CD News Staff

**U.Va. Health, BRHD and VDH pause distribution of Johnson & Johnson vaccine**

U.Va. Health officially paused the distribution of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine following the development of a rare blood clot disease in six Americans, meaning that University students who signed up to receive the vaccine through U.Va. Health will now receive either Pfizer or Moderna.

“Vaccinations at our Seminole Square vaccination center and at community outreach events are expected to continue as scheduled with our existing supplies of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines,” said Eric Swensen, public relations officer for U.Va. Health, in an email to The Cavalier Daily.

The Blue Ridge Health District also said it would stop Johnson & Johnson vaccines until further notice in a tweet. Individuals in the BRHD who were scheduled to receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine can reschedule their appointment for a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

The Virginia Department of Health officially paused all Johnson & Johnson vaccinations April 13 after six women between the ages of 18 and 48 developed a rare blood clot disease within the weeks following their vaccinations. Scientists from the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are working to determine whether there is a link between the clots and the vaccine, as well as whether the vaccine should be limited to certain population groups. Over 6.8 million Johnson & Johnson vaccines have been administered so far in the U.S.

VDH said that distribution of Johnson & Johnson vaccines will be paused until the federal investigation is complete.

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**Lauren Kim and Andy Chambers to serve as UJC and Honor chair for 2021-22**

The University Judiciary Committee and Honor Committee elected third-year College students Lauren Kim and Andy Chambers as their chairs for the 2021-22 academic year, respectively. Kim and Chambers succeed this year’s UJC chair — fourth-year Batten student Gabby Cox — and Honor chair — fourth-year Batten student Ryan Keane.

UJC investigates and holds trials for reports of violations of the University’s Standards of Conduct while the Honor Committee focuses on reports of Honor Code violations. University-wide elections took place March 17 through March 19 when Chambers and Kim secured positions as school representatives. Internal elections then took place afterward among the newly elected Honor representatives March 27 and among UJC representatives March 28. The transition to new committees took place in the beginning of April.

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**BOV freezes tuition for most undergraduates, supports digital contextualization of monuments**

The Board of Visitors voted to freeze tuition for most undergraduate students and support recommendations made by the Committee on Naming and Memorials at a meeting of the full board April 13.

According to the resolution, there will be no changes to tuition and fees for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year for most undergraduates. Both in-state and out-of-state students who entered the College of Arts & Sciences in 2019 will still see a $2,700 increase for the 2021-2022 school year due to a 2016 decision by the Board, however:

“If there were ever a year to raise undergraduate tuition, it would be this year given the large and unexpected costs and the loss of revenues because of COVID,” University President Jim Ryan said. “At the same time, if they were ever a year not to raise undergraduate tuition, it is also this year given the pandemic and the financial hardship facing a lot of our students and their families.”

In a separate resolution, the Board also voted to support recommendations made by the Committee on Naming and Memorials, a group established by the University in February. The committee was tasked with creating protocols for naming — and in some cases, renaming — buildings on Grounds as well as making recommendations on contextualizing memorials.

The Committee on Naming and Memorials concluded that a digital contextualization of the University’s statues and memorials would help visitors and residents appreciate the history of the University. The committee recommended the University create a “digital historical stratigraphy” that will permit students, visitors and community members to develop an “informed perspective” on its various statues and memorials.

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**APIDA student groups host panel on Asian American identity, femininity**

The Alpha Kappa Delta Phi and Sigma Psi Zeta sororities, in collaboration with the Asian Student Union and She Writes History, hosted Professor Sylvia Chong and a panel of four students to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on Asian Pacific Islander Desi American communities Monday night. The discourse, titled “COVID-19: The Asian American Experience,” was held as a KDPhi’s annual Asian American Women’s Initiative event and Sigma’s annual VOSICIDS event.

As the event was hosted by two predominantly APIDA sororities, Chong focused her talk on the experiences of Asian American women and the intersectionality of race and gender. She defined intersectionality — first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 — as “the simultaneous impacts of one’s experience with multiple identities, including race, gender and economic class.”

“You do not stop to think to yourself, ‘Did that car come from Gender Street or Race Street?’” Chong said. “All you know is that you’ve been injured, and you’ve been injured precisely because you’re standing where you are.”

Chong then moved to discuss the Atlanta spa shootings. Much media coverage focused on whether the victims were sex workers or not, which delegitimizes them as Asian American figures and humans, Chong said. She found a similar case of misconstrued narrative building in the Derek Chauvin trial, noting that Chauvin’s attorney focused on George Floyd’s relation to drugs rather than Chauvin kneeling on Floyd, delegitimizing Floyd as a victim. Chauvin kneaded on Floyd’s neck for over nine minutes and was found guilty of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter Tuesday afternoon.

Just as on possible drug addiction overshadowed Floyd’s death, centering the issue of sex work in the Atlanta shootings undervalues the lives of the victims and foregrounds the sexuality of Asian American women, according to Chong.

“How can we be Asian American females and access … the features of other forms of femininity?” Chong said. “How can we be Asian American women and access the features of other forms of femininity such as sexual agency at the same time that we also protect our rights against exploitation?”

“Kumar shared his journey to accepting his Asian American identity as an ‘active definition’ and spoke on the ongoing process of learning about being an Asian American woman in a predominantly white school.”

“Salac called their Asian American identity an ‘active definition’ and spoke on the ongoing process of learning about being an Asian American woman in a predominantly white school.”

“I keep trying to almost unlearn this habit of centering whiteness in my Asian American identity after being told that being Indian does not mean he is Asian. Salac called their Asian American identity an ‘active definition’ and spoke on the ongoing process of learning about being an Asian American woman in a predominantly white school.”

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“I keep trying to almost unlearn this habit of centering whiteness in my Asian American identity.” Chong said. “Me being Asian American is not me being non-white. I don’t want that to be central to my identity formation.”

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U.Va. Survivors calls on University to meet unmet demands

The group has detailed what must be done to meet demands for accountability, education, training and survivor resources.

Emma Gallagher | Staff Writer

One year ago, U.Va. Survivors released a list of demands presented to University administration and the University’s Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights focused on increasing University accountability, education and training surrounding sexual assault awareness and prevention on Grounds. Today, U.Va. Survivors is still calling on the University to meet these unmet demands, having noted limited progress over the past 12 months, according to student advocates on Grounds.

“Survivors will continue to drop out of classes, suffer mentally and physically and watch their perpetrators face no consequences,” the Instagram post, dated April 11, said. “Nothing is good and great about the University fostering a culture of violence.”

Since 2019, U.Va. Survivors has strived to create an inclusive environment for all survivors, particularly survivors of color whose voices have traditionally been silenced. The group recently launched a website that includes educational and survivor support resources.

“We aim to cultivate a life-giving, inclusive space for survivors as we work to build a University where organizations like this no longer need to exist,” the website reads. “We operate through the knowledge that oppressive systems, like capitalism and patriarchy, will continue to cause interpersonal violence until they are abolished.”

The website details the University’s history of sexual violence, explains consent and the types of sexual and interpersonal violence, provides resources to those looking to be allies, points survivors towards reporting tools, as well as identity-based and self-help resources.

The group’s original demands — which were released in April 2020 — garnered attention over the summer when an anonymous Twitter account, @ExposedUVA, began tweeting about allegations of sexual misconduct on Grounds. The account encouraged survivors to share their stories along with the names of their alleged abusers. It has since been deleted.

The demands received over 1,800 signatures following their release.

Despite the financial challenges posed to the University by the pandemic, the demands call for the University to allocate more resources to sexual assault prevention and support for survivors.

“The current allocation of resources towards sexual and intimate-partner violence education, prevention and recovery resources is insufficient,” the demands said. “University administration is failing to meet their goals and neglecting the majority of their student body.”

In an email to The Cavalier Daily, a representative from U.Va. Survivors expressed frustration with the University’s lack of response to the list of demands.

“We very much doubt that they will take concrete actions in the near future, but we hope that these demands will be met,” the representative said. “We don’t need anymore panels or futile discussions with administrators about it since we laid out our demands in detail.”

Emily Sanders, associate vice president for the University’s Office for Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights, met with U.Va. Survivors last March after receiving the demands, according to a statement to The Cavalier Daily from deputy University spokesperson Wes Hester. Sanders plans to meet with the group again before the end of the school year, Hester added.

The 2019 AAU Campus Climate Report suggests sexual misconduct remains a prevalent issue at the University. Thirty percent of respondents said “yes” when asked “since you have been a student at U.Va. has a friend or close acquaintance also at U.Va. told you about an experience that happened to them that you thought might be a form of sexual misconduct?”

The survey also shows that 51.1 percent of first-year students have been victims of sexual assault or misconduct, along with 153 percent of second-years, 11 percent of second years and 93 percent of fourth years.

According to University policy, “the University conducts ongoing prevention, awareness and training programs for employees and students to facilitate the goals of this policy.” These include training programs on Title IX and sexual assault policy, awareness programs, bystander intervention programs, risk reduction education and primary prevention programs, among others.

The University’s specific annual programs include its Alcohol Wise and Sexual Education Module, Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Halloween Safety, National Hazing Week and Substance Abuse Prevention Week, among others.

The post also reiterated unmet demands regarding Title IX — which include moving the Title IX office from Rugby Road and increasing education on the reporting process, new regulations and anonymous reporting.

The demands said the Title IX office’s current location on Rugby does not provide a safe place to report sexual assault due to its proximity to fraternity houses, where sexual assaults historically have occurred, and that the University needs to provide more accessible ways to report assault, violence and harassment.

The University recently revised its Title IX Policy and Procedures based on new regulatory requirements released by the U.S. Department of Education in May 2020, and the new regulations went into effect in August 2020. Passed in 1972, Title IX is a federal civil rights law that protects individuals from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance — this includes sexual harassment, interpersonal violence and sexual assault.

