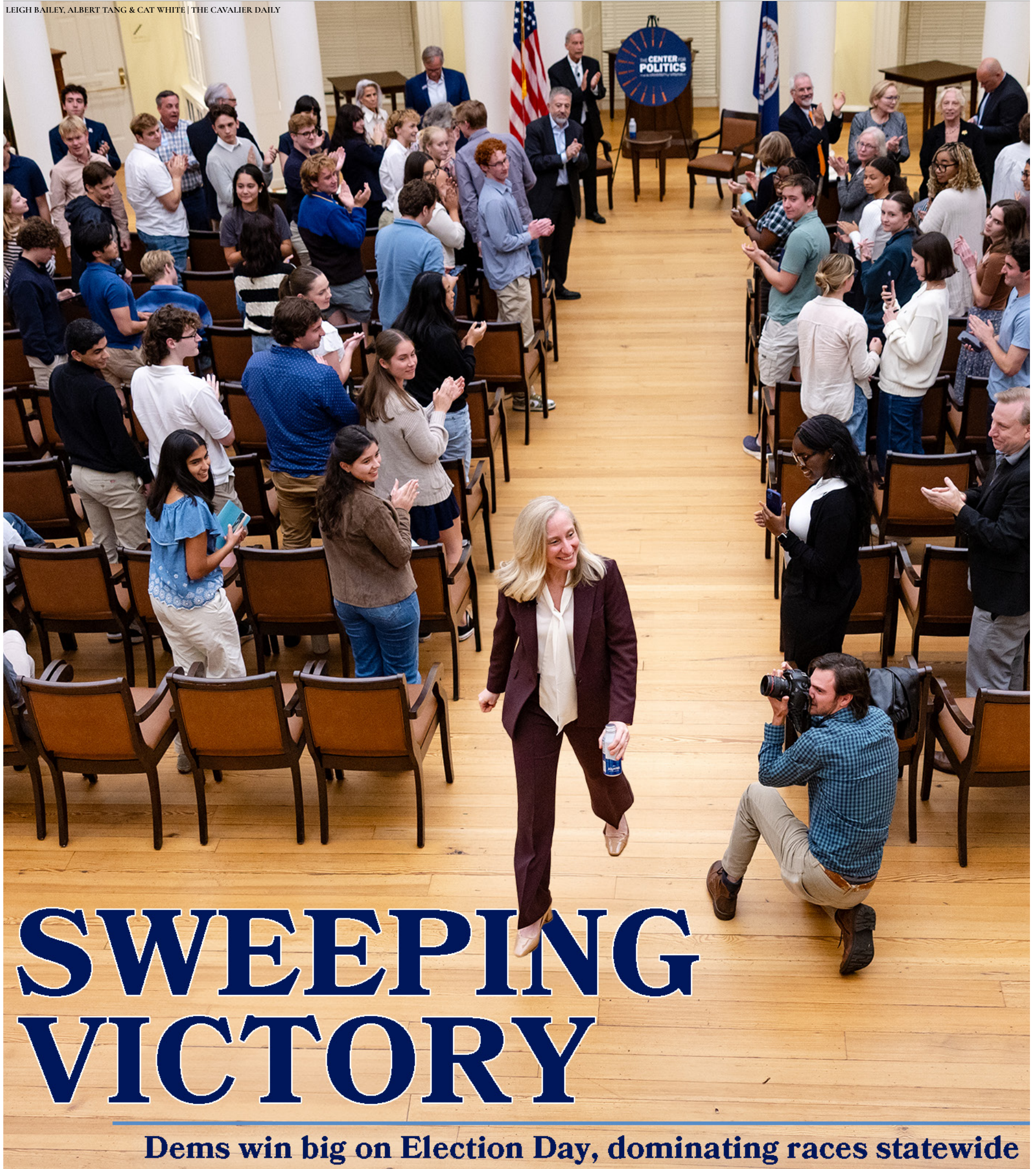


# THE CAVALIER DAILY

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Thursday, November 6, 2025

LEIGH BAILEY, ALBERT TANG & CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY



## SWEEPING VICTORY

Dems win big on Election Day, dominating races statewide

# NEWS

## Democrats win big in Virginia, sweeping statewide races

Abigail Spanberger, Ghazala Hashmi and Jay Jones have all defeated their Republican opponents, picking up the seats for Democrats

Ford McCracken | News Editor

Abigail Spanberger will be the next governor of Virginia — the first woman to serve in that role — after she defeated Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears in a resounding victory. Spanberger led in pre-election polls throughout the campaign, but most polls did not have her margin as large as it ended up — 15 points with almost all votes counted.

Democrats also won the other two statewide races Tuesday night. State Sen. Ghazala Hashmi won the lieutenant governor's race, defeating John Reid by nearly 11 points, and becoming the first Muslim woman elected to any statewide office in U.S. history. Former Del. Jay Jones also won the attorney general's race despite his violent text message controversy, defeating incumbent Jason Miyares by nearly 7 points.

In the House of Delegates, Dem-

ocrats retained control and flipped 13 seats, expanding their majority in the chamber to a total of 64 seats. Because Democrats hold a majority in the Senate of Virginia, which was not up for election, Spanberger will take office as governor with a Democratic majority and the ability to pass legislation without Republican votes.

The 2025 elections also saw high turnout by University students. The Cavalier Daily tracked turnout at student polling places throughout the day, and reported that turnout was only slightly tracking behind the 2024 presidential race. Presidential races in Virginia typically have significantly higher turnout than gubernatorial races.

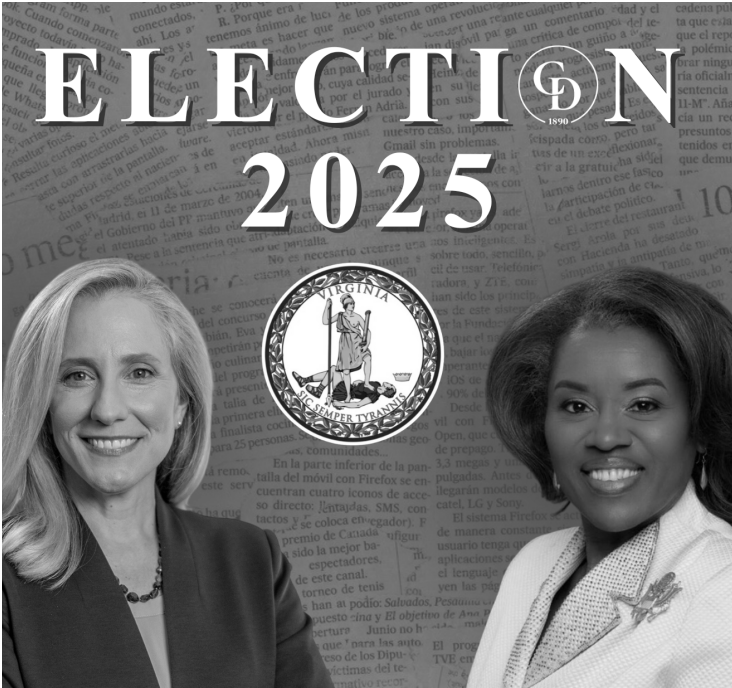
In Charlottesville specifically, with nearly all votes counted, only around 5000 fewer votes were cast in 2025 compared with 2024. Spanberger beat Earle-Sears by 78 per-

centage points in Charlottesville.

Overall, Spanberger far outperformed former Vice President Kamala Harris across the Commonwealth, outrunning Harris in nearly every county. The largest shifts were concentrated in some of the most populous counties in Northern Virginia, including Loudoun, Fairfax and Prince William.

Those counties were at the center of the Trump administration's cuts to the federal workforce and the ongoing government shutdown, an issue Spanberger leaned heavily into during her campaign.

Throughout the day, The Cavalier Daily maintained a live blog with turnout updates from student polling places every two hours and talking to students as they cast their ballots about what mattered most to them. The live blog was also updated throughout the night with live results.



COURTESY NOELLE VALDINOTO

## “We chose our Commonwealth over chaos”: Spanberger speaks to supporters in Richmond

Ford McCracken and Cecilia Mould | News Editors

Following the call that she would be the first female governor of Virginia, Spanberger spoke to a crowd of supporters at an election night celebration in Richmond, thanking Virginians for their votes and saying that she intends to serve all voters whether or not they voted for her.

“Our founders ... didn’t choose to call Virginia a Commonwealth by accident,” Spanberger said. “They chose it to signify that our government would be based on the power of the people, united for a common good. Not for a political party, not for a president, not for a monarch, but for a common good together, and tonight, Virginia proved that that tradition is alive and well.”

Spanberger took a moment to thank Earle-Sears for a hard fought campaign, offering a message for her voters after tonight’s defeat.

“The lieutenant governor’s story, her military service and her years of service here in Virginia deserve our respect and our gratitude,” Spanberger said. “To those Virginians who did not vote for me, I want you to know that my goal and my intent is to serve all Virginians.”

The governor-elect said she is looking forward to starting the job.

“We chose leadership that will always put Virginia first, and Virginia, I cannot wait to get to work for you,” Spanberger said.

## Community members share thoughts on the national political climate

Nina Broderick and Grace Little | Senior Associates

Some students held national politics in mind when voting in this statewide election, including second-year Engineering student Kerem Altunis. Altunis told The Cavalier Daily he chose to vote with hopes of counteracting President Donald Trump’s policies.

“On the national level, Trump has taken over for the most part,” Altunis said. “So we need small scale changes at a state level, and I feel like Abigail Spanberger can bring that.”

Similarly, at Miller, Class of 2006 alumna Maria Gall said that she strongly opposes Trump’s policies and thinks that Spanberger brings valuable experience to the position.

“I really disagree with a lot of President Trump’s policies, to put that very simply ... I really wanted to vote for Abigail Spanberger,” Gall said. “I feel like she’s got great experience. I think that she’s going to be moderate, because we’re a purple state.”

Overall, third-year College student Hovsep Seferian said he thinks many students who are voting are reflecting ideals put forth by the University’s founder, Thomas Jefferson.

“I’ve seen so many U.Va. students at the polls,” Seferian said. “At the risk of sounding corny, it is what Jefferson would have wanted.”

# Students react to the results of the gubernatorial election

Following Tuesday’s statewide elections, students reflected on what these outcomes mean for the future

Lidia Zur Muhlen | Senior Writer

Virginia held its statewide general elections Tuesday, including the race for governor as well as contests for seats in the House of Delegates. Democrats swept the governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general elections, allowing them to reclaim executive power in Virginia. With Democratic candidate Abigail Spanberger elected as governor, students on Grounds are now reflecting on how the results could shape state policy — including issues directly affecting the University.

Along with Spanberger, Democratic candidates Ghazala Hashmi and Jay Jones were also elected to the lieutenant governor and attorney general positions, respectively.

In the City of Charlottesville, Spanberger won 89 percent of the vote to Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears’ 11 percent, according to the Associated Press. Also in the surrounding Albemarle County, Spanberger led with 70 percent of the vote to Earle-Sears’ 30 percent.

Students broadly expressed content with Spanberger’s win. Second-year College student Mary Lord said she sees the results as a chance for Democrats to regain political momentum.

“I’m really hopeful for what the 2026 midterms look like, and I just hope that the Democrats can keep up the steam that they’ve had in this minority election,” Lord said.

Second-year College student Natalie Cook expressed excitement and noted that Spanberger was voted one of the most bipartisan House members in 2021.

“I think this will have a really good impact on politics in Virginia because Abigail Spanberger is known to be one of the most bipartisan politicians,” Cook said. “That’s really comforting to me, to know that someone who’s pursuing conversation and bipartisanship and cooperation and agreement and love, is in power.”

