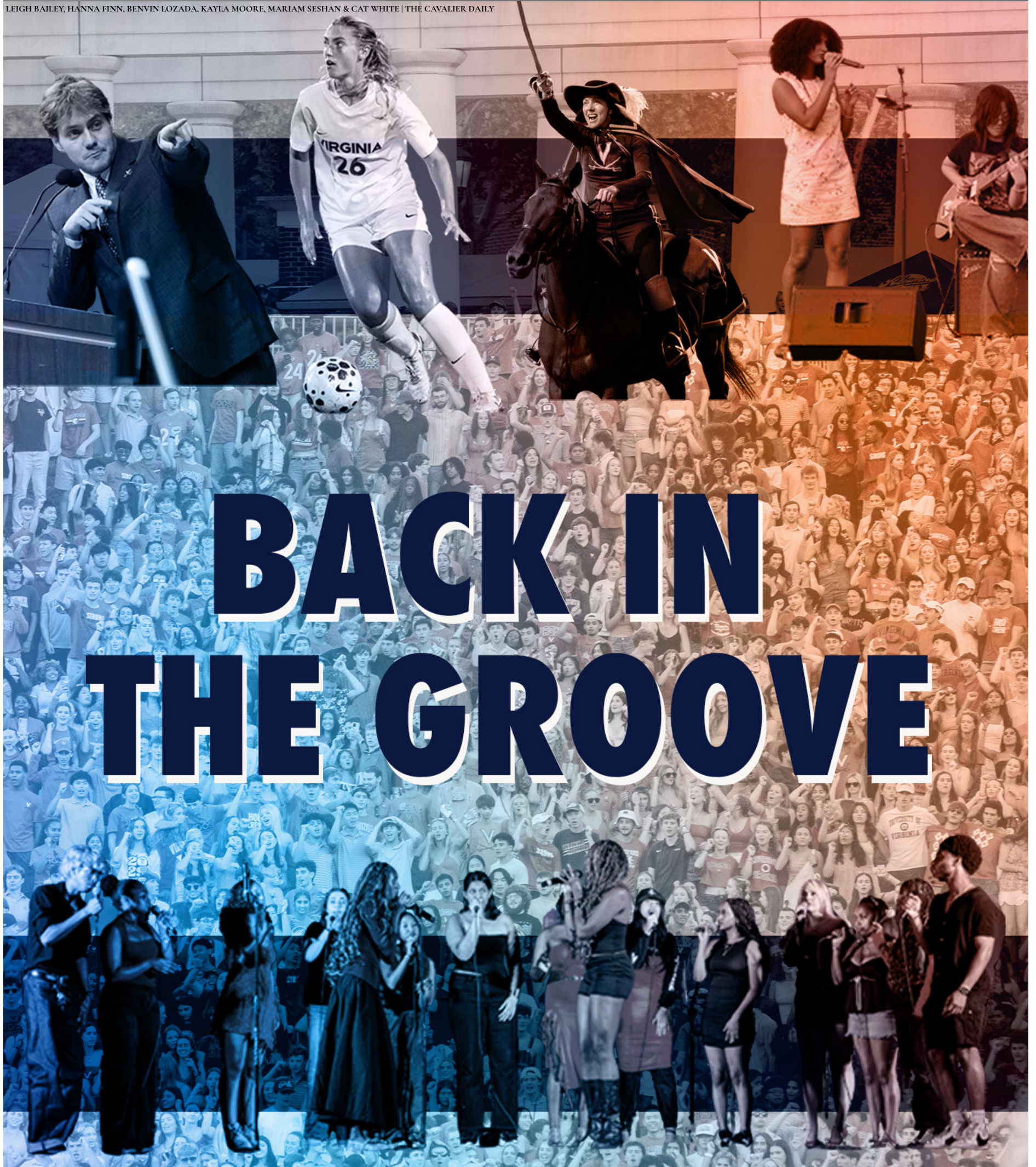


THE CAVALIER DAILY

Vol. 136, Issue 2

Thursday, September 11, 2025

LEIGH BAILEY, HANNA FINN, BENVIN LOZADA, KAYLA MOORE, MARIAM SESHAN & CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY



NEWS

This week in-brief

CD News Staff

Senate votes down more Youngkin nominees, likely leaving five vacancies on the Board

The Senate Privileges and Elections Committee voted down another set of Gov. Glenn Youngkin's nominees to public university governing boards in Virginia. In total, the Committee has now rejected 10 nominees for George Mason University's governing board, seven for the Virginia Military Institute and five at U.Va.

Rejected Thursday were James Donovan, John Harris, H. Eugene Lockhart and Calvert Saunders Moore, all of whom were appointed by Youngkin at the end of June and have been serving on the Board of Visitors since then. Former Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli was previously rejected by the committee in early June, alongside seven other appointees to GMU and VMI. If those universities comply with the ruling, there will be a total of 10 vacancies at GMU and seven at VMI.

In the 9 minute meeting Thursday, Democrats wasted little time in voting down the slate of appointees before them, with eight members voting against the nominees and six in favor — a party line vote. Before the vote, State Sen. Glen Sturtevant, R-Midlothian, made remarks before the committee that the nominees have not done anything worthy of being voted down. State Sen. Aaron Rouse, D-Virginia Beach and the chair of the committee, did not respond to Sturtevant, and brought the slate to a vote.

In a statement after the vote, Rouse cited "political interference" from the Trump administration as the reason for the vote. Former University President Jim Ryan stepped down in June following pressure from the Department of Justice.

HRL removes DEI from resident staff training, restructures multiculturalism committee

This year, Housing and Residence Life has eliminated diversity, equity and inclusion and multicultural training for resident advisors, according to anonymous resident staff. In addition, HRL's Committee on Multiculturalism has been absorbed by the Resident Staff Engagement Committee without any formal announcement to resident staff. These changes follow national mandates to dissolve DEI programs and pressure on the University from the Justice Department to comply with federal law prohibiting these programs.

Resident staff began their annual Orientation Week, also known as "O-Week" — a training period that aims to prepare them for their roles — in early August. During O-Week, resident advisors go through different training modules, such as "Intro to Safe Grounds" or "Emergency Management."

Alongside these modules, RAs and SRs also went through multicultural and DEI-adjacent training in 2024, such as modules titled "Inclusivity in Your Hall" and "DEI Resources," according to former resident staff. This training was not covered this past O-Week, according to a training calendar which was provided to The Cavalier Daily by a resident advisor.

An anonymous RA confirmed that DEI training was not a focus this year. "In the past, we had a big emphasis on DEI ... But as far as I can tell, there has not been much discussion of diversity and inclusivity," the RA said.

In contrast to previous years, training sessions did not mention multicultural organizations on Grounds, such as the Office of African-American Affairs.

U.Va. Faculty Senate hears from interim President Mahoney

The Faculty Senate discussed its distrust in the University's Board of Visitors at its Friday meeting, citing specifically the current search for a permanent president and the upcoming search for executive vice president and provost. The Faculty Senate also heard from Interim President Paul G. Mahoney and later passed a resolution affirming the body's commitment to academic freedom and the University's mission.

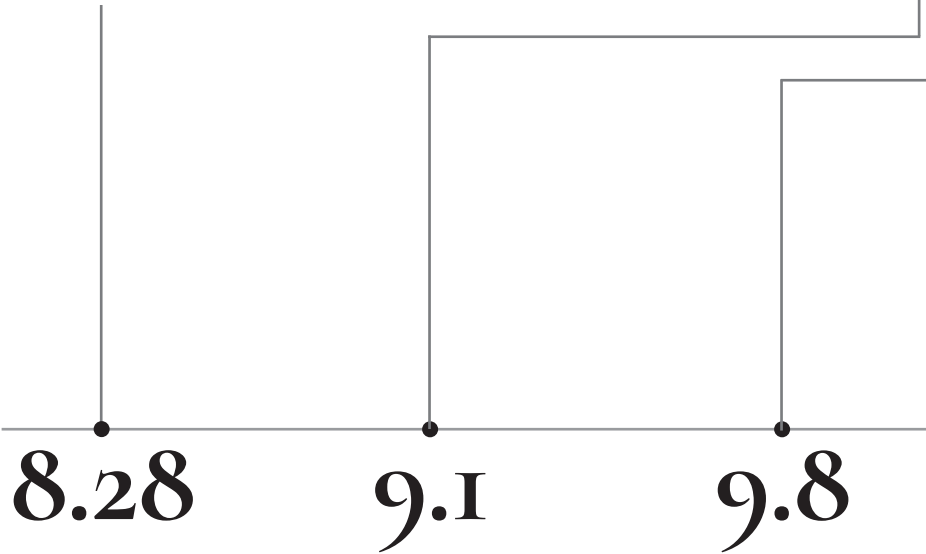
Faculty Senate Chair Jeri Seidman opened the meeting by providing a brief update on the ongoing University-wide compliance review by the Office of University Counsel.

The compliance review follows a series of inquiries beginning April 11 from the Department of Justice about the University's diversity, equity and inclusion policies and adherence to federal law under former University President Jim Ryan.

Seidman said that over the summer she had asked University Counsel Cliff Iler questions about the compliance review and said she was expecting a draft of responses from Iler by Sunday. Because of this, she asked that the senators refrain from asking Mahoney questions about the compliance review given that they would likely be answered by Iler in the next few days.

Seidman then invited Mahoney to speak and answer a few questions from the group. Mahoney opened by emphasizing his belief in the importance of academic freedom at the University.

"I think I can say quite confidently that academic freedom is not only a core value of mine, but a core value of the University," Mahoney said.



Political groups on Grounds mobilize for gubernatorial race

Major political organizations are planning voter outreach and mobilization efforts as early voting fast approaches

Bertie Azqueta | Senior Writer

Student groups are ramping up their efforts to get out the vote ahead of Virginia's statewide and legislative elections this November. Partisan and non-partisan political groups like the UVa. Center for Politics, Hoos Vote, University Democrats and College Republicans are planning events to increase voter education and turnout before voters head to the polls starting Sept. 19.

The main candidates in the race to be the Commonwealth's next chief executive, succeeding Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, are Republican Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears and former Rep. Abigail Spanberger, D-Va. The winning candidate will be Virginia's first woman governor.

The governor's race will occur alongside the race for lieutenant governor, with State Sen. Gloria Hashmi, D-Chesterfield, facing off against Republican and Businessman John Reid, as well as the race for attorney general between incumbent Republican Attorney General Jason Miyares and former Del. Jay Jones, D-Norfolk. Winning either seat would be a pick-up for Democrats.

Fourth-year College student Zoe Shook is co-president of Hoos Vote, a Contracted Independent Organization at the University that aims to increase student engagement and turnout. Shook said the club will be tabling across the University and will be giving out different kinds of donuts from Krispy Kreme and Carter's Mountain Orchard through its "Donut Forget to Vote" effort.

She mentioned that she hopes to reach first-years with this effort and that the club is there to answer their questions, including whether students are eligible to vote in Virginia or if they can change their registration to a different state.

"I think politics can, at times, be very inaccessible or boring," Shook said. "So we're trying to help people realize that it doesn't always have to be like that, and to make politics more accessible."

Throughout this process, the University Democrats and College Republicans are supporting their respective party candidates, while non-partisan groups like the Center for Politics hope to increase voter awareness and turnout more generally.

The Center for Politics — which also collaborates with Hoos Vote — will be hosting several programs, including a partnership with Andrew Markwalter, founder of Every Vote Matters and graduate Batten Student. The group aims to help those on the autism spectrum to vote and will be conducting a mock polling event in cooperation with the University and the Charlottesville registrar.

The event will simulate the vot-



LILY PEPPER AND FORD MCCrackEN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears (left) and former Rep. Abigail Spanberger (right) speak at events in the Charlottesville-area in April 2025. The pair are facing off in the 2025 Virginia's governor's race.

ing process and will take place Sept. 18 in the multipurpose room of the Rotunda. The initiative is designed to familiarize participants with the mechanics of casting a ballot in a low-stress setting.

Glenn Crossman, director of programs at the Center, has been involved with numerous get out the vote efforts across the University and is currently working with Markwalter on this initiative. He said that participants will be able to register to vote at the event if they are not already registered, noting existing low turnout.

"There's a very low rate of students on the spectrum actually going to vote because it's too overwhelming for them," Crossman said.