The definition of sexual harassment recently changed so fewer incidents are covered under Title IX. Cases that occur outside the United States, in off-campus apartments or at events that are not part of the University’s “program or activity” are no longer covered by Title IX.

Schools are also now required to investigate cases in a “manner that is not deliberately indifferent” rather than the previous 60-day timeframe, meaning that investigations may take longer. Schools can choose which employees are mandatory reporters, whereas before most employees were mandatory reporters. Schools can also determine whether to use a “preponderance of evidence” or “clear and convincing evidence” as the standard in cases involving sexual harassment.

“Following the release of the new regulations, the University’s Title IX Office, as part of the broader Office for Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights, launched a thorough process of evaluating the regulations and seeking feedback and input from the community,” Hester said.

This process included a new website with information about the new requirements, four public listening sessions. The office also evaluated 130 submissions through an online feedback form, Hester said.

The new Title IX reporting process introduces two sets of procedures — the “Grievance Process” and other general “Procedures” — to respond to reports and formal complaints. The Grievance Process describes procedures for responding to reports of Title IX violations while the Procedures section outlines procedures for responding to reports of sexual or gender-based prohibited conduct.

Other nationwide changes made to Title IX policy under the Trump administration include live hearings for sexual assault claims, the addition of sexual harassment cases, the Biden administration has started the process of undoing the previous administration’s directives.

“In addition to making significant policy and procedure and staff changes since 2015, U.Va. has continued to place a high priority on education, training and prevention in the Title IX area,” Hester said.

The April post by U.Va. Survivors reiterated the group’s demands that the University commit to stopping sexual and interpersonal violence, fully fund mental and physical health resources, address its history of sexual and interpersonal violence and comprehensive external review of the Title IX Office.

The post also notes the University’s shortcomings in education and training students, faculty and staff, asserting that the University has not made an effort to provide trauma-informed care and education, consent, sex and trauma education or training for student leaders and reports on how to handle situations of misconduct.

All incoming first-year and transfer students are required to complete an online Title IX training, as well as alcohol awareness training. Students are required to retake a refresher training every two years.

Graduate students are also offered separate Title IX training to reflect their own experience. Student employees are required to take additional training for Title IX, as well as alcohol awareness training. Students who would like to see the University at the forefront in the future.

“We very much doubt that they will take concrete actions in the near future, but we hope that these demands will be met,” the representative said. “We don’t need anymore panels or futile discussions with administrators about it since we laid out our demands in detail.”

The representative from U.Va. Survivors also welcomed any concerned students to join their efforts.

“To survivors at U.Va. we want to say that we are here for them even though the University often is not,” said the representative. “If any survivors are looking for a sense of community, they can join U.Va. Survivors and follow us on Instagram and attend our next interest meeting on April 28 at 7 p.m.

Reports of sexual assault or interpersonal violence can be reported to the University’s Title IX Coordinator, a deputy Title IX Coordinator or using the University’s Just Report It website.
Community calls for Whispering Wall removal

Listeners called in to demand that the Committee on Naming and Memorials remove the statue due to Hume’s Confederate background

Ava MacBlane | Senior Associate

The memorial was built in 1938 thanks to a donation from Frank Hume’s sons, John and Howard Hume.

The Committee on Naming and Memorials hosted a two-hour listening session Wednesday evening during which members of the public commented on the future of the Frank Hume Memorial Fountain. Over 20 individuals, including University students, alumni and members of the community, called in to the session to appeal to the committee, all of whom expressed their support for the removal of the memorial in its entirety.

All eight members of the committee were present at the session and callers could dial-in to make a three-minute timed public comment or simply listen to the session.

The Frank Hume Memorial Foun-tain — also known as the Whispering Wall for its unique ability to transmit sound from one side of the wall to the other — was erected in 1898 in honor of Frank Hume, who was a soldier and spy in the Confederate Army before he served in the Virginia House of Delegates. The statue was funded by John and Howard Hume, Frank’s sons who both attended the University and were major donors. Located near Newcomb Hall and Monroe Hall, the memorial consists of a fountain and wall with an inscription that describes Hume as “a devoted Virgin-ian who served his native state in civil war and legislative hall.”

The memorial has been the subject of mounting public criticism because of Hume’s roots with the Confederacy — in late February, the Minority Rights Coalition at the University launched a petition and letter campaign calling for the removal of the memorial in its entirety. On Monday, the memorial was vandalized with red paint, an incident which the University is currently investigating. The paint has since been removed.

After the Board of Visitors voted to rededicate or remove the memorial at last fall, the University created the Committee on Naming and Memorials in February to make recommendations on the naming and contextualization of statues, monuments and buildings on Grounds.

Michael Suarez — committee chair, English professor and director of the Rare Book School — opened the event by thanking listeners and participants for taking the time to share their opinions with committee members.

Anthony Guy Lopez, a Class of 2009 alumna and head of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Group at U.Va., was the first caller in the session. Lopez, who is an enrolled member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, first objected to the committee’s lack of Native American members, citing that the Committee on Naming and Memorials has no Native American representation even though many of the monuments and memorials at the University are directly related to Na-tive American history.

For example, the George Rogers Clark statue depicts Clark on horseback alongside American soldiers towering over a group of Native Americans alongside an inscription that reads “Conqueror of the North-west.” The Board voted to remove and relocate the statue last fall, but the removal date is still unclear.

Lopez said he hopes the commit-tee will further consult with the community before making decisions.

“None of the work of your com-mittee has come out of the product of a consultation with the public or the community — not the way [the Commit-tee] was composed or the way that you conducted your work,” Lopez said. “This is your first public consul-tation, but the Board of Visitors have already made decisions based on your recommendations.”

In a meeting of the full board April 13, the Board voted to sup-port recommendations made by the committee, which suggested a digital contextualization of memorials and statues on Grounds to help students, visitors and community members develop an “informed perspective” on the history of the University — rather than a visual indicator like a plaque or sign, or physical disrup-tion of the historic landscape. The committee said this would allow the University to represent the complex and nuanced histories enshrined with these statues and memorials.

Tichara Robertson, first-year College student and Student Council representative, spoke next in favor of removing the memorial. Robertson called the memorial a “glorification” of Hume’s life and contributions to the Confederate South.

“If the University is claiming to be in support of Black students and wants to promote a safe and healthy, welcoming environment, they should listen to the concerns of Black and minority students on Grounds and show their support through actions — actions like completely taking down the wall,” Robertson said.

Robertson also read a statement on behalf of Nina Santana, a first-year College student and Student Council representative, who echoed Robertsons’s call to remove the Whis-pering Wall.

“How can we ever be comfortable at a school that honors white supremacists?” Santana wrote in her statement. “The only way to help make life at the University better for Black students is to remove the Whispering Wall and to continue removing every single memorial that protects and upholds UVA’s racism and systemic oppression.”

Abena Appiah-Ofori, vice-chair of the Minority Rights Coalition and second-year College student, spoke next, calling for the committee to remove the memorial.

“As a Black student, we’re told all the time that UVA’s supports us, but that’s not possible when there’s a Confederate memorial right in the middle of Grounds,” Appiah-Ofori said. “I feel like it’s a very straightfor-ward situation.”

In February, Appiah-Ofori said she was disappointed the committee was considering rededication, and many of the students who spoke at the session echoed the sentiment that it is not enough to simply contextual-ize or redecorate the memorial.

“Leaving the memorial up, regard-less of the contextualization process that might occur, is saying that ulti-mately UVA’s still stands for pandering to donors or alumni who see it as a tradition, even when it has negative impacts on the student body,” one graduate student said in a comment.

“You can’t pretend or contextualize that impact away.”

Lillian Rojas, first-year College student and Student Council repre-sentative, called in to demand that the committee remove the memorial, calling it “downright sad that students have even had to engage in this conversation” to remove a memorial dedicated to a Confederate soldier.

Gabriela Hernandez, second-year College student and chair of the Stu-dent Council representative body, reiterated previous callers’ demands to completely remove the memorial, saying she found it “appalling” that the University has continued to allow the memorial to stand.

“This structure will always serve as a reminder that the racist ideals upheld by the Confederacy are also ideals the University is proud to pre-serve,” Hernandez said, quoting from an open letter the MRC wrote to the University.

Hifah Berhams, chair of the MRC and fourth-year College student, called in to discuss a racist comment that was left on one of MRC’s social media posts encouraging students to attend the listening session.

“It was blatant racism, a slur post-ed under the Instagram [post],” Ber-hams said, choosing not to share the comment itself because of its offen-sive content. “What I wanted to share because of that is … if this monument is empowering people to say blatantly racist things on social media, it’s just clear that it needs to go.”

University and Charlottesville community members continued to call in and call for the committee to remove the memorial, many echoing previous sentiments that the memo-rial embodies racism and commemo-rates a white supremacist.

“If we’re really striving to be a great and good university, we should reexamine the legacy of racism and slavery on our Grounds,” one caller said.

The session lasted two hours, and afterwards Suarez thanked callers for taking the “time and trouble” to call.

“We will take these inputs into our deliberations,” Suarez said.

The committee hopes to make a recommendation about the memor-al before the Board of Visitors meets again in June.
High school seniors reflect on test optional decision

In January, the University announced that undergraduate admissions processes will be test-optional through fall 2023

Lauren O'Neill | Staff Writer

Last June, University President Jim Ryan announced that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic all applications for fall 2021 admission to the University would follow a test-optional policy, whereby applicants may opt not to submit standardized test scores without penalty. Many of the now incoming University first years had to choose whether or not they wanted to submit these scores, and close to half chose not to. In the fall 2021 application cycle, 42 percent of the 47,827 applicants chose not to submit test scores, while 28 percent of those admitted were students who did not submit scores.

“Application decisions are based on a holistic review of each part of the application,” an email to The Cavalier Daily from Ryan said. “The SAT/ACT is only one component of your application, and represents one measure of a student’s performance while at the University.” Those who opted not to submit scores were not at any disadvantage, according to Roberts, as the University’s process for undergraduate admissions is holistic.

