor of unions over the past decade, he said, and workers are “newly organizing right in the throes of the pandemic.”

The union’s work is cut out for them. But with a couple of semesters of Zoom classes under their belt, Young, Newhauser and the rest of the union have adapted to creating solidarity digitally, working to change the system of decision-making itself.

“We’re working to ensure that the universities operate in a more democratic fashion and listen to the little people like me and student workers,” Young said. “And that we have a voice in how the system is run.”

**“We want true shared governance, in other words, what we're talking about is power-sharing at the University.”
— Richard Newhauser**



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Having a normal one in 2021

"I found the professor, wearing a neon light-up hazmat suit among the sea of business casual-clad students"

by Camila Pedrosa

Editors Note: The nature of this article is satirical and the opinions presented are the author's and do not imply any endorsement from The State Press and its editors.

At the beginning of the semester, ASU President Michael Crow implemented a new rule requiring provost's office approval for professors to hold classes entirely on Zoom. This was in an attempt to get more professors teaching on campus and consequently more students into classrooms, as a survey showed only 20% of ASU students attended class in person each day. I went to different classes across the Tempe campus to see how professors without provost approval are managing.

I stepped into the first building and the overwhelming smell of hand sanitizer burned my nostrils as the custodian mopped the floor using a gallon jug of Purell. I made my way to the first class I was invited to, treading carefully as to not completely eat it on the slippery sanitizer-covered tiles. One life-threatening flight of stairs later, I made it.

Looking inside from the window next to the door, I was confused. The lights were off but the projector screen displayed a full Zoom class. I knocked on the door. No answer. I pulled on the handle and the door opened to a seemingly empty classroom. In the back corner of the room right outside my line of sight sat a single student slumped in a chair on his phone. He was so engrossed in repeatedly refreshing his COVID-19 test result webpage that he didn't even acknowledge my presence. He didn't realize I existed until I sat

down in the chair closest to him.

I asked him why he was the only student inside the classroom when everyone else was on Zoom. "Our professor is in the ICU with COVID-19 and the provost denied his request for a temporary fully-Zoom class, so now we have to have a designated in-class student each day. They sent us a sign-up sheet and promised to drop our lowest test score if we came in at least once," he said.

Sure enough, a rough-looking professor attached to a ventilator flashed on the projector screen. The camera looked to be held up by someone else, possibly a nurse, doctor, or distraught loved one. Between monitor beeps and artificial breaths, the professor eked out the lecture one sentence at a time. In the chat, every single student of the 60-person class sent messages like "Get well soon!" and "I'll keep you in my prayers, professor!" The student sitting in class told me those messages were sent in every single class session since the professor was diagnosed with COVID-19.

At the end of the shortened lecture, only about 30 minutes, the professor slowly stated, "There is an essay listed in Canvas. Ignore it. I can't stay awake long enough...to grade papers right now. Have a good weekend." A chorus of well-wishes streamed in as everyone left. The designated in-person student exited the classroom Zoom and

turned off the projector before giving a half-hearted goodbye and leaving. Completely shocked, I followed his lead and headed out.

By this point, the Purell-treated floor was dry so I quickly left the building, shaking off the terrifying image of the professor with a tube down their trachea.

I made my way to the next class in the upstairs lecture hall. Pilates? Walking inside, my mouth dropped. This 25-person class was being held in a lecture hall meant for 400 students. In a large circle around the stadium-style hall were 26 8-foot hamster ball-looking bubbles filled with students, and the teacher. The bubbles rolled rapidly around the classroom as the students did warm-up laps. To reach the teacher in the center of the hall, I had to time my entrance Crossy Road-style to avoid being steam-rolled by a hamster-ball pilates student. Narrowly missing a ball, I made it to where the teacher stood with a microphone inside her own bubble.

She noticed me and invited me to sit in one of the lecture chairs as she climbed out of her bubble and told the class to continue warming up.

I asked her about the bubbles, and she responded, "I feel pilates needs to be practiced with freedom, so to overlook the mask requirement, I had each student purchase personal bubble balls to practice our exer-



Illustration by Nghi Tran

cises in.” I looked up the price for these balls later in the day and they’re over \$300 apiece, which is apparently cheaper than some textbooks. “I requested this lecture hall for our class, we can’t fit 26 8-foot bubbles in a dance studio,” she said. “Usually, there’s an accounting lecture in this room, but the administration made it work.”