Brianna Sharpe, president of the University Democrats and fourth-year College student, discussed her plans to host door-knocking events, phone banks and voter registration drives across Charlottesville every week leading up to the election in support of Spanberger and other Democrats. She also noted the importance of reaching areas outside of Charlottesville, including Ruckersville, a change from their previous strategy.

"Something we're trying to do differently this semester versus last semester in terms of door knocking and canvassing is getting outside of Charlottesville, outside of Albemarle, to rural areas ... where it really makes a

difference," Sharpe said. "I think we'll have more value in areas that aren't navy blue Charlottesville."

Sharpe also outlined plans to host several other collegiate Democratic groups, including the University of Pennsylvania Democrats, to help door knock for Spanberger in October. This follows the University Democrats visiting Pennsylvania to campaign for former Vice President Kamala Harris before the 2024 presidential election. Sharpe described these collaborations as a way to share resources and build momentum among student organizations across different universities.

The College Republicans declined to comment on its efforts or strategies regarding the governor's race, but they have expressed their continued support for the Republican ticket in email newsletters. During past election cycles, the group has organized voter registration drives, hosted speakers and connected students with opportunities to volunteer on campaigns.

Based on their email newsletters, College Republicans plans to knock on doors across Albemarle County this cycle and will have phone banks where students can volunteer to help inform people about Republican candidates running for office. The group hosted a phone banking event Sept. 10 for Earle-Sears and other Republicans.

Another political group on

Grounds with similar goals to the University Democrats is Cavalier Strategies, a student-run political consulting group that exclusively supports Democratic candidates. Riley Munson, club co-president and third-year Batten student, underlined the importance of reaching younger voters and increasing the club's online presence.

"A big goal for us is to meet younger voters where they are, which is usually online and on social media," Munson said. "A lot of the outreach that we're going to do about the upcoming election is going to be on the places where young people are naturally."

The governor's race in particular has received significant national attention as Virginia and New Jersey are the only two states holding gubernatorial elections this year, with the races viewed as bellwethers for the 2026 midterms.

This election is especially significant to students due to recent events at the University, according to Sharpe, regarding the resignation of former University President Jim Ryan and the recent controversy surrounding Youngkin's appointments to the Board of Visitors.

She noted the possibility of Spanberger being able to appoint several new members to the Board, preventing conservatives from maintaining a majority. Sharpe said that having a Democratic trifecta in state govern-

ment could ease tensions and significantly change the way the University currently operates before commenting on the state of the race.

"People see the polls and say it does look good for Spanberger ... but we want to campaign like we're 12 points down ... acting like we're going to lose with the hope and confidence that we're going to win and make things in the Commonwealth," Sharpe said.

Spanberger is rated as "likely" to win according to Sabato's Crystal Ball, the political publication run by Prof. Larry Sabato and the Center for Politics, which recently changed its characterization of the governor's race in the Democrats' favor. This comes amid strong polling and fundraising numbers for Spanberger. At the same time, analysts caution that statewide races in Virginia have often tightened in the final weeks of campaigning, suggesting that the contest remains competitive.

Elections in Virginia will take place Nov. 4 with classes not being held at the University. Early voting starts Sept. 19, but students can register to vote online or in-person before Oct. 24. Same-day registration is also available at a polling place to cast a provisional ballot. Mail-in ballots are available to request until Oct. 24. For more information, visit the Virginia Department of Elections.

Architecture Student Council loses budget for Beaux Arts Ball

According to the University, these reductions in funding are a result of University-wide cuts to discretionary funding

Lauren Seeliger | Senior Writer



KATE MERCER | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Watts said he was made aware of the budget cut through a meeting he had with the School of Architecture Office of Student Affairs.

This year, the School of Architecture Student Council has lost its \$12,000 budget for planning and executing the annual Beaux Arts Ball charity event as a result of University-wide cuts to discretionary funding.

The Architecture Student Council is a Special Status Organization responsible for serving Architecture students through social, community building and service events, including the Beaux Arts Ball.

The Beaux Arts Ball is an annual charity event that has been run since 1928 and is hosted by the Architecture School and the University art department. Alan Watts, Architecture Student Council president and fourth-year Architecture student, said the event was hosted at the Graduate hotel last year and the majority of the \$12,000 grant went towards renting the space and providing catered food. Following the event, the organization donates any extra funding and ticket money raised to a charity of their choice.

“The goal is to be able to pay for the event using as much of the grant as possible so that we can make money off the event [through ticketing and other fundraising],” Watts said. “The more money we make off of the event, the more we can donate to charity.”

Watts emphasized that he is confident the event will still be able to take place this year but that their Student Council will need to fundraise more

and potentially change the location of the ball. He said that rather than hosting at a rented space, it may be more budget-friendly to hold the ball on the North Terrace of the Architecture Grounds.

“It’s a little bit [tougher] this year when we don’t have that grant,” Watts said. “It means we have to be more creative about where we’re getting our funding from, and then also [rethink] what exactly the event might look like.”

Watts said he was made aware of the budget cut through a meeting he had with the School of Architecture Office of Student Affairs. According to Watts, administrators in the office said this was due to federal funding cuts.

In an email sent to Watts prior to this meeting, Cindy Kiefer, associate dean of Student Affairs in the School of Architecture, said that all departmental discretionary funds had been cut.

“Our budget has been impacted across multiple areas, including professional development, equipment replacement, Final Reviews, and the elimination of all departmental discretionary funds,” Kiefer said.

The Cavalier Daily reached out to Kiefer for more information on this topic, who referred The Cavalier Daily to Associate Dean of Finance Megan Arevalo — who was unresponsive — and Executive Director of Communications Sneha Patel, who

declined to speak with The Cavalier Daily directly.

University Spokesperson Bethanie Glover said that the need to cut the ball’s budget this year stems from University-wide guidance of “fiscal austerity” and cuts to all areas of discretionary funding. Glover said that these cuts are not a result of recent federal funding cuts, which totaled more than \$60 million in May.

According to Glover, the Architecture Office of Student Affairs has engaged the University’s Foundation and Advancement team for support in searching for potential donors to support the event this year.

Watts and Cole Evans, Architecture Student Council director of fundraising and third-year Architecture student, both said the Architecture Student Council has already begun discussing ways to combat the budget cut. They are still in the planning stages as Watts did not learn of the cut until the second week of the school year. He said one thing the Council is considering is increasing their cosponsorships with the Honor Committee.

The Committee works to uphold the community of trust at the University through holding students accountable to integrity and honesty, and their cosponsorships allow the Committee to partner with other organizations on Grounds to host initiatives and events. Cosponsored events with the Committee each have

a maximum budget of \$500.

Evans said the Architecture Student Council has typically cosponsored with Honor between one and three times per semester, in which the Committee has provided them with a grant to buy materials for Architecture students. Watts noted materials like acrylic, cardboard and model making tools can be incredibly expensive for students and that partnering with the Committee in the past has been a huge help.

“We do a lot of cosponsorships with the Committee ... they have a ton of money and they’re willing to share with us which is amazing,” Watts said.

Beyond the Committee, Evans said the Architecture Student Council is additionally hoping to cosponsor with the University Student Council, which serves all students, as well as the University Programs Council, which is a programming organization that provides entertaining and educational events to students.

“We’re trying to explain the situation to [other committees] to tailor our events so that they can fit either some of the criteria for cosponsorships or [to] create another type of grant or fundraising category that they might be able to assist us with,” Evans said.

Evans said two other sources he is looking into requesting funding from are the University Parents Program and the Jefferson Trust. The Parents

Program works to directly aid student organizations through monetary donations from current and past parents of University students, and the Jefferson Trust provides grants to ideas that they think will enrich the University. Evans explained that the Architecture Student Council will work to write compelling requests for grants that will hopefully qualify the Council to receive funding.

Despite the loss of the \$12,000 grant for the Beaux Arts Ball, Watts said he remains positive about the year ahead for Architecture students. He emphasized his commitment to upholding the general programming the Architecture Student Council does throughout the year with their \$2,500 budget. This budget has not been cut as it is a collection of Architecture students’ Student Activities Fees that each student pays with tuition, and costs \$70 for Architecture students during the 2025-26 academic year.

He said with this money, there will be a fall semi-formal, teaching workshops where Architecture students can better their Adobe skills and professor-student bonding events for students to showcase and professionalize their work.

“We do have a ton of programming that is still going to happen and still be great quality,” Watts said.

Is a U.Va. degree worth it?

According to higher education scholars, there is no “one size fits all” solution to questions of attending college or choosing a major

Grace Little | Senior Associate

As tuition costs surge and a strong labor market offers promising pay, there is a growing belief among some that a college degree is no longer worth the cost. Students and families alike may be asking if a bachelor's degree from the University increases a student's marketability and predicts a higher salary than their peers who chose an alternative career route.

The College Scorecard — a resource managed by the U.S. Department of Education — offers an answer to this question in the form of a breakdown by median earnings and student loan debt after graduation for 68 fields of study at the University. The scorecard offers similar breakdowns on earnings and debt for 5,546 colleges in total. The scorecard suggests that some degrees are worth significantly more than others, and it also allows users to compare the value of a University degree to other accredited colleges. The resource's most recent data is five years old.

In comparison to the other over 3,000 four-year colleges for which data was collected on earnings and debt post-graduation, the University's median earnings are higher — the University's median earnings are \$86,863, as compared to the midpoint for four-year colleges, which is \$53,727.

According to the data on the Scorecard amassed from University graduates, bachelor's degrees in computer science and mathematics offer the highest salaries — median earnings following graduation fall between approximately \$130,000 and \$160,000. In contrast, bachelor's degrees in anthropology, fine and studio arts produce graduates with the lowest earnings right out of college — graduates from these programs make about \$45,000 to \$55,000, on average.

According to Preston Cooper, higher education researcher and senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, students attend college with the promise of a secured return on investment in the back of their minds. Cooper's work includes quantitatively assessing the value of a degree by calculating ROI through looking at earnings compared to average debt accrued.

He said that although many prospective students also value learning for its own sake and forming friendships — alternative lessons that the college experience imparts — they most prominently expect a payout in the form of higher placement in the job market.

“If you ask college students, what are your reasons for going to college? They'll say some variation of, ‘I want to get a better job. I want to increase my earnings. I want to make myself more marketable,’” Cooper said.

Batten Prof. Sarah Turner re-

searches higher education and said that there is more to life than how much you earn right out of college, but that one must balance in tandem the idea that finding gainful employment remains a strong objective. Turner advocates for maintaining a balance of seeking college as both a well-rounded experience and a useful tool to generate hireable traits.

“My take is that skills that employers look for among U.Va. grads are tied to capacity to solve complex problems and adapt, not indicators of whether you code in a particular language,” Turner wrote in a statement to *The Cavalier Daily*.

While Cooper acknowledged the significance of balance, he also vouched for the importance of tactfully choosing one's college major — according to his research, one in four college degrees has a negative ROI and are not worth it. Cooper said that fields like engineering, computer science and business tend to have a high ROI and students of these majors can earn back the cost of their education without issue. This is less of the case for other degrees, he said.

“Fine arts, education, philosophy, history, humanities ... certainly people do get a good return on investment with those degrees, but the return is less guaranteed,” Cooper said. “With those majors, you're often facing much more of a coin flip ... It's sometimes not enough to earn back the cost of the education.”

However, according to Ira Bashkow, associate professor and director of the undergraduate program in anthropology, the anthropology major, which is rated among the worst ROI at the University, differs from skill-oriented majors such as accounting because the field is much more diverse, and students take their knowledge in different directions.

Instead of immediately entering a specialized career post-grad after completing a degree in a specific skill, his students pursue many different directions, including teaching, medical school, public health and law school.

“[It] is generally true that our students don't go straight into a middle-aged career from college, which I think is overrated, actually,” Bashkow said. “It's okay to be young and explore things when you're young, and later you can be middle-aged when you're middle-aged.”

Bashkow said that changes in the landscape of post-graduate trends are due in part to increased worries among students which have pressured them to get started in their careers earlier and specialize as soon as possible.

“Young people are under more pressure than they should be to feel like they need to have a plan that leads from now to retirement, when they're,



ASMA SANALLAH | THE CAVALIER DAILY

like, 20,” Bashkow said. “It comes from the culture — there's a lot of anxiety — and it comes from people constantly asking one another, ‘Oh, what are you doing next?’”