Second-year College student Jackson DeHaven said that he was looking forward to seeing how a moderate Democrat might impact the University and Virginia at large.

“Spanberger winning is really good just because, even as somebody who doesn’t consider themselves a Democrat ... I want both parties to be healthy,” DeHaven said. “I think the Democrats have been a little bit all over the place this last year in terms of how they’re defining themselves, and I think choosing to be moderate is going to be a lot more successful for them and better for the country.”

Many students also said they were watching how the election may affect the Board of Visitors, which

is appointed entirely by the governor and approved by the General Assembly. Under Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, appointments shifted the Board ideologically to the right, sparking debates over academic independence, University governance and administrative priorities. DeHaven hopes that the University can take this opportunity and move more towards the center.

“I’m happy that Spanberger won in terms of U.Va. stuff ... I think it’s probably good to have less conflict between the University and the Board of Visitors, generally,” DeHaven said. “But, I do think I would like to see the University move a little bit more to the center, and hopefully Spanberger can be a part of that.”

Schmitt thinks it will be good to have a governor who is not in the same party as the executive power in the federal government and believes this win could make the Board less skewed to the right.

“I think it’s rather good that there’s going to be someone who runs the state who’s going to be standing up to the federal government and the federal government’s decisions,” Schmitt said. “So to have someone who’s willing to defend against, especially a public institution, I think that’s a great thing to have.”

Spanberger will now have the authority to appoint new members as current terms expire. Second-year College student Izzy Mitchell attended one of Spanberger’s rallies in the fall where Spanberger put an emphasis on education and academic independence. After the fall out with the Trump administration and concerns over academic independence, Mitchell thinks that these points are particularly poignant.

Some students said the Republican campaigns were not run as well as they could have been. DeHaven, who met both candidates in the lead-up to the election, said Earle-Sears was not portrayed in the media as positively as she came off in-person. He felt that Earle-Sears did not do well in a recent debate with Spanberger, during which the Republican candidate repeatedly interrupted Spanberger’s responses.

“I think [Sears is] a lot funnier than she gets credit for in the media, and to me, it was hard watching that debate,” DeHaven said. “She is, I think, a much smarter and more thoughtful person than [she] really came off.”

Similarly, third-year College student Santiago Schmitt also did not think the Virginia race for governor was as interesting of a race to follow because of a lack of excitement on the Republican side. Without even looking at the polling and more



KAYLA MOORE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Students line up to vote at Trailblazer Elementary in Charlottesville’s Venable neighborhood Nov. 4, 2025.

based on his conversations with friends, he felt that he knew Spanberger was going to win.

“Looking at friends who were Republican who were saying Spanberger is the better candidate, and when you know, people saying that, and you tend to realize, okay, well, if even Republicans are leaning that way,” Schmitt said.

Some students followed the race more closely than others. Mitchell and Cook were both in PLAP 3370 “Workshop in Contemporary American Electoral Politics,” taught by The Center for Politics Associate Director Kenneth Stroupe and Director Larry Sabato. Through this class, they were more aware of the races taking place, learning from guest speakers and rallies on Grounds.

While both Mitchell and Cook said they did not want to be too “optimistic” in their predictions, Spanberger winning the gubernatorial election was not surprising to either of them — she led in all preelection polls. Mitchell referenced what is sometimes called the “Virginia Curse,” in which the party holding the U.S. presidency typically loses the following year’s gubernatorial election, as one plausible factor which played into Spanberger’s success.

For some students, this race made them realize the importance of Virginia politics, even if they are out-of-state students. Second-year College student Duncan White said

that being from Illinois made him feel less invested in the race, though he recognizes its implications for the state he currently lives in. He added

that he hopes to become more engaged in Virginia politics in the future.

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# Callsen and Laufer outline priorities following election victories

The governor-elect and Charlottesville-area delegates preview legislative goals that could affect students, renters and workers across Virginia in 2026

Brendon Bordwine | Senior Writer

As the campaigns drew to a close following sweeping Democratic victories, attention now turns to how Gov.-elect Abigail Spanberger and Charlottesville-area Dels. Katrina Callsen and Amy Laufer will shape the future of Charlottesville in their upcoming terms, especially for students at the University.

Spanberger was elected Nov. 4 in a 15-point victory over Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears, while Callsen and Laufer ran unopposed and thus were re-elected. State Sen. Ghazala Hashmi, D-Chesterfield, won the lieutenant governor's race and former Del. Jay Jones, D-Norfolk, won the attorney general's race.

When the next legislative session begins in January, Spanberger and Democrats should have greater ease in passing these legislative priorities after picking up 13 seats in the House of Delegates and maintaining their majority in the Senate, which was not up for election this year. The Cavalier Daily spoke to Callsen and Laufer just a day before the election to gain a better understanding of how they will govern ahead of the 2026 legislative session.

## Higher education

According to Spanberger's campaign website and platform, she hopes to focus on improving education in the Commonwealth, something Callsen and Laufer echoed when talking about moving forward with legislation.

Spanberger's plan titled "Abigail's Strengthening Virginia Schools Plan," addresses a variety of issues in K-12 and higher education. Spanberger has pledged to reform the appointment for university governing boards following a months-long battle between the State Senate and the governor's office. The vacancies left from that battle means Spanberger could also immediately appoint new members to boards at the University of Virginia, George Mason University and the Virginia Military Institute.

One of her proposals would empower the Commission on Higher Education Board Appointments to recommend qualified and nonpartisan "mission-driven individuals" for board service, aimed at preventing future governors "from using our colleges and universities as political pawns."

Callsen said she shares those concerns about partisanship in higher education governance.

"I think it's concerning that university governance right now is entirely Republican. All 17 members are Republican in a state that is a purple state, in a city [and] in a county that leans very blue," Callsen said. "I do not think that is a fair allotment of governance, and I find it problematic."

Callsen added that she hopes to see a more balanced approach to university

oversight in coming years.

"I think there are ways that we can tackle that, nonpartisan ways, so we can stagger terms to make it so that no one sitting governor appoints all board members," Callsen said. "We can appoint independent counsel to our universities ... so that's the work I would like to see happen."

Also aimed at protecting the University, Spanberger previously stated her support for changing the role of the university counsel. Currently the counsel is part of the attorney general's office. Spanberger proposed moving the counsel out from underneath the attorney general, allowing them to make decisions for a public university independent of the partisan affiliation of the attorney general. The vast majority of states have a university counsel independent of the attorney general.

Under Attorney General Jason Miyares (R), former University Counsel Cliff Iler likely could not have taken legal action against the Trump administration when the University came under investigation, as it would have required Miyares' approval. But even if Democrats do not make that policy change, the position of university counsel could be more forceful against the Trump administration under Attorney General-elect Jay Jones.

Laufer also said she plans to continue her work on legislation related to the University's Board of Visitors, which involves once again introducing a bill giving voting rights to the existing faculty and staff representatives on the Board, who currently are not permitted to vote on agenda items.

Spanberger's plan for higher education also aims to make college more affordable and accessible by directing the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to monitor efficiency through the OpSix process, a six-person advisory committee that reviews and provides feedback on institutions' six-year operating plans. The proposal would encourage universities to streamline operations as enrollment declines while prioritizing access for Pell Grant-eligible and first-generation students.

## K-12 education

Callsen said her priorities include ensuring Virginia schools are adequately funded and raising the standards to ensure that students are prepared for higher education or the workforce.

"[We need to] make sure that we're adequately funding our schools, paying our teachers, making sure that children have access to facilities and buildings that are conducive to learning," Callsen said.

She highlighted her previous work on restoring education funding and her "math auto-enroll" bill, which automatically places qualified students in



KAYLA MOORE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Students line up to cast their votes at Trailblazer Elementary School in Charlottesville's Venable neighborhood Nov. 4, 2025.

advanced math courses.

Spanberger has outlined her plan for K-12 education on her website, which focuses on improving achievement as well as recruiting more teachers to address Virginia's teacher shortage, repairing existing school infrastructure — something currently underway in Charlottesville — and focusing on protecting schools from gun violence and cyberattacks, among other policies.

## Economy, jobs and affordability

Spanberger campaigned heavily on affordability and housing access across Virginia. Her plan calls for addressing the state's housing supply crisis by cutting red tape on construction, empowering local governments to develop tailored affordable housing programs and directing investments toward starter homes and middle-class housing.

Spanberger has also proposed re-establishing an Interagency Council on Homelessness and Housing and strengthening tenant protections to prevent evictions, goals that parallel local concerns in Charlottesville's tight rental market.

Callsen said she hopes to extend that focus on affordability from the legislative side, emphasizing the need for stronger tenant protections to ensure students and residents alike can access quality housing.

"This year, I know I will be carrying a bill ... called the Warranty of Habitability," Callsen said. Right now in Virginia, if you have a place that is unfit

to live in, you actually have quite a few burdens that you have to overcome financially in order to even be able to go after your landlord."

She added that the bill could particularly impact students, many of whom are renters living off Grounds.

Spanberger's "Growing Virginia's Workforce" plan outlines a statewide effort focused on expanding paid internships, apprenticeships and dual-enrollment courses in high-demand fields like healthcare, education and advanced manufacturing. Spanberger also plans to direct the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to collaborate with universities and businesses on creating on-campus internship centers, a move that could directly benefit University students looking to stay and work in Virginia after graduation.

The plan also addresses a key part of her campaign, which was cuts to the federal workforce in Washington. Spanberger said she hopes to create a workforce board to make recommendations of adjacent positions to fired federal workers, and to work with the attorney general to fight for legal protections for those employees.

Her workforce plan could have significant implications for Charlottesville and Albemarle County, where industries like healthcare, research and education drive the local economy. By aligning workforce programs with these sectors, Spanberger hopes to retain more young professionals in the region.

## Constitutional amendments

Alongside the Democrats' increased majority in the General Assembly, Laufer said she plans to support three proposed constitutional amendments which have already passed once but must be passed a second time following the election. The amendments would protect access to abortion and contraception, guarantee marriage equality regardless of gender and restore voting rights for individuals with past felony convictions. Laufer thinks those amendments will pass quickly after they gavel back into session, and if they do pass, they would be on the ballot in 2026 for Virginia voters to vote on.

Spanberger has also pledged to make protecting reproductive rights a cornerstone of her administration. Following the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision in 2022 — which overturned the right to abortion nationwide — she emphasized that Virginia remains the only state in the South that has not enacted an abortion ban. Her platform commits to defending access to contraception, abortion and in vitro fertilization while working to codify these protections into the Virginia Constitution.

The General Assembly is set to gavel back into regular session Jan. 14 for a 60-day term. Spanberger is set to be inaugurated as the 75th governor of Virginia Jan. 17, becoming the first woman to hold the office in the Commonwealth's history.

# How Youngkin reshaped Virginia during his term

From higher education and regulation to taxes and marijuana, here is how Virginia did and did not change under Youngkin's administration

Ford McCracken | News Editor

When Gov. Glenn Youngkin won a narrow victory in 2021 against former Gov. Terry McAuliffe, he promised to transform the Commonwealth after over a decade of Democratic leadership.

"Together we will change the trajectory of this Commonwealth," Youngkin said in his 2021 victory speech. "We are going to start that transformation on day one."

Yet with a divided government during his entire four years, disagreements with Democrats in the General Assembly stopped him short of a major overhaul. Youngkin also was not able to run for re-election because Virginia law prohibits governors from running for consecutive terms.

Youngkin took office with Republican control of the House of Delegates, following a strong year for Republicans in 2021. But because the Senate and the governor are never up for election at the same time, Youngkin had a Democratic-controlled Senate for the first half of his term. And when he had a chance to get a trifecta in 2023, Democrats retained control of the Senate and took control of the House, solidifying a divided government for the rest of his term. This dynamic created stalemates on key priorities for both parties.