“Students who do not submit test scores are at no disadvantage in the application review,” Roberts said. “We review applications in the exact same way, only without test scores.”

A lack of testing scores for applicants who decided not to submit tests simply meant that the admissions committee focused on other aspects of the application while test scores were a part of the consideration for applicants who went through with submitting them. In an email to The Cavalier Daily, Roberts said that test-optional simply means that testing is not required to be offered admission to the University and stressed that testing was never the most important factor in the application review process — applicants submit essays, transcripts, GPA and class rank if applicable and recommendations.

“There is no formula or equation in our evaluation process, so there is not a specific weight placed on each part of the application,” Roberts said. “Our review considers the whole student, and we do our best to get to know a student, personally and academically, through their transcript, essays, recommendations and involvement outside of the classroom.”

High school senior Diana Nguyen was able to take an August 2020 test, which she says helped to create a foundation for her testing abilities, but ultimately decided to dedicate her focus on coming up with creative ways to continue extracurricular involvements as opposed to studying for standardized tests.

“So, despite having the opportunity to take a test, Nguyen decided that applying without scores would encourage her growth in other areas and allow her to forgo worrying about both paying for and constantly rescheduling tests.”

“When the make-up SATs were constantly getting canceled afterwards, it caused me to reevaluate my factor in her decision was the hope that applying with test scores would alleviate the stress placed on other application components, such as essays and transcripts.”

“Part of the reason I chose to apply with my test scores was indeed because I would’ve felt more pressure on other aspects of my application if I hadn’t, so I certainly would’ve been more stressed about the writing portion.”

High school senior Mohammad Murad joined Celentano and Ekmecligil in submitting test scores. Murad didn’t feel pressure to submit a score — he did so because his parents encouraged him to take the test early in his junior year, which helped him avoid testing shutdowns — but did observe friends that underwent stressful application processes because of the inability to apply with test scores.

“It did alleviate stress because I did have test scores and it made me feel better, but I think for other people — one of my best friends couldn’t take the test — and for her she was extremely stressed about it,” Murad said.

All three students feel confident in their decision to submit test scores despite the challenges of the fall 2021 application cycle, but note that not all students were presented with the same opportunities. For both Murad and Celentano, sitting for tests early and having test scores as an application component greatly alleviated stress when the time came to submit applications, but both students also know that their decision was made within their particular circumstances.

With the University committed to a test-optional plan through 2023, the next two years will be spent studying the value and impact of testing in assessing candidates. Currently, the SAT has an “anticipated” schedule for fall test dates, and notes that the pandemic may affect these dates. The ACT has also released a schedule for fall 2021 testing dates, but again notes that circumstances may change based on COVID-19.

“Tarat is aware of the limits of the test, and when it comes time to decide whether or not to submit scores, applicants should be made aware that standardized testing only provides one snapshot of their potential.”

“Tarat said that the SAT/ACT really doesn’t take into account the fact that different students shine — so brightly might I add — in areas that can never be fully highlighted on paper.”
Every April, the Asian Student Union hosts Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Heritage Month — a month dedicated to celebrating Asian culture and educating students on Asian American history. While Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is nationally celebrated in May to commemorate the first immigration of Japanese people to the United States, ASU’s APIDAHM takes place in April to avoid conflicts with exam season and to allow for events throughout the entire month.

The four APIDAHM planning committee members began organizing the events and dates over winter break via Zoom. The committee — led by Tanay Bapat, ASU’s APIDAHM chair and third-year College student, “Since they’re our main audience, if we don’t make things accessible for them, who’s going to come? So we’ve also been thinking of ways to utilize our Zoom format.”

The goal of this year’s APIDAHM is celebration and healing, after a tumultuous year that made in-person gatherings within the community particularly difficult. Feelings of distress related to the pandemic and the recent increase in hate crimes toward the Asian American community led the planning committee to focus on something they feel the community has been lacking.

“We believe that now, more than ever, we need to heal from what can hurt, and celebrate what lifts people up,” Bapat said in an email to The Cavalier Daily. “Some of our events will be from a historical perspective, some of them from cultural perspectives and some from activist perspectives.”

This spring’s theme follows last fall’s APIDAutumn theme of solidarity. APIDAutumn is the abbreviated fall counterpart to APIDAHM and consists of a one-to-two week-long celebration in November. The same APIDAHM committee members plan four to five events that fit under the chosen theme of the celebrations. This past fall, APIDAutumn had similar events to this year’s APIDAHM — including poetry slams and food-related events.

“Last year’s theme [of solidarity] was a bit heavier — we were going through a difficult time, so we wanted to bond with each other and stay strong,” said Yuri Kim, APIDAHM committee member and first-year College student. “It was more of a bonding event for all of us to just talk and eat dinner together.”

“We also brought foods to eat as we watched,” said Yuri Kim, APIDAHM committee member and first-year College student. “It was more of a bonding event for all of us to just talk and eat dinner together.”

“Since then, they’ve hosted the Celebration Slam — an event where students could come read and write poetry celebrating Asian culture, while also expressing feelings about recent AAPI hate — and the A-Factor — a virtual talent show that collected submission videos from contestants until Saturday, April 10. The winner of the talent show could choose an organization from a pre-compiled list of organizations or submit a different organization of their choosing that ASU would donate to. Many of these organizations, including Stop AAPI Hate, #EnoughIsEnough, Asian Americans Advancing Justice and the Asian American Feminist Collective are dedicated to spreading awareness on Asian American hate and stopping anti-Asian violence. This year’s talent show — which ASU hopes to turn into an annual event — was won by the AKAdemix Dance Crew. As the winner, AKAdemix could direct ASU’s string of events kicked off with a more casual event April 1 and dubbed “Chomp and Chill.” As an innovative alternative to what ASU hopes to turn into an annual event — was won by the AKAdemix Dance Crew. As the winner, AKAdemix could direct ASU’s string of events kicked off with a more casual event April 1 and dubbed “Chomp and Chill.” As an innovative alternative to what ASU hopes to turn into an annual event — was won by the AKAdemix Dance Crew. As the winner, AKAdemix could direct ASU’s string of events kicked off with a more casual event April 1 and dubbed “Chomp and Chill.” As an innovative alternative to...
Faculties on Minari

Friday, April 23, 2021
2:30 - 4:00 PM EST

I was able to empathize so hard with characters in a film,” third-year Batten student Katie Zhang said in an email to The Cavalier Daily. “I felt each character’s emotions so strongly. I could feel David’s (Alan Kim) frustration at his halmeoni [grandmother] when in regards to parenting practices, views on religion and general life priorities which I had not expected.”

Graduate Arts & Sciences student Erin Burke commented on the film’s focus on a singular family’s problems from a non-Asian perspective — as its focus will entail the nuances of cultural shocks and difficulties that tend to characterize the Asian American experience. On the panel is Prof. Chong, Shilpa Davé — an assistant dean and assistant professor of Media Studies, and Samhita Sunya—

APIDAHM Celebration Slam

During this night of chilly vibes and awesome poetry, participants were able to share poetry and pieces of poetry under the theme of celebration and healing. Some also chose to share their self-written poetry and as a fun addition to the event, everyone was able to take on their own haikus.

Some poems shared:
- Sherry Cola: My Community is Under Attack
- Rumi: Rumi’s America
- New Year’s Day: Andre Lorde
- Things We Carry On the Sea, Wang Ping

Some of the problems the family had related to their position as immigrants, but they were not standing in as representatives for the immigrant experience. “Biracial Americans are very much what I felt the tenderness between Jacob, Monica and her mother

Lee Isaac Chung — the director of the film and a first-generation American immigrant himself — a panel on April 23 to discuss the film’s focus on a singular family’s problems from a non-Asian perspective — as its focus will entail the nuances of cultural shocks and difficulties that tend to characterize the Asian American experience. On the panel is Prof. Chong, Shilpa Davé — an assistant dean and assistant professor of Media Studies, and Samhita Sunya—

APIDAHM Celebration Slam

During this night of chilly vibes and awesome poetry, participants were able to share poetry and pieces of poetry under the theme of celebration and healing. Some also chose to share their self-written poetry and as a fun addition to the event, everyone was able to take on their own haikus.

Some poems shared:
- Sherry Cola: My Community is Under Attack
- Rumi: Rumi’s America
- New Year’s Day: Andre Lorde
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Despite the publicity, attendance at many ASU events has been lower since the start of the pandemic. Committee members have observed an average of 15 to 20 attendees at most events compared to higher turnouts for in-person events. However, the committee is hopeful the remaining few events will produce a higher turnout, particularly after seeing the high demand for “Minari” tickets.

“I think a lot of Asian [organizations] and organizations at U.Va. in general have not been having very good turnout in the pandemic. But I think there’s a lot of people, which was astounding that we could do that over a pandemic, it’s been hard, but we’ve pushed for outreach and publicity a lot more. We’re trying, and it’s [turnout is] still small, but I think we’re doing well, given the circumstances.”

“I think valuing each other as community is an important lesson,” Bapat said. “I think most of the events are done entirely by students through the APIDAHM Facebook event page, email and messaging apps. The committee has also given dates and information to the University Programs Council and Student Council to put on social media and newsletters sent out to a wider audience of students.

The Mindful Morning event, scheduled for April 25. At the event, Dr. Thich Nhat Hanh in Vietnam and France. Her experience with a Zen Buddhist Master is what drew the attention and also relatable to most people.”

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The sixth annual Africa Day celebrates resilience

The Organization of African Students paid homage to various African cultures in this year’s celebration

Samuel Opunti | Staff Writer

The Organization of African Students hosted Africa Day on Friday, April 16 in the Amphitheater — an annual event that celebrates the many cultures found on the African continent. Last year, Africa Day was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The performances had been filmed at different locations and were presented on a projector. The performances included dances, fashion, cast member games, an homage to Africa Day 2020, a flag presentation and a segment that asked what Africa Day meant to students.