Second-year College student Francis Aiken, who is majoring in Behavioral Neuroscience, said she chose her major because it prepares her for future success in medical school and ultimately becoming a doctor. According to Aiken, the University does offer majors that lead to more difficulty after graduation in finding a job and success in one's career. She gave the media studies major as an example of a degree she believes does not ensure students a solid ROI.

According to Bashkow, many of the people he knows who are happiest have changed directions many times over the course of their career. Some of the people he knows who entered bona fide careers out of college became very unhappy, and they ultimately changed directions.

He said another change to the landscape of the post-grad job market is the introduction of artificial intelligence — with the new technology, some traditional career pathways are crumbling or rapidly transforming, and he expects more profound changes in graduates' plans are to come in response to this drastic shift.

While Bashkow said he was wary a degree in a subject like computer science could remain lucrative with time, Cooper said students with these degrees are also gaining a marketable skill set that could be adaptable to the new world of AI. Cooper's advice to

students is to be aware of labor market trends and the skills in demand to adjust one's courses accordingly.

Second-year College student Yeeva Chunnanond studies computer science, and before arriving on Grounds, she had planned to major in this subject. Chunnanond said that she also hopes to complete a major in philosophy and appreciates getting a liberal arts education alongside her engineering-oriented degree.

Overall, Bashkow made the case for college centering on the experience and the qualitative skills one learns. Pushing one's limits, adjusting to life's surprises, exploring new courses and exposure to new ideas are all invaluable lessons one learns at college, and the more specialized skills required for one's specific career are easy to learn on the job.

Second-year College student Eloise Diffley intends to study art history and government, and she said that a college name — in this case, the University — gives the degree its value more than a student's major.

“The U.Va. name carries a lot of weight in the professional world, and I think that people have a certain perception of you based on where you went to college,” Diffley said. “A U.Va. degree immediately sends the message that you are driven and smart, and I think that that alone is a strong enough return on its investment.”

Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce publishes projections of jobs, education and training requirements through 2031. According to the resource, by

2031, 72 percent of jobs in the US will require postsecondary education and/or training, and 42 percent of jobs will require at least a bachelor's degree, up from 36 percent in 2021. In 1983, less than 20 percent of jobs required at least a bachelor's degree.

Cooper said he believes the government has the right to step in and enforce standards for degrees. Recently, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, passed by Congress and signed by President Donald Trump, enacted the policy that for an undergraduate program to receive federal loans, former students must have higher median earnings than high school graduates. Cooper said that this ensures that the worst ROIs can no longer use federal student loans going forward, which he believes is a reasonable change.

When considering the tradeoff between the inherent value of learning and experiencing college and a quantitative ROI, Cooper said that ultimately, if colleges are not delivering on positioning students to get better jobs, fewer and fewer students will choose to attend college.

“I do think that schools need to start actively considering what is their actual value proposition,” Cooper said. “Maybe that means closing some programs, but maybe that also means revamping programs to make them a bit more relevant to today's labor markets.”

LIFE

Hoo's got influence? Kate Gillen does.

With a sizable presence online, this fourth-year student has recently become the unofficial face of the University

Ingrid Gay | Staff Writer

For Kate Gillen, a hobby that started as home videos when she was a pre-tween has now become a source of entertainment for thousands.

Many University students will recognize Gillen, local content creator and fourth-year Batten student, from her role as a Student Communications Intern. Her day-in-the-life reels — capturing moments from studying abroad in Spain to moving into her Lawn room — have regularly appeared on the University's Instagram page.

But Gillen is also a content creator in her own right. Drawing from her day-to-day life at the University, Gillen has built a personal TikTok presence that has racked up over 2.3 million likes. Her account allows her to publicly share her life on Grounds and carve out a space to document her college memories.

For Gillen, creating content is nothing new. She began making family home movies and storytelling videos in elementary school. Shared with just a few friends and family, the fun she had planning and producing these videos sparked her love for video content. Her favorite one, she noted, was a spin on a Shakespeare tragedy.

"[My friend and I] thought it would be so fun if we did a parody called 'Elmo and Juliet,'" Gillen said. "I had this stuffed Elmo that was life-sized."

In her early days of video content, these fictional videos allowed her to bring her creative ideas to life.

"It's usually Capulet in Shakespeare, but we [called Elmo] Capu-red," Gillen said.

Nowadays, though, Gillen is best known for something a bit different — her frequent "Day In My Life" videos, which string together clips of her daily adventures set to a voice-over. She first started posting these on TikTok in her junior year of high school as a way to connect with her friends and classmates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This desire to stay connected with her network evolved into something more when she arrived at the University in 2022. Gillen quickly realized that many of her followers were also college students, who, like her, were navigating the transition to school and a new phase of life. As she

showcased attending Virginia football games and going out on Saturday nights, her content naturally shifted to reflect her college experience, which caused the engagement with her account to skyrocket.

"Because [college content] is so broadly applicable to everyone in college at this age ... I started getting so much traction," Gillen said.

Over these last three years, her most viral video has been a tribute to her first-year dorm in Kellogg House. Set to Elton John's "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," the video shows Gillen moving out, with a clean transition from a decorated, lived-in college dorm to an empty room. As of this month, it has received 8.4 million views.

Though Gillen has made plenty of videos like this one, which appeal to a largely college-age demographic across schools, most of her content is specific to the University. Her TikToks place an emphasis on the University's unique traditions and the quirks of student life on Grounds, from the annual Lighting of the Lawn to the "Run for Jim" in June.

Gillen's University content niche is what allowed her to break into more professional social media work on Grounds. She started her work for the University back as a first-year student, when she joined U.Va. Recreation as a Marketing Lead. Gillen was the brains behind several trending videos — most notably, one where she asks students at the gym what songs they are listening to, which amassed over 4.6 million views. Fast forward to last year, and Gillen received the opportunity to take her skills to a larger platform — U.Va. Communications.

"I like to highlight authentic U.Va. content and the student experience," Gillen said. "That's what [they were] looking for."

In her role as a Student Communications Intern, Gillen has been able to expand her social media footprint, from promoting the collaboration between the University and Lululemon at the Bookstore to creating even more University-related content for her personal account. Now, with a little less than two semesters left on Grounds, Gillen said she hopes to continue featuring more University essentials on both her



MAC DOUCETTE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Drawing from her day-to-day life at the University, Gillen has built a personal TikTok presence that has racked up over 2.3 million likes.

personal account and on the University's social platforms.

What's more, Gillen now has a front-row seat — literally — to all of these happenings. Lawn Room 11 has been her residence since the start of the year, and so now, she serves as a face of the school both digitally and in person. As a Lawnie, she is particularly excited to capture the joy of the University's community-wide celebrations, starting with the Halloween festivities next month.

"I am definitely so excited for Trick or Treating on the Lawn," Gillen said. "Halloween is [my] favorite holiday. I love the community aspect of being able to be with my friends, and being able to engage with the Charlottesville community."

With millions of views on TikTok and a residence in the heart of Grounds, it is hard to

find a more public-facing University student than Gillen. But despite the love she has for both her following and the liveliness of the Lawn, she stresses the importance of her own privacy, both in the digital and physical world.

"For me, it's just very important to remember that I am the one [who] chooses what is seen and what is not," Gillen said. "There is a lot about me that I don't put on social media ... Likewise, living on the Lawn is amazing. I feel so blessed ... but I can close that door when I want to."

Gillen also stressed that her content is highly curated, and she said that her seemingly "ideal" college experience is no better than anyone else's on Grounds — despite that it is so public-facing and picture-perfect online.

"I really don't think my experiences are any more valuable

or important because they are so visible, but you can't deny that the visibility does mean that I have a platform that everyone has access to, and I think it's very cool," Gillen said.

Gillen shared that, more than any TikTok of hers that has amassed tens of thousands of likes, her favorite videos she has made are collages of memories with her friends at the University.

What has been vital to Gillen through her entire experience with social media content creation is remembering who she does it for. She does not consider herself an influencer — rather, she said, her content is for her own enjoyment and scrapbooking.

"My friends influence me as much as I influence them," Gillen said.

‘Make lots of mistakes and learn from there’

Three University professors share guidance to help students lead successful semesters

Mai Hukuoka | Staff Writer

A new academic year has once again arrived at the University. Excited first-years are swarming McCormick Road, upperclassmen are dusting off their textbooks and everyone is scrambling to figure out the best route to their classes.

But “syll week” has come and gone and as the leaves start to turn, students’ anxieties rise. With the semester plugging along and courses becoming more demanding as a result, students feel compelled to figure out what kind of person they want to be entering the year — academically, professionally and individually.

Professors at the University have a unique front-row seat to these journeys. Having once navigated their own beginnings, professors now guide current students in figuring out their paths. Equipped with years of both teaching and learning from their students, these educators have accumulated quite the vault of advice.

Jane Zimmerman, lecturer at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, finds that a lot of her students feel out of place, battling thoughts that they are not good enough. But, she says, this is not something unique to each individual student.

“If you feel that you have imposter syndrome, know that everybody else does too,” Zimmerman said. “As much as you may be worried about how other people perceive you, they’re really spending more time having the same worries themselves about how they’re being perceived.”

Having been a first-generation college student herself, she empathizes with the stresses of entering a new world, managing not only work and academics but also the little things like laundry etiquette and dorm life.

Mieko Kawai, director of the Japanese language program and distinguished lecturer of Japanese, echoes this sentiment. She recalls, as a student, doubting her own self-worth while trying to keep up with friends and peers.

“[Students] want to be successful ... [but] then they are afraid of making mistakes or asking questions,” Kawai said. “[Asking] one question can be a contribution to the whole group and the whole community.”

Having now switched roles from student to teacher, Kawai realizes that classmates can be a valuable resource for studying, asking questions and having companionship during classes. She invites current students

to get to know their peers early in the semester, especially to stimulate the experience in the classroom.

Besides connecting with classmates, these professors also suggested that students form relationships with their instructors. They have noticed that often, students do not know how to initially approach their instructors, and that they are terrified of doing so in the wrong manner. John Casteen IV, principal of Brown College and associate professor of English, stresses the importance of students going to office hours and making the effort to get to know their professors. Taking the first step and reaching out to professors is never a mistake, he said.

“The comparison I always make is that office hours are like the National Parks,” Casteen said. “They’re really great if you go and you’re paying for them anyway, so you might as well show up.”

While academics stand at the forefront of college life, a recurring tidbit these professors dwelled on was that students should avoid overloading themselves. The fall semester presents a chaotic period filled with career fairs, recruitment for extracurriculars and, for many, internship applications. Yet the professors warned

that trying to accomplish everything, everywhere, all at once is a mistake. The biggest mistake Casteen sees in the first semester is students spreading themselves too thin, and he said that such a mindset actually puts students at a heavy disadvantage.

“[Overloading] leads [students] engagement to be conditional and superficial,” Casteen said. “I always recommend that people ... take about 15 credit hours, and then do one thing outside of class that you’ve always done that you really love and care about.”

While an overbooked calendar can be an obstacle in the way of students’ success, these professors want students to know that they are resources who strive to help them find their path. Kawai reflected on an instance where the way she thought about teaching and learning changed when a student who struggled in past courses reached out to her with the news that they had found a job in Japan. The student shared that Kawai’s class was the greatest, most meaningful class they had taken at the University.

This led her to realize that teaching lasts much longer than just a semester, impacting students long

beyond their time in college. Kawai said she changed the purpose of her classes, constantly thinking about how she can make each class meaningful for her students and relevant in practicality.

“It’s lifetime learning for me as well,” Kawai said. “Sometimes [teaching] is painful, but at the same time, it can be something that you can enjoy for life. That was the moment that I thought, ‘This is great. I love my job.’”

Casteen said that college is a place that concentrates “maximum diversity and minimum geography” and that this opportunity for students to broaden their worldview will never approach them in the same way again. Being present in and getting involved with Charlottesville’s special community is crucial to making the most out of being a student at the University.

“Don’t spend your time at college doing things that you could do if you hadn’t gone to college or if you were at some other college. Take advantage of the things that are here,” Casteen said. “Nothing that’s happening on your phone is as important as anything that’s happening between people here.”