When Youngkin was elected, he leaned into changing what was taught in Virginia's schools and making it an attractive state for business. His impact on higher education at Virginia's public universities will have lasting implications, but other attempted policy changes stalled in the legislative process. His strong record on jobs and the economy also threatens to be stopped in its tracks by cuts from the Trump administration.

Still, Youngkin was able to compromise on some issues and take executive action to bring some of the changes he promised. After nearly four years in office, here is an overview of how Youngkin changed Virginia.

## Higher education

Education was a key part of Youngkin's 2021 campaign, and many of the significant changes during his term being on the topic show an attempt to keep his promise.

Working around the divided government at times, Youngkin found success in the arena of higher education, a space where he was able to execute executive action. During his term, Youngkin appointed 17 new members to the University's Board of Visitors, giving the previously Democratic-appointed Board a new conservative lean.

Some of the biggest policy changes of the Board were not decisions made by the members themselves, rather compliance with outside orders. They

followed orders from the Trump administration to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion programs in March. Additionally, the Board was accused of not adequately fighting federal pressures when the Justice Department pressured former University President Jim Ryan to resign, according to some faculty and students.

But after rubber-stamping Youngkin's Board nominees throughout most of his term, Senate Democrats have blocked a total of 22 governing board appointees at three schools — including the University — all since June. So while these boards are stacked with Youngkin appointees, Democrats' decision to fight back slowed any further progress.

When Gov.-elect Abigail Spanberger takes office in January, she could fill the five vacancies on the University's Board. But unless she chooses to fire individual members, Youngkin nominees will hold the majority on the Board for the beginning of her term.

## K-12 education

K-12 education was also a focal point of Youngkin's 2021 campaign, in which he criticized COVID-19 lockdowns and how narratives about race and sexuality were addressed in the classroom setting. The first executive order of his term was one to end "inherently divisive concepts" in public schools, which included "critical race theory." But PolitiFact found that critical race theory was not previously part of Virginia's K-12 education curriculum. Youngkin also set up a tip line for parents to report if "inherently divisive concepts" were being taught in public schools.

One of Youngkin's signature accomplishments on education was convincing the General Assembly under split-party control to approve over \$100 million to fund lab schools, or specialized public schools created in partnership with colleges and universities. The schools allow students from any district to attend — via a lottery system, and given that space is available — instead of their local public school.

## Economy, jobs and regulation

Taking over as governor on the heels of the pandemic and recession, Youngkin's administration saw the creation of 277,000 jobs in the Commonwealth, according to a Youngkin spokesperson. But as President Donald Trump made significant cuts to the federal workforce in 2025, Virginia is projected to lose jobs this year and have almost no job growth in 2026. These cuts are not the result of the Youngkin policies, but will end his administration's streak of job growth.

Youngkin also delivered more than \$9 billion in tax relief, according to



COURTESY GLENN YOUNKIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Gov. Glenn Youngkin speaks at a campaign event July 14, 2021.

the spokesperson. A key part of that tax relief was eliminating the state's portion of the grocery tax — reducing the overall rate from 2.5 percent to 1 percent.

An attempt to pause the state's gas tax for a brief period failed in the Senate, and more substantial tax cuts Youngkin attempted — including a corporate tax cut and eliminating the remainder of the grocery tax — failed. A bipartisan compromise in Youngkin's 2023 budget delivered a one-time tax credit and a raise in the standard tax deduction.

While Youngkin was not able to successfully eliminate the car tax or pause the gas tax, he was able to successfully challenge other environmental regulations which had been previously implemented, including mostly eliminating Virginia's adherence to the California electric vehicle mandate. The General Assembly passed a law in 2021 to match California's plan for all-electric vehicles in the state by 2035. But that law only opted Virginia into the first phase of the plan, allowing Youngkin to decide not to match the second phase of the plan without legislative action.

## Vetoes and General Assembly stand-offs

Overall, many bills by the General Assembly failed during Youngkin's term. As of the end of the 2025 session, Youngkin had vetoed over 400 bills as governor — the most in Virginia history.

Among the stalled legislation which resulted from divided government included legislation to set up a commercial marijuana market in Virginia. The General Assembly legalized marijuana for recreational use in 2021, but waited to set up a retail market until the beginning of 2024. By then, Youngkin was governor, and vetoed two attempts by the General Assembly to set up a retail market.

Youngkin also vetoed two attempts by the General Assembly to raise the minimum wage to \$13.50 an hour by 2026, and \$15 by 2027.

One unexpected agreement came in 2024 when Youngkin signed a bill protecting same-sex marriage in Virginia after it had mostly received only-Democratic support in the General Assembly.

When he first took over as majority leader before the 2024 session, Sen. Scott Surovell, D-Fairfax, told *The Cavalier Daily* he was optimistic about working with Youngkin, saying the governor had shown willingness to work together.

But by the end of the 2025 session, Surovell had changed his attitude, telling *The Cavalier Daily* that Youngkin was not "particularly collaborative."

Democrats' priorities were not the only ones which stalled. Youngkin and Republicans campaigned on passing a 15-week abortion ban during the 2023 elections as a way to encourage voters to give the party a majority in both chambers. But as the last state in the South without an abortion ban,

Virginia voters rejected Republicans and kept abortion unrestricted in the Commonwealth.

In the end, Youngkin vetoed far more bills than when U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine was a governor with divided government and vetoed just 40 bills. But when Youngkin could not use the General Assembly to achieve his priorities, he used executive action to make a lasting change in Virginia.

## Looking forward

As Spanberger prepares to take office, she will do so with a significantly expanded majority in the House and a continued majority in the Senate.

Tuesday night, Spanberger shared a message to her supporters, emphasizing the power of the people in bringing political change to Virginia.

"Our founders ... didn't choose to call Virginia a Commonwealth by accident," Spanberger said. "They chose it to signify that our government would be based on the power of the people, united for a common good. Not for a political party, not for a president, not for a monarch, but for a common good together, and tonight, Virginia proved that that tradition is alive and well."

With a trifecta in Richmond for the first time in years and a promise to reform education once again, voters can expect more legislative productivity to come.

# PUZZLE

Ali Hunter | Puzzlist

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 |   |   |   |   |
| 7 |   |   |   |   |
| 8 |   |   |   |   |
| 9 |   |   |   |   |

ACROSS

- 1 “Welcome to New York” singer  
6 With 1-Down, unsuccessful Virginia Governor candidate  
7 On track to win  
8 “The Subway” singer  
9 Lays down the lawn

DOWN

- 1 See 6-Across  
2 Abigail Spanberger is one  
3 “\_\_\_\_\_ you loud and clear”  
4 Some Spanish desserts  
5 Texas Senator Cruz

Quinn Connor | Puzzle Editor

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 |   |   |   |   |
| 7 |   |   |   |   |
|   | 8 |   |   |   |
|   |   | 9 |   |   |

ACROSS

- 1 Mini albums, briefly  
6 Sheets of glass  
7 “Don’t be glazing me here, Zohran” utterer Curtis  
8 Djungelskog producer  
9 What’s consumed during Fourth-Year Fifth, for short

DOWN

- 1 Mini albums, briefly  
2 Mansa Musa’s empire  
3 “she=\_\_\_\_\_ ate=burgers” (2023 Tweet-turned-meme)  
4 Pricey part of some Louvre collections  
5 Newton who discovered gravity

## THE CAVALIER DAILY

### THE CAVALIER DAILY

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## SPORTS

## The true cost that follows the loss of Virginia diving

Months after the University suspended its diving program, uncertainty persists about the past and future of the program

Leigh Bailey | Staff Writer

On what would have otherwise been a normal Saturday morning practice at the Aquatic & Fitness Center March 1, the Virginia divers gathered in the pool deck classroom for an impromptu meeting with Coach Todd DeSorbo. The divers were notified of the meeting — but not its contents — just hours before it occurred, by former interim diving coach Jack Gigliotti.

At this meeting, the divers learned that their program would be cut. To provide insight on the content of this meeting and its effects, The Cavalier Daily spoke with a quartet of former divers.

With brewings of future roster caps on NCAA athletic programs — that later culminated in the passing of the House settlement in June — many student-athletes were aware early on that cuts would be made, at least on an individual level.

Dean Treanor, former diver and third-year College student, carpooled with Morgan Manley, fellow former diver and third-year Batten student, to the meeting on that chilling morning. Treanor said that he anticipated prior to the meeting that it was not out of the realm of possibility for the diving team to feel the early effects of the settlement.

“I remember driving with Morgan [to the meeting], and it was a really quiet car,” Treanor said. “But I was just like, ‘I think this is the time that we get cut, Morgan.’ And she was like, ‘Yeah, I really don’t have a good feeling about this.’”

Ruby Borzekowski, former diver and third-year College student, was present for the meeting in the pooldeck classroom. Borzekowski said that as the meeting was happening, she could see the swimmers exiting the pool and glancing into the meeting through the glass windows of the classroom.

This division from the swimmers foreshadowed the devastating news the divers were about to hear from DeSorbo — that the diving team was going to be put on “pause” for the foreseeable future. Treanor asked for further clarification during DeSorbo’s announcement — his use of the word “pause” confused many in the room.

“One of my teammates asked ... ‘What is a pause?’ And they told us that there was not going to be a dive team in the near future,” Borzekowski said. “I think I just blacked out the rest of that conversation ... I think I just looked

out the window. I was like, ‘I don’t even want to listen to this right now.’”

Ultimately, both during the meeting and in the aftermath of it, divers were left with little clarification other than that they would not be competing in the 2025-26 collegiate season.

This “pause” followed a series of years of coaching turnover. After spending just two years in the position, former diving coach Josh Arndt left at the beginning of the 2024-25 season. Gigliotti then took Arndt’s place while also maintaining a full-time job unrelated to athletics, according to Braden Keith of SwimSwam.

Despite feeling disappointed, Class of 2025 alumna Lizzy Kaye was also not entirely surprised to hear the news about the program.

“I wasn’t 100 percent shocked,” Kaye said. “From the business side of things, it does make sense ... it doesn’t mean I agree with it, and it doesn’t mean I’m okay with it at all, but it does make sense to an extent.”

Kaye — a role model for divers like Treanor, Manley and Borzekowski — was a senior at the time and on the tail end of her historic run for Cavalier diving. Despite having three coaches during her four-year tenure, Kaye became Virginia’s first All-American diver in the program’s history, reaching the finals in meets such as the NCAA and ACC Championships.

The stage that Kaye set for the upcoming classes was one of excellence, and she mentioned feeling great disappointment upon hearing the news that she would not be able to see the underclassmen strive for that same caliber.

“I felt so bad for everybody else that was younger than me, because, you know, this is their dream,” Kaye said. “This is something you train for your entire life, to be a college athlete, if that’s something that you want to do, and just to have that taken away from you in seconds is completely heartbreaking and just crushing.”

Borzekowski said the divers crafted an email sent to Athletic Director Carla Williams June 19, among other senior members of Virginia Athletics, seeking a formal, tangible rationale as to why DeSorbo and his coaching staff decided to cut the entire program. According to Borzekowski, the divers’ email was acknowledged by Williams, saying she stood behind DeSorbo’s decision, but no further



The AFC diving boards, empty.

CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

rationale related to the cut of the program was provided.

Now, months since the “pause” on the program, Virginia Athletics has yet to provide further explanation beyond the one provided publicly in March. In a written statement to The Cavalier Daily, Erich Bacher, associate athletics director for athletic communications, wrote that factors such as the House settlement were relevant to the decision-making process, and that resource allocation strategy was a key priority for the program. Details on the decision beyond Bacher’s written statement are unknown.

