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MAC DOUCETTE, DANIEL FISHER, BENVIN LOZADA, KAYLA MOORE & CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY



NEWS

Student Council Commission identifies gaps in UBE processes

The 26-page report laid out recommendations to strengthen UBE's policies and practices deemed insufficient following the 2026 Student Council election

Jaylynn Perez, Michael Racz and Grace Little | **Senior Associates and News Editor**

In an interim report obtained by The Cavalier Daily, the newly formed Commission for Legitimacy, Electoral Accountability and Reform identified several institutional failures in the University Board of Elections' oversight of student elections and ballot review process, specifically during the 2026 Student Council presidential election, 2026 College Council presidential election and the 2026 First-Year Council elections.

The report — which was released Sunday — examined UBE's student electoral system and outlined 18 initial findings and recommendations, including concerns that the UBE relies too heavily on unwritten precedent, lacks sufficient mechanisms to enforce its own rules and has not clearly and consistently administered error-free ballots.

The Commission was first proposed during Student Council's Sept. 8 meeting — one week after UBE released its first draft of its updated Rules and Regulations Sept. 1. Following a week-long public comment period and revisions, the amended Rules and Regulations took effect Sept. 9. The Commission was tasked with reviewing UBE's current organizational structure and operations with the goal of providing recommendations based on its findings.

The report outlines several issues identified by the Commission, including UBE's violation of its own requirement for a two-week public comment period, ballot errors in two of the last five elections, the lack of formal written authority for its committees and chair, limited sanctions for candidates and organizations that violate its Rules and Regulations and inconsistent handling of student privacy law during the 2026 Student Council election dispute.

Ella Gilmore, UBE chair and fourth-year College student, said she appreciates the Commission's work in providing the UBE with feedback.

"I appreciate the time and effort taken by each member of the [Commission] in compiling their interim report, and I look forward to reviewing their final recommendations when the time comes," Gilmore said in a statement to The Cavalier Daily.

Strengthen ballot checks, clarify who resolves disputes

The report claims insufficient ballot review procedures may exist — in the last five elections administered by the UBE, the report asserts "substantial errors" have affected ballots in two elections in 2024 and 2026.

"In guaranteeing free and fair elections, an electoral board must ensure that the ballot is accessible and free from error," the report reads. "We find both instances to represent significant failures by the UBE to properly assemble the ballot."

The first error occurred in the 2024 First-Year Council elections. After voting commenced, the UBE received reports that several candidates were excluded from the ballot in several races. The UBE reissued the ballot later in the evening, but mistakenly used the incorrect system to tabulate votes, meaning a run-off was administered to make up for the error. The then-UBE chair apologized for the error, assuring the student body no future errors would occur.

The second error concerns the 2026 College Council presidential election, in which UBE mistakenly wrote a candidate onto the ballot who had failed to acquire the necessary 25 signatures. After recognizing the error, UBE proceeded with counting ballots by its ranked system and disqualified the candidate without sufficient signatures.

Improve voter outreach and public access technologies

The Commission found that voter turnout in student elections remains too low, despite increases in recent election cycles. Turnout in the 2026 Student Council presidential election more than doubled from 12 percent of the student body in 2025 to 25 percent. The 2026 First-Year Council elections saw 48 percent turnout, which the Commission described as "a great encouragement for self-governance."

The report credited UBE with efforts to publicize elections through social media, tabling and collaborations with the Honor Committee. However, the Commission stated that, with the exception of the Honor Committee, elected student bodies "have not done much to ensure participation in student elections."

As part of its recommendation, the Commission stated that UBE should extend its outreach partnerships to other student organizations and that "all elected bodies make a conscious effort to encourage participation." The Commission further warned that low turnout could raise questions about the legitimacy of student self-governance, particularly at a university that emphasizes student participation in its governing institutions.

Carry out transition periods for undisputed elections

The report also discussed how the dispute surrounding the 2026 Student Council president election disrupted the transition between the outgoing Student Council leadership and the incoming elected members. The report stated that although the dispute was isolated to the office of Student Council president, the delay in the transition of power applied to all elected Student Council officials and had a "significant impact on [Student] Council at large."

The report noted that the dispute delayed the appointment of branch chiefs and the approval of the summer budget. It stated that UBE should allow the transition of undisputed incoming Student Council leadership to proceed while disputed positions are being resolved, rather than delaying transition until all disputes are settled.

Enforce a clarified endorsing organization framework

The report also outlined concerns with the rules governing endorsing organizations, which allow student groups to formally support candidates in University elections. The report acknowledged that prior to the implementation of the 2026-27 UBE Rules and Regulations that took effect Sept. 9, UBE did not have a clearly established process for sanctioning endorsing organizations that violated election rules.

The new set of Rules and Regulations implemented Sept. 9, however, grant the UBE Rules and Regulations Committee the authority to suspend the endorsing organization's participation in endorsements for up to one year following violations of election rules.

The report pointed to the complaint made against the Inter-Fraternity Council following the 2026 Student Council election as an example of why such a process is necessary. The IFC, however, was not found to have violated UBE election rules during last semester's elections.

Ensure alignment of UBE and elected bodies' interpretation of constitutions

According to the report, UBE and the elected bodies for which it oversees elections often carry conflicting interpretations of the elected bodies' constitutions. Due to interpretation discrepancies, UBE and the bodies encounter challenges when attempting to work through disputes and certification processes, according to the report.

In one instance in 2004, Student Council's constitution said that a two-thirds vote was necessary for its elections to certify an outcome, and Council members disagreed on whether a two-thirds vote meant two-thirds of students casting a ballot or two-thirds of students casting a ballot and voting on the particular referendum of concern. The then-UBE chair asserted that UBE is responsible for reporting election results, not interpreting what they should mean based on each organization's constitution.

"Not only does it lead us to wonder what the extent of the UBE's regulatory authority is, but it also brings forward a crucial discovery — the UBE reports the results of elections, but does not certify those results," the report reads.

When investigating the issue of constitutional interpretations, the report also expressed an underlying concern with the lack of mechanisms to report such disputes about governing constitutions between the UBE and the self-governance organizations. The report asserted that the elected body could not impartially render such interpretations, and it states that adjudication by a third party is the "most sensible option."

Aside from alignment between UBE and other self-governance organizations, the report also brought to light the need to ensure UBE complies with its own constitution and Rules and Regulations. Specifically, the report raised concerns about UBE's Sept. 1 decision to eliminate the Judicial Review Board from its appellate structure, even though its role is codified in UBE's constitution. Further, the report also noted that UBE moved to limit its public comment period to one week — a change not reflected in its constitution.

The report asserted a mechanism must be created to ensure compliance by UBE, and the Commission resolved to recommend a proposal in its final report.

Create comprehensive framework for FERPA, VFOIA

The report further identified inconsistencies in how UBE handles public access to election proceedings and the privacy of student information, particularly during the 2026 Student Council presidential election.

During the first hearing related to the 2026 Student Council presidential election, several members of the public attempted to attend the proceedings. Abby Nickelson, then-UBE chair and Class of 2026 alumna, denied the public entry. In a March 12 email statement to The Cavalier Daily, Nickelson said UBE guidelines did not require meetings to be open to the public and noted that UBE had historically conducted its proceedings privately. She also said that the hearing would remain closed under FERPA.

The UBE subsequently released an opinion containing information discussed during the hearing. After Micah Andrews, fourth-year College student and then-Student Council presidential candidate, made her first appeal, the JRB also issued an opinion March 20, which remanded the case to UBE for further review.

The Commission questioned the inconsistency in how decisions were handled. It further wrote that if Nickelson's initial determination that the hearing should be sealed under FERPA was correct, then publishing the initial UBE and JRB opinions was "dubious."

The report said UBE appeared to lack an established procedure for handling its responsibilities under the FOIA and FERPA, instead of invoking categorical exemptions under FERPA. The Commission said those exemptions were inconsistent with the UBE's status as a "public body" exercising authority delegated by the Board of Visitors.

Examine Judicial Review Board presence

The JRB — a body controlled by the University administration — is an appellate group that oversees hearings for appeals in student election disputes. The JRB heard Andrews' appeal in the 2026 Student Council presidential election, deciding to uphold the results and certify Michael Mitchell, Student Council president and fourth-year Commerce student, as the election's winner.

The report claims the JRB "occupies a strange place in the appellate process" due to its composition as a body appointed by the Vice President and Chief Student Affairs Officer. The JRB has had authority over appeals cases since 2003, but the UBE has expressed that this body should not hold this authority, according to the report.

The report acknowledges that appeals cases differ in scope across self-governance organizations, and sanctions issued by bodies such as UJC and Honor may warrant this administrative oversight due to liability concerns. However, the report states that these concerns do not exist in student elections, meaning an administrative body should not have the purview it exerted in the 2026 appeals case. The report also asserts a need for a body outside of UBE to hear appealed cases.

"We believe that offering critiques to our electoral system is unproductive if we cannot offer sufficient reforms. As such, we endeavor to provide detailed proposals that could be implemented by the University Board of Elections and elected bodies," the report reads.

First-years establish new commerce clubs throughout fall

The new clubs span various business fields including consulting, capital markets, asset management and sales

Bryan Dean | Staff Writer



MAC DOUCETTE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

This trend comes amidst increasingly competitive admission to the McIntire School of Commerce, which reported a 43.5 percent acceptance rate for the most recent cycle.

The University has seen at least seven newly-formed commerce clubs throughout the fall semester, with many founders being current first-year students. This trend comes amidst increasingly competitive admission to the McIntire School of Commerce, which reported a 43.5 percent acceptance rate for the most recent cycle.

Commerce clubs — student organizations oriented around business — have historically garnered strong student interest, with many listed as selective in admissions on Hoos Involved. Of note, McIntire also lists a selection of McIntire-affiliated, independent Contracted Organizations on its website, alongside its student governance councils. Not all commerce-related clubs maintain this McIntire tie.

Common activities amongst commerce clubs include technical business training, mock interviews and networking events. Last spring, third-year Commerce student Hayden Matay administered a survey finding disproportionate favoritism and competitiveness in commerce club recruitment. Matay told The Cavalier Daily in January that respondents expressed that the rigor of commerce club applications outpaces the recruitment practices of clubs in other disciplines.

The Cavalier Daily spoke with the founders of four new commerce clubs created this semester alone — all of whom are first-year students. These clubs include the Virginia Mergers & Acquisitions Group, the Virginia Real Estate Consulting Group, the Caucasus Consulting Group and the Cavalier Capital Group. The Cavalier Daily also contacted the Virginia Sales Organization, the Virginia Private Equity Group and the Wealth Management Club but did not receive a response by the time of publication.

Many of these new commerce clubs were inspired by founders' experiences throughout high school. Youssef Nasr, founder of VCRG and first-year College student, said he has been a realtor since his senior year of high school. He spoke on his inspiration for founding the club after helping an immigrant client find a family home shortly after graduation.

"Thank God, I was able to find a great home for him that fit all his needs and wants," Nasr said. "Seeing how much of an improvement that made in his life and his family really motivated me ... if this is one person, think about how [many] more people could experience that."

According to Nasr, VRCG is focused on educating students interested in real estate while providing pro-bono consulting to local companies, realtors and investors. Thomas Giordano, member of VRCG and first-year College student, said he feels that exposure to introductory consulting through the club will prepare him for a future career.

"I don't really have nailed exactly what I want to do, but consulting is definitely an option for that," Giordano said. "I think ... practicing case prep in what is now a low stakes environment ... will put me ahead of the curve."

Ronan Vora is a co-founder of the Caucasus Consulting Group — a group started this fall — and a first-year College student. CCG is a hands-on consulting club dedicated to supporting humanitarian aid in the Caucasus region — an area encompassing parts of Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Vora said the club is a continuation of a high school club he participated in that could not engage in formal consulting due to school restrictions. Vora said he hopes to gain real-world consulting experience through CCG, which is currently preparing for future client work. CCG was approved as a CIO Tuesday during Student Council's general body meeting.

Vora said he hopes all members of CCG become educated on events in the Caucasus region as well as experience strong professional development through working with clients, performing hands-on market research and creating real deliverables.

Khoi Tran, member of CCG and first-year Engineering student, said he has had a positive experience in the club so far, highlighting its training program involving introductory case studies.

"I've enjoyed all of [the training and case studies] because they've exposed me to a different way of approaching problems," Tran said. "It's also been great meeting people with many different perspectives and learning from them ... I'm excited to see how the organization develops and [to] eventually start working on an actual consulting project."