Incorporating lessons in silence into fall semester

Summer travels led me to ditch the distractions and get in tune with my thoughts

Elizabeth Adams | Staff Writer

Each time I stepped out of my dorm last year, one accessory was always close by — my trusty AirPods. It is an understatement to say that I was attached to my chatty podcasts in the AFC, pop playlists on strolls around Grounds and instrumental music during Shannon study sessions. Whether I was embarking on the two-minute walk from Gooch to Runk Dining Hall or the 20-minute trek to my classes, something was constantly playing in my ears.

As this semester ramps up, however, I’ve decided that I want my listening habits to look a little different. The transitions from place to place formerly filled with easy, noisy distraction are now opportunities for peace or productivity — times for me to mentally prepare my to-do list or simply take in Grounds’ sights and sounds. And those reliable old AirPods? Well, they’re now more likely found safely tucked away in my bag.

It’s safe to say that this change did not happen overnight. After a school year of nonstop, personalized sound, this summer brought experiences that

left me feeling a bit differently about my headphone habits. I embarked on an exciting backpacking trip through Portugal with my brother, and although we’d spent months planning this journey, days off the grid and long stretches of walking brought a challenge I had not anticipated — silence.

Predictably, two straight weeks of hiking meant my brother and I spent quite a bit of quality time together. But with so many days walking between 10 and 20 miles, we eventually ran out of discussion-worthy topics and sibling spats to fill the space. I soon found myself following my brother on the trail with no conversation flowing between us — just the sound of our shoes tromping across the landscape.

As we trekked through towns, countrysides and even along highways, I tried desperately to pass the time. I looked past the foggy mornings, gorgeous vistas and salty seaside scents, instead reaching for downloaded podcast episodes and hoping the hours and landscapes would fly by if I had something — anything — playing in my ears. Yet when we passed other

hikers, swapping good-natured greetings, I noticed that no one else seemed to be sporting headphones. I suddenly felt embarrassed — not relieved — by my reliance on perpetual stimulation.

I began removing my AirPods each time we approached groups on the trail, not wanting them to see my inability to be fully present in the experience. Eventually, I gave up on my strange headphone dance altogether. My fears of judgement revealed the deeper need at hand — it was time to let myself think.

At first, I couldn’t help but replace the noise with dread for the hilly terrain and thoughts of my backpack’s seemingly ever-increasing weight. I quickly realized the misery of this, however, and worked to give myself prompts and ideas — daydreaming about the future, appreciating my friendships and considering the beautiful landscape.

The silence was lonely at times, but I soon realized how much I enjoyed my own company. Being with myself — without distractions — gave me space to discover new aspects of my

own personality. I entertained myself with games and scenarios, ran through songs and soundtracks I had long ago memorized and enjoyed the freedom to simply think without inhibition.

As I wrapped up my travels and returned to the world of consistent Spotify access, I expected to revert right back to my old listening ways. To my surprise, however, I found myself craving that sense of peace I’d uncovered on my trip. But the hectic start of the school year inevitably brings new challenges, routines and questions — so how could I keep up this reflective habit amidst the chaos?

Since returning to Grounds, I have made the daily, conscious effort to integrate these lessons in silence into my life at the University, from challenging myself to technology-free walks across the Lawn to leaving my phone at home when grabbing Bodo’s with friends.

Yet, without the distraction of the breathtaking Portuguese views from my trip, I still find these choices difficult. Our brains can be jarring and strange places, always ready to offer unnecessary judgement and criticism.

I’m often tempted to use noise as a distraction rather than investigate the more disagreeable thoughts that arise. Despite this, I remain firm in my goal to embrace the quiet, working to replace the ease of entertainment with observation — both inside and out.

All this is not to say that soundtracks are never necessary — the joys of the perfect upbeat song during a hard workout or a hilarious podcast on a long car ride are unmatched. But there is something to be said for adding a little awkwardness to your life, particularly when those strange feelings are just a stop on the way to uncovering more about yourself.

Music is still a constant presence in my life, and I’m unlikely to fully ditch my AirPods anytime soon. But as I’ve begun making room for my own thoughts, the soundtrack that used to blare incessantly has become an accessory to my life, rather than a crutch. I may not always have internet access or Spotify Premium, but I will always have myself — and I’ve come to realize that’s enough for me.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Fralin's "In Feeling" is a multisensory journey through disability

On display through Jan. 4, the exhibit asks viewers to interact, rest and feel in order to challenge the notion of what a museum can be for its audience.

Fiona Goo | Staff Writer

"In Feeling: Empathy and Tension Through Disability" at the Fralin Museum of Art does not look like the everyday art exhibit — in fact, upon visiting, museumgoers might ask themselves where the art is. The exhibit opened Aug. 30 and explores how we empathize with others, highlighting the experiences of lived disability through different mediums such as space, music, video, text and drawing.

By accessing multiple senses and drawing on intimacy and empathy, "In Feeling" goes above and beyond to connect viewers to each other and to the experiences of others. Ainsley McGowan, chair of the Fralin student docent program and fourth-year College student, described what it is like to experience the work.

"You start to think about how you've taken for granted just being able to walk into a museum, and be comfortable, and stand and walk around for two hours and not need to use the one bench that may be available," McGowan said.

"Perspective" by Molly Joyce — one of the curators of the exhibit and fourth-year PhD student in music — was the original piece around which the exhibit was curated. The boundary-pushing art is an 18-minute, 30 second video that she describes as featuring voices and viewpoints of the disability community.

There are several iterations of the work spanning locations from Washington, D.C. to Dusseldorf, Germany, but the one on display at the Fralin is unique — to create the work, Joyce localized it to Charlottesville residents and University students and faculty, asking questions that she felt were central to the disabled experience.

"What is rest for you?" she asks at the beginning of the work.

The video is paired with a bench equipped with vibrotactile technology that converts sounds into vibration, creating an environment where one can feel, as well as hear, the art. Joyce, who identifies as disabled herself, said that her own acceptance of her disability led to an expansion of her artistic practice.

"I think, more publicly, kind of coming out as disabled, and especially collaborating with other disabled artists and so forth, definitely opened up new avenues for collaboration and thinking about disability," Joyce said.

Joyce's own artistic practice parallels the curatorial vision she brought to the exhibit. During the

curation of the exhibit, Joyce mentioned that many of the artists she reached out to were from her personal network collaborators, all of whom publicly identify as disabled. She wanted the exhibit to have art across a variety of mediums and disciplines and asked the artists if they had any pieces of art that centers around the ideas in "Perspective."

"I think from the start, we knew we wanted to only have disabled artists or artists that publicly identify as disabled," Joyce said. "It really was artist-led in that way, like choosing artists that we found interesting, and trying to get artists across a range of disciplines."

Empathy and intention with disability were themes that Joyce wanted to highlight in the curation of the exhibit and are clear from the moment you enter. Immediately upon entering the exhibit, viewers can see a table set with various cards and hourglasses, as well as a rectangular mat set upon the floor, with circular markers on it indicating distance. These works are entitled "wrestling embrace (deck)" and "wrestling embrace (index)" by artist Jeff Kasper, whose works often feature instructional text that prompt relationship building and serious play.

The art is a set of interactive exercises on cards, designed to be used with a partner on a soft mat. The cards prompt deeper dialogue between those who choose to participate, exploring themes of vulnerability and access to intimacy.

"Hold a distance of no more than 2 feet," reads one card. "As often and as naturally as you can, let your partner know: 'we're in this together and I'm not going anywhere.'"

McGowan emphasized how the exhibit goes beyond traditional interactive approaches.

"With the docent program, we try to make things as interactive as they can be," McGowan said. "But this level of interaction, I haven't seen before ... not only is it interactive, but there's so many different ways you can interact."

Other opportunities for viewers to interact can be found in works such as "A New Self Portrait" and "Landing Site" by Andy Slater, a Chicago based artist who is blind. The viewer can engage with the work by putting on a set of headphones and pressing a button. Upon doing this, they will hear descriptive audio and alternative text describing the works. Slater converts access itself into art and

asks a non-disabled audience to put themselves into different shoes.

"This is my face, I know what I look like, but proving it is a challenge," Slater says in "A New Self Portrait."

While Slater explores auditory access, artist Park McArthur adds a tactile dimension to her work. Viewers are encouraged to gently interact with her work "Polyurethane Foam." The name of the work is fitting — it is a substantially large block of light green polyurethane foam, which the placard says is the material used in the artist's everyday wheelchair. The tactile dimension makes the piece physically accessible, but also adds a personal depth of inclusion and disability from McArthur's own experience.

Just steps away from "Polyurethane Foam," visitors can find themselves in a dim, octagonal gallery vibrating with JJJJJerome Ellis's "Sonic Bathhouse #2." The room contains benches, couches, chairs and pillows that are also equipped with vibrotactile technology. On the walls are comforting mantras such as, "Rest is encouraged" and "Please stay as long as you wish."

McGowan went on to elaborate on the thoughts that the exhibit provoked within her and what audiences might expect to learn from viewing it.

"I think it really opens your eyes to how different people with different levels of mobility or ability interact with these quiet spaces," McGowan said.

Among the works that provoke thought is Jerron Herman's "LAX," a video performance by the artist. Herman, a New York based dancer and playwright with cerebral palsy, dances between flow and staccato, asking through narration — "What if rest is the dance?" As the composer of the work's text and audio score, Herman imbues the work with an intimately personal view of his experience with disability by blending choreography with text and music.

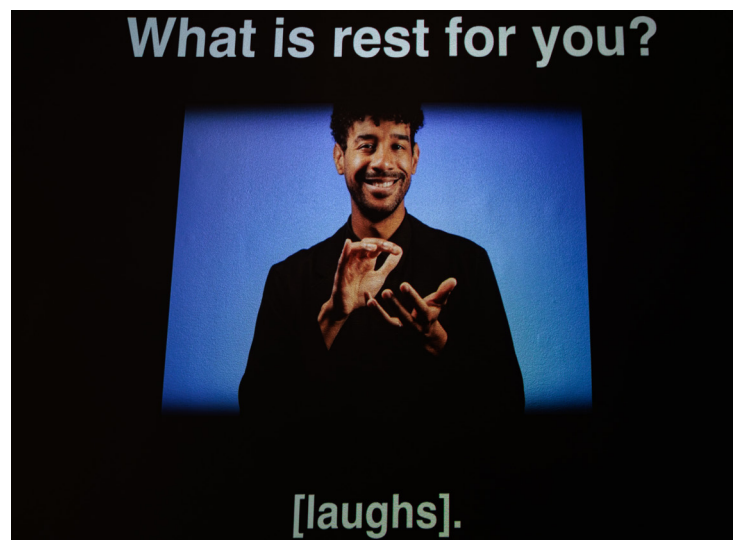
After the exhibit's run at the Fralin is over, it is expected to travel to other museums nationally, according to Joyce. Through its intentionally accessible design and focus on disability led artistry, the exhibit gives viewers more than a typical museum experience, leaving a lasting impression.

"I hope it does forge new connections for the Fralin and UVA, overall, especially those that don't typically see themselves in a museum setting," Joyce said.



CALEB RAGEN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Finnegan Shannon, "Do you want us here or not" (2025)



CALEB RAGEN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Molly Joyce, "Perspective" (2020)



CALEB RAGEN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

JJJJJerome Ellis, "Sonic Bathhouse #2" (2025)

Scapegoat Underground continues a staple comedy event

After hosting Step Comedy Jam Sept. 9, the student comedy duo plans to expand stand-up at the University

Alice Oakey | Staff Writer



LILY PEPPER | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Held at Crozet Pizza and Buddhist Biker Bar, the Step Comedy Jam consisted of 13 comedy acts of all different styles.

Two University students formed the comedy duo Scapegoat Underground in order to participate in a University stand-up comedy tradition — and this year, they were in charge of planning that same event. Featuring student comedians and drawing in crowds from across the University, Kieran Warner, third-year College and Commerce student, and third-year College student Jack Yasenchok, hosted the third annual Step Comedy Jam Sept. 9.

Held at Crozet Pizza and Buddhist Biker Bar, the Step Comedy Jam consisted of 13 comedy acts of all different styles — stand-up, improv and sketch with an SNL-esque musical accompaniment. Step Comedy Jam is one of the only non-competitive comedy events at the University, and both Yasenchok and Warner stressed they wanted to keep the event accessible to anyone who wanted to participate.

“You come and you laugh with everyone, and that’s kind of what you’re winning ... community and laughter ... When [last year’s event] was branded as the last Step Comedy Jam, we were like, ‘That can’t happen. This has to stay around,’” Yasenchok said.