“The changing landscape of college athletics, which includes the House Settlement, required the University of Virginia swimming and diving program to make strategic and difficult decisions regarding its roster and staff,” Bacher wrote.

Treanor was formerly a representative for the program on Virginia’s Student Athlete Advisory Committee. This role enabled him to attend meetings prior to March with Williams and other Virginia Athletics leadership. Treanor said that early rumors of the settlement and roster cuts were large topics of conversation and inquiry for Williams and her team in the months leading up to the March decision for Cavalier diving.

Treanor also noted that cutting diving meant missing out on

an Olympic sport, which he said felt ironic given the department’s recent unveiling of their Olympic Sports Center, a symbol of the University’s commitment to non-revenue sports.

“We have really, really good Olympic institutions. And then we even have this new Olympic Center which is going to be huge ... and then to hear that, and then to cut the most Olympic of Olympic sports ... that was I think the biggest backstab in all this,” Treanor said.

Notably, Virginia as a team earns fewer points for swimming and diving competitions moving forward. For instance, at the Cavaliers’ recent dual against the Tar Heels, North Carolina kicked off the meet with 32 more points than Virginia, simply due to the existence of their diving program.

A lack of diving did not impact Virginia’s ability to sweep the meet this time, but according to all four divers, has potential to — both this spring and in years to come — especially at the championship level. Close competitors such as Stanford, Texas and Indiana all have diving programs that will contribute points in national competitions that the Cavaliers will not have the ability to contest against.

According to Manley, Virginia’s “pause” on the program is reflective of a larger trend throughout collegiate sports nationwide. She

noted that, in a NCAA landscape that is increasingly driven by monetary gains, athletes that compete in non-revenue sports such as diving will continue to fight for relevancy.

“We’re seeing a huge shift from a very athletic competition-based landscape to a very monetary landscape, and that’s starting to matter a lot more in ways that it didn’t used to,” Manley said. “I was one of those athletes that was recruited on potential ... But that has really gone away in the NCAA, at least from the standpoint that I’ve seen.”

Though many divers like Manley, Borzekowski and Treanor remained at the University instead of transferring to other schools to compete as collegiate divers, their inability to end their collegiate sporting careers on their own terms will persist as the ending to their diving careers.

“I think that was the hardest part ... you start to internalize it. You’re like, okay, maybe I’m just not good enough, and that’s why I’m getting cut,” Treanor said. “I was a great diver, but I’m just battling an institutional change, and I’m battling a systemic problem of never investing in diving ... and that’s not my fault. That’s not what I put in.”

# The authors, architects and ascendance of Virginia football

Seven leaders. One program. Here is how the Cavaliers built a newfound contender on the gridiron

Xander Tilock | Sports Editor

Virginia football has only started 8-1 twice in program history. One of those times was in 1990, and the other is 2025. The difference this season is that Coach Tony Elliott has his Cavaliers sitting in first place in the ACC, with a 5-0 start to ACC play.

For the first time since 2021, Virginia is bowl eligible and in the running to compete for an ACC title or perhaps even more. That is astonishing for a program averaging fewer than five wins per campaign over the last 10 seasons.

But, as Elliott himself would say, success cannot be accomplished alone.

There are seven protagonists fueling the gargantuan turnaround through a transfer portal soiree — Elliott, Williams, executive consultant Scott Pioli, general manager Tyler Jones, football chief of staff Justin Speros, deputy athletics director Kevin Miller and even Board of Visitors Rector Rachel Sheridan.

But how did these seven characters take the Cavaliers from ACC bottom feeders to ACC championship contenders, making incredible progress over just one offseason?

“I think that all circles back to Scott Pioli, Tony Elliott and Carla, really picking the right, magic players and the right ingredients,” Sheridan said. “If you look at where we were last year, this time, it’s almost impossible to see how we could have gotten so far, so fast.”

As Williams explained on the “Inside Virginia Athletics with Carla Williams” podcast in July, there are only two options — ride the wave of change, or get left behind.

“You could experience the change and not adjust, or you could accept the change and look for the opportunity to really flourish,” Williams said.

The wave of change began with the start of the partnership between Williams and Elliott in late 2021. Speros also joined Virginia at the same time as Elliott, becoming his director of scouting. Speros’ role, according to Virginia Athletics, is to oversee the evaluation process for high-school recruits and portal recruits.

But with college football undergoing an evolution, more members beyond Speros were needed for the core cast.

Enter Jones, who joined in the 2023 offseason as the program’s first general manager. In this role, he handles front office responsibilities such as player contracts, essentially operating Virginia like an NFL franchise. But unlike the NFL, there is no collective bargaining agreement or contract standards.

Jones said his NFL peers called his job “impossible.” They were shocked by Jones having to negotiate with players again and again over multiple transfer windows.



BENVIN LOZADA | THE CAVALIER DAILY

The Cavaliers take the field.

“When I talk with NFL GMs, they just laugh at me,” Jones said on “Inside Virginia Athletics” in July.

Next, they needed the funding, which is where Miller came in. He took over all VAF funding oversight in the fall of 2023. In Miller’s tenure thus far, Virginia has received four “transformational” donations. Miller and Sheridan helped raise millions of dollars so Jones’ front office can splurge in the portal and generate success on the field.

“Building your front office, keeping staff, investing in the right staff in terms of a player evaluation are probably the ... investment areas that I’m excited to put a plan together with Carla’s guidance on,” Jones said.

From Jones’ arrival through the 2024 season, pieces of that plan had fallen into place. However, the next major move was to grapple with NIL — an arena in which Virginia had fallen behind. This changed when Jones, Speros, Williams and her fellow leaders finally got in on the action.

“December [2024] was the first time that our football program fully participated in NIL, and that speaks volumes because it’s been happening for three years,” Williams said.

However, fundraising and NIL alone would not suffice. Virginia needed to turn financial investments into on-field success — and it did so by

professionalizing football operations.

When the House settlement was approved June 6, another leader was needed, and Sheridan found one in her connection with Scott Pioli, a three-time Super Bowl winner as the vice president of player personnel for the New England Patriots. Pioli is one of the best in the business, as evidenced by his five NFL Executive of the Year awards.

“[I] always thought [Pioli] should have been at UVa,” Sheridan said in an interview with The Cavalier Daily. “[I] always had that sense that there was this kindred spirit between the way he operates and the way we like to operate at UVa.”

Pioli’s path to Virginia began in Nantucket, Mass. Sheridan and her family spend summers there and are neighbors with Pioli. As the families grew close and the NCAA landscape underwent unprecedented transformation, Sheridan’s friendship with Pioli blossomed. This relationship often included talks about Virginia Athletics, and eventually, the possibility of a consulting position.

“We kept talking to [Pioli] over and over again about, you know, UVa. wants to do things the right way, and UVa. could use Scott,” Sheridan said.

Pioli took Sheridan’s advice and officially joined the Cavaliers as a consultant following the 2024 season.

Working with Jones and Speros, Pioli used his NFL expertise to help evaluate potential recruits. He quickly became enamored with Elliott’s program.

“[I] really admired not only the job that [Elliott] did, but how he did his job, and all the people that were with him and around him and how they felt about him,” Pioli said on X.

But culture can only go so far. To bring on a football mind as bright as Pioli’s, the stars needed to align — and it just so happened that Pioli knew Williams as well. That relationship was essential in convincing Pioli to join Virginia Athletics.

And so, Pioli became the final piece to the puzzle of the front office with Jones and Speros — who was named chief of staff and assistant general manager in 2025. That triumvirate, along with Elliott, Williams and Miller, put their football minds and hefty wallets together to craft the most important development for the program, which is the success of Virginia’s 32 transfer portal additions.

From that cohort, Virginia picked up productive starters on the offensive line and at quarterback, running back, wide receiver, defensive tackle, defensive end, linebacker, SPUR, cornerback and safety. And now, that group has led the Cavaliers to a 8-1 record, good for first in the ACC.

“I’m really excited about where we

are,” Sheridan said. “And if you ask me, even six months ago, I don’t know that I would have thought we could be this good.”

Elliott knows what it takes to be “this good.” He spent a decade at Clemson, winning multiple national championships. But winning is impossible alone, and only recently did the Cavaliers complete their cache of stars.

“You got to have a plan, and then you got to have the humility to adapt to your plan based off of what what fits you,” Elliott said.

But even greater than success on the field is that the success is associated with the University at large. People are proudly talking about this football team. And this year, there are cheers aplenty as the “Good Ol’ Song” rings throughout the Commonwealth.

“I do think in many ways, sports is the front porch of the University,” Sheridan said. “It’s something that alumni all over the country can reconnect with, and when we’re playing well in football, it’s just palpable. I feel like you can feel it around Grounds ... There’s just an excitement.”

PUZZLE

Olivia Boynton | Puzzlist

Answers are available on the digital version of this puzzle which is published at [www.cavalierdaily.com](http://www.cavalierdaily.com).  
Congratulations to our October 24 Crossword Solving Competition winner Drew Dillman!

ACROSS

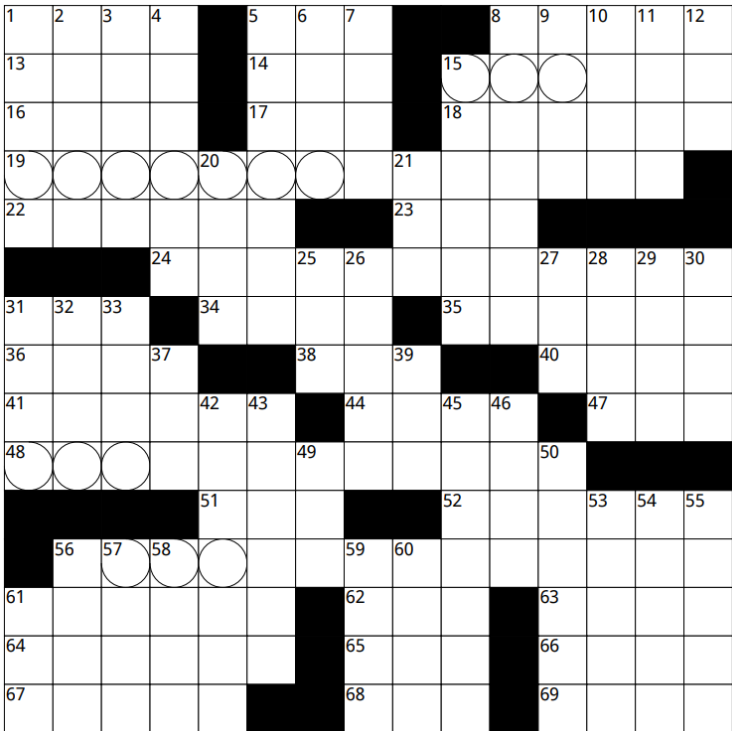
- 1 Utahn coffee alternative  
5 Something Jordin Sparks had to breathe without  
8 \_\_\_\_\_ Wars (Rome-Carthage conflicts)  
13 Yankee superstar's name  
14 PINK purchase  
15 1751 British law restricting the sale of liquor  
16 Pause predecessor?  
17 Bush 43, to Bush 41  
18 Happens  
19 French ruling clan  
22 "It's \_\_\_\_\_" (bargain)  
23 Suffix with employ and attend  
24 Comedy Central show that is an apt description of 15-Across, 19-Across, 48-Across and 56-Across  
31 Mini LPs  
34 "\_\_\_\_\_ Wars" (Sith-Skywalker conflicts)  
35 "Fruit Ninja" ranking, perhaps  
36 Neighbor of Belg.