One common challenge several new founders said they have been experiencing is the CIO application process. According to the Student Council website, criteria for student clubs to gain CIO recognition includes at least 10 active members, hosting three meetings, a CIO agreement and a constitution. Organizations seeking CIO status for the fall semester needed to submit their applications before Oct. 31.

Many organizations aim to reach CIO status to gain the ability to reserve on-Grounds meeting rooms and event spaces, advertise and recruit at the student activities fall and spring fairs, become eligible for Student Activities Fee funding and receive formal University recognition. Even with these benefits, CIOs still operate independently from the University and maintain the freedom to manage their own structures and calendars.

New member recruitment — particularly within the CIO application timeframe — has been another common challenge among founders, even for those who lead organizations that are not yet CIOs. Brody Larkins, co-founder of the Virginia Mergers & Acquisitions Group and first-year Engineering student, spoke about the rushed recruitment process.

"It was a very quick and slightly rushed process ... one weekend we were at Starbucks from nine to five, three or four days in a row, just interviewing [candidates]," Larkins said. "I think it was 60 applicants ... but it was a fun experience. Getting to meet all these people that have that like-minded interest in mergers and acquisitions was a great experience."

Founders weighed in on what they hope to gain from club leadership, including Samiullah Tariq, co-founder of the Cavalier Capital Group and first-year College student. He spoke about his experience as an international student from Pakistan.

"Coming from across the world, a 17-hour flight, I just want to leave something behind when I exit ... the University of Virginia," Tariq said. "When I graduate and go back to Pakistan, I'll have a piece of me [at] U.Va. that continues [to] help other people as well."

When asked about the increasing selectivity of existing commerce clubs, Vora said that he believes it is due to the rising popularity of McIntire, with commerce club applicants hoping to differentiate themselves in the McIntire admissions process.

According to the McIntire admissions website, the admissions office looks for certain traits within applicants, including academic excellence, curiosity, taking initiative and resilience.

Danny Steeper, associate dean for student success and executive director of academic programs at McIntire, said that he believes the creation of new student organizations aligns with the values McIntire looks for when evaluating candidates, specifically taking initiative to create organizations where need exists.

"I would say that this is equally true about organizations that are business related and non business related. It's more of the act of identifying an area of interest that a student individually may have, and then assessing the broader University community. Does this currently exist? If not, how can I assess whether or not there's a sustained interest in this?" Steeper said.

Steeper also said that CIOs in general have become increasingly difficult to join due to the popularity of the clubs, which could be a motivator for founding new commerce clubs.

"Everything from pickleball to fraternities and sororities to business-related groups ... Students are so talented, and there's so much interest in getting engaged," Steeper said. "I think they increasingly might be turning to, 'Okay, well I'm going to start something, because I'm not able to get access to the [club] that I specifically want to get access to now.'"

According to the McIntire Office of Undergraduate Admission, business-related activities are not a prerequisite for admission to the undergraduate program nor are they weighed over other extracurricular experiences. The application to McIntire will be open to first-year students from Jan. 27 to May 4, with decisions released in June.

Virginia voters reshape State Constitution in 2026 midterms

All three constitutional amendments passed in the Midterms, changing decades-old restrictions and establishing new legal protections in the Commonwealth

Reilly Auld | Staff Writer

In the 2026 midterm elections, Virginia voters approved all three proposed amendments to the State Constitution, which will take effect Jan. 1, reshaping the legal protections surrounding reproductive healthcare, marriage equality and voting rights for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Question 1 protects reproductive freedom following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* Supreme Court case in 2022. While the ruling of *Roe v. Wade* provided federal protection for abortion, Question 1 provides broader protection of reproductive freedom at the state level. Question 2 enshrines the right to same-sex marriage in the Constitution and Question 3 changes the Commonwealth's system of permanent felony disenfranchisement to automatic restoration of felons' voting rights upon release from incarceration.

Ballot Question 1

Ballot Question 1 — the Right to Reproductive Freedom Amendment — addressed three main concerns regarding reproductive freedom in the Commonwealth. It asked voters to protect the freedom of personal decisions surrounding reproductive choice, protect healthcare workers from being punished for aiding in the production of an abortion and restrict abortion during the third trimester except when a patient's health is at risk and the pregnancy cannot survive.

In June 2022, the United States Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organizatio*n case. This eliminated the federal constitutional right to abortion and returned the authority to regulate or ban the procedure to individual states.

Under the current Constitution of Virginia, there is no existing clause protecting reproductive freedoms. Instead, the Code of Virginia — a collection of statutory laws — outlines the statutory regulations of reproductive freedoms and abortion.

According to the code, anyone administering to or using means to destroy an unborn child or produce an abortion or miscarriage is guilty of a Class 4 felony unless outlined as a specific medical exception. Additionally, the administration of means to produce an abortion or miscarriage is not classified as a felony when it is performed to save the life of the woman. A licensed physician may terminate a pregnancy, or aid and assist in the termination, by performing an abortion or causing a miscarriage during a pregnancy's first trimester.

A licensed physician may perform an abortion or cause a miscarriage on any woman during the second trimester and before the third trimester as long as it is performed in a licensed hospital or operated by the Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services. Further, under Code section 18.2-75, any physician who objects to abortion is not required to participate in the procedure and refusing to administer the procedure is not a claim for legal action as long as the objection is written.

The amendment, as elected to be adopted by voters under Article 1, Section 11-A, states "that every individual has the fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including the ability to make and carry out decisions relating to one's own prenatal care, childbirth, postpartum care, contraception, abortion care, miscarriage management and fertility care."

The amendment explicitly permits the General Assembly to regulate abortion in the third trimester, with exceptions for when a physician determines the procedure is necessary to protect the pregnant patient's life.

Law Prof. Daniel Ortiz explained that the adoption of these policies as an amendment in comparison to a statute offers different legal protections, as there are differences between statutory protection and Constitutional protection.

"[The amendment basically] ensures that going into the future, no legislature will try to outlaw or unduly restrict abortion rights or other reproductive freedoms in the Commonwealth. It's a way of protecting against future majorities," Ortiz said.

In Virginia, a legislative majority is defined as a majority vote in the General Assembly consisting of the House of Delegates with 100 members and the 40 members of the State Senate. While the Code of Virginia that currently outlines reproductive freedom legislation can be overturned through a majority of the General Assembly, the amendment process includes approval from the General Assembly in two sessions. The sessions must also be separated by a House of Delegates election and requires voter ratification to be adopted. Following the 2026 midterm elections, voters across Virginia ratified Question 1 and the amended language reproductive freedoms will take effect Jan. 1.

Ballot Question 2

Ballot Question 2 asked voters if they should amend the Virginia Constitution to remove the ban on same-sex marriage, affirm that two adults may marry regardless of race, gender or sex and require all marriages to be treated equally under the law.

In the Constitution of Virginia, a marriage recognizable by the state is defined as a union between a man and a woman and does not recognize another union between individuals as having the same legal status, rights, benefits, obligations and qualities as marriage.

The clause limiting marriage to the union between a man and woman is known as the Marshall-Newman Amendment after Delegate Bob Marshall (R), who served in the House of Delegates from January 1992 to January 2018 and Senator Stephen Newman (R), who served in the House of Delegates from January 1992 to January 1996 and in the Virginia Senate from January 1996 to January 2024, who developed the section in 2006. Their approved proposal also prohibited the Commonwealth from creating or recognizing civil unions, domestic partnerships or any similar legal status for unmarried couples that did not abide by how the state defined marriage.

The constitutional ban on same-sex marriage remained in effect until 2015, in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* Supreme Court Case. The case ruling required all states to license marriages between two people of the same sex and to recognize lawful same-sex marriages performed in other states. This ruling invalidated state-level constitutional and statutory bans, including the Marshall-Newman Amendment, and established nationwide marriage equality.

According to Ortiz, the push to pass Ballot Question 2 was driven by both legal anxiety and the symbolic weight of the primary documents in Virginia.

"I think that the people who are in favor of the right to same-sex marriage fear that the Supreme Court may change its mind," Ortiz said. "To many people, the fact that it's written in the [Virginia] Constitution that there shall be no same-sex marriage denigrates their marriages, because it's a formal expression in the Supreme Document in Virginia that these marriages don't count."

The recently passed amendment would change Article 1, Section 15-A in the Virginia Bill of Rights to define marriage as a "vital personal right essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness." It further states that the marriage of any adult individuals will not be denied based on sex, gender or race and their union will be a lawful marriage recognized by the state.

Ballot Question 3

Ballot Question 3 asked voters whether or not convicted felons should have their voting rights automatically restored once released from incarceration. In addition, it moves to allow mentally incompetent persons to vote if they have the capacity to understand the act of voting.

Under the current language of the Virginia Constitution, "no person who has been convicted of a felony shall be qualified to vote unless his civil rights have been restored by the Governor or another appropriate authority."

In January, a federal court classified specific felonies as "common law felonies" where an individual convicted of such a felony can lose their voting rights. A "common law felony" includes 11 felonies from common law in 1870 — arson, burglary, escape and rescue from a prison or jail, larceny, manslaughter, mayhem, murder, rape, robbery, sodomy and suicide. The Commonwealth further defined common law felonies to include three state statutory offenses — murder, voluntary manslaughter and involuntary manslaughter. Under the court order, committing a statutory offense disqualifies individuals from voting or registering to vote.

Virginia law defines a felony as a crime punishable by confinement in a state correctional facility for a year or more. The Commonwealth further divides felonies into six classes. Respective punishments range from a life sentence for a class one felony to a one- to five-year sentence for a class six felony. In addition to the time served, convicted felons may be subject to a fine ranging from $2,500 for a class six felony and fines up to $100,000 for a class one felony.

The passing of the ballot question amends the Virginia Constitution to state, "no person who has been convicted of a felony shall be entitled to vote during any period of incarceration for such a felony conviction, but every person upon release from incarceration for that felony conviction and without further action required of him, shall be invested with all political rights, including the right to vote." This means convicted felons will have their right to vote restored automatically upon their release from incarceration.

Throughout history, the Commonwealth has restricted voting rights and designed voting laws to suppress the participation of Black Americans in legislative activities. In 1902, Virginia delegates called for a convention that resulted in the intent to disfranchise Black voters. In order to not violate the Fifteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, an understanding clause and poll tax were created. The understanding clause enacted a literacy test on any potential voter who could lose their right to vote if they were deemed incapable of understanding the posed question. Poll taxes were set at $1.50 — equivalent to $58 today — and needed to be paid for up to three years at a time. The poll tax was later overturned by the Supreme Court in *Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections* in 1966.

Furthermore, part of the disenfranchisement measures in the 1902 constitution was a sweeping clause that permanently stripped voting rights from anyone convicted of treason or of any felony. At the same convention, then-Senator Carter Glass (D) from Lynchburg is credited with citing the convention itself as a method to legally eliminate every Black voter without reducing the power of the white electorate. In the 2026 midterms, the passing of Question 3 changed a 124-year-old charter defining voting rights in Virginia.

Under the current amendment, any resident adjudicated by a court to be "mentally incompetent," which includes individuals placed under broad guardianship or conservatorship orders, loses their right to vote regardless of the nature of their disability. With the recently approved amendment, a general finding of incapacity no longer disqualifies a voter and a voter can only be barred from voting if a court specifically determines that the individual lacks the capacity to understand the act of voting itself.

Looking forward

On Jan. 1, the three constitutional amendments passed in the 2026 Midterm elections are scheduled to take effect. With widely protected reproductive freedoms, adopted changes to same-sex marriage and the right to vote restored for released incarcerated individuals, Virginia enters a new constitutional era.

After results were announced that all amendments had passed, Gov. Abigail Spanberger (D) shared a series of public statements. After campaigning to vote "yes" for all three measures and signing the legislation that placed them on the ballot Feb. 6, she framed the outcome as a defining moment for civil rights within the Commonwealth.

"Now, because Virginians used their voices at the ballot box, these rights will be enshrined in our constitution," Spanberger wrote on Instagram Nov. 3.

However, others signaled that the election results are the beginning of a legal fight instead of a means to an end.

Question 1 is facing legal action in Tazewell County Circuit Court, where plaintiffs are seeking to block the certification of the reproductive freedom amendment. The plaintiffs argue that the ballot language misled voters about the scope of the amendment. They additionally say that legislative clerks violated state law by failing to distribute and post copies of the proposed amendments to local courthouses and voting precincts ahead of the November 2025 elections.