The event was originally created by Mary Walton Petersen,

founder of Stepmom LLC and Class of 2025 alumna, but she handed the event over to Yasenchok and Warner last April, via a satirical Instagram Reel. Petersen returned for the event as a stop on her own stand-up tour, whose dates are available on ilovestepmom.com. She reflected on what the Step Comedy Jam means to her and the University comedy community.

“It’s about free expression, being yourself and unconditional support of other people’s vulnerability,” Petersen said. “What matters is that there’s unconditional clapping after each set, and you see people actually improve with each time that they come back here.”

Hosting an event with these values reflects Scapegoat Underground’s love for the comedy community at the University. Yasenchok and Warner both were exposed to comedy through the improv group and Contracted Independent Organization Amuse Bouche. They then formed Scapegoat Underground in order to participate in last year’s Step Comedy Jam. Initially, they launched the group to friends casually via Instagram to promote their set in last year’s Jam. However, since taking over the event, they have expanded

through marketing and creating an LLC.

Scapegoat Underground’s marketing and video content began after Petersen announced that Yasenchok and Warner would be taking over the Step Comedy Jam with an Instagram reel of the three of them toasting over a Coca-Cola. The duo began planning just days after.

Yasenchok and Warner agreed that growing Scapegoat Underground has been a way to express themselves outside of their demanding class schedules, as well as a chance to hone different skills. Yasenchok noted that creating Scapegoat Underground and promoting their duo has allowed him to draw again and has taught him video editing.

However, Scapegoat Underground believes that the completely student-run Step Comedy Jam provides more than just laughter. For Warner and Yasenchok, stand-up comedy has given them a community at the University, one that they want to help bring to more people.

“When [Petersen] talked about finding the small pockets of community, and [the comedy community] being one of them, it just made everything feel very intimate and special that I was able to find this pocket at U.Va.,”

Warner said.

As for the content they produce, Scapegoat Underground’s structure has allowed Yasenchok and Warner to flex their creative muscles with their comedy.

“The structure of a comedy duo is super interesting because there’s so many constraints. There are only two characters, and they both have to be on stage at the same time,” Yasenchok said. “All of the constraints actually made us more creative when it came to our act and posts.”

Scapegoat Underground has been working to increase their visibility on Grounds through other arts events as well, such as MCing Rotunda Sing Aug. 27. And as the year progresses, Yasenchok and Warner also hope to create short-form digital content on their Instagram, [@scapegoatunderground](https://www.instagram.com/scapegoatunderground). Up to this point, they have created a few Instagram reels that each have over 1000 views and are looking to expand more into the digital space. However, this task is more difficult than it seems.

“I think that’s a really interesting area of comedy right now, because there’s just so much on your phone and to convince someone to watch for even 10 seconds is so hard,” Yasenchok said.

Despite this, Scapegoat Underground is determined to expand their duo. With the rise of social media and endless scrolling, people consume comedy differently. This change is evident in the United States’ most well-known comedy platform, Saturday Night Live.

“The most recent cast members are almost all known from their short-form digital content,” Warner said.

Along with their online content creation, Scapegoat Underground is planning to release merch and host more frequent stand-up events.

“A dream of ours would be to have a late night comedy event at Grit Coffee,” Warner said.

Warner said that Scapegoat Underground’s next event — though likely not to the same scale as the Step Comedy Jam — is planned to be held this winter. Directly after the Sept. 9 event, Yasenchok and Warner expressed their appreciation for everyone who attended.

“I feel so connected and close to everyone, even the people in the audience I don’t recognize because when you make eye contact and you laugh together, it really is a great thing,” Yasenchok said.

‘A small business’: The inner workings of a cappella at U.Va.

While often thought of as just another arts club on Grounds, the University’s a cappella groups face their own unique logistical challenges

Darya Bartol | Staff Writer



COURTESY CHARLES MURPHY

Despite the logistical aspects that come with being an a cappella group, the community it gives to its members is immense.

The 14 a cappella groups on Grounds each have their own unique sound and style, from the Hullabahoos signature robes to Hoos in Treble’s bright pink heels — but one thing they have in common is that they manage the behind-the-scenes logistics themselves. With a variety of concert performances, album releases and busy audition cycles, the a cappella groups on Grounds not only have to sing but also manage their group’s image and schedule.

The plethora of different groups on Grounds for singers to join and ample performance opportunities for students to enjoy makes the a cappella culture at the University a strong one. Luke Watson, president of Hoos in the Stairwell and fourth-year College student, said that it was this culture that made the University stand out to him.

“A cappella was actually one of the reasons I came to U.Va.,” Watson said. “I live in a college town, but where I’m from, there’s nothing like this.”

At the beginning of the academic year, the question of how to advertise auditions for one’s group comes to the forefront of many members’ minds. After all, it can be hard to stand out with 14 other a cappella groups on Grounds. One answer is Rotunda Sing — an annual University Programs Council event at the start of the fall semes-

ter that showcases the variety of a cappella groups.

According to Watson, this performance is crucial for a cappella on Grounds, allowing a cappella groups to show off their distinctive sounds and promote their group to potential auditioners.

“That tends to be scheduled during the week of auditions,” Watson said. “It’s very important for us to put on a good show every time so people hear us and think, ‘Wow, I might want to be a part of that group.’”

The audition process itself is a multi-step process that takes into account not only how an auditioner’s vocals will fit into the group but also how they will fit into the group as an individual. For many groups, the first round consists of an open audition, oftentimes held in Lawn rooms the week of Rotunda Sing. Callbacks are held that same weekend, in which auditionees attend both a vocally-based and social callback to interact more closely with current members.

If admitted to a group, new members will find that the culture of a cappella is ultimately one of collaboration among the different groups. This collaboration is formalized through the a cappella Presidents Council, where the presidents of each group meet once or twice a semester to represent their members and coordi-

nate the details of their concerts. Together, they decide which songs each group will do and what dates each group can schedule their concert so as to not overlap with other groups or divide potential fans.

This collaborative effort is also utilized within the group during the song selection process for concerts. Each group must submit the songs they want to claim, or sing in the future, on a spreadsheet shared amongst all a cappella groups. If a song has already been claimed, another group is unable to perform that song for four semesters, causing many groups to immediately claim songs as soon as they are released.

After songs are claimed, each group can pick from their claimed songs in order to curate the sound they want for a specific gig. Cavan Meade, former president of the Virginia Gentlemen and fourth-year Engineering student, said that the selection for songs is a joint effort among the group.

“The songs that we sing in concert are selected by the whole group,” Meade said. “From there, we will kind of go through together, usually on a Zoom meeting or hanging out together, and be like, ‘Okay, what kind of setlist do you want to create?’”

Setlists, which are the specific order of songs performed at a concert, are typically focused on

a specific theme for a given concert. While some follow the theme a little more broadly, picking one theme helps to set the tone for the setlist. According to Watson, once a theme is chosen, the group then suggests ideas for songs that they think will fit. After a setlist is chosen, the music director then works to arrange each of these songs for the different voice parts in the group.

Mead said that finding a concert time that works for every member also presents a logistical challenge with many members of a cappella groups also having involvements in other University activities.

“People are very busy, and for a group that does as much as we do, it’s really important that we have an open line of communication to kind of make sure that we know where everyone is,” Meade said. “That might determine whether or not you can do [the concert].”

Once the details of a concert are in place, the next challenge becomes making sure the event reaches an audience. While one is likely to encounter eager a cappella groups promoting their shows as they pass through South Lawn, social media has become another useful tool for a cappella groups to promote not only concerts, but auditions and album releases as well.

Kate Mueller, publicity chair

for the Virginia Sil’hooettes and second-year College student, said that social media allows for groups to showcase the members themselves in addition to their music.

“When I’m making content for the group, I try to walk a fine line of posting both stuff about our music and about what we do as professionals, and then I also like to post about us as a girl group,” Mueller said. “It’s trying to find that happy medium of posting our social aspects and posting our professional media.”

Social media can also allow for a cappella videos to go viral at a moment’s notice. The Virginia Gentlemen saw their cover of “Everybody Talks” by Neon Trees reach over 85,000 views on Instagram reels.

Despite the logistical aspects that come with being an a cappella group, the community it gives to its members is immense. Meade said that despite sometimes feeling like it is a “small business,” his experience in a cappella has been rewarding beyond what he expected, a sentiment shared by Mueller and Watson as well.

“I don’t know who I would be or what my college experience would have been without this group,” Meade said. “The community is so, so strong and that is true both in the group and across all groups.”

SPORTS

Fall programs relish — or ignore — early effects of roster limits

One coach enjoys the increased bandwidth, another looks a few years down the road and trembles, and most feel no change

Michael Liebermann | Sports Editor



BENVIN LOZADA | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Coach Tony Elliott is glad to not have his team's roster reduced immediately.

The men's soccer bench this year looks sparsely populated. There are a lot less players smushed together, competing for tush space on the metal strip.

There is no more crowd of substitutes warming up, no more clump of sneakered reserves standing next to the bench, left off the gameday squad because the game roster is too small to accommodate them.

The overcrowding of past seasons is no longer. Virginia's men's soccer team is not trying anymore to wedge the equivalent of two full rosters onto the bench of one.

It can't.

Roster limits, dressed in the livery of the House v. NCAA settlement, have arrived. The settlement enshrined them across college sports in June, after years of anticipation and an offseason of preparation. Each sport, instead of the scholarship limit that existed before, now has unlimited scholarships and a cap on its roster size.

The NCAA previously fixed the amount of scholarships a team could distribute, based on the sport. But a team's roster could stretch as large as it decided. Under the recent settlement, the governing body decided on the amount of players per sport a team can

carry, and it can give out as many scholarships as it decides.

Virginia men's soccer's roster size hovered around the three-dozen mark for a while — 36 three years ago, 36 two years ago, 42 last season. This go-around, Virginia is carrying 30 players.

Looking back, after the season-opener Aug. 21, at the swollen rosters of years past, Coach George Gelnovatch marveled at the contrast. His staff can coach that much more efficiently having shed 12 players.

"The bandwidth that 40 guys on a roster takes up," Gelnovatch said. "I wasn't even aware of it until now."

Gelnovatch is just one of a handful of Virginia's fall-sport coaches navigating the impact of the newfound roster limits in the first few weeks of their seasons. But most described a far less staggering experience than the men's soccer skipper.

Not every program's roster, in the first place, actually contained more players than the new limits allow. They have barely been affected. You cannot bump your head on the ceiling if you are too short.

Coach Shannon Wells's volleyball program, for example, has always operated under the 18-player limit just applied to the sport. Coach Andres

Pedroso's men's tennis program has flirted over the years with the new line of 10 players but will have no trouble remaining under it.

The same goes for Coach Steve Swanson and women's soccer. While the program's roster, like others across the country, overflowed for a few years because of pandemic-generated extra eligibility, its numbers receded last season. Swanson noted no consternation over the limits because the number they impose is roughly standard for his team.

But the limits are something, at least, that will inhabit the back of his and any coach's mind going forward. The number will need to be considered in recruiting, in planning for the future.

"You can only have 28 on your team," Swanson said. "You have to be aware of that."

This season, in fact, his team, like Gelnovatch's, has two more than soccer's 28-player limit. That is because the settlement, when its initial language hit the concentric circles of college sports discourse, provoked quite a stir. It would mean so many players losing their roster spots.

So the lawyers came up with a solution, to "grandfather in" players, to make sure nobody would have to lose

their roster spot. Any athlete who had, or had been promised, a roster spot that they would lose as a result of the settlement could be named a "designated student-athlete" and maintain their spot. Swanson liked the tweak.

"I thought that was good, especially for the current players," Swanson said.

Coach Tony Elliott agrees, even more fervently. This year he has 124 players, boosted by a whole squadron of designated student-athletes. That will eventually shrink to 105.

"I'm thankful that they didn't go right to 105 right away," Elliott said. "It allowed us to be able to carry enough depth to practice the way that we need to."

Over the next few years the team's size will dwindle as the grandfathered players graduate, and Elliott said it is going to make quite an impact. That is a muddy prospect.

"You won't have the ability to tackle as much as you did," Elliott said. "It's going to be harder to truly get the reps that you need for the truly developmental guys, because you're going to have to modify the way that you practice."

It also might impact early-season games, he said. Injuries later on in the season could force teams to rethink how they use their players throughout

the week.