The theme of this year’s event was #IFARADA. Ifarada means resilience in Yoruba — a West African language. The theme was influenced by the many African youth movements that have occurred this past year. These movements have sought social and civil rights and have taken to social media to organize and spread their message. Their slogans have been hashtagged and were seen by people all over social media. Examples include #EndSARS in Nigeria, #Congolee18 in Congo, #ShootitAllDown in Namibia and many more.

Jasmine Obule, fourth-year College student and Africa Day creative director, wanted to draw attention to the reliance in the face of such adversity.

“The show is titled #IFARADA to show that throughout it all, the African community has remained resilient, courageous, bold, confident and strong,” Obule said. “We sought to show through our clothing and our powerful walks how bold and fearless we can be. We showed through our clothing and walks that we are not easily intimidated.”

In deciding whether to put on the show this year, Nna Okafor, fourth-year College student and OAS president, said that the executive board took into account the lack of social interaction and difficult mental health situations that students were facing. Africa Day was needed to provide students a social outlet and a break from reality.

Okafor said the format of the event was changed this year because of the uncertainty of the pandemic. The board decided that they wanted a video show in case they were not able to do anything in person. Due to the switch to a video show, the team had to take on nontraditional roles in addition to their regular roles.

Planning for the event normally starts the summer before, but this year planning began in January. The team met regularly over Zoom to plan and coordinate how they were going to film and produce Africa Day. Okafor said the show was filmed over a month before Africa Day and the filming happened over the course of a weekend.

Everybody was booked Friday, Saturday, Sunday of that weekend and we were awake from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. — some people later than that,” Okafor said.

Okafor explained that organizing this event meant keeping up with a lot of moving parts. The person team was composed of models, photographers Nathaniel Diemer and Omer Gorashi, videographers Raed Gilliam and Demetri Workman, and a make-up team.

“We had to make sure that everyone had a negative COVID-19 test and was quarantining correctly for 14 days prior to filming,” Okafor said. “During filming, we had to make sure we fed everyone for a whole weekend.”

The video format allowed for new ideas to the show but also brought forth many edits.

“We decided that the show would be more interactive if models used the different locations they were provided and brought their creativity to the video while walking and posing in that setting,” Obule said. “We were able to record things multiple times to make sure we were putting out our best work.”

Okafor said the team worked hard to make sure the presentation of their work in the Amphitheater was safe and enjoyable. There were staggered arrival times for the audience and seats were also spread apart.

The night began with a celebration of the recipients of an OAS scholarship and it proceeded with speeches from Okafor and Obule. There was then a presentation of the flags for the 54 countries in Africa. Afterward, there was a presentation about the theme of this year’s show — #IFARADA. Boule explained to the audience what Ifarada meant and why it was chosen. They also highlighted many youth movements for civil rights happening on the continent.

The night continued with the different sections of the show which had their own subtheme. Fashion was a major part of the show, as demonstrated by the traditional prints the models wore. Okafor said the prints were beautiful, but she wanted to emphasize that a lot of the prints seen in this year’s show are West African prints and not representative of the entire continent. A lot of the prints were transferred from last year’s canceled show. The vibrant prints came from many West African countries. They were worn in traditional styles and also embroidered into more Western clothing. The prints were vibrant and incorporated red, gold, pink and blue among some of the notable colors.

The prints were not the only reference to Africa Day 2020, the show included a tribute to last year’s Africa Day with a section called “Dear Africa Day 2020.”

Additionally, there were dance performances from the AfroHoos — a student dance group.

In other years the intermissions in the live shows were performances by student singers and rappers. But this year, the intermissions allowed the audience to learn about the models. The models played a game where they were shown another model’s baby picture and had to identify the person. Another intermission saw the models describe what Africa Day meant to them in one word. The answers included “family,” “necessary,” “dynamic” and “Umoja” — the Swahili word for unity.

Obule said that Africa Day, while informative and important, can only provide a glimpse into the beauty of African cultures.

“We were able to show a glimpse of Africa, the beauty of our culture, clothing, and people,” Obule said. “However, it’s important to mention that this is not a representation of all of Africa as this is very hard to do in an hour and 10 minute show.”

For those more interested in learning more about Africa, Okafor said that the OAS is eager to help. Africa Day is one of the many events OAS produces to educate people about Africa’s numerous cultures and discredit myths about the continent. Okafor stressed that the organization is open to anyone with an interest in Africa.

“OAS is very inclusive to Africans as well as non-Africans who are interested in learning about the various cultures here that we have to offer,” Okafor said.

More information about OAS can be found on its website www.oasatuva.org.
“Face Me: a declaration” examines the complexities and intersectionalities of identity, religion and history through a lens that begins in uncertainty and submission and transforms into a celebration of self. Second-year College student Olivia Keenan shares her identity and story through this book of poems to reclaim herself in the context of the historic white patriarchy.

Keenan developed a love for writing poetry in middle school and started publishing her work in high school. She continued to indulge in literature and poetry in her first year when she joined Flux Poetry and Spoken Word, a student group on Grounds that promotes self-expression and creativity through the exploration of written and performed poetry. Keenan explains Flux as an organization where her voice has been uplifted in the best way. Not only has it provided her a safe space to speak on issues like these, but it has also reinforced her desire to write about her own identity.

Keenan’s most recent project began in summer 2020 when her father’s cousin Carrie Severson reached out to her about pitching a project for Unapologetic Voice House, an independent publishing company. Although Keenan did not have a particular project in mind, she expressed that she would love to write about her identity through race. After showing her some poems she already had written, the official process began around June and July. She did most writing from her home in Milwaukee and finished writing at the University when she came back in August. The book was finalized in December, and by February it was available for pre-sale and officially released on April 6.

Keenan described that her inspiration for “Face Me” came from the controversial events occurring during the summer of 2020.

“It was definitely just the events of this summer that catalyzed it... and just the fact that also, with COVID, I had so much time on my hands to write and then so much time to be thinking about race,” Keenan said.

She also explained how her relationship with her two younger sisters had a major impact on the book. She dedicated the book to her siblings, and many of the pieces in the book are directed towards them, encouraging them to embrace and celebrate their identities while also praying for a better future for them.

The book also commemorates personal family traditions, such as in the poem called “Princess Moburu,” in which Keenan addresses her mother and sisters by remembering a character their mother created to inspire her children.

Overall, the book works towards this theme of celebration and declaration, but only after addressing the submission and uncertainty a young, mixed-race Black woman faces in today’s American society. Keenan focuses on a lot of intersectional issues, such as race, femininity, history and religion to “cater the journey” she went through.

She also wanted to see this journey reflected in the artwork for the book. Keenan collaborated with Caroline Weiss, her close friend and second-year College student, on the photography to ensure that the photos emulated the poems they paired with. One photo matched with the poem “Wash” depicts a pair of feet, symbolic of the religious implications of sin and the idea of washing one’s feet as an act of service. Similarly, Weiss designed the cover with Keenan to ensure that it reflected the real confrontation that comes with the command of “Face Me.”

Finally, Keenan detailed the main ideas she hopes her readers will take away from this project, one of which is centered around the University and its history of idolizing racist men. She explained how the title of her book seeks to reclaim some of the foundational elements of both the University and the United States in general.

“I named it... “Face Me: a declaration” because of the fact that... the founder of the school wrote the Declaration of Independence and didn’t include people that look like me,” Keenan said. “So, I reclaim these notions of declaration and these idealized documents that are very imperfect and written by very imperfect men.”

Similarly, Keenan emphasizes the marginalization and treatment that comes with being a mixed-race Black woman in her book. After looking at this topic in the context of American history, Keenan addresses the shame most women feel about their identities and their bodies. This is especially observed in her piece “Lucky You” with the line, “you are not the one who begs for forgiveness at the end of the night.”

“I want people to read that and realize that they shouldn’t feel shameful of the decisions they make and what their bodies are like or what it looks like or what they chose to do with it,” Keenan said.

“Face Me: a declaration” not only observes and critiques intersectional issues, but tells her story in a way that is compelling, unique and powerful. The language is intimate and truly reflects today’s world. But the only way to understand the full range of meaning presented in the book is to read it yourself, as it is truly an experience.

“Face me,” is not simply a question — it is a command.

“Face Me: a declaration” can be purchased on Amazon for Kindle and in paperback.

Making lo-fi on the low
A glimpse into the life of student producer Adin Yager

Adin Yager — 19-year-old producer and first-year College student — is steadily making his way in the lo-fi genre under the alias "skywalking." At the time of this article’s creation, Yager is at a staggering 80,251 monthly listeners on Spotify and 199,200 plays on Apple music, solidifying him as an up-and-coming artist to look out for. Yager creates and mixes beats for his audience, hoping to achieve even greater heights in the future.

But he had to start somewhere.

“My family is very musical,” Yager said. “One of my grandparents is a cantor at a synagogue, my other grandpa is a professional pianist and my dad is a really talented guitarist and pianist.”

Recalling his humble beginnings, Yager remembers his family’s influence and their inadvertent push toward his own fluency in musical environments.

“For a young age, I took piano lessons at 5, I took drums at 8, I took guitar at 12 and taught myself ukulele,” Yager said. “I loved music, but I didn’t really find a home with any instrument, so when I found out that I could do production, I was so interested.”

Yager did not stop there. After doing hours of research and watching endless videos on producing, he found a popular beat-making app called Auxy and made it his home.

“It was a really streamlined, easy and mobile way to produce music,” Yager said. “I could produce music from anywhere, in school, in a car, [if I had earbuds], I was good to go.”

Observing the world of music over the years, Yager remembers his family's influence and how it fostered many connections it helped him develop over time.

“If I had earbuds, I was good to go.”