Provided the amendments take effect as scheduled, their impact will be seen immediately throughout the Commonwealth. The newly expanded electorate will head to the polls for Virginia's 2027 General Assembly and national primary elections. They will showcase how Virginia's newly defined constitutional landscape could reshape campaigns ahead of the 2028 presidential race.

SPORTS

A change of address: Coogen and Gribble's road to Virginia

The first-years followed Coach Aaron Roussell from Richmond to Virginia, carrying their belief in his vision

Eleanor Lynch | **Senior Associate**



COURTESY VIRGINIA ATHLETICS

Both Coogen (No. 2) and Gribble (No. 3) have played key roles off the bench for Virginia this season.

First-year guard Erica Gribble and first-year forward Lyla Coogen thought they knew where their college basketball careers would begin. Both committed to the system they wanted to play in and the culture they wanted to join. They chose Richmond, not anticipating having to make that choice again.

Two months before they were set to begin their collegiate careers, Coogen and Gribble learned that Aaron Roussell — the head coach who recruited them to Richmond — was going to be the next head coach at Virginia. The announcement upended the plans each spent months making. Since rules surrounding Roussell's new contract prohibited either from immediately speaking with him about the transition, both had to reconsider what their college basketball careers might look like.

For two high schoolers, the timing could hardly have been more consequential. Ultimately, both chose to follow Roussell to Virginia instead of remaining at Richmond — becoming the only members of Roussell's 2026 recruiting class to join him, and bringing with them an understanding of the vision he had spent so long selling them.

"I chose Richmond to be with [Roussell] and to be with him as a coach and a program," Coogen said. "So I didn't see a reason why I would go somewhere else."

The decision to commit to Virginia reflected what attracted them to Roussell's program in the first place. For Coogen, it was the opportunity to play in a system that accommodated her versatility as a 6-foot-3 forward. Roussell's offense offered liberty to operate inside and along the perimeter, allowing her to develop an expansive game.

But Coogen was equally drawn in by the environment Roussell had cultivated. His compelling record of achievement at Richmond — 148 wins and three consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances from 2024 to 2026 — demonstrated his ability to build a competitive program, while the relationships he maintained with his players suggested a culture in which they could develop beyond basketball.

"You're a student-athlete, and you want to have the family atmosphere [and] be more than just a basketball player," Coogen said. "So that was also really important to me."

Gribble, who left Greensburg Central Catholic High School as its all-time leading scorer, had a different path to Richmond. She committed early in the process as a junior in high school, hoping to put the recruiting process behind her and enjoy her final season of AAU basketball. She was excited about Richmond's coaching staff, the academics and the campus. More importantly, she came to trust Roussell.

When Gribble learned that he was leaving, she said the news was difficult to reconcile with the future she had been preparing for.

"I really wanted to stay with Coach [Roussell] because I built a strong relationship with him and knew what his goals were and his playing style and whatnot," Gribble said.

His departure came as a complete surprise. Coogen recalled the uncertainty of learning that the coach she had planned to play for would no longer be at Richmond.

"That was shocking because in two months I was supposed to start summer workouts and start," Coogen said. "I had this whole plan and I was like, 'What am I gonna do?'"

Neither player immediately had a clear answer. Coogen did not simply assume that Virginia would be her next destination. She explored other possibilities after decommitting from Richmond. But the more she considered her options, the more she returned to the original reasons she had committed — the coach and the program he was building. A different campus did not necessarily require a different choice.

For Gribble, Virginia also presented an opportunity that extended beyond continuity. Growing up, she had watched her sister Alayna compete in the ACC at Pittsburgh. She imagined one day playing in the same league. The move to Charlottesville offered a chance to pursue that ambition while remaining with Roussell.

"It was a dream to play at the top high level," Gribble said. "This opportunity came along and I've always dreamt of this as a little girl, playing in the ACC … That was a really cool experience, to have my dreams come true."

Their arrival on Grounds with more prior knowledge of the coaching system than the average late commit did not mean that the transition would be seamless — familiarity with Roussell's philosophy gave both players a point of reference, but neither had yet directly experienced his system at the collegiate level. They still had to adjust to the speed of the game and the demands of being new to a college roster.

For Gribble, that has meant recalibrating her role. After serving as a primary offensive option in high school, she is now learning how to contribute within a deeper rotation — the five-out style of playing Virginia has developed this season forces players to support their teammates from any position through constant movement. Rather than arrive at Virginia expecting to reproduce the responsibilities she held before, Gribble has approached the transitions with an openness to just help her team.

"Whatever they need me to be, I'm going to strive to do that," Gribble said.

Coogen, meanwhile, is continuing to improve her skills. She is learning from the opportunities she gets on the court, but also from watching and absorbing the habits of older players. This has required patience, as progress is not always measured in playing time — though both Coogen and Gribble have had chances to contribute in games.

Both first-years have played in all five of the Cavaliers' games thus far, where Gribble and Coogen average 12.4 minutes and eight and a half minutes on the court per game, respectively. Gribble currently holds the second-highest field-goal percentage on the team at 62.5 percent, and Coogen has made all three of her free throws in games.

While they are working hard to perform on the court, understanding a system can take place well before a player begins to master it.

"I'm learning even if I'm not on the floor," Coogen said. "I'm learning every minute, every second, on the court and off the court."

That process has been eased by the reception they received from their teammates. Coogen mentioned that when she gets confused by a play or struggles to keep pace, teammates have taken the time to explain it and bring her along.

"It's been one of the most healthy basketball teams and communities that I've been a part of in my basketball lifetime," Coogen said. "[The team's veterans] are so open and willing to help us first-years. It's been amazing to have such great leadership and them taking us under their wings."

The support helped recreate an element of what Coogen anticipated from Richmond — a sense of belonging not contingent on performance. Though she left behind people she had expected to spend her college years with, Coogen has found that the same community she associated with her original commitment followed her to Charlottesville.

"The community just got brought over here," Coogen said.

That sense of continuity is significant for a program undergoing a leadership change. Roussell's arrival brought a new direction to Virginia, but Coogen and Gribble entered with some understanding of the principles behind it. They know what he values and have bought into the approach he hopes to establish.

Their presence also illustrates the distinction between building a program and simply assembling a roster. A coaching change can bring new players and new expectations, but culture is built through the relationships and habits that take hold over time. While Coogen and Gribble cannot carry Richmond's record or its past accomplishments with them, what they have brought to Virginia is an understanding of the environment Roussell wants to create, and a willingness to help create it.

That is a significant responsibility for two first-years — they must establish themselves in a new program while learning the demands of college basketball. Their initial decisions were rooted in trust, but the work ahead requires them to turn trust into consistent contributions.

Richmond was where Coogen and Gribble first pictured their futures. Charlottesville is where those futures will take shape. The address changed, the circumstances shifted and the questions became different. While they did not arrive in Charlottesville knowing exactly what would become of their college careers, they arrived knowing why they wanted to begin them here.

Johann Grünloh is Virginia's not-so-secret weapon

The 7-foot second-year has shown drastic improvements across many facets of his game, while continuing to be a stalwart in the Cavalier defense

Evan White | Staff Writer



AHNA HAMPTON | THE CAVALIER DAILY

If you haven't been paying attention to Virginia men's basketball, you really should start. If you have been, watch closer.

Watch Bucknell attempt only eight two-point shots in the first half. Watch Arkansas' centers combine for three total points and four turnovers. Watch Northeastern get only eight points from players taller than 6-foot-6. The undefeated Cavaliers have won six consecutive games, by an average margin of 21.8 points. They're averaging 43.3 points in the paint per game. They have yet to be outrebounded.

Seeing all of this, one thing is clear — it sucks to play in the post against Virginia. The Cavaliers have a force down low, and that force is second-year center Johann Grünloh.

The 7-footer came to Charlottesville last year from Löningen, Germany, to be a part of Coach Ryan Odom's first year at Virginia, after playing professionally in his home country for SC RASTA Vechta. He started in every game and had some big moments at high levels, but the Cavaliers took an early exit in the NCAA Tournament, falling to Tennessee. Grünloh, like all nine other Cavaliers eligible, committed to returning for his second season.

The task now? Use the offseason to continue to settle into American basketball, and find his role in a star-studded Virginia lineup. Before this season tipped off, Odom spoke to Grünloh's development as a leader and teammate.

"Johann is the ultimate team player," Odom said. "Johann in particular is way more vocal than he was a year ago. He is much more energetic. He knows exactly what's going on out there."

Grünloh's work over the course of the offseason has clearly paid off. He is stronger, quicker and more comfortable defending all over the floor. Grünloh is pacing the ACC in blocks this year, averaging 2.83 rejections per game, an upgrade from his already outstanding mark of 2.2 last year. He will hope to become the second consecutive Cavalier to lead the conference, after former center Ugonna Onyenso did it last season.

"I think you can prepare better mentally about what's going to happen," Grünloh said about having a year under his belt. "Last year, everything was kind of new to us."

He took a huge step toward this goal in the Capital Showcase Nov. 8. Arkansas, like all teams coached by Naismith Hall-of-Famer John Calipari, wants to get downhill and score at the rim, using alley-oops and cuts to sneak in and score before a defense even realizes what's happening. Grünloh stayed diligent and composed in the paint, limiting Arkansas to one first half assist while swatting five Razorback shots on his way to winning the Capital Showcase Game MVP award. In addition to fantastic interior defense and shot-stopping, he poured on 15 points.

The capstone play of this MVP performance came early in the second half, a Virginia turnover left Grünloh scrambling back to defend three Arkansas players on a fast break. Razorback junior guard Jeremiah Wilkinson, a fast and athletic guard, opted to take it himself, leaping from the third hash on the left side of the paint at full speed. Almost casually, Grünloh turned his body, jumped and met Wilkinson at the rim, knocking his shot away and preserving the Virginia lead.

"One of Johann's most complete games in a Virginia uniform," Odom said in a press conference after the Arkansas game.

This scoring outburst would have been slightly abnormal last year, as Grünloh only reached double figures nine times in 36 games, and only scored 15 or more points three times.

Nowhere yet this season was the offensive leap more apparent than in the recent Northeastern game. With nine minutes left in the first half, Virginia was down by 16-18 when fourth-year guard Jurian Dixon swung the ball to Grünloh on the right wing. Grünloh caught the ball, squared up to the basket and pumpfaked, then promptly took one dribble, blowing right by the Northeastern defender before slamming it home. This basket gave Virginia a much-needed offensive spark in a game they went on to win by 25 points.

When asked about Grünloh's offensive improvement as he begins to garner national recognition, second-year forward Thijs De Ridder had extremely high praise for his partner in the frontcourt.

"I think he's a perfect center, seven-foot, strong guy," De Ridder said. "He can shoot the ball. He can finish well. Great touch. He can pass. I mean, for me, that's the perfect new center of this area of basketball."

As the season goes on and the Cavaliers take on more and more top-ranked teams, Grünloh will have his work cut out for him. Virginia plays a long list of extremely talented centers, matching up with eight of the 20 preseason watchlist members for the Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Award, which is given to the nation's top center. Grünloh himself also is on this watchlist.

The first of these matchups came Nov. 13, when the Cavaliers took on Maryland and star senior center Pharrell Payne. An experienced post scorer who scored 28 points to go along with eight rebounds against Georgetown in his previous game, Payne was a different matchup than Grünloh has had all season.

While Payne got the upper hand early, accumulating 12 first-half points and drawing seven free throws, things turned around as Grünloh and Virginia seemed to change their approach to rebounding in the second half. As soon as possession changed hands, Grünloh was sprinting back to earn a position in the paint, and when the shot went up he promptly turned around and threw his body into Payne, allowing one of his teammates to come in and clean up the rebound.

While he was not able to keep Payne out of the box score, Grünloh erased his rebounding contributions almost entirely, holding him to one rebound in 18 second-half minutes. This ferocious boxing-out was instrumental to the ability of the Cavaliers to grab 10 more rebounds than the Terrapins after halftime. Most importantly, he did it without fouling, unlike many of his teammates relegated to the bench with early foul trouble.

"He just works hard," Odom said of Grünloh after the game. "He's in great physical condition. He's a tough guy, he's not afraid of big moments."

It is in Virginia's best interest that he is not afraid of those moments. Following the battle with Payne and the Terrapins, five of the seven heavyweight center matchups are in conference play, against top ACC talents like Louisville junior Flory Bidunga and Duke junior Patrick Ngongba II. While Grünloh is no stranger to these tough conference matchups, facing many of the top ACC centers last year, he did so in a much smaller sample size. Grünloh played just 21.4 minutes per game in conference play last year, with Odom opting to rotate him with Onyenso.