It is all to be seen. But the men's soccer team, for one, is already seeing the effects of a reduced roster.

The program did not need to drop any of last season's players. But it ended up, despite the "grandfathering," with a much smaller roster. Of last season's 42 players, 11 transferred to other schools.

But the team, at any rate, is doing better with the tighter roster. In college soccer's compressed preseason, two weeks wadded tighter than a clump of torn earth, the change leaves quite an impact.

Fusing roughly 40 guys into a team in that period was always a chore. Now subtract 10.

"That's 25 percent less," Gelnovatch said. "It's allowing us to manage, coach a little better. It's made a big difference."

Thomas Baxter, Victoria Blankenship, Eleanor Buchanan, Sam Chun and Xander Tilock contributed reporting.

Building Coach Andres Pedroso's 'perfect' player

Of his 11 players, whose traits would the men's tennis coach pick to build the best possible player?

Thomas Baxter | Senior Writer

Helming one of the best programs in college tennis for nearly a decade, men's tennis Coach Andres Pedroso has coached his fair share of incredible talents. At present, he is the only coach in the sport who can boast about having two players ranked in the top 10 nationally, and he spent the summer watching guys he has coached appear in grand slam main draws and win professional tournaments across the Atlantic.

With all that talent sporting the V-Sabre over the years, many — or perhaps just one — of us are still left with a burning question. With a dual match tied at 3-3 entering a deciding set, who exactly does Pedroso want standing at the baseline?

If Pedroso were to, just for a day, play the role of college tennis's Dr. Frankenstein, exactly what would he build? Using traits from the 11 players on his roster, what would his perfect player look like? Pedroso sat down with The Cavalier Daily to answer this question.

Serve — Dylan Dietrich

As the only guaranteed shot in tennis, the serve is foundational to so many players' games. Junior Dylan Dietrich, unsurprisingly, is Pedroso's pick for service, with it being a centerpiece of the 6-foot-5 junior's game.

"He can take the racket out of your hand with the serve," Pedroso said.

Dietrich is currently the ninth-ranked singles player in the country, having spent most of last season playing Court 2 singles for the Cavaliers, going 18-5 in the dual-spring season. Giant serves are a staple of Dietrich's thrilling play, and, while inconsistency sometimes gets the best of him, the junior can seemingly beat anyone on his best day.

Return — Rafael Jódar

"You've got to go with Rafael Jódar," Pedroso said. "He might have the best return in college tennis."

Having a freshman season half as good as the one that now-sophomore Rafael Jódar had would be an accomplishment in itself. The sophomore out of Madrid is clinical from the baseline and went an incredible 19-3 in singles in his first semester as a Cavalier.

Currently the second-ranked singles player in the nation and a recent winner on the Challenger Tour, Jódar opted to return to Virginia for a second season, where he is poised to again be one of the best players in college tennis and

an unstoppable force from the baseline.

Movement — Jangjun Kim

Sophomore Jangjun Kim arrived on Grounds in January, started winning and never looked back. The Korean sophomore is a steady contributor for Virginia, playing mostly on Courts 5 and 6 but racking up wins there, going 16-7.

Movement in tennis is much more than just speed, acceleration and footwork, and not many players embody that the way Kim does. Kim controls points effectively, with calculated and efficient movement accompanying strong buildup play, which allows him to thrive against more mistake-prone opponents. He spent his summer playing professional tournaments in Asia and taking summer courses, and may be preparing for a breakout sophomore campaign.

Forehand — Måns Dahlberg

"That's between Kim and Måns," Pedroso said. "I think Måns will be offended if I don't choose him, so I'm gonna go with Måns on seniority."

Senior Måns Dahlberg is certainly deserving of the nod. Entering his fourth year on the roster, he strikes the ball better than almost anybody on the team. The Dahlberg that appears late in the season is probably one of the scariest sights a Court 5 or 6 singles player can see across the court, and his strong baseline shots — especially that forehand — have helped Dahlberg win tight matches.

Dahlberg went 15-12 in duals last season and is also half of the No. 18 doubles pairing in the country alongside Dietrich. The senior ended last season in incredible form, going 9-1 from March 28 onward and scoring the deciding point in clutch fashion for Virginia's ACC semifinal win over top-ranked Wake Forest.

Backhand — Keegan Rice

"I'm gonna need to go with Mr. Keegan Rice there," Pedroso said. "He's got one of the most pure backhands that I've ever coached."

Playing mostly on Court 3 in the spring, sophomore Keegan Rice put together solid performances against tough opposition day in and day out. The sophomore out of Regina, Canada, has a crisp backhand that generates incredible power from behind the baseline, powering him to an 11-11 record in spring singles and an 11-10 record in doubles with partner graduate student James Hopper.



MARIAM SESHAN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Net game — Ty Switzer

"Ty Switzer volleys extremely well," Pedroso said. "He came a long way in doubles last year."

Senior Ty Switzer only played doubles for Virginia in spring, but did so with seven different partners, showcasing what Pedroso saw in the senior's growth. Standing at 6-foot-2, he is decisive at the net, making him a versatile doubles player that can find success with many partners, including three freshmen last season.

Tennis IQ — Roy Horovitz

Sophomore Roy Horovitz, who spent most of his freshman year sidelined recovering from an ACL injury, said his time out turned him into a more mature, poised tennis player.

"Just from the mental side of things, I felt a lot more mature on the court," Horovitz said.

In what court time he did get in spring, Horovitz found most of his success in doubles, going undefeated with Jódar through the ACC and NCAA tournaments. Finding success in long, drawn-out points, the sophomore still considers his game a bit of a work in progress but prides himself on his ability to make opponents' lives difficult with prolonged rallies and tough-to-reach balls.

Attitude — Stiles Brockett

If attitude is analogous to that composure and clutchness nec-

essary for tight matches, then sophomore Stiles Brockett has it in droves. The sophomore, hailing from Fairfax, Va., went 5-4 in spring singles, with his most noteworthy performance being a 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 win on Court 6 against a top-ranked Texas Feb. 2.

That day, Virginia was trailing 3-1 at one point and had worked its way back to 3-3, meaning that the entire match came down to Brockett, who was playing a third set against an extremely strong, more experienced player. With deliberate play and unparalleled composure, Brockett won the third set decisively, showing exactly what attitude is needed for clutch wins at the highest level.

Leadership — Stefan Regalia

Junior Stefan Regalia only saw the court once in spring — playing doubles with Switzer in an away matchup against Boston College — but, in his two years as a Cavalier, he has been a relevant name in the Virginia rotation.

With a record now at 12-10 in singles over his two years, the junior out of Arlington, Va., is a vocal sideline presence and an important part of the depth that may be the difference for a Virginia side that lost two players over the offseason while bringing in none.

Sense of Humor — Douglas Yaffa

One might expect that the "perfect" college tennis player would

likely finish their matches pretty quickly. But with the nature of the game, that means their work is far from over. That is where the "glue guy" skills come into play, and nobody embodies that better on the Virginia roster than senior Douglas Yaffa.

When he's not playing, Yaffa can be found at home matches camped out beside Court 5 or 6, egging on his teammates with nicknames, taglines and assorted sound effects. Dahlberg, a regular recipient of this support who was a freshman with Yaffa in 2022, said that the support he gets from his sideline from his teammate is invaluable in maintaining a positive mindset.

Preparation — RJ Fresen

"If RJ was healthy, I can promise you, he would probably be the best at the pre-match and the preparation," Pedroso said. "He's extremely prepared any time he gets a chance to play tennis."

Senior RJ Fresen never had the stereotypical college athletics experience. Plagued with back injuries from a young age, Fresen played a bit in his freshman year but has since not played any college tennis matches. Pedroso raved about the now-senior's work ethic, which saw him return to the roster in the 2023-2024 season after a two-year absence.

Presidential search committee features athletic representation

Five members of the committee are tied, in varying degrees, to the school's athletic department

Casey Reims | Staff Writer

July 25, one month after former University President Jim Ryan stepped down, the search committee for his permanent replacement was announced. Since the announcement, many community stakeholders — notably students and faculty — have objected to what they call a lack of sufficient representation.

But one area that seems to have unusually large representation is athletics. The sizable athletics representation on the committee marks a departure from past search committees at the University and in higher education more broadly and comes at a unique moment.

Athletic Director Carla Williams is among the committee's members. So is Gretchen Walsh, the Olympic swimmer and Class of 2025 alumna. Marvin Bush, vice president of Virginia Athletics Foundation and Class of 1979 alumnus, and Marvin Gilliam, trustee of VAF, also occupy seats, and Rachel Sheridan, the committee chair, is the current president of the Virginia Athletics Foundation.

University Spokesperson Bethanie Glover noted in a statement to The Cavalier Daily that the committee members involved with VAF “are also serving on the committee in their capacity as current or former Board of Visitors members and U.Va. alumni.” Sheridan occupies one of the school's top positions, and Gilliam is another Board member.

The University's 2017 search, which culminated in the hiring of Ryan, consisted of 22 members and nobody tied to the athletic department. Not even the athletic director, Craig Littlepage, took part on the 2017 committee, and none of the committee members were affiliated with VAF. No athletic representation appeared on the 2010 committee, either.

But over the last few years, sports have taken up more air-space in the world of universities than ever before. Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) started in 2021 and has exploded ever since, and the recent House v. NCAA settlement, which many schools spent two years preparing for, became

a discussion point far beyond the athletic offices.

Still, it was not a foregone conclusion that athletic representation would be present in the search committee for the tenth president — presidential search committees at similarly large public universities with powerful sports programs have not had the same chorus of athletic opinions.

Within the past year, both the University of Florida and Louisiana State University have commenced presidential search committees. Florida's committee of 14 has no one associated with sports. Louisiana State's 19-person group, meanwhile, has just one former student-athlete from the 1990s.

In the last few years, the University of Arizona and Washington State University have also undergone presidential searches. Each school's committee included their athletic director and no athletic representation beyond that.

Boise State University is also operating an ongoing 46-person search committee and has a student-athlete representative on

its committee — gymnast Sydney Leitch.

The University's student-athlete representative, however, is unique. Walsh is an alumna — and was also one of the most prominent student-athletes across the entire NCAA. Her career is the most celebrated in the history of the school's swimming program and perhaps its athletic department, resulting in 17 world records, 25 NCAA championships and a host of other awards.

“The Board selected Gretchen Walsh to serve on the committee because of her experience as a U.Va. student and athlete,” Glover said.

Walsh noted the importance of her student experience, along with her time in athletics and her desire to discuss with other students, in a statement about her role on the committee.

“As the work of the special committee gets underway, I am looking forward to sharing my perspective as a recently-graduated student and an athlete with my fellow committee members and the Board,” Walsh said.

Walsh and her fellow committee members, in addition to other areas of focus, will have to consider the rapidly evolving financial landscape of collegiate athletics. Ryan and Williams frequently collaborated in those conversations, and Mahoney will face the newest developments in NIL, new Virginia Athletics facilities and coaches' contracts.

The committee, Sheridan announced, intends to present three final candidates to the Board for consideration. Estimates suggest the entire process will take around six months. Walsh, Williams and the rest gathered for the first time Aug. 22.

Until then, Interim President Paul G. Mahoney, the dean of the School of Law from 2008 to 2016, is filling the role. He started Aug. 11 and will continue until the Board, following the recommendations of the committee and all its athletic representation, appoints a new president.

THE CAVALIER DAILY

The Cavalier Daily is a financially and editorially independent news organization staffed and managed entirely by students of the University of Virginia.

The opinions expressed in The Cavalier Daily are not necessarily those of the students, faculty, staff or administration of the University of Virginia. Unsigned editorials represent the majority opinion of the editorial board. Cartoons and columns represent the views of the authors. The managing board of The Cavalier Daily has sole authority over and responsibility for all content.

No part of The Cavalier Daily or The Cavalier Daily online edition may be reproduced in any form, in whole or in part, without the written consent of the editor-in-chief.

The Cavalier Daily is published daily online at cavalierdaily.com. It is printed on at least 40 percent recycled paper. 2025 The Cavalier Daily Inc.

HAVE AN OPINION?