- 38 Contract for a UVa. athlete to get paid  
40 Strip of wood  
41 2004 Olympics host  
44 Tom Nook can give you one  
47 Govt. stipend  
48 Only military coup in Australian history  
51 \_\_\_ v. Wade  
52 Like "Sausage Party"  
56 Time of caveman or 2.5 million years before CavMan  
61 Where to find your herd on Grounds  
62 C-Ville airport  
63 Massive  
64 LinkedIn profile section  
65 Hearing organ  
66 "Olivia" boy band, for short  
67 Bowling alley divisions  
68 Moral misstep  
69 Something scary passed around on Halloweekend?

DOWN

- 1 Adidas variety  
2 Black-and-white sandwiches  
3 Snack for Homer  
4 Loved  
5 Vodka brand that forgot an "e"  
6 De-crease?  
7 South African currency  
8 Artist with a Blue Period  
9 Fourth-years and grad students, derogatorily  
10 Ship-related, abbr.  
11 "So \_\_\_\_\_, only in the rain" (Addison Rae chorus)  
12 Dollar divs.  
15 "\_\_\_\_\_ the blink of an eye" (left quick)  
20 What a rapper might spit?  
21 "Uh-huh"  
25 Grandmother across the pond?  
26 Whale food in "Happy Feet Two"  
27 Things to stream on

- 28 They're essential for almond moms  
29 Some 27-Downs  
30 Abominable "Monster's, Inc." character banished to the Human World  
31 E-School grad  
32 Machu Picchu country  
33 Educational acronym that includes 31-Downs  
37 2013 movie starring Joaquin Phoenix  
39 Laugh on 61-Across  
42 Trix and Kix  
43 Paperless novels  
45 Sound effect for a DJ or cargo ship  
46 Sushi casing  
49 Sushi contents  
50 Asado appetizer offering  
53 Mock  
54 Urged (on)  
55 Charlottesville State Senator  
56 Half of a yellow Pokémon  
57 Similar (to)



- 58 Shawn Mendes's character in a 2022 crocodile movie  
59 "Cosmic SnowCone" and three cuisine "Red, White and Berry"  
60 "White Lotus" season  
61 French designer letters

CARTOON

Bippity Boppity Booze

Blake Maguire | Cartoonist

*Elphaba arrives on Grounds ahead of Wicked: For Good's premiere.*



*To mark the tradition of Fourth Year Fifth, she casts anti-hangover spells on all Charlottesville liquor.*

Playing Like Hell

Sophia Lee | Cartoonist



## LIFE

## ‘A big, loving, supporting community’

Residents find friendship and an enriching language experience at Casa Bolívar, La Maison Française and Shea House

Laura Gine-Vega | Staff Writer



KEN FABIA | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Casa Bolívar, the Spanish house, was the first language house to open its doors to the University community in 1981.



KEN FABIA | THE CAVALIER DAILY

La Maison Française, the French house, housed its first University students inside the Queen Anne style residence in 1985.



KEN FABIA | THE CAVALIER DAILY

The last language house, Shea House, opened in 2002, and as of this year, it has six language pods — ASL, Chinese, German, Japanese, Korean and Russian.

Laughter and multilingual chatter flow down Jefferson Park Avenue as students convene for study sessions, cook group dinners and sing karaoke. This type of close-knit, linguistic community can only be found in the University’s language house complex, composed of Casa Bolívar, La Maison Française and Shea House.

These houses, under the purview of Housing and Residence Life, offer students a fully immersive environment where they can practice a language and meet like-minded language enthusiasts. To their residents, the language houses offer a supportive community that both challenges and fulfills its members, day in and day out.

Julianna Pledgie, language house senior resident and third-year College student, characterized the language house community as welcoming to all language-learners, regardless of ability.

“All the residents in every building are very understanding to beginners who are speaking the language for the first time,” Pledgie said. “It’s overall very supportive.”

Casa Bolívar, the Spanish house, was the first language house to open its doors to the University community in 1981. La Maison Française, the French house, followed suit four years later, housing its first University students inside the Queen Anne style residence in 1985. The last language house, Shea House, opened in 2002, and as of this year, it has six language pods — ASL, Chinese, German, Japanese, Korean and Russian.

Although each language house has specific requirements and events for each of their residents, one communal goal of the houses is for the students to be in complete language immersion. Each house sets ground rules at the beginning of the year — covering anything from language expectations in common areas to whether residents can speak English in their bedrooms.

The Residential Leadership Experience — composed of Pledgie and two residents from each language house — organizes events for the language houses as a collective. Additionally, each language house also has its own event schedule. Some common events include movie nights and coffee chats, where individuals come from all over the University to one of the language houses to practice speaking a language.

Each house also holds resident dinners, where the residents share meals together on a regular basis. Each Sunday, for example, three or four Maison Française residents take turns preparing a meal for all their housemates to enjoy together.

These events give residents the opportunity to practice speaking and

learning their language in a lighthearted environment. Brandon Nesbit, Shea House resident and third-year Commerce student, recalled practicing his Chinese by celebrating festivals such as the Lunar New Year at the Shea House, where the Chinese pod prepared traditional snacks and taught attendees how to do traditional calligraphy.

Like Nesbit, Calvin Pan, Maison Française resident and third year-College student, said he enjoys the opportunity to practice speaking French in his dorm. Before joining a language house, Pan had only sparingly used Duolingo and taken one semester of French at the University. Pan, who has since picked up a French minor, said he joined the language house community as a place where he could actively practice speaking the language.

Pan described learning a new language as a steep learning curve, but he said it is very rewarding once you can naturally use new words in conversations.

“There are going to be moments where ... I’m going to need to ask for help, and that’s okay,” Pan said. “You have to [embrace] that discomfort and [put] yourself out there, but once you do, it becomes really fun.”

Jason Kim, Maison Française resident and second-year College student, also loves the language immersion of the French house. Kim grew up speaking Arabic and French with his Lebanese stepfather, and he enjoyed the connection that he felt when he spoke a language that was not spoken by his peers. He said he wanted to experience that same type of community in college, and he found it in the French house.

“It’s truly just a welcoming community full of different minded people who come together and just share who they are without any judgment,” Kim said. “[We] just accept each other as we are.”

These residents agree that their housemates are the best part about living in the language houses. Pledgie described the language house community as “supportive and resilient,” full of ambitious people who put themselves in potentially uncomfortable living situations to improve their language skills and engage with different cultures.

“I really admire how these residents ... are willing to take time out of their day and take the step out of that comfort zone to better themselves with their language practices,” Pledgie said.

Diego De Leon, Casa Bolívar resident and fourth-year Batten student, loved the community he found when

living in the Spanish house last year. However, he said that this year, he feels like the atmosphere is less lively, with loose enforcement of the Spanish-speaking rules and sparse attendance at house events.

Moreover, De Leon said he does not feel much of a connection between the three language houses. Pledgie echoed this sentiment, as she heard from other residents that in previous years, the language houses have felt isolated from each other.

To address this problem, De Leon and Pledgie, along with other RLE members, have organized events open to all language house residents to help build community across the three houses. Pledgie said that one of her fondest memories of her language house experience was at one of these RLE events. She recalled how the residents were singing karaoke songs in different languages, and when one resident sang a song in her native language, people in the room were brought to tears by how beautiful it was.

“That was something that really touched me and I really enjoyed. I think it’s something that’ll stick with me ... just seeing the joy on people’s faces when they see that they can sing in a language ... and there’s no judgment,” Pledgie said.

According to Pan, although most residents enjoy the events organized by the houses and the RLE, some of the best moments happen more spontaneously. For instance, Pan sometimes plays the piano in the Maison Française music room. Once he starts playing, people wander in and give him song recommendations, and it often becomes an impromptu karaoke night.

For De Leon, his favorite memory was participating in the snowball fight on the Lawn with his Casa Bolívar hallmates last year. Coming in as a third-year transfer student, De Leon found it hard to become adjusted to the University, but the language houses helped him find a community.

“It felt like that moment really made me feel like I truly belong here,” De Leon said. “Before that, I was struggling to feel like I belonged, but [it] felt so nice to have people that you know.”

Similarly to other residents, Pan highly recommended the experience and encouraged individuals to apply. Although he acknowledged that the application and language immersion may be daunting, it is less about the language skills and more about joining a house community.

“It’s really a place for you to learn,” Pan said. “When in doubt, apply.”

# Akon Awuok brings the hustle to content creation

From investment internships to marathons, Akon Awuok highlights her life at the University on TikTok

Ingrid Gay | Staff Writer

The University is filled with students with intense work ethic and drive, who balance school with an internship or two and still manage to maintain an active social life. Fourth-year Commerce student Akon Awuoka is a prime example of this, as she not only balances each facet of her life at the University, but documents it, too.

Awuok's content creation began during her COVID-19 high school days, with her posting clips of shows and movies on Tik Tok for others to watch. Her account garnered decent success, and although she abandoned the hobby after the lockdown lifted, she retained most of her following. In 2023, as a second-year student at the University, Awuok returned to posting on her account, producing humorous, meme-like content about her life as a student.

During the Fall 2023 semester finals that year, a viral TikTok caused her account to explode in popularity, gaining over 1,000 followers from just that singular video. Acquiring 2.5 million views and over 600,000 likes, the clip depicts Awuok slamming her computer and stuffing her bag as she finishes her last assignment for a difficult class. After going viral, she was

shocked that her account's popularity had skyrocketed.

"This account was my freedom, creative space and so I really didn't advertise it at all. I didn't follow my friends," Awuok said. "This account kind of blew up on its own."

From there, Akon's account continued to gain traction. While being a large creator was not her original goal, her humorous content, which focused on the predicaments of being a college student — like dorm move-out and 12-hour library sessions — gave her a wide appeal to followers navigating similar phases of life.

"I've noticed that TikTok loves relatable videos, and that's what I've seen success in [posting]," Awuok said. "I always did like relatable academic or funny joke videos that people ... laugh [and] share with their friends."

Since acquiring social media fame, though, Awuok's content has morphed into more than just videos for laughs. As her fame grew, she began to make content about other aspects of her life, like her interests in finance and her new passion for running.

Awuok said that the decision to feature running on her account was simple. Not only does she love the physical and mental benefits of the

sport, but she also said that running itself is a very widely applicable and professionally "safe" experience to document digitally.

"Being aware of digital footprints ... [and thinking of] what I would want an employer to see, I started running as a safe haven," Awuok said. "It is just kind of like gold in that essence. You can't really get canceled for running."

Today, running around Grounds takes up a substantial portion of her TikTok page, from fitting in 14 miles before a Saturday darty to doing laps around the indoor track at the Aquatic and Fitness Center to escape from the August humidity.

In addition to posting her runs and college-lifestyle vlogs, Awuok likes to feature the various aspects of being in the McIntire School of Commerce. Interestingly, she was actually first enrolled in the School of Nursing but said she felt inspired to switch gears after seeing her older brother go through Commerce.

During her entire journey, she has had her brother there to guide her. Now as a content creator, she hopes to be a similar guide to followers hoping to enter the competitive world of finance. The biggest way that she does this is by sending an FAQ document

each year to students' applying to the same programs she once did.

"I share that journey to kind of be that older brother or mentor that maybe not everybody has," Awuok said. "I've loved being able to help people and getting messages like, 'Oh my god. Thank you so much.'"

Awuok attributes much of the financial success she has achieved through her content creation to her coursework at the University. She said that her knowledge acquired through her marketing and finance classes are broadly applicable to curating her social media platform, and that they even frame the way she thinks about her online presence.

"I would say that [my studies] have shaped the way that I view my platform," Awuok said. "I see [my account] as more of a business that has influence."

Beyond her runs and Commerce experiences, Awuok's content expands to her journey in developing her professional career. For the past two summers, Awuok has documented her time in New York City completing finance internships. Although she tries not to include much of what she does in the office, she does have a series of TikToks dedicated to the experience,

including a video commemorating the first day of her internship and another of her taking a 1 a.m. business call.