"I think it prepares us for what's coming after, in January, February or even in March," Grünloh said of the upcoming matchups. "We got good preparation for the big games at the end, and I think that helps us come closer together and be ready for those."

This year, Grünloh will take the brunt of the minutes, as well as the brunt of the defensive responsibility. He's already averaging 29.3 minutes per game in this blowout-riddled start, an increase of over five minutes per game from last season's average. This increased load would bother some, but not Grünloh. In the Arkansas game, his first power matchup in this new role, he played 35 minutes and 18 seconds, a career high at the time. He would top that just five days later against Maryland, playing 37 minutes and 18 seconds, including the last 27 minutes of the game. It should not be a surprise if, come ACC play, Grünloh is playing 30-35 minutes a night.

This Virginia team looks improved in a lot of ways from last year's already strong squad, and there's a lot of positives to look at from the first four games. But there is no doubt that one of the biggest is the rise of Johann Grünloh.

Between contender and pretender: Taking stock of field hockey

A season of landmark victories and frustrating setbacks left the Cavaliers somewhere between championship potential and an unfinished product

Eleanor Lynch, Adair Reid and Phoebe Toney | **Senior Associate & Staff Writers**

Virginia field hockey spent much of its 2026 season making a convincing case for itself, then an equally convincing case against itself. The Cavaliers (9-7, 3-5, ACC) beat then-No. 11 North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C., for the first time in 12 years, demonstrating their ability to challenge the country's most established programs. Yet that same team was shut out 3-0 by then-No. 11 Syracuse and ultimately fell 2-1 to Boston College in overtime in the ACC Tournament semifinals — neither result felt entirely out of character.

With a record of 9-7 overall but a conference record of 3-5, Virginia's season resists a clear assessment. The Cavaliers showed they could compete with the ACC's best, but struggled to make that level their standard. The distinction raises questions that extend beyond individual performances or a postseason finish. Three Cavalier Daily sports writers examine the expectations and patterns that made Virginia's season difficult to define.

Was Virginia as good as it was supposed to be in 2026?

Eleanor Lynch, Senior Associate: Virginia entered the 2026 season with the resume of an ACC contender, but its roster presented a more complicated picture. The Cavaliers were coming off a 16-3 campaign, a 7-1 conference record and an appearance in the ACC Championship game. They averaged 2.37 goals per game in 2025, and the return of fourth-year back Mia Abello and fourth-year goalkeeper Nilou Lempers offered continuity in two important areas of the field.

Despite these strengths, Virginia never seemed to grasp the same depth and distribution of talent that was seen the year before. The departures of midfielder Suze Leemans and back Madison Orsi started the disconnect between the seasons. Leemans finished 2025 with 15 points, second behind Abello's 20. With seven first-years on the 2026 roster, Virginia was asking a less experienced group to reproduce the output of a team that spent multiple seasons working together to establish its chemistry.

That is where the preseason outlook overstated the Cavaliers' ability — while Virginia had returning talent, the strength of its 2025 season was not concentrated in easily replaceable players. The Cavaliers' 2026 record — 9-7 overall and 3-5 against ACC opponents — suggests that the program's standing and the readiness of its current roster were different this year.

The gap between the two most recent seasons does not mean that Virginia was overrated. Rather, expectations reflected what the program had accomplished without accounting for what it lost.

Why did Virginia struggle to turn potential into consistency?

Adair Reid, Staff Writer: Throughout the 2026 season, Virginia never logged three consecutive wins, only achieving back-to-back wins thrice. What it came down to was simple. Virginia's offensive production and shot conversion rate was not enough to consistently win, even though the talent was present.

In the earliest slate, the Cavaliers struggled to connect from the midfield to the circle, which slowed shot production and kept the possession battle in the midfield. Even as the offense found synergy, Virginia ended the season averaging two goals per game, tying for 45th in the NCAA. They were also tied for 49th in points per game, averaging 5.50.

Shooting capability was there — the Cavaliers tallied 206 total shots to opponents' 137, but in goals-shot attempts, it was a different story. Virginia ended up going 32-206, landing at 0.155 while their opponents found 25-137, for 0.182. Conversion shots on goal to goals was Virginia's most obvious missing piece this year, despite a consistently dominant back line from Abello, second-year Lauren Sloan and first-year Marisa Fahning that held impressive defensive control when the offense was denied.

Considering retention and whether the Cavaliers will need to find a replacement for Lempers, Virginia looks prepared for another rise to prominence next season. Wins against North Carolina and Wake Forest in the regular season and in ACC quarterfinals are proof of that, even if they were buried by a disappointing rotation of victories and defeats.

What does this season mean for the future of Virginia field hockey?

Phoebe Toney, Staff Writer: At first glance, a season barely above .500 and under that in ACC play could be considered disheartening for the Cavaliers especially when compared with last season. But to understand the significance of this new team, it's important to do just that — compare this season with the last to realize just how little overlap there really is. This season may have looked like regression for the program, but it can be chalked up to a mere adjustment period.

Losing key players is a challenge faced by every team, Virginia losing Leemans is no exception. After accumulating back-to-back National Field Hockey Coaches Association All-American honors and two All-ACC First Team selections, Leemans' absence was felt across the entire field. Filling her productivity would be no easy task.

However, by bringing in eight new promising players, Virginia is moving the program in the right direction. Notably, first-year forward Caitlin Connell tallied an impressive 12 points on the season, matching Virginia's top point earner of the previous season. Additionally, first-year midfielder Marisa Fahning contributed seven points of her own, and first-year forward Livvy Barker put up six points.

With productivity coming from multiple new faces, Virginia fans should not feel worried. The skill is there, and the experience is coming. This will prove key in years to come as the Cavaliers continue to play young ACC teams including Duke and North Carolina in an already tough conference. While Virginia field hockey may appear rocky at present, the future is in steady hands.

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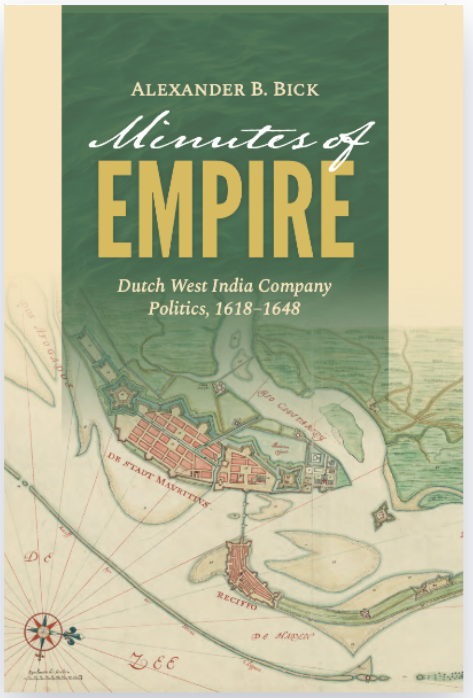
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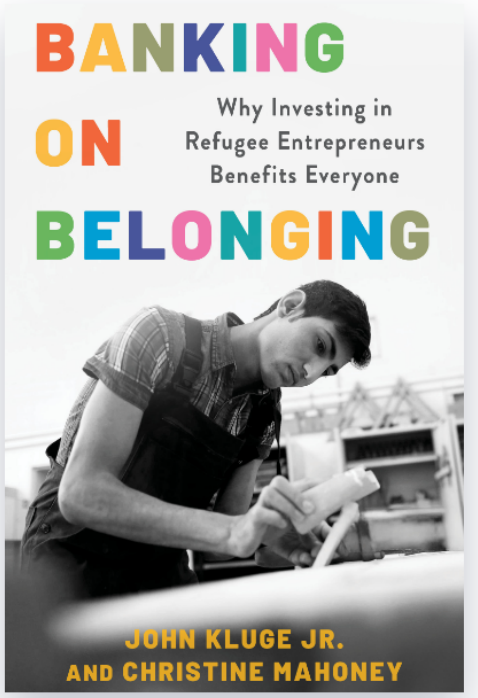


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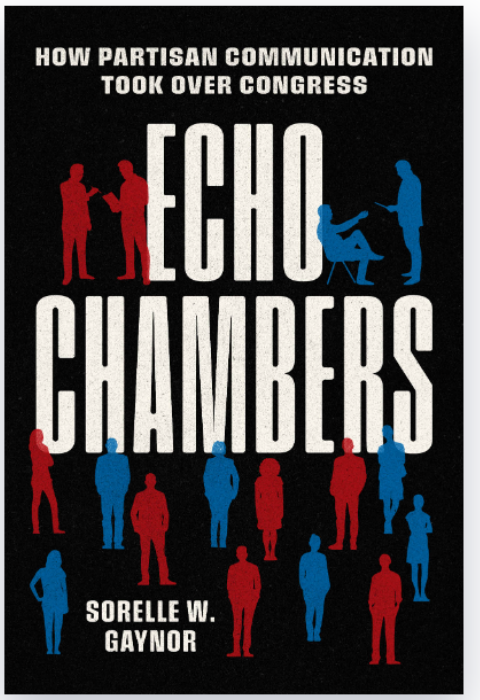


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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Benjamin Rous celebrates 10 years as symphony director

Rous' passion and zeal for working with the Symphony has been evident to audiences for a decade

Catherine Ziegler | **Staff Writer**

Benjamin Rous, music director and conductor of the Charlottesville Symphony and associate music professor, has been celebrating his decennial anniversary as music director this 2026-27 season with a series of stirring concert programs. The Symphony's season took flight with its first performance, "The Firebird," Sept. 25, and soared to new heights with "Bach Violin Concerto" concerts Nov. 7-8. Here, Rous spread his wings as a violin soloist for the first time with the Symphony, performing Johann Sebastian Bach's "Violin Concerto in D Minor, BWV 1052R," and conducting the remainder of the colorful program.

While he has spent the last 10 years honing his craft as a masterful conductor at the University, Rous said the violin marked the beginning of his musical story long ago at age six.

"I took to [the violin] gradually. Like most kids, I had to be told to practice for a while until about fifth grade," Rous said. "I think I flipped a switch, and then I wanted to practice, and I didn't have to be told anymore ... It felt like, 'Oh, this is mine now.'"

As Rous progressed through middle and high school, his interest in music expanded beyond playing violin to composing music and conducting. Rous began composing in middle school and pursued the craft throughout high school, but did not have any conducting opportunities at the time.

"I kind of knew in the back of my mind that what I really wanted to do was conduct orchestras because I watched very carefully what my youth orchestra conductors were doing, and I thought that was really, really fascinating," Rous said. "I was often in the mindset of 'How would I rehearse this moment if I were the conductor?' even though I was playing violin."

Rous began conducting during his years at Harvard University where he graduated in 2000 with highest honors and a bachelor's degree in music. Rous first conducted for Harvard's pit band in a production of the musical "City of Angels," but said what really sparked his then-future career as a conductor was being selected to lead the Harvard Bach Society Orchestra during his senior year.

Shortly after Harvard, Rous attended the University of Michigan and earned both a master's degree in music and doctorate of musical arts in conducting by 2006. He then went on to be assistant conductor for several orchestras around the country before landing the role as resident conductor for the Virginia Symphony Orchestra in Norfolk. Through connections made there, Rous said he heard that the Charlottesville Symphony was looking for a new music director — he auditioned, was selected and has been on Grounds ever since.

To celebrate his 10th season, Rous said he was able to program a collection of pieces with more interest to him. Between pieces in the recent Bach Violin Concerto, Rous addressed the audience from the stage and said that performing the program felt like wandering around a "candy store."

"We wanted this season to be like a celebration of 10 years," Rous said. "I thought that it was a chance for me to program in a way that was very personal."

Other personal touches included Igor Stravinsky's "The Firebird" suite, which was performed in the first concert installation of the season, and carries a full circle sentiment for Rous. He used the piece in his audition for the role of music director, which launched his career at the University just as it launched the 2026-27 season 10 years later. Toward the end of the season, his own arrangement of Robert Schumann's "Fantasie in C" is currently planned for the spring "Brahms Symphony No. 1" concert April 10, 2027.

Nov. 7-8, the Bach Violin Concerto opened with distinct baroque characteristics amplified by using a traditional harpsichord rather than a piano. It was followed by George Frideric Handel's "Music for the Royal Fireworks" which, although still in the baroque genre, contrasted the Bach concerto's moody strings with regal horns, winds and percussion.