The Cavalier Daily welcomes letters to the editor and guest columns. Writers must provide full name, telephone number and University affiliation, if appropriate. Letters should not exceed 250 words in length and columns should not exceed 800. The Cavalier Daily does not guarantee publication of submissions and may edit all material for content and grammar. Submit to opinion@cavalierdaily.com or P.O. Box 400703, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4703.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

The Cavalier Daily welcomes feedback from community members (questions and/or comments) in addition to broader queries pertaining to journalism. Additionally, we are happy to solicit story ideas from readers but do not guarantee that we will be able to pursue them. Please visit our website for desk specific email addresses or email editor@cavalierdaily.com directly.

THE CAVALIER DAILY

MANAGING BOARD

Editor-in-Chief

Naima Sawaya

Managing Editor

Hailey Chung

Executive Editor

Scarlett Sullivan

Operations Manager

Leigh Bailey

Chief Financial Officer

Will Peres

EDITORIAL BOARD

Naima Sawaya

Scarlett Sullivan

Farah Eljazzar

Wylie Brunman

Ryan Cohen

Michael King

Adeline Garvie

JUNIOR BOARD

Assistant Literary Editor

Blaine Hutchens

Assistant Managing Editor

Vera Woody

(SA) Elizabeth Adams

(SA) Calla Mischen

(SA) Sophia Puype

(SA) Brooke Tayman

(SA) Maddie Weinstein

News Editors

Ford McCracken

Cecilia Mould

(SA) Nina Broderick

(SA) Grace Little

Sports Editors

Michael Liebermann

Xander Tilock

(SA) Eleanor Buchanan

(SA) Ryan Weiner

Arts & Entertainment Editors

Leila Mohajer

Grace Traxler

(SA) Benjamin Apostol

Life Editors

Dana Douglas

Kate Johnson

(SA) Madigan Wirkus

Podcast Editor

Evelyn Lewis

Opinion Editors

Farah Eljazzar

Wylie Brunman

(SA) Ryan Cohen

(SA) Michael King

Humor Editor

Adair Reid

(SA) Nikitha Prabhu

Cartoon Editor

Ada Malpani

(SA) Jasmine Xiang

Puzzle Editors

Quinn Connor

Isabelle Tindall

(SA) Shreyas Agnihotri

Photo Editors

Kayla Moore

Car White

(SA) Mac Doucette

(SA) Caleb Regan

Design Editors

Sarah St. John

Mariam Seshan

Noelle Valdinoto

Chinese Translation Editor

XiaoYi Luo

Spanish Translation Editor

Madelyn Paz Castillo

Social Media Managers

Lahari Kunapaneni

Abby Boursiquot

Video Editors

Issy Denevan

Pria Dua

Finance Manager

Shahnoor Chaudhry

Advertising Manager

Spence Doherty

Website Manager

Taylor Petrofski

Kyle Song

Analytics Manager

Irene Si

Newsletter Editor

Catherine Kuryla

Archivists

Clara Franklin

Finn Trainer

DEI Chair

Malaika Rehman

Fundraising Chair

Ava Tolin

OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

Virginia's political parties have left our universities boarded up

The stand-off between Virginia's Republicans and Democrats has left our state universities critically unstable

In recent weeks, the Virginia Senate's Privileges and Elections Committee blocked another slate of appointees for Boards of Visitors across our state. The effects of this are dire — the University's Board is missing five members, and the Board at George Mason University is unable to even make a quorum, shuttering their operations. This predicament reflects systemic issues within the statewide governing board confirmation process, issues that must be fixed. In an environment where systemic problems have impaired the stability of our universities, changes to the appointment process must be made.

These changes necessitate reflecting on how the complex political processes brought us to this moment. Currently, a months-long waiting period exists between the appointment of nominees by Gov. Glenn Youngkin and their confirmation by the legislature. Nominees frequently serve on their University Board for several months before they are confirmed.

For example, in June 2022, Youngkin appointed Bert Ellis and three other nominees to our University's Board. Only in February of 2023 were they confirmed by the Virginia legislature. Our University's Board contained members who had not been subject to the process of legislative confirmation that provides our Board with legitimacy and voters with a voice in our University leadership.

This summer, it became clear how destabilizing this norm of waiting for formal confirmation could be. Democrats have argued that recent Youngkin nominees have not been protecting their universities in the face of attacks by the Trump administration. Because of this, they voted to reject these nominees at the committee level, first in June and then last week.

Republicans, led by Virginia's Attorney General Jason Miyares, subsequently instructed these appointees to remain active on their Boards, arguing that the Democrat-led action was illegal. Democrats then challenged this in court, which led to an injunction,

effectively saying that the Democrat-led rejection was legal.

Though legally legitimate, the actions have created uncertainty in higher education. At our University, the number of rejected nominees creates the risk that our Board may not have enough University alumni or Virginia residents to function. Additionally, two nominees rejected last week had been named to the presidential selection committee. With Miyares appealing the court order and arguing for appointees to retain their positions, this political imbroglio brings greater confusion — will these nominees serve on the committee until a judge rules otherwise, or will they respect the rejection? These questions clarify that the norms for Board appointment engender instability within our selection committee.

The political standoff has had a harsher effect at GMU. With 10 nominees rejected, GMU's Board is unable to make a quorum. Meanwhile, the Department of Justice has initiated multiple probes into diversity, equity

and inclusion practices. In a time where federal attacks necessitate institutional support, GMU's Board cannot meet to further defend its president, nor can they chart a strategy against this gross intrusion on university autonomy.

The destabilizing consequences of the appointment process have revealed fault lines within our political system. Under the stress-test of an invasive federal government, a sycophantic governor and a strong-minded legislature, our system has buckled in a way that grinds the structures of our universities to a halt. Procedural changes must be made — changes which limit politicization and ensure that universities are able to continue operations.

One avenue for this would be to institute holdover rules, where Board members stay in place until a successor is confirmed. This would align with announced desires by Senate Democrats to disallow Board members from sitting on their Boards until confirmed. Another potential fix would be to shorten the length of

time between Committee votes and full confirmation by the legislature. Admittedly, there is no set answer for what solution should be put in place — the only failure would be to ignore the need for a solution altogether.

The fact that the stability of our University and GMU has been weakened by the fragility of our appointment process is a plague on both our political parties. Without a secure political process for appointments, our universities have been left with administrative realities that are at best delegitimized and at worst nonfunctional. Both parties must grapple with the institutional consequences of their actions. We often hear that the political system is broken — now, for the sake of Virginia's students, Virginia's leaders must find a solution.

THE CAVALIER DAILY EDITORIAL BOARD is composed of the Executive Editor, the Editor-in-Chief, the two Opinion Editors, two Senior Associate and an Opinion Columnist. The board can be reached at eb@cavalierdaily.com.

HUMOR

New module on Strategic Nodding and Eye Contact

Editor's note: This article is a humor column.

In an announcement Monday, the University assigned a new mandatory online training module to prepare students for the return to life on Grounds for fall 2026. The module, named "Strategic Nodding and Eye Contact in Lectures" — or SNECL — intends to teach students how to be engaged scholars and utilize strategic laziness to ease their way to the top.

Much like its familiar counterparts — the Honor Module, the Alcohol Education Module and the Preventing and Addressing Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Student Module — this new course will live on the Student Information Services Platform, embedded somewhere between Degree Progress and an external link to Stellar that only functions on Tuesdays.

The University's School of Education and Development reviewers called this module "the second best thing to happen to college education since the first best thing." Although it will not be implemented until next fall, the University revealed the for-

mat of the SNECL module, breaking them down into five highly impactful sections.

1. Faking a Reading With Confidence — Learn advanced techniques in skipping pages and making vague but effective statements like "I just thought the author was really brave"

2. Seat Selection Science — A masterclass in choosing the optimal location for invisibility from the TAs and professor

3. Looking Interested While Mentally Elsewhere — Featuring eye contact hacks, nodding drills and a bonus segment on how to fake-write notes while actually doodling

4. Surviving No Electronics Classrooms — Fun activities to get your mind off of readings and long lectures

5. Emailing Professors Persuasively — Learn how to miss class without using up your excused absences

In response to growing concerns over student performance, the Uni-

versity is seeking to preserve its academic prestige and US News ranking without making any substantive changes to its curriculum. Karen Buzzkill, newly appointed Associate Interim Vice Liaison for Student Acceptable Behaviors, is credited with creating this new module.

"As the University's reputation grows," said Buzzkill, "We want to ensure students are equipped with the tools they need to maintain our work hard, play hard culture — without, you know, actually having to work hard."

While previous modules have attempted to instill values like personal integrity, mutual respect and legal compliance, the University realized these trainings were equipping students with the ability to act like functional members of society, but not helping University's national rankings.

Students have long complained about being forced into Engagements courses — classes with little to no relevance to their interests. Instead of addressing these frustrations, the University has decided the

real problem is that students simply don't know how to look engaged. Nota Reeder, third-year College student and English major, shared her thoughts.

"There has been such a large focus on students getting skills to be good people, but what about being able to sit through a 75-minute lecture about Shakespeare without looking bored?" Reeder said.

This is where the new module comes in.

Completion time for the SNECL module can take anywhere from three to six hours depending on the University's SIS system, your Wi-Fi strength and how many times you accidentally close the tab.

Student reaction to the announcement has been consistently negative, with many lamenting the addition of another module that may only serve a performative purpose. Many feel the University is seeking superficial honors rather than student transparency. Second-year College student Barley Moonshine expressed frustration at the module being another administrative obstacle for students.

"I was already flagged during the Alcohol Education module after accidentally being honest about how much I drink during the week," Moonshine said. "They told me to stop inflating their data."

The module will not be required for student-athletes, as further classroom disengagement could risk drawing unwanted attention to the University's already creatively interpreted admissions standards for athletic recruits.

Buzzkill hopes this new training will empower students to thrive in the classroom — or at least look like they are from a distance. After all, as the University continues to climb national rankings, it's not about what you've learned, but whether you can maintain steady eye contact while nodding every 45 seconds. And if that's not academic excellence, what is?

SIMRAN CHAVAN is a humor columnist for the Cavalier Daily. She can be reached at humor@cavalierdaily.com

Cutting research cuts out students

Academic development is under attack by a coordinated effort weaponizing research funding to fit a political script against diversity and international students

If the Rotunda were on fire, bystanders would rush to its side, working to extinguish the flames. Yet, that is precisely what is happening now, and little has been done to douse the fire.

Of course, the building is not on fire. Metaphorically, however, everything the building represents — learning, democracy, permanence and the pursuit of excellence — is being consumed by flames. The spark? Political agendas that are weaponizing funding to suffocate research. Through these measures, the government is stripping away research opportunities for students and thwarting democratic progress.

On Grounds, the extent of these flames became clear when University President Jim Ryan resigned under pressure from the Department of Justice. In his resignation statement, Ryan highlighted the “catastrophic” consequences of refusing to bow to the Trump administration’s demands. One of these consequences includes cuts to funding for research programs which the Trump administration has introduced to pressure institutions into making policy and institutional changes.

Central to these efforts is their undeniable political aim — the Trump administration is not only reducing

expenditures, but it is also weaponizing funding to enforce ideological conformity. By targeting diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, the government is reducing the intellectual diversity that is vital for academic innovation. Simultaneously, the administration is tightening international student visa policies in hopes of limiting international students’ influence. These moves are not incidental policy

adjustments, but rather, two parts of a broader campaign aimed at imposing a nativist ideology on universities and threatening both the autonomy of higher education and all research opportunities. These funding cuts are materializing as follows. Under the direction of the federal government, the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation are altering research funding policies, which hamper universities’ ability to finance research efforts. Typically, most of a research grant’s funding goes toward direct costs of that research, while

“The impact of funding cuts on America’s research infrastructure will soon become more apparent, as progress in both STEM and humanities research declines.”

the indirect costs — such as IT infrastructure, building maintenance and administrative support — are covered through the process of indirect cost recovery, a funding mechanism through which organizations recover costs for services and facilities. Those reimbursement rates are between 50 to 65 percent from the NIH and NSF. However, both agencies have recently capped indirect cost recovery at only

15 percent, meaning universities will lose hundreds of thousands of dollars per grant. Evidently, the effects of these caps are not just abstract budgetary shifts. Instead, they affect the amount of research universities can fund and the number of faculty they can hire. Additionally, such cuts impact the total number of students who can enroll or engage in research positions. This distinction is crucial because it highlights how funding cuts undermine the broader capacity for innovation in universities, which is a pillar of higher education.