At this point she had to start instruction, so I sat and watched while she led the class in a series of exercises inside their bubbles. The bubbles tended to fog up after a particularly strenuous exercise so she kept a squeegee with her to wipe down the plastic and remain visible. She had a Zoom call live, but there were no students attending virtually. It was only so she could stream to the giant

monitors in the lecture hall for the students in the back to see her movements clearly. I noticed one guy in the back repeatedly open the zipper of his ball and stick his head out to take dramatically loud breaths without his mask on, despite having an 8-foot personal diameter to not wear a mask. The professor never seemed to notice, but every time he did it, the students directly next to him inched away more and more. By the end of the class, he had an extra 10 feet of space around him on each side of the bubble.

I remembered the pilates instructor said there usually was an accounting class in the lecture hall, so I asked if she knew where they relocated so I could check it out. She told me it was a floor down, in the science

lab. Not knowing what to expect, I made my way down.

Approaching the door, I felt uneasy, as if I knew exactly what I was about to see on the other side. My gut proved correct.

I felt like I was stepping into the metro on game day. Packed almost literally from wall to ceiling, were business majors. I estimated 150 students in a room meant for 40. In the front of the class, there was a Zoom call showing another 150 students, so per ASU rules, half of the class was in-person at a time. I suddenly regretted reporting for this article.

Pushing past throngs of people, I found the professor, wearing a neon light-up hazmat suit among the sea of business

casual-clad students while also valiantly protecting himself from a seemingly inevitable COVID-19 diagnosis. I also noticed he had a chain attached to a wrist cuff. I assumed it was to keep from being swept away in the crowd. I introduced myself and explained why I was in the class, and he passed me a spare hazmat helmet before expressing rage toward the administration.

“Somehow, the Animal Physiology lab was granted permission to hold class fully on Zoom but we weren’t... so the provost gave us their classroom because that pilates teacher wanted ‘more space to fully experience the class’ and now we have to fit half of our lecture in here each day. How do you even dissect animals on Zoom?”

He allowed me to sit at his desk with him while he lectured, and I somehow managed to spot students in new places everywhere I looked.

I noticed the majority sitting on the floor, some straddling each other’s backs to best make use of the space. Many students shared chairs (the class record was seven to a chair). To take notes, they all used each other’s backs as writing surfaces. I couldn’t make out one tabletop or even a solid surface.

If they weren’t sitting on a chair ounces from shattering or the floor, they sat on the tables, inside the fume hood or stood inside the supply closet. Glass test tubes and flasks from the supply closet were fit in the small spaces left on the floor, resembling a water cup prank but with much higher stakes. The students inside the fume hood were sitting on one another’s shoulders, creating a tower of students as high as the ceiling. They did a telephone-style chain for relaying lecture information. Knowing how the telephone game typically goes, I genuinely wondered how accurate the notes of the student at the top were. The emergency shower would accidentally go off any time someone even sneezed. The poor girl whose assigned cubic foot of space was under the showerhead brought an umbrella. Looking up to stretch my neck, and subsequently setting off the

shower again, I jumped at the sight of a group of students sitting in a circle on the roof tiles, with one taken out for them to see and hear the professor, and probably to leave after class.

After what was the longest hour of my life, the lecture finally ended and the students left one by one, like a human game of Jenga to avoid any catastrophic stamped. It took another 15 minutes to empty the class, and then I finally was able to leave as well. I offered my sympathy to the professor and headed out to find some food, some Ibuprofen and a spare vaccine perhaps.

Finally, my day of hell was over. My consensus is that no one, student or professor, except maybe the pilates teacher, is happy with the new rule. From designating a student to be in class, to sardine-packing a class of 150 into a small room, to requiring students to shell out hundreds of dollars for a plastic inflatable bubble, there has been nothing good to come out of it. While it may be more cost-effective for the administration to exploit their faculty and students, it seems like the unintended consequences may come back to haunt them soon.



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Creighton University is seeking accreditation of a new physical therapist education program from CAPTE. The program is planning to submit an Application for Candidacy, which is the formal application required in the

pre-accreditation stage, on June 1, 2021. Submission of this document does not assure that the program will be granted Candidate for Accreditation status. Achievement of Candidate for Accreditation status is required prior to implementation of the professional phase of the program; therefore, no students may be enrolled in professional courses until Candidate for Accreditation status has been achieved. Further, though achievement of Candidate for Accreditation status signifies satisfactory progress toward accreditation, it does not assure that the program will be granted accreditation.