Then came the "Four Sea Interludes" from Benjamin Britten's opera "Peter Grimes," which each depicted a scene relating to the ocean. Finally, the concert's final piece was "Romanian Rhapsody No. 1" by George Enescu, which started with charming clarinet and flute solos and closed the concert as a vibrant revelry of sound. With each piece, more of the orchestra became involved until every section had been featured, an effort by Rous that ensured the entirety of the symphony was appreciated by the audience.

The Symphony performed the "Bach Violin Concerto in D Minor, BWV 1052R" as a chamber orchestra with small sections of string instruments and, instead of a designated conductor, Rous performed as both violin soloist and conductor at the same time. In lieu of traditional conducting, Rous gave subtle and precise cues through body language while performing some of Bach's most difficult violin repertoire on his own. To simultaneously lead an orchestra and play a demanding violin concerto successfully required detailed awareness of not only the soloist part, but every other instrument's parts and how they fit together. Rous deftly balanced quick-paced, intricate playing with animated conducting for three movements over 20 minutes with nearly no breaks.



COURTESY JEN FARIELLO

Rous began conducting during his years at Harvard University where he graduated in 2000 with highest honors and a bachelor's degree in music.

Moreover, Rous broke new ground with the "Bach Violin Concerto in D Minor, BWV 1052R" by reconstructing the entire piece himself from its traditional form as a keyboard solo to accommodate a violin solo comprising his original arrangement. The oldest existing manuscript of the piece was, in fact, written for a keyboard instrument, and it has been widely debated among Bach scholars whether the original concerto was actually composed for keyboard or violin.

What sparked this debate are melodic sequences in which the melody line alternates with a single, repeated note played throughout the concerto — mirroring a violin technique known as bariolage, which involves rapid string crossing between two adjacent strings. Rous said the first time he heard the concerto was on keyboard, and he thought instantly that it was a violin concerto that had been transcribed. According to Rous, he and other music scholars alike speculate that Bach's original was likely for the violin because it is easier to play bariolage on the violin than on a keyboard.

Rous said the Bach lingered in the back of his mind for years, and he always had an interest in transcribing the keyboard version for the violin. He figured there may not be a better time to take on reconstructing the concerto than his 10th anniversary concert series, so he set out to accomplish it, with the entire project taking over 18 months to complete.

"In that process, I figured out I was going to have to make my own performing edition because ... your decisions for the solo part have implications for what the section parts are going to be," Rous said. "I ended up notating the entire thing, all the parts, all three movements, from scratch."

As Rous' role at the University today is primarily in conducting and not in violin, he said there often are periods of time that his violin case stays closed for weeks, sometimes months, on end. As a result, he said he has had to retrain himself to play the violin several times over. Preparing for the "Bach Violin Concerto" concerts was one of those times where he had to build his technique back up.

"I'm very confident in saying I'm playing better than I ever have in my life," Rous said. "I've been practicing like crazy over the last year since I decided on this concerto. I decided to get myself to another level."

While pursuing music at a high level, many may become engrossed in chasing perfection because of the precise technique required to master certain instruments. While this can blur a musician's initial motivation and challenge their inspiration to keep going, Rous said his muse has always remained intrinsic to the art form — standing for the endless pursuit of fleeting, temporary beauty that is the performing arts.

"It's always worth asking yourself, 'What [do] you like about music, and what motivates you to play?'" Rous said. "Because the answer to that, if it's just, 'There's nothing more beautiful,' that's a good enough answer."

Hello Goodbye Records caters to all music lovers

The family-owned record shop balances big names with local artists near the Downtown Mall

Carter Horner | **Senior Writer**

Just outside of the Downtown Mall is a charming yet robust mom-and-pop record shop called Hello Goodbye Records. Co-founders Lindsay and Daniel Fitzgerald opened the shop in 2023. The store started as a small vinyl store in Market Square before quickly outgrowing its original location, moving in 2025 to its current location on 4th St. NW. The spacious shop offers thousands of records for customers to peruse, from mainstream hits to old classics and local recordings.

As for the origins of the shop, Lindsay and Daniel said they both love music and bonded over it in the early days of their relationship, frequently shopping for records together. Lindsay said that Daniel had played in bands and collected music throughout his life, and that she had worked in the music industry as an artist manager for 17 years before meeting him. Soon enough, within a year of knowing one another, they said they both decided they wanted a career change. Given Daniel's previous experience owning a record shop, Lindsay said opening up one in Charlottesville made sense for the pair to explore a new endeavor.

"Daniel and I casually started talking about it maybe four years ago," Lindsay said. "And now we've been in business for three and a half years ... So it was pretty quick, [from], 'We might do this' to, 'We are doing this.'"

Lindsay and Daniel started by selling records on the online music marketplace Discogs. While Hello Goodbye Records exists as a brick-and-mortar store in Charlottesville today, Lindsay mentioned that they still sell some of the back catalogue on Discogs, offering segments of their selection to an online consumer base. Daniel said that generating online sales gave them the security and confidence to open up their own store.

However, a facet of the store that initially gave Lindsay and Daniel pause was that Hello Goodbye's physical location may appear similar to that of any other Charlottesville record shop. Thousands of albums are arranged by genre, then alphabetically, with rock taking up a significant portion of the center of the store. From Melody Supreme to Plan 9 Music to Visible Records, there was already a robust selection of physical music retailers in Charlottesville, but Lindsay and Daniel knew that they had something unique to bring to the scene.

"We're starting to get into other areas where certain stores don't go," Daniel said. "We have more heavier music now than we had before. We try to go for a more ... eclectic curation."

Hello Goodbye offers a collection of records that might not be offered at other stores in the area, ranging from the newest releases pulled straight from the charts to limited edition or rare pressings of older and more obscure titles. Daniel said the inspiration for the more eclectic collection came from a New York City record store he saw in the 1990s called Other Music. According to Daniel, the store was intentionally designed to create a unique atmosphere for buying records, and this mindset was a significant part of his and Lindsay's early conversations around Hello Goodbye.

"Of course, you're going to get mainstream stuff here," Daniel said. "But we want you to be able to find a nugget you may not find somewhere else."

In addition to their vast catalogue of LPs — long play records — Hello Goodbye sells seven-inch vinyls, record players, CDs, books and other merchandise. According to Lindsay, approximately 80 percent of their catalogue is vintage or pre-owned, and Daniel noted the heavier music like metal and punk that they hold. Lindsay commented on how their different music tastes, as well as the tastes of their customers, has helped give their store its unique identity.

"We have a very large selection of punk and heavy metal, which [Daniel] brings to the table," Lindsay said. "And a large jazz selection, which I bring to the table, and then really again, it's the community that tells us, 'This is what we're looking for.'"

Characteristic of their support of music and musicians of all varieties, Lindsay and Daniel have made an effort to entrench Hello Goodbye in the Charlottesville music scene through more than just record sales. From underwriting the University radio station WTJU to partnering with Prints, Platters & Pints as a vendor to screening the music documentary "Salad Days: A Decade of Punk in Washington, DC (1980–90)" at the Violet Crown, the pair has supported the local music scene through a wide variety of means.

In addition to these efforts, Hello Goodbye has partnered with WTJU to host local DJs on their own balcony, with sets from local radio staples like Dave Donahue and ANDROID. Lindsay and Daniel both highlighted their work in helping bands record and press their own records, specifically local outfits amminal and Pinkish. Daniel noted that they do not take any profit cuts from record sales for local bands, emphasizing Hello Goodbye's dedication to the local scene.

"I often say, 'Use this place as a resource,' to bands," Daniel said. "So whether you want to hang flyers, whether you want to put your records in the bins, we don't take any cut ... That kind of stuff is really important to us."

Hello Goodbye Records has become a modern cornerstone of the Charlottesville vinyl scene, and Daniel said he hopes it continues to enrich the area going forward and attract those from all corners of the Charlottesville music community.

"We live in a town with really great record stores," Daniel said. "I kind of looked at it as hopefully adding to the strength of this town musically ... It helps build Charlottesville as a more musical town or a destination point for travelers to come."

For Kevin Everson, art is everything

The studio art professor balances academic and artistic pursuits to maintain his creative life

Alena Touve | **Senior Associate**

Kevin Everson, art professor and director of studio art, has been teaching at the University for 26 years. But even while being a full-time professor, Everson has never paused his career as a filmmaker and artist. Everson has created around 300 films throughout his lifetime, both short and feature length, alongside expansive portfolios of sculpture and physical art. His works all seek to examine aspects of everyday life, while exploring the larger societal concepts and forces which impact even the most minute of details — namely concepts of race and class.

Everson grew up in Mansfield, Ohio, a town built on industrial labor and factory jobs. He remained in Ohio for his higher education, graduating from the University of Akron in 1987 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and then completing a Master in Fine Arts at Ohio University in 1990. Everson said that he first became interested in film because he wanted to capture how physical factory labor affected the people around him, and that interest grew to cover other aspects of humanity and everyday life.

The professor balances a significant teaching load alongside his artistic pursuits, often teaching many if not all of the University's Studio Art filmmaking classes, most notably Introduction to Filmmaking I and II. Everson said that although it can be hard to find time within his class schedule to pursue his creative projects, his natural drive to make art is what keeps him motivated.

"Art is 24 hours a day. You can't turn it off, like nine to five," Everson said. "[I'm] always thinking about stuff like, constantly — [I'm] working on stuff this weekend ... you just kind of figure it out."

Everson also said that over time, he has found a familiar routine which allows him to sustainably balance both his academic and artistic professions.

"During the semester, when certain classes start to run themselves, you can do some research here, maybe a week or so ... So you just kind of build up 'til the summer, just when you have a clear shooting schedule," Everson said.

However, Everson said he finds himself thinking about his students even while doing his creative work. When he travels to film festivals, Everson said he notes whether that festival would be a potential place for students to get internships. He said that he also considers whether certain films or guests at that festival would be interesting to his students, and tries to organize either a film screening or a guest lecture for them.

At the most recent Virginia Film Festival, Everson said he would leave screenings early to meet his students for various speaker events, and even organized personal meetings between them and VAFF guests like composer Cristóbal Tapia de Veer.

"It's not about me. It's always about the students, and just trying to make sure they have a good experience," Everson said. "When I was an undergraduate, I remember almost every guest that talked to us. So I want them to have that kind of same experience."

Everson's work has been shown at film festivals, galleries and museums throughout the United States and Europe. Most recently, some of Everson's films were showcased at the 39th annual Virginia Film Festival in a series titled "A Suite of Short Films by Kevin Jerome Everson." This series has run annually since 2015, as VAFF Artistic Director Ilya Tovbis reserves a spot for Everson on the festival's program each year.

Everson said that he aims to submit a variety of films to his screening block, purposefully choosing works that explore diverse topics, narrative forms and filmmaking techniques. This year, Everson's block featured five short films — four experimental shorts, and one half-hour documentary.

The documentary is called "Board of Visitor," and follows Gregory D. Perryman, then fourth-year College student and Student Member of the Board of Visitors, through his service on the Board during the tumultuous 2025-26 academic year. Everson said he and his long-time artistic collaborator Claudrena Harold, associate dean for the social sciences and history professor, wanted to highlight not only Perryman's experience as an African-American student, but the unique weight which was placed on him during his time on the Board.

Stories from his childhood, events he personally witnessed and accounts he has researched have become part of Everson's continuous exploration of African-American culture, where he examines small parts of everyday life in order to tell wider narratives about culture, identity and history.

"[These details are] just minor things that are considered major in a weird way. So the micro becomes the macro ... just make the invisible, visible," Everson said.

Currently, Everson is working on a variety of new projects in sculpture, physical art and film, which continue to examine common themes of race, history and class. His most expansive project is creating a narrative feature-length film — a stylistic departure from his usual experimental films, which often abandon traditional narrative structure. But Everson said that no matter the original medium he is working in, there is a chance that he will explore the same concept in other forms of art to unlock a new perspective.

"Even in grad school, if I had a concept, I would execute that concept in multiple mediums — film, sculpture, photo, artistic books, paintings ... I'm always...either making something or thinking about making something," Everson said.

In spring 2027, Everson is teaching an impressive five Studio Art classes, with three in filmmaking and two in generalized Studio Art. Yet even with this full schedule, there is no doubt Everson will continue his creative pursuits in every free moment he finds.