For research programs nationwide, this spells the end of enduring success. The more labs that are involved in research, the more difficult it becomes to support them financially. Large research entities, like the University, will need to scale back or cancel projects due to funding caps. While these decisions may have initially been a political tactic to limit diversity in institutions of higher education, the impact is that

these cuts are now crippling research efforts across universities, regardless of size. The impact of funding cuts on America’s research infrastructure will soon become more apparent, as progress in both STEM and humanities research declines.

Take the University’s initiatives in precision medicine, social development and climate research, for example. Over the past several years, these projects have produced invaluable solutions like an advanced artificial pancreas system for Type 1 diabetics. These advances, along with any future initiatives, are being threatened, in

turn endangering people’s lives and livelihoods. Patients may wait years longer for treatments that are already accessible, or communities facing climate disasters could be left without research to guide prevention and recovery.

In short, the government is using targeted attacks on research funding to control university autonomy. Using the guise of limiting DEI initiatives and international student influence, they are directly threatening open inquiry in the pursuit of knowledge — the very pillar of our University’s founding. As the current members of Jefferson’s University, we must defend those ideals. Kneecapping the foundation of the country’s research enterprise to follow nativist principles is a short-sighted strategy that is a threat to us all. The most concerning truth is when political agendas dictate academic boundaries, we do not lose professors or programs — we lose progress.

The Rotunda is aflame, the academic world is on fire. And we are merely watching it burn.

LUCY DUTTENHOFER is an opinion columnist who writes about academics for *The Cavalier Daily*. She can be reached at opinion@cavalierdaily.com.

Protect city funding for Central Virginia Violence Interrupters

To expand opportunities for individuals with criminal backgrounds, Charlottesville should increase funding for CVVI and prioritize de-escalation strategies to prevent violence

In 2021, the Charlottesville City Council unanimously voted to provide funding for an organization known as the Central Virginia Violence Interrupters, which formed after the fatal shooting of a young man in the community. Gun violence had continued to grow in Charlottesville, particularly in the Prospect Avenue area. Thus, the need for CVVI became apparent. Uniquely, this organization employs individuals with a criminal background to create de-escalation techniques to avoid violence, utilizing the skills that they have with the justice system to protect the community.

In the first half of 2025, CVVI estimates that their work has prevented 60 crimes, and they continue to serve the community successfully — receiving \$200,000 annually from the City to facilitate their community-based approach. Despite this organization’s best intentions, however, Charlottesville plans to drastically reduce its funding for CVVI at the local level, which threatens the organization’s survival.

CVVI formed in response to a significant wave of gun violence in the Charlottesville community in 2021. While it is difficult to quantify

crimes that have not occurred, CVVI is said to have prevented 350 instances of violence over the last four years. After CVVI became recognized by Charlottesville community members, their work was rewarded by the City Council with a unanimous vote to help fund the organization. Over

“Despite this organization’s best intentions, however, Charlottesville plans to drastically reduce its funding for CVVI at the local level, which threatens the organization’s survival.”

\$20,000 was donated by the city council in addition to \$16,000 from other sources. The City continued to support CVVI up until last year, when its funding was threatened in part as a result of the substantially high number of organizations competing for limited funding.

One of the most unique aspects of this organization is that it trains and employs people part-time who have some experience with violence — including for those who are formerly incarcerated — at \$19 an hour. This enables these individuals to connect with people trained in violence prevention.

The organization bases its training on the Cure Violence Approach, using strategies like interrupting violence, communicating with dangerous subjects and ultimately changing the dynamic of the community that contributes to violence. This training teaches mediators how to develop trust with

those involved with armed conflict and deescalate violent altercations effectively.

Oftentimes, those with criminal pasts are systemically discriminated against in the workforce, making it difficult for them to find more stable employment. CVVI reduces this discrimination and encourages people previously incarcerated to join the organization due to the value that their background brings to the program. This ultimately plays a role in preventing recidivism by providing stable employment and bringing previously incarcerated individuals back into the

community and the economy.

Seeing that CVVI provides benefits for the Charlottesville community, it is in the best interest of the City to protect its existence. The organization has lost over \$250,000 in federal funding cuts in addition to the City reducing funding from \$200,000 to

only \$94,000. Although CVVI remains active, the impact of these cuts is so significant that the organization may not survive past the fall of 2025. The program requires \$450,000 annually to operate in the Prospect Avenue area of Charlottesville alone. Although the organization still receives large private donations, this is not enough to sustain the current services and may lead to them scaling down.

The City claims that it is necessary to reduce funding for CVVI, due to the significant number of other organizations in need of city funding. However, safety should be at the top

of the City’s priorities, as it plays a holistic part in the wellbeing of community members. Entrusting people with a criminal background to facilitate nonviolent intervention and providing in-depth training in crime prevention is possibly the best alternative to police funding or further, more costly initiatives. The unique initiative which CVVI has set forth must not be squandered on the basis of other priorities.

It is the job of the City to ensure that the instances of gun violence which inspired CVVI’s creation do not become commonplace. Although the police do their best to prevent such altercations, it can only help to have another organization that seeks to reduce violence from another perspective. Seeing the dedication that CVVI has to ensuring the safety of the community and its inarguable efficacy, it is a clear mistake to cut its funding, as the CVVI plays a significant role in keeping Charlottesville safe.

ALEX SHRAUGER is an opinion columnist who writes about academics for *The Cavalier Daily*. He can be reached at opinion@cavalierdaily.com.

PUZZLE

Joe Stern | Puzzlist

Answers are available on the digital version of this puzzle which is published at www.cavalierdaily.com.

ACROSS

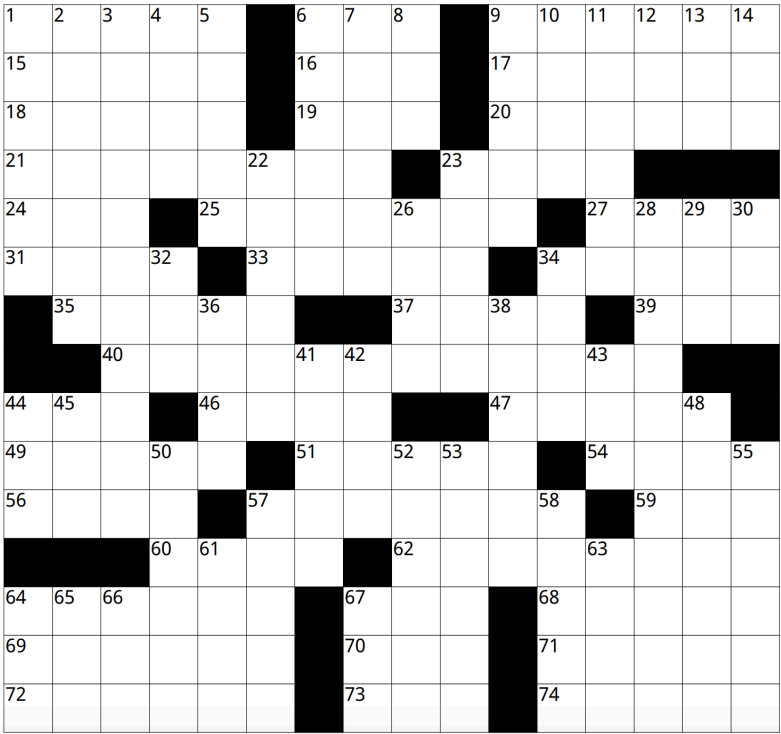
- 1 _____ Sketch
- 6 Org. based in Langley, Va.
- 9 _____-Lorraine (French region)
- 15 Nothing, in Latin
- 16 Plus
- 17 "It's my favorite latte!"
- 18 Buy time
- 19 Mufasa, to Simba
- 20 Spotted wildcat
- 21 They're often pierced
- 23 Patella home
- 24 Picnic invader
- 25 "It just stores all of my Joan Didion books!"
- 27 Hit up on Instagram
- 31 Miller or Natty
- 33 Grouchy Muppet
- 34 One of 150 in the Bible
- 35 Second longest African river
- 37 "That's hilarious," in a text
- 39 Actress Tyler of "Lord of the Rings" and "The Strangers"
- 40 Male archetype speaking

- in 17-Across, 25-Across and 69-Across
- 44 "No ____!" (I'm not lying...)
- 46 Jackson 5 hairdo
- 47 Back of a 45 record
- 49 Nerdy sort, like a cruciverbalist
- 51 Measuring device
- 54 OED, e.g.
- 56 Actor Michael of "Juno"
- 57 Sully, as a reputation
- 59 "Crazy Rich Asians" director Jon M. ____
- 60 Prince's "Purple ____"
- 62 Predator to 24-Across
- 64 Suppress
- 67 Second woman appointed to SCOTUS
- 68 Cut slightly
- 69 "I just bought this new plush keychain toy!"
- 70 See 53-Down
- 72 400 meters, in Olympic track and field
- 73 Joaquin Phoenix AI-girlfriend movie
- 74 Itty-bitty

DOWN

- 1 Stamp, like a document
- 2 Iceberg; 1, _____: o
- 3 First on Billboard's Hot 100
- 4 Observatory ____
- 5 Parcel out
- 6 West Point students
- 7 "Be right there!"
- 8 Throw in
- 9 Surrounded by
- 10 "Arsenic and Old ____"
- 11 Knights' horses
- 12 Oft-injured part of
- 23-Across
- 13 ____ Chang of Harry Potter
- 14 Stack plates in Newcomb, say
- 22 Voice displeasure for a performer
- 23 "____ Police," Radiohead hit
- 26 Soothing ointment
- 28 Magical word used to curse someone, or when split into two words, a fancy way to describe "Bro

- talk"
- 29 Quarterback Manning
- 30 Driver's license org.
- 32 Opposite of WSW
- 34 Petits ____ (tiny peas), also a French restaurant on the Downtown Mall
- 36 Snatch
- 38 Optimally
- 41 Instrument with pipes
- 42 "I Can't Handle Change" musician
- 43 You Tube Short, for short
- 44 Public health org.
- 45 Wonderment
- 48 How remote workers get paid
- 50 Sharp scolding
- 52 Incapable
- 53 Canada Dry drink, with 70-Across
- 55 Thanksgiving bird
- 57 Fasten
- 58 "Siddhartha" author Herman
- 61 Actress Jessica
- 63 Poker payment
- 64 ____-mo



- 65 Sunbathing goal
- 66 "May ____ of service?"
- 67 "Hoo-____-ray, Hoo-____-ray, ray, ray, UNa.!"

CARTOON

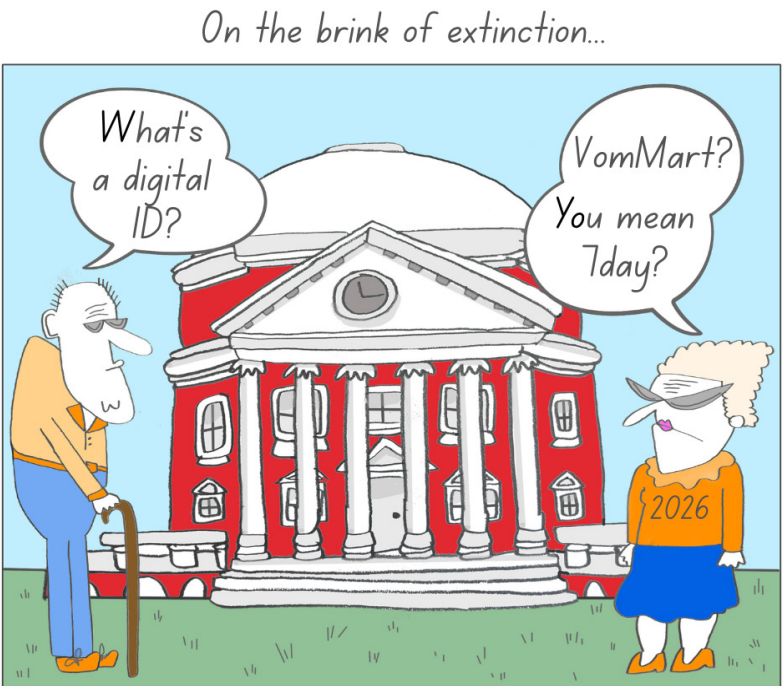
Students' Best Friend

Jasmine Xiang | Cartoon Senior Associate



The Brink of Extinction

Blake Maguire | Cartoonist



the fourth-years return to Grounds for the last first time.