Moving closer to professional music production, Yager discovered the platform SoundCloud and the many connections it fostered with other budding artists. After becoming increasingly acquainted with the world of music over the years, Yager knew he wanted to get serious.

When the pandemic hit and soon altered everyone’s lives, for Yager, it meant the perfect opportunity to create. With hours of newfound free time on his hands, Yager took to his computer to immerse himself in the dynamic terrain of music production and release.

“As soon as the pandemic hit, I was like, ‘Holy s—. I have time. What am I gonna do?’” Yager said. “Music.”

Late March brought Yager’s real plunge into production. He spent up to 15 hours almost every day tinkering with various beats and melodies.

“I would just sit in my room all day, and my mom would get so mad at me because I wouldn’t come down for any meals,” Yager said.

From there, his potential skyrocketed. Release after release cemented Yager’s growth in the community, and his outreach to other artists also gave him the necessary know-how to succeed amongst the competition.

“I made some social media accounts, DMed some really famous lo-fi artists and my idol [Kapla] DMed me back within a day,” Yager said.

He took the time to answer all of my questions, listened to some of my music, gave me advice on what to do on marketing and labels and how to get involved in the industry. Yager said.

For Yager, the invention of “skywalking” and generating song after song was only the first step. Understanding the business side of the music industry became the next big hurdle to overcome. One piece of the music industry Yager mentioned should be discussed more often is the knowledge of payment and how artists get compensated for their production.

“I know a ton of artists who aren’t getting paid everything that they’re owed because they didn’t know about [the business side] going into [the industry],” Yager said.

The fair treatment of musicians by the industry is extremely important to Yager, and he remains passionate about disclosing vital information about the business to others.

“There are a lot of different parts of the music industry that are not very public,” Yager said. “In the future, it would be really cool to be able to compile information from people who are willing to share and make a website or platform for young producers or young artists to find.”

As for local influences, Yager feels that he has not really had a chance to test the waters quite yet. While he has had some experience in getting to know musicians in the Charlottesville area, such as Orion Faruque and Elie Bashlow, his ability to meet and collaborate with local artists has been limited over the past year. Luckily, the University offered Yager the possibility of greater production opportunities in the future through the Miller Arts Scholars Program.

“It’s looking like it’s going to be a lot of fun, and I’ll be able to meet a lot of good people to collaborate with artistically,” Yager said.

For those trying to follow in his footsteps, Yager gives the following heartfelt advice.

“Collaborate. Ask people. Don’t be afraid to message anybody or ask anybody for help. Watch YouTube videos, just learn as much as you can. Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there,” Yager said.

At the end of the day, music is completely intertwined with Yager’s identity and sense of individuality. From the days when he was making beats on his phone to his current climb to stardom, Yager has and always will be incredibly attached to his work.

“Everything my music is, is me,” Yager said.
Brand New Day Benefit Concert empowers viewers

Views of this event joined the Virginia Women’s Chorus in raising awareness for sexual assault through uplifting music

Sarah Howorth | Senior Writer

As we have all come to learn, virtual concerts are a new and occasionally discouraging way to carry on events in a COVID-19-safe way. However, the Virginia Women’s Chorus has mastered the art of the virtual music experience. On April 17, the Virginia Women’s Chorus broadcasted the “Women Against Violence: Brand New Day” Benefit Concert on YouTube in support of sexual assault awareness.

The Virginia Women’s Chorus was founded in 1974. The group began its journey just four years after women were allowed into the University without the restriction of being available to help at all times.

The Virginia Women’s Chorus is a well-known tune by Andra Day that famously represents resilience in the face of overwhelming distress. If readers would like to experience the event for themselves, the video is still up on the Virginia Women’s Chorus official YouTube page.

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The Virginia Women’s Chorus was founded in 1974. The group began its journey just four years after women were allowed into the University without restrictions, and it has been preaching women’s empowerment all through its presence at the school.

After a brief hiatus from 1989 to 1994, the group was revived and continued to blossom under new direction. Today, the chorus performs a wide array of music — ranging from classical to pop — for its dedicated listeners. In attending the chorus’ previous events and observing this event alone, it is abundantly clear that the group takes great pride in connecting with its University fans as well as the greater Charlottesville community.

The Virginia Women’s Chorus kicked off the event with a gorgeous a cappella number titled, “How Can I Keep Singing?” Many of the subsequent performances offered an exciting contrast to the angelic rendition of this song. No Fella A Capella sang “You Don’t Own Me,” a slow, iconic pop song originally performed by Lesley Gore in 1964.

Much to the enjoyment of the audience, The Academic Village People made an impression with their lively video and creative editing skills. The Virginia Belles performed “Rise Up,” a well-known tune by Andra Day that famously represents resilience in the face of overwhelming distress. If readers would like to experience the event for themselves, the video is still up on the Virginia Women’s Chorus official YouTube page.

During this disconnected and difficult semester, the song choices of the Women’s Chorus have been understandably lighter. The Brand New Day Benefit Concert was a great example of an event that shared its serious message with bravery and bright, uplifting music.

This concert marks the fifth Women Against Violence concert, and it also represents the fifth year of the Virginia Women’s Chorus singing ballads of empowerment and support in the name of this event. Before the singing began, viewers were encouraged to donate to the Women’s Initiative, a Charlottesville-based initiative that works to provide counseling, healthcare and general support for women in the community.

In addition to sexual assault and relationship violence, the Women’s Initiative also focuses on anxiety, depression and other forms of trauma. The Chorus’ leadership emphasized that the Women’s Initiative is free of charge and there is no appointment necessary for those in need — the organization is available to help at all times.

Overall, the concert did a wonderful job in supporting the messages of Sexual Assault Awareness Month this April. 2021 signifies the 20th anniversary of this month-long campaign for raising widespread awareness of sexual assault and educating the public about sexual violence. Even in the times of virtual events and concerts, the Brand New Day Benefit Concert showed it is still possible to come together as a community to educate ourselves and lend a helping hand to those around us.
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OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

We could be happier, President Ryan

The University must ensure the Board of Visitors doesn’t go back on its word to remove symbols of hate on Grounds

Recommendations by the Committee on Naming and Memorials were supported by the Board of Visitors on April 13. The recommendations include digitally contextualizing statues and memorials at the University to create a “digital historical stratigraphy.” This aims to compile a complete, “informed perspective” of monuments for students, visitors, and community members. University President Jim Ryan said he “could not be happier” about this recommendation, with the committee ruling digital contextualization the most “practicable option.” According to the decision, digital contextualization of the historic landscape allows more detail and flexibility given the limited space around Grounds that physical markers would intrude upon.

But we could be happier, Ryan — in a society structured on racism, dismantling white supremacy calls us to think beyond practicable options. Digital contextualization is inadequate, and the University must ensure student demands are met. Confederate monuments are removed and the Board doesn’t go back on its word to eradicate symbols of hate on Grounds.

The committee recommended professional historians, students, Charlottesville residents, and alumni work together on digital contextualization through a working group established by Ryan. This would include creating QR codes to access the history of statues around Grounds, such as the Thomas Jefferson statue in front of the Rotunda. This would eventually develop into a “walking tour of statues and memorials.” Though the committee noted the tour’s narrative would cover the full history of the commission, funding, construction, and “informed treatment” of the artist for all monuments and statues, it isn’t enough.

Prof. Jalane Schmidt and Jefferson School Executive Director Andrea Douglass demonstrate the power of technology in contextualization with the Marked by These Monuments audio tour of Charlottesville. However, this resource is a tool to push for removal of monuments to white supremacy. It was never meant to be the solution. A walking tour designed to contextualize a racist narrative without further action would allow the true history of white supremacy around Grounds to remain hidden.

The contextualization of statues — such as those of Thomas Jefferson should be as in your face as the physical monuments are. Placing QR codes on statues and memorials rather than physical contextualization is performative activism of the highest degree. This method of contextualization is also inherently inaccessible, as users would need a smartphone in order to access the information provided. It reinforces the University’s pattern of hiding — rather than taking accountability for — its history and its tendency to push the onus of learning onto students. If the historic landscape made room for statues that perpetuate a racist narrative, it must now dedicate room for markers to contextualize them. In addition to this, there are some statues and memorials that even contextualization is not enough.

All Confederate statutes — such as the one in the cemetery — need to be removed, just as other forms of dedicated to or memorialization of the Confederacy must be rededicated or removed as well. The Board will meet in June regarding the Frank Hume Memorial Fountain — often referred to as the Whispering Wall — following Tuesday’s community listening session with the Naming and Memorials Committee. While the Board voted to remove or rededicate the wall in September, the fate of the monument remains in question. With organizers such as the Minority Rights Coalition adamantly calling for its removal, we believe the answer is clear — the Hume Memorial must come down.

Written across the Hume Memorial Fountain are the words “A Memorial To The Honorable Frank Hume — A Devoted Virginian Who Served His Native State In Civil War And Legislative Hall.” The word “honorable” should not be used to describe a man who fought for the Confederacy and protection of slavery and held countless events romanticizing the Confederacy efforts after the Civil War’s end. This monument is a disgusting romanticization of the nation’s past located in a high-traffic area on Grounds and even shown to prospective students during many tours of the University. Considering Hume had no ties to the University, there is no question that the fountain is yet another vestige of the institutions’ historic glorification of white supremacy. We urge the University to do more than just rededicate the Whispering Wall — remove the memorial and trauma its continued presence signifies for marginalized students.

The University cannot continue to perpetuate and hide its racist history. The Board must listen to community demands and remove the Frank Hume Memorial Fountain. Students are forced to walk past these memorials every day — a slap of stone should never take priority over the mental wellbeing and sense of belonging of those who walk through Grounds.
Earlier this month, the Virginia General Assembly passed a final version of a bill to legalize recreational marijuana in the Commonwealth. While the original version of the bill set the legalization date in 2024, an amendment proposed by Governor Ralph Northam and approved by both chambers of the legislature moved the date up to July 1, 2021. The legislation is monumental — Virginia is the first state in the South to legalize recreational marijuana.