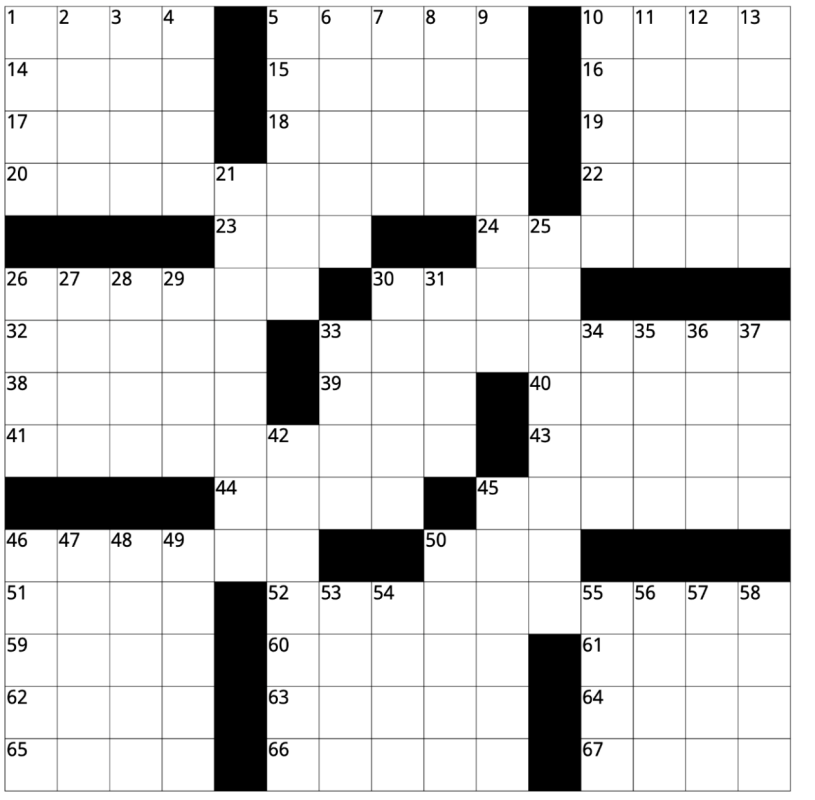
PUZZLE

Olivia Boynton | **Puzzlist**

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

ACROSS
1 Part of a wine glass
5 "_____ Is Born"
10 Wild guess
14 Lady's man
15 Supermodel Campbell
16 "That's terrible!"
17 U.Va. Women's Center magazine
18 Some sneakers
19 Parent's warning
20 Building on a nickel
22 "Double stuf" cookie
23 Clear (of)
24 Big name in discount retail
26 Presidential grant for turkeys
30 "Take ____ Church" (Hozier song)
32 "Is it my cue?"
33 Like many Cirque du Soleil performers
38 Requirement for Philosophy students
39 Initials which represent 20-Across, 24-Across or 52-Across
40 Tan suit wearing president
41 Kiss eliciting flora
43 Greek cheeses
44 Anti-police acronym
45 On fire
46 Barks and meows
50 Ginger ___
51 "Horton Hears ____!"
52 Grocery store with a cult following
59 PRNDL pick
60 "You've got mail" addressee, such as Maya or Anna in "Pen15"
61 Toaster waffle brand
62 Australian birds
63 Like some milk
64 Therefore
65 Intro to marketing?
66 "Oui", "si" and "ja"
67 Nuisance

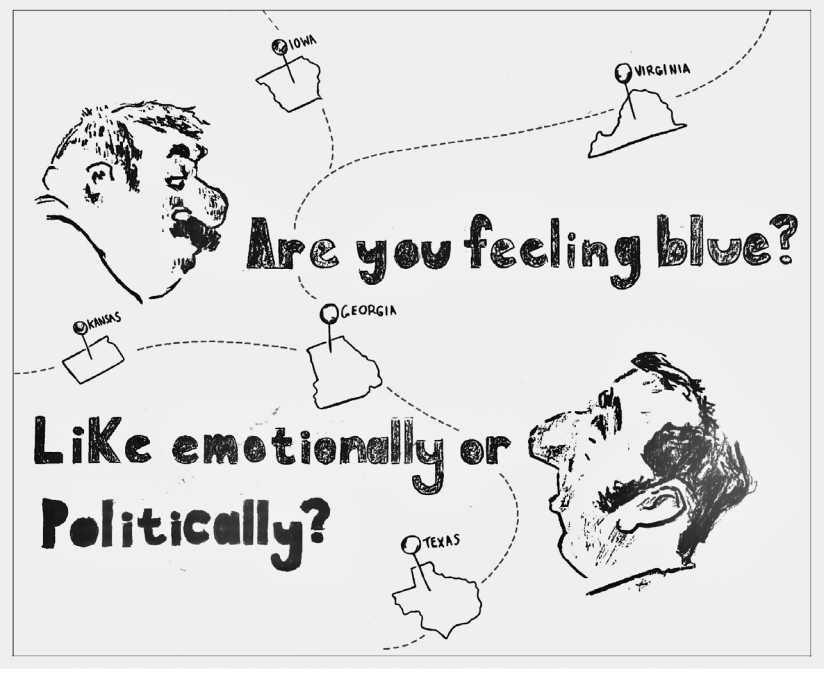
DOWN
1 Skinny
2 Spanish bull
3 Ireland, poetically
4 Course code for "Women and Television" and "Sports Journalism"
5 Aspirin with caffeine
6 Added to the piggy bank
7 Work hard
8 Human rights attorney Clooney
9 Italian rice dish
10 Genesis city
11 Birth of "American Beauty"
12 Section of "The Office" set where the show's writers worked
13 Wrinkle-reducing injection
21 Like Zendaya's nudity clause in "Euphoria"
25 Dream for a fourth-year
26 Tropical tree
27 Mine, in Montreal
28 Fixes, as a fight
29 "I dare you!"
30 Low-paying employment, slangily
31 Gaelic
33 "____ boy!"
34 Genesis victim
35 "Toodle-oo!"
36 Muslim religious leader
37 Beer bottle unit
42 Molly
45 Messages from U.Va. Emergency Management
46 Bob of "Full House"
47 "You _____ one"
48 DIY mover's rental
49 Like the Vikings
50 "Rolling in the Deep" singer
53 Mountaineering need
54 Boxers Muhammad and Laila
55 Car whose owners give one another rubber ducks
56 Shrek, for one
57 Dozen found at 52-Across
58 Lawn chimney residue



CARTOON

Feeling Blue

Philip Wheeler | **Cartoonist**



Daylight Savings

Melody Moore | **Cartoonist**



LIFE

Greek life chefs bring food and student engagement to dinner

From home-cooked meals to moments of human connection, the chefs of Rugby Road serve more than just food

Sadie Adams | **Senior Associate**



OLIVIA THOMPSON | THE CAVALIER DAILY

As a University student, it can be difficult to plan meals around classes while prioritizing healthy, cheap and convenient options. After the first-year mandatory All Access Plan, students can choose to continue a University dining plan — ranging from Block 50 to continuing the All Access Plan — join the Elevate off-Grounds meal plan or cook at home.

However, for many students involved in Greek life, a fourth alternative exists — a meal plan provided by their sorority or fraternity chapter for mostly in-house members, oftentimes included in membership dues. Unlike on-Grounds dining halls, which are at least a 10-minute walk from fraternity and sorority houses, house residents can simply walk down the hall from their bedroom to the kitchen for a delicious hot meal.

Some Greek life chapters — like Alpha Delta Pi sorority, Alpha Phi sorority and Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity — cater meals for house residents and chapter members. Others, such as Delta Gamma sorority, Phi Gamma Delta and many others, have personal, in-house chefs serving fresh, home-cooked meals. These meals are prepared by seasoned culinary professionals, often with years of experience in the food service industry under their belts.

The Cavalier Daily sat down with four of the Greek life Chefs from Rugby Road to learn more about the dishes — and community — they serve up.

Juan Luna, Delta Gamma and Sigma Alpha Mu chef and Upper Crust Food Service employee — a company that provides catering and chef services to fraternities and sororities across the United States — has curated and cooked meals for University Greek life chapters since August 2025. Luna began his food service career 15 years ago at California's Disneyland resort, inspired by his father's career advice.

"At [the] time, I was already 17, and I didn't know what to do yet with my life," Luna said. "[My dad's] philosophy is that I would never be hungry if I tried to be a chef, and I went with that. And he was so right that I never became hungry, and I've loved it ever since."

Luna worked as a chef in several hotels and a restaurant before he joined Upper Crust Food Service. He spends most of his working hours in the Delta Gamma house, where he prepares two meals a day Monday through Thursday and brunch on Friday. He also stocks the house pantry for snacks and grab-and-go breakfasts, like bagels and cream cheese.

Across the alley from the Delta Gamma kitchen, Luna also drops off food to the house of Sigma Alpha Mu. Unlike Delta Gamma, where meals are prepared at certain times for the members to eat together, meals at Sigma Alpha Mu are designed for casual drop-ins, so members can stop by for food on the go.

Unlike working in a restaurant with a set menu, Luna can get creative as head chef at Delta Gamma, experimenting with cuisines including Italian, Indian, Thai, Mediterranean and his new favorite — Korean. Luna's boss, Brandon Ratliff, Upper Crust Area Manager and previous Delta Gamma chef, believes in chef autonomy to capture home-cooked authenticity. Instead of standardizing menus or ingredients, he said he wants to "let our chefs be chefs."

For Patricia Dombrauskas, known as Chef Trish to Tri Delta sorority members, the ability to take creative liberties is one of the many reasons why she loves her job. Prior to Tri Delta, Dombrauskas was the beloved chef of Delta Gamma and Zeta Tau Alpha. Unlike her previous restaurant managerial roles, Dombrauskas has the freedom to curate her own dishes when working for Greek House Chefs — another company providing chef services to sororities and fraternities — many of which come from her family recipes.

"Recipes [are] passed down from our grandma's and mother's. I truly think that makes a difference," Dombrauskas said in a correspondence with The Cavalier Daily. "I always say if you hear me singing to the food, you know it is going to be good."

One criterion for the menus of the house chefs is the ability to adapt their menus to members' preferences and dietary restrictions. Nathan Shaffer, a private chef for Phi Gamma Delta who is contracted privately to cook 10 meals a week, provides lunch every weekday and dinner Sunday through Thursday. Shaffer accommodates the changing preferences of the 30 to 40 fraternity members who attend each meal with the help of a three-person full-time kitchen staff he hired. In addition to the brothers of Phi Gamma Delta, Shaffer caters for Sigma Kappa sorority, Delta Upsilon, McCormick Hall, St. Anthony Hall, Chi Phi and Sigma Nu fraternities.

"Tastes change pretty frequently," Shaffer said. "Some years you got a group of guys that [really like] good comfort food. Other years they're all on a health kick and going to the gym and working out, so you know their diet changes completely, and ... generally, they all kind of tend to follow each other in those kind of habits."

At Delta Gamma, members can talk to Luna personally or submit meal requests through the Upper Crust Food Service app. The app also lets Delta Gamma members provide feedback on the meals, and according to Luna's boss, Luna never scores below a perfect five stars. Molly Day, a third-year College student and Delta Gamma member, uses the app to request her favorite meal that Luna makes — Mediterranean bowls.

"Juan is the best," Day said. "He's so sweet. He knows all of us personally ... I don't really eat red meat very often, so if there's something that's red meat, he'll have made chicken meatballs. He's so accommodating, and all of his food is also just amazing."

Day lives in the Delta Gamma house, where all of the residents are on the meal plan as part of their monthly residential dues. On Delta Gamma's TikTok account, DeltaGrubs, members document sisterhood bonding over the meals Luna creates. Day said she loves that consistent meals provide a built-in time when members can enjoy each other's company, allowing them to build community and catch up during busy weeks.

On Friday for brunch, Luna brings his 20-month-old daughter into work, where she gets to visit with the Delta Gamma members.

"[Luna's daughter] comes to the house on Fridays, and she's the cutest thing ever," Day said. "She loves giving high fives, and she'll go around the room and high-five all of us ... and it's just a perfect little start to our Friday morning."

Expressing a similar sentiment, Dombrauskas said she has gotten the chance to build connections and community at work. Each of the meals — lunch and dinner Monday through Thursday and brunch Friday — is prepared right in the Tri Delta house kitchen, so Dombrauskas interacts with members lots throughout the days.

"My favorite nights [are] when I'm leaving at night, and there's a group of girls in here, and they're like, 'Bye, Trish. We love you,'" Dombrauskas said. "It's just so endearing, and it makes you feel so good. It makes me feel so good. I feel like I have the best job."