Outside of her content, Awuok furthers her career preparations on Grounds with her involvement with pre-investment banking and career readiness programs, as co-president emeritus of BlackFin Investment Group and a career ambassador for the Career Center. According to Awuok, a particularly impactful achievement was being accepted in the the Girls Who Invest Summer Program, a non-profit organization working to help educate and get more women into the investment field.

As her content helps her followers parse their own academic, fitness and professional journeys, Awuok's content has also been beneficial for herself. She shared that during her hardest times as a student at the University, content creation became a much-needed respite. While she intends to keep up with her frequent posting, she plans to slow down and savor every moment of her final months at the University.

"I just want to slow down and enjoy the year before it's not there anymore," Awuok said.

# An ode to Carter Mountain: Bringing the orchard home

A gluten-free take on the beloved cider donuts — soft, spiced and unmistakably Charlottesville

Evelyn Maxwell | Staff Writer

With Carter Mountain's "Sunset Series" fading into a fond memory and the Charlottesville foliage turning gold, one Thursday ritual lingers in my mind — their apple cider donuts. My friends describe them as soft, delicately spiced and dusted with cinnamon-sugar. To many, they are the very essence of autumn in Charlottesville.

Personally, though, I can't attest. As someone who eats gluten-free, I've never been able to try the Carter Mountain classic. With this in mind, I set out to create a version I could finally enjoy — one that evokes the same warm comfort everyone else seems to know by heart.

After a few weekends of trial and error, I landed on a recipe adapted from Bob's Red Mill but reimagined with a maple twist. The result is everything you want in a fall treat — crisp edges, a pillowy cake-like crumb and the syrupy brightness of a fresh Virginia apple.

Despite their bakery-worthy appearance, these donuts are remarkably simple to make. Most of the ingredients are pantry staples, and you don't

need much equipment — just a bit of patience as their scent fills the kitchen. I'll admit most college students aren't typically stocked with donut pans, but I ordered one overnight from Amazon for \$18 and haven't regretted it since. But, if you'd rather improvise, a muffin tin works too — simply fill the wells with batter, extend the baking time slightly, and watch the beautiful domes rise.

Whether you're a student missing Carter's sunsets or simply craving a cozy weekend baking project, these gluten-free apple cider donuts bring the orchard home. Plus, they pass the only test that matters — approval from my gluten-eating friends.

**Prep time:** 40 minutes

**Cook time:** 15 minutes

**Yields:** 12 donuts

**Ingredients:**

**Donuts**

- 1 ½ cups apple cider (bonus points for local Virginia brands)
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter,

softened to room temperature

- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1 ½ cups gluten-free 1-to-1 baking flour (you can substitute for regular, if you please)
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 ½ teaspoons nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- Pinch of salt
- Oil spray for pan

**Cinnamon-Sugar Coating**

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon

**Instructions:**

1. In a medium pot over medium-high heat, bring the apple cider to a gentle boil.\* Let simmer until it reduces to roughly half of its original height — about ¾ cup, or for about 10 to 15 minutes. Set aside to cool slightly.
2. Preheat your oven to 350°F while the apple cider cools and you begin preparation on the remaining ingredients.
3. In a large bowl, beat together the

sugar and softened butter with an electric mixer until light, fluffy and noticeably increased in volume. In my experience, this can take 4-5 minutes. Don't rush this step — it's what makes the donuts airy.

4. Add the egg and maple syrup into the same bowl, and mix until just combined.

5. In another bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, nutmeg, cinnamon and salt.\*\*

6. Gradually alternate between adding small portions of the dry ingredients and the cooled cider into your butter mixture, mixing as you go, until a thick batter forms.

7. Coat the donut pan with oil spray, then spoon the batter into each cavity. Only fill about two-thirds of the way — the donuts will rise, and you want that perfect center hole to stay intact.

8. Place the trays on the oven's middle rack and bake for 15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.

9. Let the donuts rest in the pan for 2 to 3 minutes, then transfer to a plate or wire rack to cool slightly.

10. While the donuts cool, melt the

remaining butter in one ramekin. In another, mix together the sugar and cinnamon.

11. Dip each donut in butter and press into the cinnamon sugar until fully coated. I usually do one side for balance, but double-dip if you're feeling indulgent.

\*You'll notice a bit of sediment forming around the edges — don't worry, that's natural.

\*\*Spoon flour into your measuring cup, then level it with a knife, rather than scooping directly from the bag.

These donuts are best enjoyed warm, their cinnamon-sugar crust still glistening and just beginning to melt into the crumb. Pair one with your morning coffee, a mug of hot chocolate, or alongside a scoop of vanilla ice cream for the perfect fall treat. If you have leftovers, these donuts keep well for a few days in an airtight container — though I doubt they'll last that long.

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## U.Va. Cosplay Club celebrates creative escapism

Members of all skill levels embrace community and indulge in fantasy at the Makerspace

Adrian Weakley | Staff Writer

Every year, fans pack convention centers around the world wearing painstakingly detailed costumes based on their favorite fictional characters, and some even turn it into a full-time job by marketing their skills on social media. This increasingly popular art form is known as cosplay, and unbeknownst to many, it has a home at the University that was established in 2023.

The Cosplay, Costuming & Crafts Club is a place where anyone is welcome, from experienced cosplayers to those with a casual interest in jewelry or prop making. Its mission is to allow student artists to explore their creative passions with no social apprehension and without facing the financial hurdles that prevent them from accessing the tools and materials they need. Link Fu, club founder and third-year College student, shared how organizations such as the University Library, Parents Program and Arts Council have helped her realize her vision.

"These resources allowed us to have the space to host workshops and pursue our mission, and [they] also offer us financial support," Fu said.

Because of this support, club members enjoy a variety of benefits at no cost. At their regular workshops, hosts offer step-by-step instructions to craft smaller items that can be finished in a single session, such as pirate hats and dice trays. Whether or not they use these props for a larger project in the future, participants can socialize and gain experience in a fun, supportive environment.

By gathering artists of all backgrounds and skill levels, club leaders hope to destigmatize the hobby and introduce students to the communal element of cosplay culture. While some naysayers consider cosplay juvenile or lacking in practical value, many fans find it to be a fulfilling creative outlet that nurtures skills ranging from makeup to 3D modeling.

It's also a great way to meet new people with the same taste in media or those who simply appreciate the effort of a well-done costume. Char-

lene Huynh, club secretary and fourth-year College student, described how her personality blossoms when she's surrounded by likeminded fans at conventions.

"I'm personally an introvert, but at conventions, I'm a huge extrovert ... I'm very happy to interact with all these sorts of people, and they're also very happy to interact with me, because there's no room for judgment," Huynh said.

Fennec Craig, club president and second-year Engineering student, joined CCC in his first year and quickly found a sense of belonging at the Makerspace. He mentioned the importance of offering a welcoming experience to students who may be afraid of judgment or otherwise lack a supportive social circle.

"We're trying to make it a bit more community-based this year, so then it gives a lot of people less of that fear to jump in," Craig said. "Because now that we got rid of the financial and the skill barrier, it's like, okay, let's get rid of the social barrier."

To help achieve this, CCC partners with conventions such as Anime USA in Arlington, Va. to offer discounted badges to members. Students also have the option to connect virtually on the club's Discord server where almost 200 members ask for advice and post updates on their designs.

Those pursuing more complex projects can bring their ideas to life with premium materials and state-of-the-art equipment at the Scholars' Lab Makerspace, which acts as CCC's home base on the third floor of Shannon Library. In addition, the club offers free access to instructional books and sewing patterns from online resource hub Kamuicosplay so members can keep improving on their own time.

For more specific guidance, members can meet with club leaders during their office hours. Fu explained how these consultations help students develop their skills in a more focused setting.

"If people ... want to come in to learn how to use a tool or equipment or to work on a personal project, they can come in



COURTESY LINK FU

CCC is a place where anyone is welcome, from experienced cosplayers to those with a casual interest in jewelry or prop making

to learn or to ask questions," Fu said. "And I think those are also helpful if you want a dedicated space to hone your craft."

As cosplayers themselves, club leaders and administrators also take advantage of the perks on offer. Huynh, who enjoys dressing up as Herta from the popular video game "Honkai: Star Rail," expressed gratitude for the support she's received for her projects.

"I'm very happy to have this club, because I get to do whatever I can for my cosplays without being anxious about finishing on time or wasting so much money on different materials," Huynh said.

On occasion, the club hosts special guests to go more in-depth on a particular discipline. Recently, local craftsman Daniel Gilmore dropped by to show members how to create their own leather keychains, and professional cosplayer Maker Fishmeal visited

in the spring to host two days of panels and workshops.

Club leaders hope that promoting artistic expression and connection will help members understand the appeal of cosplay on a deeper level. Dressing up and becoming immersed in fandom brings "joy and whimsy to a mundane life" according to Craig, and his experience proves the hobby can be transformational in more ways than one. As a transgender person, cosplay became an avenue for him to explore his gender identity before coming out and to meet others in the LGBT community for the first time.

"My first cosplay, I cosplayed a girl character, and I was like, yes, it's fun, it's whatever, but it didn't feel quite right to wear the costume," Craig said. "But my first time wearing a male costume, I actually felt like myself ... I was way more extroverted than

usual, and I just had this sense of relief the whole time."

Craig's story demonstrates how cosplay can foster self-discovery in profound ways. By allowing members to realize their creative ambitions and interact with fellow artists on Grounds and beyond, CCC helps them achieve a type of freedom they can't get anywhere else.

"You can make anything that you want to make, you can be whoever you want to be, and you can be in any world that's outside of this one," Fu said.

Students interested in the Cosplay, Costuming & Crafts Club can find updates on their Instagram or visit their Linktree to join their mailing list and learn more about the resources and workshops they offer.

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

## Fralin exhibit explores ancient Egypt and Nubia's shared history

On display through June 14, "The World Between: Egypt and Nubia in Africa" showcases the unknown facets of how ancient Egypt came to be

Paige Campbell | Staff Writer

The Fralin Museum of Art is currently hosting "The World Between: Egypt and Nubia in Africa," an exhibit which explores the juxtaposition of having sharp political boundaries, yet blurred cultural ones. The exhibit showcases this complex relationship through a variety of artifacts, such as pottery, statues, figurines and 3D-printed replicas.

Anastasia Dakouri-Hild, curator of the exhibit and professor of art history, said she assembled the collection to demonstrate the influence Nubia had on Egypt and educate visitors on how ancient people led normal lives.

"This exhibition shows that people in the past were as complex as they are today," Dakouri-Hild said. "This does not always come across in textbook descriptions of ancient cultures ... That was my inspiration."

Nubia, now located in present-day Sudan, comprised several cultures that influenced Egyptian culture, yet their relationship with Egypt is one of volatility – first with Egypt colonizing and occupying Nubia, then later with Nubia doing the same to Egypt. The exhibit works to recognize this dynamism.

Upon entering, guests are greeted

with a panel that describes the exhibit, which moves chronologically through ancient Nubian history. The only archaeology-focused exhibit at the museum, "The World Between" offers a unique collection of artifacts to visitors.

Among these artifacts is the "ba" head – a grey, male head with its eyes closed. In ancient Egyptian belief, the "ba" was the concept of one's soul and personality, according to Dakouri-Hild. Though a "ba" statue is typically attached to a bird's body, this artifact is only the head.

"The concept of the ba as a human-headed kite (bird) flying about the dead body trying to reunite itself with the materiality of a person, as well as the name of the 'spirit,' are Egyptian," Dakouri-Hild said. "This was one of many Egyptian religious and eschatological beliefs."