This victory should be celebrated — marijuana is one of the safest substances out there, and legalization has been shown to reduce overall incarceration rates and prevent violent crime from drug cartels. Despite legalization though, the Commonwealth currently has no plans to free people incarcerated for marijuana convictions — a goal only possible if it includes freeing people incarcerated for marijuana offenses. Opponents of releasing marijuana offenders argue they broke the law when marijuana was illegal, and must therefore serve the remainder of their sentence. They did break the law — but the law was unjust, intended to harm communities of color and arbitrarily applied. Most of our contemporary drug laws find their origins in Nixon’s War on Drugs. Not only ineffective and counterproductive, the War on Drugs was deployed to uphold white supremacist values and oppress Black Americans. In a 1994 interview, for example, one of Nixon’s former aides admitted that the War on Drugs was created as a tool of violence against Black communities.

The racism and community harm from the War on Drugs and its lasting policies are still felt across the country today. In 2017, the Virginia Crime Commission found that 46 percent of the people arrested for marijuana offenses from 2007 to 2016 were Black — despite Black people only making up about 20 percent of the Commonwealth’s population. In 2019, marijuana arrests in Virginia reached their highest levels in two decades — nearly 29,000 arrested. Legalization is a step towards social justice, but correcting the historical targeting of Black people with arrests and incarceration must accompany it.

It is impossible to fulfill our goal of racial justice without freeing those incarcerated for past marijuana offenses.

High-income students are disproportionately represented at the University, which creates affordability barriers for low-income students seeking to integrate with their peers. In particular, joining special status organizations — including Student, School and Class Councils, the Honor and Judiciary Committees, the University Board of Elections, University Programs Council and University Guide Service — is challenging for students who must juggle unpaid, time-intensive opportunities or other responsibilities. In order to facilitate low-income student engagement in these important University institutions, those students ought to be paid for their work through the Federal Work-Study program.

The University is one of the least socioeconomically diverse public universities in the Commonwealth. Just 25 percent of students come from the bottom 20 percent income percentile. By contrast, 67 percent of the student body come from the top 20 percent of household incomes within the top one percent. The proportion of students in the top one percent is the highest among public universities in the Commonwealth, and compares more to elite private institutions like Washington and Lee. As a result of this lack of socioeconomic diversity, many first-generation and low-income students at the University have struggled to fit in and be a part of an environment where wealthier students are so grossly overrepresented. According to one survey of University students, over 90 percent of FGLI students cited harassment or discrimination regarding socioeconomic status. This takes many forms — from looking physically different due to an inability to afford the latest fashion trends, to being socially segregated having to avoid groups where they have to constantly spend money to keep up with peers.

Most troubling are the barriers faced by FGLI students in joining SSOs, which often require large time commitments from members without a penny of compensation. Notably, positions within many of these SSOs — particularly student government or club positions — are often paid positions at colleges around the country. For an FGLI student who may need to work a part-time job, the time required may make these positions unattainable for someone otherwise interested.

For an FGLI student who may need to work a part-time job, the time required may make these positions in Special Status Organizations unattainable for someone else. In their membership they are in the overall student body. While SSOs do not often release their internal demographics publicly, the fact remains that low-income students are at a clear structural disadvantage when it comes to taking unpaid commitments. It is thus alarming that such essential University functions are run by students who qualify for Work-Study will then receive compensation for their labor. To fulfill our goal of racial justice with dignity and fairness, politicians resort to hard truths about contemporary period. But it is impossible to legalize marijuana under the banner of social justice without accounting for and actively addressing the historical harm American drug policies have caused. It is impossible to fulfill our goal of racial justice without freeing those incarcerated for past marijuana offenses.

OPINION

Virginia must release marijuana offenders

With recreational marijuana legal beginning July 1, 2021, the Commonwealth must move to release all those in prison for marijuana offenses and harsher punishments. Combating drug use is a marathon, not a sprint — a relapse should not lead to jail time. Alternative sentencing should be expanded to all drug users, not just those caught at the first offense. We must stop treating drug use like a criminal issue and start treating it for what it is — a healthcare issue.

The General Assembly’s move to legalize recreational marijuana and create a regulated market for it in the Commonwealth is undoubtedly a good thing. Governor Northam’s commitment to social justice in legalization is exactly what Virginia needs in our contemporary period. But it is impossible to legalize marijuana under the banner of social justice without accounting for and actively addressing the historical harm American drug policies have caused. It is impossible to fulfill our goal of racial justice without freeing those incarcerated for past marijuana offenses.

MATT HELLER is an Opinion Columnist for The Cavalier Daily. He can be reached at opinion@cavalierdaily.com.

Expand Work-Study to cover roles in SSOs

PAYING LOW-INCOME STUDENTS INVOLVED IN SPECIAL STATUS ORGANIZATIONS WILL MAKE THEM MORE ACCESSIBLE AND MORE INCLUSIVE OF THE UNIVERSITY’S STUDENT BODY

Though the Work-Study program is not without its faults, expanding it to cover roles in SSOs will wider these organizations more accessible to FGLI students. This would be a major improvement — not just in terms of breaking some of the barriers in access faced by low-income students, but also to ensure that University institutions themselves are representative of the student body.

MATT HELLER is an Opinion Columnist for The Cavalier Daily. He can be reached at opinion@cavalierdaily.com.

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How to break out of a writer’s block

You probably can’t, but there is no harm in trying.

There is nothing on this Earth worse for a student or writer than suffering from writer’s block. It is an infuriating infliction that can last from minutes to years. I suffered a writer’s block that lasted two years — or at least I have given myself the perception that I escaped. The winters were long and harsh, and my Google document page was as blank as my brain.

Well, readers, today I am going to list a few ways to attempt to break from this horrid condition and finish that paper or story you have been putting off for the past week.

1. Diagnose yourself
   The first clear step in treating writer’s block is to establish that you have writer’s block, which often is confused with the equally destructive condition of procrastination. Common symptoms include staring at a blank Google doc for five hours without writing anything, an extreme lack of motivation and a rainbow wheel of death for a brain. If you relate to any of these symptoms, I hate to break it to you, but you have writer’s block.

2. Identify the cause of the block
   Everything comes from something, so you are going to want to figure out what exactly is the cause of the block. It can be anything from self-doubt, burnout or the intense fear of comparison. Or, in many cases, simply the inability to construct a creative subject that both entices the reader and interests the writer. A prime example is an essay I wrote titled “Free Will and Fate Presented In The Odyssey and The Iliad.” Did I have a shred of interest in the subject? Absolutely not. Did my teacher know that? Obviously. And, it took me practically forever to break out of a block and write that paper. I’m still salty about the grade.

   Anyway, now that you’ve got the basics down, it’s time to get out of the funk.

3. Buy a cabin in the woods
   This is a thing authors do, I think, so you should do it too. You can’t just rent one. You have to buy a cabin in some secluded area of the woods. But, not too isolated that it’s like being in a slasher horror film. You need to be able to sit at a desk and look longingly out the window while drinking a steaming cup of black coffee with a feather quill pen in one hand and sheets of ivory white paper laid before you. This is a requirement, so don’t slack off.

4. Literally do anything else
   I’m not joking with this. Just do something else, anything else. Take a walk until your mask gets that gross moist feeling and you start to think about the last time you exercised. Find a hobby to financially invest in and center your whole personality around until you immediately drop it a week later. And people will keep asking you, “How’s the crochet kit going?” And you’ll have to search up a photo of it completed and bluff how much you have done when you know it’s still incomplete and laying underneath your pile of clean but also sort of dirty clothes pile. That was really specific for no reason. You can’t judge me.

5. Suppress all thoughts and live in denial
   If you ignore the problem, it will eventually go away. So, throw all your motivation into ignoring your block and force yourself to power through whatever assignment or creative piece is troubling you. Set a schedule, and keep to it. Forget that the concept of a writer’s block exists and write as if your life depends on it. That’s what I did for this article.

   Okay, I think I’m done now. What’s my word count?

CAMILA COHEN SUAREZ is a Humor columnist for The Cavalier Daily. She can be reached at humor@cavalierdaily.com.

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Allergy Season

Ria Kharosekar | Cartoonist
Across
1. To abstain from, often used in legal settings.
4. Sport that Diego Maradona is known for.
8. The Cavalier Daily might be hit with one of these if it published copyrighted material.
9. What is buried after someone dies.
11. Trump inflated the numbers of this at his inauguration.
12. Last name of man who created an online site with educational materials and test prep.
13. A person who is easily deceived.
14. The Executive Branch has ____ the laws.
16. A white, bell-shaped flower that droops down.
18. To kick someone out of school.
20. Third instruction that Bop It gives.
21. Place where two borders intersect and vehicles are inspected.
23. Place where the Graduate bar is located.
24. Performances of an actor.
25. Building material on the outside of houses.
26. A person who is hired to go with someone to an event.

Down
1. Event where people choose their fantasy football teams.
2. To think someone is guilty.
3. A machine that dries clothes without heat. (two words)
5. Adjective for someone with a BMI over 30.
6. Slang word often used in the show “Derry Girls” to mean really good.
7. Idiom to mean something that sounds familiar.
10. Service that someone gives when they translate for two people who speak different languages.
15. In soccer, something players are awarded when the other team commits fouls. (two words)
17. Having lots of good food to eat.
19. A clause in which a condition is introduced.
21. To sing softly and intimately.
22. Title of book written by Elie Wiesel.

* SOLUTION FROM APRIL 8 ISSUE

* THE SOLUTION TO THIS PUZZLE CAN BE FOUND IN THE NEXT ISSUE
Meet women’s tennis sophomore Natasha Subhash

The 2020 ITA National Rookie of the Year has Grand Slam aspirations — and a Grand Slam personality

Connor Lotthorp | Sports Columnist

Before every match, Natasha Subhash, women’s tennis player and second-year Commerce student, spends minutes listening to music alone. “I don’t really have a specific song I use,” Subhash said. “But it helps me focus.”