This academic year is Dombrauskas's second year at Tri Delta, following many years at Delta Gamma and Zeta Tau Alpha. When Delta Gamma graduates were recently in town for the University's Young Alumni Reunion, many of them went back to visit Dombrauskas, which she said meant a lot to her. The connections she makes in her chef role are long-lasting, and she said she can feel that in her current role at Tri Delta.

"It was my birthday not too long ago, and so many girls showed up to sing me happy birthday. It was just really ... special. It really makes me feel like I am so loved, which I think is like the key to life, right?" Dombrauskas said.

According to Ratliff, after building connections with member classes, it can be difficult to adjust when members move out of chapter houses or graduate. Dietary preferences shift, but so does the community.

"The hardest thing about [Luna's] job is ... learning the students, and then as soon as you learn everybody, they're on to the next class or they're graduating," Ratliff said. "Years ago [at Delta Gamma], I had a class that I watched from when they were rushed in as sophomores to when they graduated. I can't say I didn't cry."

Ratliff began his career in food service at Wendy's at age 14, and since then, he has worked in numerous restaurants and positions. Although he briefly explored a nursing career path in college, he said the culinary arts always felt like his calling. Ratliff graduated from the Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts Sept. 29.

"I just went back into restaurants because I love to feed people," Ratliff said. "I love the feeling of somebody saying, 'Wow, this is good. Like, how do you do this?' And then sharing that experience with them."

Each day, the University's Greek life members strengthen their communities over the meals prepared by chefs like Luna, Shaffer and Dombrauskas. Despite the different kitchens they occupy and meals they cook, each chef finds deep joy in their work and aspires to make a positive difference in members' days by providing fresh, delicious and convenient meals. At work, Dombrauskas senses this positive impact.

"I feel like I get to make a difference in someone's life every day," Dombrauskas said. "Sometimes it is small, sometimes it is bigger, but either way it is rewarding."

The Dome Room Dinner: An embodiment of the University

How formal dining inside the Rotunda has long stood as a tradition unlike any other

Luke Smiley | Staff Writer

From time-honored University traditions like Lighting of the Lawn and the Ring Ceremony to a seemingly endless lexicon of University-specific jargon, University students are no strangers to the many customs that give Grounds its distinct character.

Some of these rituals mark milestones in the college experience, while others offer opportunities to build community along the way. The Dome Room Dinner, however, does both — bringing students, families and faculty together under the illustrious dome of the Rotunda to share a meal and celebrate the people who make Grounds feel like home.

The first Dome Room Dinner was hosted by Thomas Jefferson himself, honoring Marquis de Lafayette within the walls of the Rotunda before its completion in November 1824. Ever since, Dome Room Dinners have become a memorable part of the University experience for many students, providing the setting for a number of cherished memories.

For decades, formal dinners organized by first-year dormitories in the Rotunda's Dome Room have been an annual tradition. First-year College student Joseph Jackson, whose Dome Room Dinner was within the first month of school, explained how the event served as an early opportunity for him to start connecting with and befriending his neighbors.

"We all sat at different seats and got to know people, which was really great," Jackson said. "I enjoyed getting to know the people at my table, and I've become closer friends with those individuals since then."

Jackson also noted how the event's formal dress code contributed to the occasion, which he said encouraged students to approach their actions with greater intentionality.

"The way that we dress directly ends up impacting how we perceive the situations around us," Jackson said. "The dome dinner setup immediately raises the bar for how you're going to interact with other people."

When it comes to organizing and planning the Dome Room Dinner for Family Weekend, David Sauerwein, associate director for parent and family programs at the University, noted that a critical element of the dinner lies within the intentionality of the atmosphere.

"What makes [the dinner such] a thing to experience is [that it is] an opportunity to really engage with people and food," Sauerwein said. "You're not distracted by a screen, you're not paying attention to other things, you're really having a conversation."

The Dome Room Dinner's emphasis on food and conversation carries across its meals during various University events, but Family Weekend brings an added layer of ceremony. This year, attendance was determined through a lottery-based ticketing system, with selected guests paying $130 per person to attend.

In addition to its culinary offerings, the Family Weekend Dome Room Dinner, which occurred Oct. 24, also included performances from the a cappella group the Hullabahoos, as well as a guest lecture from Jennifer Lawless, Leone Reaves and George W. Spicer professor of politics.

Given her extensive background in political affairs and the proximity of midterm elections — held just 10 days following the event — Lawless was selected as the guest speaker for the Family Weekend dinner. She said that her selection and topic of discussion, framed as "10 things that people should consider over the course of the next 10 days," was coordinated to provide families with an impactful message given the polarized national political landscape.

"I'm always happy to talk to people about campaigns and elections, especially audiences that might not be political junkies," Lawless said.

Beyond the evening's guest speaker, programming and menu, Sauerwein also emphasized how the history and architecture of the Rotunda itself adds an additional dimension of grandeur to the experience.

"Not many folks can say they get to dine in a [UNESCO] World Heritage site," Sauerwein said. "That splendor [of] knowing that Mr. Jefferson designed that space really adds to the experience."

Whether it be a first-year student meeting members of their dorm cohort for the first time, a family connecting with others over Family Weekend or a member of the University community hearing a message from a renowned educator, the different occasions for a Dome Room Dinner have a uniting throughline — the opportunity to connect over a wonderful meal in an extraordinary setting. For Jackson, the combination of thoughtful conversation, hospitality and ceremony reflects all of the pillars upon which the University is built — both physically and figuratively.

"I think it's one of the first times where U.Va. feels like it's yours. It's like, 'This is my experience,'" Jackson said. "It was the first time I realized how privileged I was to get to be in this place in the first place ... I think as a U.Va. student, we get very desensitized to the things around us, and I feel like the Dome Dinner was a really good opportunity to get the full sensory experience again."

Chance gives 1,500 University students a new way to connect

A dating app created by a University alumnus brings students together through weekly matches and intentional conversation

Aditi Burra | Staff Writer

Between navigating new social circles and increased independence, the transition to college offers students a unique opportunity to explore romantic relationships. With new people and new experiences shaping their preferences, students often begin to assess what they are looking for — be it casual dating, a long-term relationship or something in between. Yet, finding those connections can prove to be more difficult than it seems.

Class of 2025 alumnus Cole Cestaro wanted to build a better way for students to connect with each other. He felt that many dating apps — from Tinder to Hinge — prioritized creating casual encounters over long-term relationships, while also making conversations feel awkward and forced. From Cestaro's perspective, there is little to connect over if someone's profile lacks good prompts, making it difficult for users to show their personality on other programs like Marriage Pact.

"[With] Marriage Pact ... they only do drops once a year and you just get the person's email, and [can't] even find them on Instagram. I'm not going to cold email [them]," Cestaro said. "It's just so awkward. It's a bad system. I just wanted to make an app that focused on the chatting aspect, focusing more on intentional dating."

To achieve this goal, Cestaro developed Chance, a free mobile app designed to foster more meaningful connections.

According to Cestaro, since launching in February, over 1,500 University students have signed up, sending more than 20,000 messages through the app. Chance has also expanded to 38 Universities and Cestaro said he has plans to reach 100 this spring.

Chance's approach to dating starts with users verifying their school by signing up with their University email, then taking a 39-question quiz about their interests and lifestyles. Every two weeks on Sunday, they can choose to opt in to receiving a match with a student from their university. Conversation prompts and mini-games are shared between drops to help users break the ice and get to know their matches more naturally.

Once a user opens a match, they can only message that person until the next drop. To keep getting to know a match after two weeks, users must move the conversation off the app. For second-year Education student Althea Albert, having one person to focus on at a time makes the experience feel more manageable.

"I feel like [dating apps] can be overwhelming," Albert said. "You see all this stuff about Hinge and Tinder, where you just swipe, swipe, swipe. But it's less overwhelming when you get matched to somebody, and then you just have one person that you're gonna talk to."

Beyond limiting the number of matches to one every two weeks, Chance's emphasis on meaningful conversation can help users build a foundation for connecting before actually meeting in person. Second-year College student Matthieu Rowland said that the prompts gave him and his match a chance to learn about each other before they hung out in person.

"The way [the prompts] are written is, you talk about stuff that you care about [and] that's interesting to you," Rowland said. "You find things in common. So then, when we hung out, it was like we knew each other a bit more ... Personally, I'd want to know someone a bit more on a first date because then it's less introductory and it's more like you're spending time together and enjoying the moment more."

For Rowland, the app's focus on shared interests also makes it easier to connect with people he might have otherwise missed out on. Instead of matching with a stranger, the app creates an opportunity to get to know someone they might have passed by on the Corner or stood behind in line at the dining hall, but never had a reason to talk to.

"[Chance] is people within your school. It's people that you probably walk by in classrooms or hallways that you don't really talk to," Rowland said. "You have something in common with them already, which I think is a big factor because when you're trying to meet people or find new friends, having something in common is a good catalyst to really getting to know them."

Those connections do not necessarily have to lead to romance, either. The shared University connection leaves room for interactions to stay casual and develop into friendships, without the pressure to turn every match into a date.

"It's fun because you could start on the app, and then it's really easy to take it off of the app, and just get to know somebody better through there," Albert said. "But it wouldn't have happened without the app. One person I met on the app, I've seen [them] out, and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, we met on this.' That was less official than dating and [it was] more like we became friends."

Beyond the type of relationship users are looking for, by making first impressions feel less routine, Cestaro hopes Chance can turn meeting a fellow student into something users look forward to.

"I really just want the experience to be extremely fun and [novel] ... that's the best way to meet people," Cestaro said.

OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL: There is no modesty in raising tuition prices

The University has continued to treat tuition increases as an administrative inevitability, while promising affordability in the same breath. Students are the ones suffering

At the University, rising prices feel less like a nuanced institutional decision and more like an impulsive administrative routine. In April, the Board of Visitors approved a 3.6 percent increase in undergraduate tuition, an approximately 5 percent increase in meal plan costs and a 5 percent increase in the cost of almost all rooms for the 2026-27 academic year. Less than six months later, the Board raised prices once again — increasing meal and housing costs by roughly 5 percent respectively. U.Va. Today called these increases "modest," when in reality, they materialize as thousands of dollars for students. Given the egregious costs that students pay, no tuition increase is truly modest. This utter disregard of the student experience is another example of the disconnect between the people who set University prices and those who pay them.

Although the question of affordability at the University has long lingered, the most concerning facet of these recent tuition increases is that the University frames them as automatic responses to rising costs, rather than choices the Board makes about where money should go and who should bear those costs. Raising prices is not inherently wrong — costs undoubtedly rise both due to global economic conditions, among other factors. However, raising prices without substantiating the raises allows the University to act as though its choices are inevitable.

Americans are grappling with mounting financial pressures, and University students are not insulated. Tuition at the University, however, has far outpaced inflation — in-state tuition and fee costs have risen from $4,614 in 1995 to almost $24,000 today. That number is more than double the $9,700 that adjusted inflation could account for. As the price of entry to the University climbs, it risks undermining the mobility a college education is supposed to facilitate by pricing out low-income families. Affordability is a question of whether the University's financial priorities will make educational opportunities less accessible tomorrow.

The University's own justifications have done little to close the transparency gap between those setting the price increases and those responsible for paying them. After price increases in April, Jennifer Wagner Davis, executive vice president and chief operating officer of the University, attributed the increase to general rising costs. Davis also listed collective bargaining as a reason for upward pressure. A few weeks later, Gov. Abigail Spanberger vetoed the bill which would have granted those rights. With that veto, the cost the University was apparently concerned about disappeared. However, the increase remained — and then became precedent for the increases in October. Davis defended that October increase as a move to cover "operating expenses." These "expenses" are once again framed as unavoidable financial costs which lack clarity. The University is actively making decisions that drive students' costs higher, and they must be more transparent in doing so.

The University added 1,759 staff from 2014 to 2023. Of those staff members, 60.9 percent are in non-instructional positions, roles that are necessary for supporting large institutions like our University. However, this administrative growth is outpacing enrollment growth by wide margins. This gap between administrative and enrollment growth suggests a Board that is cavalier about hiring while subsequently passing these costs on to its students. Broad justifications surrounding increased expenses cannot be the University's substitute for accountability.

In the University's defense, its commitment to financial aid alleviates some of these costs. The Princeton Review has ranked our University as the top public school for financial aid. However, a high ranking does not signify a satisfactory support system. Aid provided through AccessUVA significantly decreases for families earning more than $100,000 a year, meaning that any assistance the University provides for middle-class families is little solace for many struggling to pay for the tuition hikes.