According to Dakouri-Hild, the "ba" and the practice of building these statues were adopted by those of the Meroitic civilization of Nubia from 300 B.C.E. to 350 C.E. They used this belief and adapted it to their art forms and styles.

Combining animal memorabilia in conjunction with the death of humans

is prevalent throughout the exhibit and in ancient Egyptian and Nubian culture. Other examples include the "Jar with Long-Horned Cattle," a jar with pictures of cattle inscribed on the side of it, and the "Painted Goat Skull," a goat skull decorated with red, black and white pigments.

"These animals meant literally life or death for agropastoral communities, and they became symbols of human sustenance," Dakouri-Hild said. "Their blessings were articulated as gifts by life-giving divine entities."

The exhibit also details regionally significant human figures of the time, such as Amenemhat, a Nubian elite who assimilated into Egyptian administration. The statue in the Fralin is a replica of the real statue of Amenemhat which depicts him as a scribe with inscriptions such as "king's acquaintance" and "overseer of the king's workmen." The original piece was found buried outside forts that the Egyptians built in the city of Buhen after colonizing it.

Tyler Glenn, Fralin exhibition intern and fourth-year College student, did archeological research on artifacts in the exhibit, including the replica statue of Amenemhat, through a class

taught by Dakouri-Hild last fall and spring semesters. He outlined the extensive process of disseminating each artifact, which to Glenn, revealed the deeper history behind its discovery and preservation.

"The Egyptians went South, colonized all of Nubia and they made these forts," Glenn said. "You could tell that these [artifacts] were taken from the temple and buried right outside the inner walls of the fortress, under a couple of feet of sand for protection."

Other artifacts invite physical interaction from visitors including "Reproduction of a 'Reserve Head' of a Nameless Elite" – a limestone noble's head with a blank expression – and "Reproduction of a Pregnant Female Figurine." Third-year Architecture student Omer Aziz-Quintana said he appreciated this aspect during his visit.

"My favorite part about the exhibit was that there were interactive models that [are] encouraged to be picked up and played with," Aziz-Quintana said. "I thought it was a really interesting way of having a hands-on way of learning about Egyptian history."

Contextual material throughout the exhibit further corroborates the nature of the relationship by including

key dates and detailed geographical and historical information.

According to Glenn, the exhibit has come at a critical point in the preservation of Nubian history.

With the destruction of the Sudan National Museum in April as part of the Sudanese civil war, it is possible that there are now more Nubian artifacts in the United States than in Sudan.

"Nubian archaeology and cultural heritage is now in kind of a short supply," Glenn said. "...That's another reason why this Nubian exhibit is so important because it [involves] current geopolitics."

The threat to Nubian history given the region's political climate makes recognition of its often underappreciated influence all the more significant. In her curation of "The World Between," Dakouri-Hild calls attention to the complexities of cultural formation in geographic proximity.

"Egypt would not be 'Egypt' had it not intersected in so many ways with Nubian cultures across time," Dakouri-Hild said. "Nubia is a very important part of how Egypt came to be the 'civilization' enshrined in public consciousness."

## Matthew Burtner creates ecoacoustic art

The University professor is pushing the boundaries of environmental activism through sound art

Carter Horner | Senior Writer

Some days, Music Professor Matthew Burtner is out in the snow, recording the sounds of dripping water and crunching ice. Others, he is inside editing and arranging those sounds along with traditional instrumentation into a digital composition. Burtner works in the field of ecoacoustics – the study of environmental sounds.

As a composer, he takes these sounds of nature and creates music of all kinds. From opera to theater to film, Burtner has scored a variety of mediums. The intersections of science, policy and art are the core of Burtner's work as a scorer and as a professor.

"Musicians play musical instruments, so performance with natural materials extends that to playing the sand or the water as the musical instrument," Burtner said.

Burtner has three primary ways he composes. In some compositions he creates harmony and rhythm from scientific data in a process known as sonification. Another method, field recording, involves directly recording sounds outside. The third is performance with natural materials, which involves a person using natural material as if it were an instrument.

His role as a composer brings sme-

thing unique to environmental activism through his collaborations with scientists and policymakers. Where environmental scientists and policymakers are gathering data and presenting information, Burtner is creating art that anyone can emotionally resonate with.

"[Science and policy] can be kind of challenged by their inability to engage normal listeners and viewers emotionally," Burtner said. "Music can help create spaces where people could receive science and not be sort of turned away by it."

In his piece for the 2012 Auksalaq Telematic Opera, he collected sounds from glaciers to create a soundtrack for a virtual theater performance about the melting ice caps.

The piece was the first telematic opera, where performers and audience members are located in multiple places and connected with one another virtually. It was streamed between concert halls in Washington, Norway, Montreal, Alaska, New York, Charlottesville and Indianapolis, with a shorter recorded version being streamed after the fact on National Geographic.

When it came to engaging with the audience for the Auksalaq piece,

he used a software of his own creation called "Nomads" that allowed the audience to play dripping sounds from their phones. As more people joined, the sounds gradually grew more plentiful and audible, outlining the story of society's contributions to climate change.

"We're not just making a piece about the Arctic melting," Burtner said. "We are melting the Arctic, we're doing it right now, and we're part of it. We're not separate from it."

Burtner's work also extends to the classroom. Since 2009, Burtner has been teaching MUSI 3400, "Ecoacoustics" at the University. In class, Burtner instructs students on the technicalities of recording, editing, composing and arranging, and discusses issues of environmental sustainability. Students from environmental science and engineering have been drawn to the course, and Burtner has adjusted it accordingly by giving students more freedom with their assignments and projects.

"Some students are working on more environmental science type projects using Creative Sound, and some are making more music compositions, and I let those things kind of coexist,"

Burtner said. "The students collaborate together, which is really cool, because it kind of models what I'm doing outside."

Just last summer, Burtner started another class – ETP 3500, "Sound and Sustainability," a class that branches out more to encompass all kinds of sustainability, from economic to social to environmental and how sound connects to those different subfields. Students work on self-driven, open-ended projects concerning whichever area they are most interested in.

"I love the opportunity to work with others on issues that are important to people," Burtner said. "I'm always looking for those kinds of opportunities with music to reach out past the concert hall."

Burtner noted that he does not just want to present music about the environment but also to get audiences and listeners involved. He wants them to connect with the art in a way that makes them think about the issues being presented.

This philosophy encompasses Burtner's work as a professor. As he was teaching a class called MUSI 2350, "Technosonics: Digital Music and Sound Art Composition," he

used the "Nomads" software to allow his 300 students to connect to each other through their personal devices and manipulate sound. Every student would influence the sound a little bit, and they turned large lectures into a series of performance pieces where each person played a role in shaping how it played out.

"They could project notes and questions and do things on the screen while we were having class. That sort of thing didn't exist at the time," Burtner said. "You had 300 people doing that, and it was just really cool."

Burtner's achievements do not stop there. He was awarded an Emmy in 2020 as the subject of Valerie Kern's short film "Making Music with Glaciers and Snow." It covers his work recording his album "Glacier Music," which he describes as a "love song to the glaciers."

Interdisciplinary collaboration is at the core of Burtner's work as a composer as a professor, and at the core of how he seeks to make an impact on sustainability and climate change.

"It's when we combine our fields and we combine our research strengths that we can actually make change in the world," Burtner said.

# OPINION

## LEAD EDITORIAL

# Grassroots student efforts have brought new energy to Grounds

*Student activism this fall shows that civic engagement at the University is alive, diverse and deeply connected to the University's values*

In a year riddled with uncertainty for the University — from the aftermath of former University President Jim Ryan's departure to the most recent agreement with the Trump administration — one constant has been the vitality of community discourse. Emerging as a silver lining amidst institutional instability, this discourse has come in the form of student-run protests, free speech campaigns and other collaborative efforts that have galvanized unlikely corners of the University community. In fact, a plethora of grassroots and organic groups have taken the initiative to foster more inclusive and robust dialogue across Grounds.

The decision of Ryan to resign following pressure from the Department of Justice, was announced when most students were off Grounds. Nonetheless, it sparked immediate political engagement. Students and community members rallied alongside faculty in protest, while others turned to social media to demand transparency and accountability, eventually peaking with June's "Run For Jim," which traded on Ryan's much-beloved communi-

ty "Runs With Jim." What began as an outpouring of concern over University leadership evolved into an instance of visible political engagement, entirely organized by students and University stakeholders across the nation.

More recently, during the Board of Visitors' Sept. 12 meeting, students and the Charlottesville community members took to the Lawn to voice their opposition to what many viewed as a lack of transparency. While many were denied entrance to the meeting, their protest garnered much attention. Barely a month later, over 1,000 protestors gathered on the Lawn Oct. 17 to oppose the "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education," a proposal many viewed as a threat to the University's academic independence. The demonstration drew a wide range of students, faculty and community members, all united by a shared concern that the Compact, rejected later that day, would undermine the University's tradition of shared governance and intellectual freedom.

This year's protests and activism have underlined a new age for student activism at the University — one

that has brought together groups and individuals who might not typically partake in political advocacy. The movements fostered collaboration between Student Council, Wahoo-s4UVA, National Campus Jewish Alliance and other student and faculty organizations, creating channels that extend beyond the traditional activist circles. The grassroots nature of this approach is a departure from the past, when activism on Grounds tended to be the result of a few, highly centralized actors. By involving groups from student governance, Greek life and all in between, recent efforts have made participation feel less like joining an ordinary protest and more like engaging in a collective conversation, lowering the barrier for students who might otherwise remain on the sidelines.

In another astonishing example of inter-university political engagement, Student Council united with the student councils of other schools initially targeted by the Compact to put out a joint, written statement of solidarity. A moment of national student collaboration surrounding a moment of unprecedented federal overreach, this

statement powerfully exemplified the importance of cooperation between affected schools and the students they represent. Challenges to academic freedom and institutional stability threaten all members of our University community — and all members of higher education writ large, as the statement recognizes. While divisions might persist across student groups and viewpoints, the willingness of student organizations to collaborate on shared goals shows that meaningful civic engagement can transcend entrenched boundaries.

Although the community's progress is commendable, this is still an ongoing effort, and sustaining a culture of open dialogue requires continued participation from both students and faculty. As the University continues to navigate challenges around free expression, it is important to ensure that this culture of dialogue extends beyond high-profile events and into everyday interactions. Even once we inevitably move beyond federal administration-driven challenges, students and faculty must continue to actively engage in shaping the Uni-

versity's decisions and maintaining a robust environment for free speech.

In this fall of student activism, our community has embraced the tenets of student self-governance upon which this University was founded. Recognizing that insurmountable challenges lie ahead of higher education, we commend our fellow students who speak out and continue to engage with political discourse on Grounds, upholding their freedom of expression and their investment in this institution's future. Perhaps a couple of demonstrations on the Lawn will not stop the Trump administration's incursion upon this University. Nevertheless, the model that these students have set, and the evidence that activism breeds change, will not go away quickly — or quietly.

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# HUMOR

# U.Va. appoints AI version of Thomas Jefferson as next president

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

In a letter sent to the University community Thursday, the presidential search committee announced its selection — an artificial intelligence recreation of school founder Thomas Jefferson. The Board of Visitors confirmed Jefferson's appointment, and a Large Language Model in an android body took charge of the University effective immediately, stirring up controversy.

The AI model, which students took to calling GPThomas, has been trained on all of Thomas Jefferson's writings, from the Declaration of Independence to gossip notes he wrote as Secretary of State. While he is indistinguishable from the historical Thomas Jefferson and is well-versed in the rights of man, the rights of woman seem to frighten and confuse him. Furthermore, when presented with a chart of the demographic breakdown of the student population, GPThomas' speech function crashed.