Maybe for another player you could call it the calm before the storm, but that doesn’t really fit the way the Fairfax, Va. native plays. It’s much more the calm before the clinical dismantling of whoever dares stand across the net from her.

Subhash’s tennis game is founded upon control and organization, as those around her tell you. When asked about her on-court presence, Coach Sara O’Leary describes her style of play as all-court and focused.

“She can be aggressive and come to the net, she can play defense, she can mix it up using slice and heavy high balls and she can easily change her court positioning,” O’Leary said. “Natasha is one of the best problem-solvers on court I would say in collegiate tennis. She has the ability to adjust her game to a certain style based on what her opponent doesn’t like. She also has the ability to do this in extremely stressful and pressure-filled moments.”

So far, Munera, Subhash’s longtime doubles partner and third-year College student, agrees.

“Natasha is very organized and very solid,” Munera said. “She’s very aggressive at the net, and you don’t expect her to miss often.”

When Subhash was 4 years old, her father, a first-generation immigrant from India, noticed his daughter had naturally good hand-eye coordination. He had her pick up a tennis racket and she hasn’t put it down since, playing in tournaments from the time she was 6 years old and traveling the world to play by high school.

Subhash grew up idolizing the always-in-control Belgian tennis player Kim Clijsters, a woman who remains one of the nicest, humble, hard-working.”

Those around Subhash feel like “She’s absolutely right. The Cavalier team is looking very modest.”

It’s undeniable that Subhash is more than talented enough to turn professional after she finishes her degree, and she seems more than willing to put in the work that could put her in the upper crust of international women’s tennis.

Those around Subhash feel like she will set up for life after tennis, too. She was recently admitted into the McIntire School of Commerce, where she will begin taking classes in the fall semester. O’Leary refers to her as hardworking and an amazing student.

You can watch Subhash and Virginia’s women’s tennis play in the ACC quarterfinals Friday on ACC Network Extra. Later down the road, it’s more than likely that you will one day be watching the Virginia stalwart play in Grand Slams on ESPN.

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The No. 12 women’s lacrosse team will wrap up its ACC regular season slate with a match against rival Virginia Tech this Saturday. The Cavaliers (6-7, 3-6 ACC) lost four consecutive games, including a pair of big defeats to top-ranked North Carolina this past weekend. Virginia will hope to use this game as a confidence booster before the ACC and NCAA Tournaments begin in the coming weeks.

Virginia began the season strongly with five consecutive wins, one of which was a 12-10 thriller against the Hokies (4-9, 0-7 ACC). Since then, ACC play picked up and the Cavaliers struggled, dropping six of their next nine games. Syracuse, Notre Dame and North Carolina — which are all teams ranked in the top five — contributed to the Virginia losing streak.

The Cavaliers’ recent struggles have mainly been due to a lack of success on the offensive end. Virginia’s offense was flying high at the beginning of the season, but has since slowed down. The Cavaliers have been held to 10 goals or less in six of their last seven games. Virginia’s offense has been powered by junior attacker Lillie Kloc, junior attacker Ashlyn McGovern and senior attacker Taylor Regan this season. Kloc and McGovern lead the team with 27 goals apiece, while Regan leads the team with 35 points on 20 goals and 15 assists. North Carolina was able to effectively contain the trio, limiting them to just three goals and three assists in two games over the weekend. For the Cavaliers to get back on the winning track, they need more offensive production from their star players.

However, Virginia has plenty of balance on offense to fall back on. The Cavaliers have five additional players who have scored double-digit goals this season. Junior midfielder Annie Dyson has 19 goals and eight assists on the season, while freshman attacker Morgan Schwaab has 16 goals and eight assists. Additionally, freshman midfielder Mackenzie Hoeg has 14 goals, and sophomore midfielder Kiki Shaw and freshman midfielder Maggie Bostain have tallied 13 goals each.

On the other side of the field, Virginia Tech presents a nice opportunity for Virginia to bounce back against. The Hokies head into game wireless in ACC play and lost four of their last five games. Virginia Tech has struggled offensively this season, averaging 10.23 goals per game. That mark is more than two goals less than Virginia’s average of 12.57 goals per game. However, the Hokies have been a bit stingier on defense than the Cavaliers, conceding 11.77 goals per game, compared to Virginia’s average of 12.21 goals against.

Virginia Tech’s offense is led by senior midfielder Paige Perry and senior attacker Sarah Lubnow. Perry leads the team with 31 goals, while Lubnow has tallied 41 points on 19 goals and 22 assists this season. It will be important for the Cavaliers to shut down the Hokies’ dynamic duo if they want to complete the season sweep.

The Cavaliers won the last two match-ups against the Hokies and haven’t lost in the series since April 2018. When the two teams met earlier this season, Virginia overcame an early deficit to knock off Virginia Tech 12-10 in Blacksburg. McGovern and Dyson came up big in the win, as both recorded hat tricks. Virginia has a good opportunity to improve its conference positioning before the ACC Tournament begins. Heading into Saturday, Virginia sits in sixth place in the ACC with a record of 6-6, compared to 2-4 on the road. The game is set to begin at 5 p.m. with coverage on ACC Network Extra.

Virginia men’s tennis: ACC Tournament preview

Ethan Bacica | Sports Columnist

It has certainly been an impressive season for Coach Andres Pedroso and his No. 5 Virginia men’s tennis team, as the Cavaliers have yet to lose a game in the ACC this year.

The last time Virginia lost a match was back in February to Illinois in the National Team Indoor Championship Tournament. Since then, the Cavaliers haven’t looked back, and they are now the winners of 12 in a row — all in-conference. It is without a doubt that Virginia is the current favorite to win its 12th ACC Championship.

With a win against Notre Dame Friday, Virginia clinched the top seed in the ACC Tournament.

As the first seed in the tournament, the Cavaliers will either play eighth-seeded Georgia Tech or ninth-seeded Miami Friday afternoon to kickstart the weekend in Rome, Ga., with the semifinals and finals taking place Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

Despite the exception of an unbelievable collapse or a set of hapless injuries, this Virginia men’s tennis team should cruise through the early rounds and be looking to bring home the title. However, there is still stiff competition that could derail championship aspirations. Which teams are most likely to knock off the Cavaliers?

NC State

The Wolfpack could challenge Virginia as a sleeper team early on in the tournament. As the fourth seed in this year’s tournament, the Cavaliers will likely see them in the semifinals.

It is arguable that NC State offers Virginia its most competitive conference match-up of the season. In their head-to-head matchup, the Cavaliers won 5-2, but the Wolfpack offered tough competition in singles.

Graduate student Alexi Gularneau is a talented No. 1 for the Wolfpack. An ATP-ranked player, he handled Virginia leads the team win Nord-Soderlund with two straight sets in their last match.

Although this team has struggled lately, don’t be surprised if they play a close one against Virginia.

Virginia

Virginia offers another potential roadblock to a championship for the Cavaliers. The Tar Heels are the only team in the ACC that can say they beat Virginia, defeating the Cavaliers 4-2 on their way to winning the 2011 National Team Indoor Championship Tournament.

However, injuries have plagued North Carolina since then, as sophomores Rinky Hijikata and senior Josh Peck — two regulars in the starting lineup — have both been out for the past month.

Without a full team, the Tar Heels have lost to Virginia 6-1, and most recently to Wake Forest 7-2, as they limp into the ACC Tournament.

Still, the country hasn’t forgotten the Indoor Championship title this year, as the Tar Heels are currently ranked No. 3 in the ITA rankings. North Carolina is the highest ranked team the Cavaliers could face in the ACC bracket.

A fully healthy North Carolina team is the best team Virginia would play in this tournament. However, even if North Carolina has a full team, those players might not be at full strength — which could influence the outcome of the match.

Wake Forest

Wake Forest, who is perhaps the most dangerous of the North Carolina teams, has emerged as a top ACC men’s title contender alongside Virginia. The Demon Deacons made their loudest statement of the season with a road sweep of North Carolina, 5-2, and Duke, 4-0.

Wake Forest is currently sitting at 11-1 in conference play, with the team rising to their highest ranking of the year, climbing to No. 10 in the ITA rankings. Having earned the second seed in the tournament, the Demon Deacons are playing with plenty of momentum coming into the final week of the regular season.

There is a plethora of talent on this team with three nationally ranked players in the starting lineup — including No. 11 sophomore Henri Squire.

In their only meeting of the season, Virginia defeated Wake Forest 5-2. Strong doubles play helped the Cavaliers early, as the singles matches were all tight and competitive — including three matches with tiebreakers.

As the hottest team entering the tournament, not including Virginia, the Demon Deacons could be a problem if both teams make it to the finals.

Despite the gauntlet of teams in the state of North Carolina and the ACC, Virginia has been able to defeat every team this year. With strong doubles play early and gritty performances from singles, there is no reason this team can’t bring another ACC title back to Charlottesville.
Nearly 13 months ago, COVID-19 first hit the University as students were asked not to return from spring break March 11, 2020 and the first University community testing positive March 16. Since then, UVA Health has taken several actions in a continuous and evolving response to the pandemic.

Now, UVA. Health administrators and physicians involved in ramping up COVID-19 testing and response reflect on the pandemic and the lessons learned from one year of tumultuous operations.

Dr. Craig Kent, executive vice president for Health Affairs at UVA and chief executive officer at UVA Health, was a new arrival to the University on Feb. 1, 2020, just weeks before the health administration began to realize the threat COVID-19 posed.

“It’s an odd time to show up to tell a health system, you know, three weeks before an international pandemic begins,” Kent said.

According to Kent, UVA Health was aware of the virus in December, but it was not until February and March when officials began to realize the scope of the threat COVID-19 posed.