The University repeatedly describes its commitment to affordability, yet treats nondescript expenses as excuses to charge students more. If affordability is a pillar of the University's public mission, then it needs to act like it. Continuously asking students to pay new tuition rates when they already face egregious prices cannot be an expectation, nor can it come without transparency. We exhort the Board to recognize that it owes its students more than relying on elusive "operating expenses" as a justification. If the Board believes these increases are necessary, it must share its justification with students, and then subsequently provide clear notification to students and their families. Until the University defends its prices with a defensible rationale, they should not be regarded as modest.

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

OWENS: There is no one way to be a Cavalier

The University has plenty of traditions, and conformity should not be one of them

Our University prides itself on its longstanding traditions and tight-knit student community. From Lighting of the Lawn to football Saturdays, Greek life and Grounds' preppy aesthetic, there is no shortage of involvements that contribute to the quintessential University experience. These traditions help establish a shared identity, but that identity can often feel prescriptive. Being a Cavalier should not require students to adopt a particular lifestyle, social circle, appearance or sets of interests, as there is no singular way to experience the University, and its students should feel comfortable finding their own place within its community.

This prescriptive pressure is most apparent in the University's social scene. Drinking, partying and Greek life occupy a considerable place in campus culture, shaping how students socialize and form friendships. According to the University's Fraternity and Sorority Life office, approximately 26 percent of undergraduates belong to a fraternity or sorority. While this represents a minority of students, Greek life extends its influence beyond membership through social events and established networks. Other than Greek life, certain selective Contracted Independent Organizations and student organizations can also shape Grounds' social landscape, creating established circles difficult for outsiders to navigate. By consequence, when social opportunities become tied to membership in particular groups, students outside those circles can feel excluded from the broader campus experience.

In her Cavalier Daily article, Kendra Mickle describes feeling like an outsider when conversations with peers revolve around partying and drinking. Similarly, Class of 2019 alumna Madeline Baker's reflection on social drinking details drinking to fit into the University's party culture, despite not enjoying the experience. These accounts show that students should be able to build friendships organically without feeling that they must attend certain parties or join particular organizations. Being a student of the University should not depend on belonging to a particular social circle but rather on having the freedom to find community in whatever way feels most meaningful.

The University's monoculture extends beyond social activities into how students present themselves. Walking across Grounds can sometimes feel like watching variations of the same outfit repeat themselves, as Barbour jackets, quarter-zips and the seemingly ubiquitous Parke sweatshirts have become so recognizable that they almost function as an unofficial student uniform. While social media undoubtedly helps popularize these trends among college students, their prevalence on Grounds further reinforces a recognizable University aesthetic that students can feel inclined to adopt.

> **"Not everyone will spend their weekends at fraternity parties, dress in the same Southern preppy aesthetic or secure membership in the most sought-after organizations."**

This phenomenon is hardly new. Virginia Magazine explores historical expectations surrounding student dress, from first-year students wearing designated hats to dressing formally for football games. Although these expectations have relaxed, recognizable fashion trends continue to shape how students present themselves. That said, it is important that students feel equally comfortable developing their own styles, experimenting with their appearances and expressing themselves in ways that depart from the familiar University aesthetic. Although no one is explicitly required to adopt this aesthetic, its ubiquity can create an unspoken standard for how students are expected to present themselves. College offers an opportunity to establish one's identity, and that process deserves room for individuality. Students should be able to walk across Grounds without wondering if they look the part — or if Regina George is lurking behind some column to evaluate their outfit.

A community cannot genuinely pride itself on inclusivity if belonging feels contingent on navigating social hierarchies. Students should feel encouraged to participate in involvements while retaining the freedom to define their own college experiences, for shared traditions are most meaningful when everyone feels welcome to take part on their own terms.

Not everyone will spend their weekends at fraternity parties, dress in the same Southern preppy aesthetic or secure membership in the most sought-after organizations. Some students might love their new University experience without ever participating in those things. Their experiences are equally meaningful and representative of the University.

Being a Cavalier should leave room for individuality, experimentation and different ways of finding community. Whether someone wears a Parke sweatshirt, surrounds themselves with the Jefferson Literary & Debating Society or chooses an entirely different path, they belong here. There is no one way to be a Cavalier, and, frankly, there should not have to be.

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ELJAZZAR: Why will U.Va. not let applicants show their story?

As the University stands firm on its position to remove supplemental essays from the Common App, its silence raises questions about access and accountability

As the University prepares to open its admissions to a new round of undergraduate students, it is imperative that it reflects on the intention and purpose of the so-called holistic admissions process. Somewhere right now, a high school student is finalizing their personal statement for the last time, attempting to encapsulate their character in a 650-word essay.

For universities like this institution, the personal statement has become the only piece of writing admissions teams read. Last admissions cycle, the University stopped considering supplemental essays as a part of the admissions process. Previously, supplemental essay questions had varied — applicants had to respond to two 50-word, creative prompts. Such prompts often asked applicants to explain their favorite word, which worked to amplify applicants' creativity and display how they would potentially contribute to the University. During the 2023-24 admissions cycle, applicants submitted an essay that asked about a piece of an applicant's background that would serve as a strength for them at the University. The University removed the supplemental essay prompt as a way to aid students — claiming that the removal would alleviate the workload in an application.

While correlation cannot indicate cause, the admissions change arrived during a turbulent period for the University. The institution faced scrutiny for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programming that resulted in the ousting of then-University President Jim Ryan. Ultimately, the removal of the DEI-based supplemental question about one's background resulted in over 82,089 first-year applications last year, up from 64,457 the year prior. Virginia Magazine reported that the University would not speculate on a cause for the jump. The University's stated rationale, easing the workload on applicants, explains the intent of change, but not its effect.

> **"With fewer avenues for applicants to tell their story, the University limits how it can consider student backgrounds in order to craft a multidimensional admitted class."**

The University exists to serve the Commonwealth, and therefore decides who deserves access to the University as a resource. The University of applicants, or what that surge means for an admitted class that is not growing, and the absence of an explanation in itself is the problem. It is extremely difficult to reconcile such commitments with a policy that may be interpreted to do the opposite. A policy that reduces how much an applicant can say about themselves sits uneasily with commitments to holistic admissions, and it does so before a single student sets foot on Grounds.

The rise in applicants without a surge in admitted students raises two concerns. The first is that with 17,632 more applicants than the year prior, coupled with a $75 application fee, the University could have collected up to $1.3 million. The second explanation concerns selectivity, in which, since the class size did not grow, the surge pushed the University's acceptance rate down from 15.6 percent to approximately 13 percent, resulting in an increase in national rankings. A falling acceptance rate is among the most visible figures in admissions — a lower rate reads as higher demand. For a public university that is competing for top applicants and prides itself on its position among other public universities, this perception is an asset.

The question regarding who benefits from this admissions change can be correlated with how heavily this affects first-generation, low-income and minority applicants. The University's published data show that only nearly one in five students currently enrolled identify as first-generation, and Black and Hispanic students account for approximately 7 and 9 percent of the current student body, respectively. The Supreme Court's decision to overturn affirmative action and end race-conscious admissions, while argued by some to be constitutionally defensible, is now coupled with the removal of what was once an integral part of undergraduate applications.

What had once been an avenue for students to showcase their identities and unique perspectives has now been struck down. With fewer avenues for applicants to tell their story, the University limits how it can consider student backgrounds in order to craft a multidimensional admitted class. The data can show whether that risk is materializing, but only if the University is transparent about how it plans to adhere to its mission while accommodating to the ever-changing admissions landscape. It is difficult to believe the University's altruism when removing supplementals lopsidedly benefits this institution economically amid a hyper-competitive ranking culture.

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HUMOR

'I Feel the Rush': A first-year's guide to U.Va. Panhellenic

Save yourself the big bucks on a rush coach and read this guide instead!

Although Virginia is a southern state, sorority recruitment at the University is nothing like the famed University of Alabama. Yes, there's still fake tan, puffy sleeves and PARKE galore, but you don't need your great-great grandmother to have licked the first brick of a sorority house to get in. If you're a kind person with average social skills, you should be fine.

The $60 rush sign up is just the beginning, because a few days of rush shopping will leave whoever's bank account you're using in an Altar'd State. Unfortunately, your outfits are crucial in making a first impression. It'll feel like orientation all over again — meeting dozens of new girls for five minutes, four of which will be spent discussing your hometown, major and whether or not you're liking the University so far. If you are still lost, which you most likely are, here is a guide to recruitment that will certainly get you a bid.

Your new routine

Your 6 a.m. alarm goes off. You slide off your twin XL, crack open an Alani and stare blankly into your Amazon LED vanity mirror. The next few days will put your social skills, caffeine tolerance and will to live to the test. For one weekend, the University becomes BarbieLand, and the only Kens around are the ROTC kids who also had to come back early. Surprisingly, the two dichotomous groups have a lot in common.

First, you both have uniforms. Theirs? Camouflage. Yours? The panhellenic shirt you'll never wear again. And common with their camouflage, you will undoubtedly blend into your environment.

Next, recognizable hair styles. Theirs? Short, or for girls, bun or braided. Yours? Though not as official, the trend seems to be curled if it's naturally straight, or straightened if it's naturally curly. Blonde dye optional for most sororities.

Lastly, you both have leaders. Theirs? Drill sergeant. Yours? Your Pi Chi who, after marching 50 girls from house to house and yelling at the top of their lungs for 12 hours, is basically ready for the ROTC.

Pi Chis are your rush advisors. They might only do it for the free mockneck set, but hey, they'll make sure you get to the right house at the right time and blast music so loudly you'll get flashbacks to Trin 3.

Albeit sweaty and uncomfortably hot at times, you'll actually start to miss Trin 3, because spring rush means it's freezing. Zip up your Aritzia Superpuff over your outfit and bring a big enough bag to stash your hand warmers. If you decide to be unique and pick a blue Longchamp as your "rush bag," do yourself the favor and throw a scarf on it. You'll be thanking me when your scarf-wrapped handle is visible in the haphazard pile of everyone else's blue Longchamps, and you can spend your precious 10 minutes between houses overthinking everything you just said instead of digging your bag out of old plastic bins from 2009.

That evening, before your DoorDash is ordered and your aching feet are stuffed into slippers, you'll immediately start breaking every unofficial rush rule. You'll talk with other girls about which houses you liked, put all your hopes on a specific house and spend at least an hour looking at hurtful sorority rankings on Yik Yak, which you were totally supposed to delete.

After two grueling days of Round Robins, you're officially just getting started. It's Philanthropy round — time to do it all over again! After waking up from stress-induced nightmares, you'll need to immediately check your new least favorite app, PNM Companion. That "companion" quickly feels more akin to a toxic friend when it tells you bright and early which houses dropped you. Don't worry though — it's never personal!

Topics of discussion

Everyone knows to avoid the 5 B's — Bible, Boys, Bills, Booze, Ballots and the sixth University exclusive, BDoorlist. So, what should you talk about? I found a lot of success with Heated Rivalry, Chandler Morris glaze and hoping to major in comm. No shade to my comm girlies, though! #Girlboss!

The awkward socializing isn't just reserved for the houses. On your way to make the brave trip to O'Hill, you'll run into a girl that you trauma-bonded with in line in front of your favorite house, and you'll excitedly ask how her rush process is going. You'll know immediately from her long pause, but she'll tell you anyway.

"Oh, I actually dropped … but how's it going for you?"

Oof … airball. You've got a full schedule to attend to anyways — picking out your next outfit, refilling your caffeine stash and staring into your mirror, practicing your totally off-the-cuff response to the "Why do you want to be in a sorority?" question. After all, Philanthropy is only round two. You've still got House Tours, Preference, and if you survive, the all-mighty Bid Day. These two weeks have gone by in a blur, and you've gotten really adjusted to it all. The Enewton indents on your arms seem to be permanent, your setting spray bottle has just a few drops left and you've gotten into the habit of chewing mints before meeting anyone new.

You'll clean up your room in preparation for Bid Day. You'll reflect on the new clothes filling your too-full wardrobe, the makeup spread all over your desk and the stress that's months off your life. For a moment, you'll wonder if it was all worth it. But honestly, you'll feel powerful holding that little white envelope containing what you've spent the last two weeks and a good chunk of fall semester dreaming about. Stretch your legs, girl, because it's time to run home!

Hopefully this helped — but I can't bid-promise anyone!

Good luck, PNMs!

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