"When we told GPThomas that

over half of the student body is female, he started crying," Barry Hip said, former Student Advisory Council member and third-year College student.

However, GPThomas' disgust was quickly replaced with a new concern.

"That wasn't even close to what he was most upset about, though. I don't know which member of the Council recommended he listen to the Hamilton soundtrack, but he ended up disbanding us after that."

Hip was devastated at the dissolution of the Council, but conceded GPThomas may not have taken the anti-Jeffersonian lyrics well and was likely confused by his Broadway counterpart.

Ironically, GPThomas' efforts to convert his views into policy were restrained by the Department of Justice's mandate for quarterly reports on the implementation of civil rights law. An attempt to rename the Maxine Platzer Lynn Women's Center to Mini Monticello and transform the building into a personal office was rejected on the ba-

sis that the building could not become privatized.

However, President Donald Trump advocated for a repeal of the mandate to AI Jefferson.

"It is so wonderful that the people of U.Va. have chosen one of the GREATEST AMERICANS IN HISTORY to serve as their president," President Trump said in a late-night Truth Social post.

"Frankly, he should be allowed to do whatever he wants. TJ and DJT can work together to MAKE U.Va. GREAT AGAIN!"

GPThomas did not comment on the developments. Instead, he was only seen once in public that day, reading "The Art Of The Deal" and frowning while plugged into a Shannon Library phone charging station.

About 36 hours after Donald Trump's Truth Social post, an opinion column written on a piece of parchment covered in wig powder and oil stains was slid under the office door of The Cavalier Daily. The column described the U.S. president as "an in-

sensible, strutting tyrant with whom no person should bear to cooperate" and was signed by "a correspondent in Virginia."

After The Cavalier Daily published the letter, reactions were shared from across the country, with President Trump taking to Truth Social once more.

"Thomas Jefferson was one of the WORST presidents in American history," Trump's post read.

"Jefferson was a RACIST and a DEMOCRATIC-Republican. A person like that should NEVER WIN THE WHITE HOUSE! Historians are saying that he won by MUCH less than me, and everybody is talking about how he let the British DESTROY the White House. We need to SAVE U.Va. AND SAVE AMERICA. President DJT."

Despite the mounting pressure for GPThomas to resign, the AI president has desperately tried to adapt through attempts to connect with the student body. He has pioneered a "Ref with Jeff" program through U.Va. Recrea-

tion, showing up to games in a black and white striped ruff despite his belief that "games played with a ball are too violent and stamp no character on the mind."

GPThomas has also been accepted as an honorary member of the Jefferson Literary and Debating Society after arguing that the original Jefferson that turned down membership was a different person. He has since insisted on going through the probationary member process and stayed up until three a.m. during the latest meeting.

"It was shocking, we've never seen someone so committed to the probie process," Anna Scott said, third-year College student and Jefferson Society member.

"We're trying our best not to haze him or anything. I just wish he would use fewer em dashes."

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# ‘Viewpoint diversity’ is not about free speech

*What sounds like a call for open dialogue has become a tool for political control*

In recent months, “viewpoint diversity” has become a guiding phrase in the lexicon of academic governance. The term is seemingly innocuous — it appears to be a celebration of diversity of thought in higher education. But this interpretation has grown increasingly unstable. In fact, recently, “viewpoint diversity” has been warped into a political mandate to impose ideological balance through administrative control.

The rhetoric of viewpoint diversity materialized at the University in April when the Board of Visitors voted in a closed session to reverse its prior commitment to fulfill numerical racial diversity goals and committed instead to strengthening viewpoint diversity. This resolution created a troubling link between viewpoint diversity and the elimination of programs advancing racial equity. These conflation of equity with bias and balance with control have far-reaching implications.

These concerns became even more visible this fall. Last month, the University was named among nine institutions offered preferential federal funding through the Trump administration’s “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education.” Notably, the Compact included a section advancing a “Marketplace of

Ideas & Civil Discourse,” which required that “institutional units” that punish, demean or incite hostility against conservative viewpoints be altered or eliminated. In the name of viewpoint diversity, it sought not the expansion of discourse, but its regulation. Though this Compact has since been rejected, the University has now signed an alternative deal with the federal government, and in doing so,

viewpoint diversity is increasingly being invoked across the nation.

This development raises serious concerns. Framing university classes as biased and thus illegitimate reflects a deliberate attempt to inhibit higher education’s primary function of advancing knowledge and critical inquiry. Under the guise of balance, systematic erasure is made to appear restorative and just. While the Univer-

The statement may not have stemmed from ill intent, but its underlying logic poses a serious threat. Hypocritically, the letter called for oversight and consequences to protect free speech. Repeated enough, the narrative of a uniform political culture invites those who seek to impose ideological balance through suppression to do so.

The irony, of course, is that this rhetoric is selectively invoked to si-

cated to uniting individuals across the political spectrum, from the Karsh Institute of Democracy’s Civic Cornerstone Fellowship to the student-run Civil Discourse Initiative.

Any state-imposed effort to make universities more ideologically balanced would necessitate the erosion of academic independence, the alteration of various academic programs and perhaps a superbly ironic form of DEI that utilizes political criteria to select hirees.

The end result of this rhetoric of balance is its opposite — it seeks to delimit acceptable fields of study and establish a pretext for government intervention. For students, faculty and staff on Grounds, these developments are not merely abstract. We are witnessing how external oversight can shape University governance, and we should pay special attention to the language being employed to this end. After all, rhetoric is always political.

**While it is true that elite American universities tend to lean liberal, it is disingenuous to assume that this is a result of indoctrination or assert that hostility is a necessary byproduct.”**

agreed to protect academic freedom on Grounds.

Despite the agreement protecting academic freedom, language ostensibly promoting open discourse has become a tool for delegitimizing higher education, not only at our University but across the country also. Accusations of ideological uniformity have immense potential to mark universities as radical and destabilizing, and thus, in need of government intervention. To the detriment of independence, the contradictory rhetoric of government intervention to safeguard

sity has reaffirmed its commitment to academic freedom, it should not deem itself immune to the lure of viewpoint diversity rhetoric. This rhetoric has spread beyond policy into student politics, where appeals to ideological balance have been invoked to justify calls for oversight.

Following the abhorrent assassination of political activist Charlie Kirk Sept. 10, the University’s College Republicans released a letter requesting that, to protect free speech on Grounds, those who reacted positively to his death “be held accountable.”

lence progressive perspectives in favor of conservative ones, and it relies on the assumption that universities’ political cultures are manufactured. While it is true that American universities tend to lean liberal, it is disingenuous to assume that this is a result of indoctrination or assert that hostility is a necessary byproduct.

Universities have long served as sites of debate and inquiry into the systems that shape the world around us — a tradition that inevitably unsettles power. Further, the University houses a number of programs dedi-

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# A case for a U.Va. degree, beyond the data

*Contrary to the idea that success from a university degree can be measured by certain statistical analyses of success, it continues to build resilience, minds and networks*

Amid debates over the freedom of higher education, rising student debt and shifting labor markets, the value of a college degree appears to be under attack. Public opinion frames higher education as a financial gamble in which students pay thousands of dollars now for the mere potential of higher earnings later. Most recently, the University’s Compact discussions — which included discussing a proposed five-year tuition freeze — also heightened focus on students’ financial responsibilities and burdens. In this context, the value of a higher education degree needs to be carefully examined.

Recently, *The Cavalier Daily* published an article on the value of a University college degree. While grounded in statistical analysis, its premise relies almost exclusively on data and omits the development of soft skills for which statistics cannot account. The article frames the value of higher education by drawing on the College Scorecard — an online tool managed by the U.S. Department of Education for comparing colleges by financial outcomes — and the conclusions of Preston Cooper, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. For Cooper, majors that deliver the fastest return are the most valuable.

That conclusion, while superficially logical, oversimplifies the value of higher education by overlooking the value of more holistic returns — intellectual growth, social capital and adaptability.

Even within its framework of financial returns for college educa-

tion, not the destination. Therefore, reducing education to an immediate payoff diminishes the broader intellectual and personal growth that defines a University experience.

Consider the University’s social capital and extensive alumni networks, each offering returns beyond

For example, programs such as the Hire Hoos program help rising fourth-years secure skill-building summer internships. These support systems matter — strong networks aid job referrals and placements — yet that data is not considered at all on the Scorecard. Beyond connec-

critically and communicate are impossible to automate. As a liberal arts institution, this is where the University thrives. Courses that emphasize intellectual flexibility and cross-disciplinary work produce graduates who can navigate diverse roles in the future.

When considering the value of a University degree, the focus must shift away from metrics that focus on the immediate return on investment. This framework overemphasizes monetary values and high-paying majors over the ability to flourish in lifelong careers, participate in civic leadership and adapt to disruption. The question cannot be whether a University degree will pay for itself in the decade after graduation. Instead, we need to consider whether it equips graduates with the networks, critical faculties and resilience to thrive through decades of change. By that measure, the cost of the University’s education is not just justified, but priceless.

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**Treating earnings data as definitive misses the fundamental benefits of educational pathways by flattening them, ignoring how outcomes unfold over time.”**

tion, the data used is too narrow. The Scorecard measures earnings five to 10 years after graduation, which undervalues professions that require further study or fields whose earnings curves are slow to climb. Treating earnings data as definitive misses the fundamental benefits of educational pathways by flattening them, ignoring how outcomes unfold over time.

A degree is not a stock. Its worth cannot be captured by a short-term earnings snapshot. And while the College Scorecard and Cooper break down majors to determine which is the most “worthy,” they miss the bigger picture — a major sets a direc-

just monetary value. One tool beyond the Scorecard that incorporates these softer benefits is the Princeton Review, a for-profit company that compiles and publishes quantitative metrics and qualitative feedback about university experiences. The Review ranks the University not only second for Best Value, but also ninth among public schools for Alumni Networks — scores that illustrate the balance between the University’s cost and opportunity. The Best Value category offers direct insight into the credentials and personal and professional dividends that come with being a graduate.

tions, consider ethical reasoning, effective communication and team collaboration — invaluable skills that transcend a major. By failing to factor in often-overlooked soft benefits of education, it is impossible for the College Scorecard and Cooper to determine the value of a degree.

A third dimension is also ignored — long-term adaptability. The postgraduate world is increasingly AI-driven, making technical skills obsolete. Computer science and math disciplines rank among the highest-earning majors in Scorecard data, yet capture only short-term value. In contrast, the abilities to think

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Federico Cuatlacuatl

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CONTEMPLATIVE SCIENCES CENTER



This event aligns with the ongoing Enabling Difficult Conversations series hosted by Dean Acampora of the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, by engaging in themes often marginalized in institutional discourse.

*Moderated by Erika Hirugami in conversation with Artist Federico Cuatlacuatl and UVA tribal liaison Kody Grant, with remarks by Dean Acampora.*



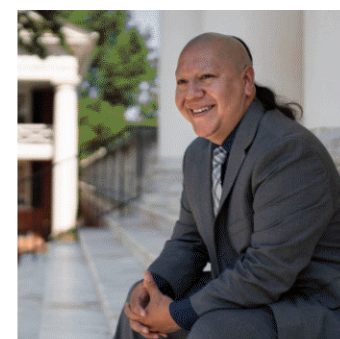
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CUATLACUATL**

Associate Professor  
Department of Art; his  
work addresses  
transborder Nahua  
futurity via social art  
practice.



**ERIKA HIRUGAMI**

Academic Curator and  
Doctoral Candidate,  
UCLA; Epistemologically  
braiding the Aesthetics of  
Undocumentedness.



**KODY GRANT**

UVA Tribal Liaison; he  
has engaged in cultural  
education for the last 15  
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