After that, UVA Health moved quickly to keep up with the pandemic’s trajectory by bringing together 15 to 20 representatives from the School of Medicine, School of Nursing and Medical Center to coordinate a response.

“In some ways, it was a crisis management team,” Kent said. “Some of us would learn what was happening around the country, some of us were experts in virus, some of us were experts in operation.”

At first, communities — both locally and elsewhere in Virginia — were overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients and had trouble keeping up with testing needs, according to Dr. Amy Mathers, associate professor of medicine and pathology.

“I went into a nursing home and 92 percent of the occupants... tested positive, and that’s terrifying,” Mathers said. “I was not licensed to practice in that facility... but... there were people that needed attention.”

Nursing home residents were hit the hardest by COVID-19 due to the age of residents, close proximity with living spaces and heightened rates of mortality among the elderly — Virginia was no exception. Within weeks of the first confirmed case in Virginia, dozens of residents died after COVID-19 spread through a nursing home facility in Richmond — the highest known death toll at a U.S. long-term care facility at the time, The New York Times reported.

The University began providing a CDC-approved COVID-19 test when the pandemic first broke out. Dr. Melissa Poulter, director of clinical microbiology at the School of Medicine, explained that UVA. Health worked to bring in the CDC test first since the physicians saw data supporting its good performance. However, the University had to purchase the specific reagents — chemical mixtures used to determine if a testing sample matches COVID-19 genome sequence — separately, which caused some issues.

“The hard part was actually getting the test components,” Poulter said in an email to The Cavalier Daily. “They aren’t sold as a ‘kit’. You have to get everything separately from multiple different companies then build the ‘kit’ yourself.”

Additionally, even when the University Health System did receive tests from public health departments, there were often only enough tests for the sickest or highest risk patients, which is what inspired Mathers and Poulter to create the University’s own test.

Despite high demand for reagents and swabs across the country, University sales representatives were able to secure the needed supplies for the tests, Poulter said, and soon after, the University created its first functioning COVID-19 test.

“I think this was a big step toward managing COVID in our state and did much to help our fellow hospital systems until they could get instruments, reagents and supplies to start their own testing programs,” Poulter said.

These new tests only took 24 hours to turnaround test results. By mid-March, UVA Health was testing at a volume of 100 tests per day and was offering 50 tests per day to six hospitals in Virginia and North Carolina for their doctors to use on patients that met clinical testing guidelines. This partnership continues to expand, according to Kent.

“At one point, we were sharing our tests with almost 30-some hospitals around the state, and that was really exciting,” Kent said.

UVA Health also worked to test the surrounding Charlottesville community and continues to do so, Mathers said.

“The community testing events that UVA hosts in collaboration with the health department are just critical,” Mathers said. “People here [are] figuring out how to meet the community where they are [by having the] Mount Zion Baptist Church [host] the testing event, and we’ve just a group that brings the test.”

Kent added that health system volunteers helped test indigent parts of the community five to six days per week throughout the fall. Each community site would administer between 75 and 115 tests during each two-hour outing.

Poulter said that UVA Health also created and validated several different tests that helped keep up with demand, including a high-throughput one that could test 94 samples at once. However, Kent acknowledged that over the summer, there were testing shortages.

“There was a period of time — April, May, June — that we weren’t even close to enough tests for everybody we wanted to test,” Kent said. “We had to set priorities.”

During this time, community testing remained a priority, as did testing of healthcare providers. However, asymptomatic individuals couldn’t be tested in large numbers.

Kent said that the addition of saliva testing helped overcome the shortage.

“When saliva testing became available in large numbers, I think that was, in some ways, almost transformational because we could test large numbers of people on a daily basis,” Kent said. Since then, saliva testing has been implemented across the state.

According to Kent, UVA Health leaders reflected on one year of COVID-19.

“Leaders and doctors cite overall success while acknowledging a few roadblocks, such as testing limitations during summer 2020.”

Since March, hospital workers have felt the pressure associated with caring for patients amid a surging pandemic. In April 2020, some employees were furloughed due to an $85 million deficit resulting from the decline of clinical care and related services. In November, hospital workers announced their unionization, citing “top-down approaches to management, inadequate staffing and subpar wages.”

UVA Health hosted over 8,800 community and vaccine volunteers and administered over 7,800 doses of COVID-19 vaccine, according to Kent.

UVA’s COVID-19 vaccine clinic located in the University’s student center has administered over 40,000 COVID-19 vaccines since December.

The University is currently administering the Moderna vaccine, which is a viral vector vaccine.

For more information on the COVID-19 vaccine, click here.

The University of Virginia alumni and other members of the Charlottesville community received an email from UVA Health Leaders on March 11, 2021 announcing that the University has received the COVID-19 vaccine.

"The University of Virginia Health System has received a limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine, and we are pleased to announce that the vaccine is now available for eligible members of the University community," the email stated.

"The vaccine is a safe and effective way to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect yourself and others. It is important for everyone to do their part to keep our community safe."
Nursing Prof. Virginia LeBaron, former Engineering Prof. John Lach and a team of graduate and undergraduate students implemented Behavioral and Environmental Sensing and Intervention for Cancer to find personalized solutions for cancer pain intervention. BESI-C is a smart health home-monitoring system that aims to reduce cancer pain by detecting it before it arises and helps healthcare workers effectively intervene with the goal of limiting negative patient outcomes.

The project was inspired by LeBaron’s personal and professional experiences.

“My clinical work as a nurse in oncology and palliative care involved caring for many cancer patients suffering with unrelieved pain,” LeBaron said in an email to The Cavalier Daily. “These professional experiences, combined with the personal loss of a family member from cancer, prompted my interest in conducting research to improve cancer pain management.”

When LeBaron arrived at the School of Nursing, she connected with Lach who was working on Behavioral and Environmental Sensing and Intervention for Dementia, a project designed to detect early agitation in dementia patients. They decided to adapt BESI-D’s technology for patients with cancer and BESI-C was born. The team that works on BESI-C — much like the project — is interdisciplinary in that it is composed of nurses and engineers.

Kate Gordon is a former graduate nursing student who was a research assistant on the project.

“The BESI-C system is comprised of three primary components — environmental sensors which are designed to collect data about factors such as temperature, noise and light; Bluetooth beacons which collect data about where the patient and caregiver are in the home; and smartwatches that are worn by both the patient and caregiver,” Gordon said in an email to The Cavalier Daily.

Gordon explained that the smartwatch allows users to mark pain events and describe these events. The smartwatches also store data on factors like movement and heart rate.

“BESI-C integrates environmental data via the sensors, social dynamic information via the beacons and personal activity and self-reported pain episodes via the wearable sensor,” Gordon said. “All of this information helps to create a holistic picture of the cancer pain experience.”

This holistic picture is referred to as a patient’s pain profile. LeBaron explained that understanding a patient’s pain profile allows for more effective and personalized interventions to reduce cancer pain.

Because both caregivers and patients wear the smartwatches, both parties mark the patient’s pain events.

“BESI-C collects data from both the patient and the caregiver about their own experience but also about their perceived experience of their partner,” LeBaron said. “This is incredibly important as it will help us understand better how to tailor effective interventions not only to support and empower patients, but family caregivers as well.”

The information that BESI-C collects is of high interest to patients and caregivers. Gordon said that patient confidentiality was an important factor in the design of BESI-C — all the data collected during this study was not identifiable.

“The interviews with the patient-caregiver dyads identified that privacy was the biggest concern,” Gordon said. “To address that, we did not capture raw audio — you cannot detect actual conversations with the noise sensor. We did not use cameras. We only put sensors in locations approved by participants and never in areas such as bathrooms, and participants could turn off sensors at any time or simply stop wearing Smart Watches.”

According to LeBaron, for the future, the team is focused on deciding how to share data with key stakeholders like patients, family caregivers and healthcare providers.

“We hypothesize that different ‘buckets’ of data exist, and who needs access to these data, when and how and in what ways will vary,” LeBaron said. “An important goal of our NIH study will be to generate and share data visualizations with key stakeholders and talk with them about their preferences.”

Yudel Martinez, a fourth-year Engineering student on the BESI-C team, explained that before the pandemic, the team of nurses and engineers would go into patients’ homes to set up the system and teach patients and caregivers how to use it. Once the pandemic began, the team had to halt deployments and reconfigure their system to allow it to be set up by patients and caregivers. The team developed the BESI-Box which allows for contactless delivery and a simplified setup with remote support from the team.

“We have gone through multiple iterations because we have innovated and then presented it to people within our demographic,” Martinez said. “We have found that they still have some pain points and we’re still in the process of fixing those to make this system as inclusive and easy to use as possible because this is a system that we want people to set up in their lives and use for the length of the deployment without it really affecting their lifestyle and without them noticing it’s there.”

Martinez is motivated by the importance of BESI-Cs mission.

“This project is trying to make the last moments of a person’s life the most comfortable we possibly can,” Martinez said.

The team has plans to expand BESI-Cs reach and impact. According to LeBaron, the team is analyzing feasibility and acceptability testing data and planning to launch a bigger study with a larger sample size. The original study observed 5 dyads — or a pair of one patient and one family caregiver. The team plans to have 30 dyads for the future study.

“For this next study, we will be recruiting patients and family caregivers from the palliative care clinic here at UVA, and also from a local hospice program — Hospice of the Piedmont — and deploying our revised system using the BESI-Box,” LeBaron said. “Looking further into the future, we will use the data collected by BESI-C to develop, deliver in a real-time and test personalized interventions, both for patients and caregivers.”

According to a University press release, pilot grants from the UVa. Center for Engineering in Medicine and the American Cancer Society enabled LeBaron and her team to design and deploy BESI-C. This year, LeBaron received a $1.4 million grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research, which is part of the National Institutes of Health, that will allow the BESI-C team to expand on their work over the next four years.

LeBaron would like to see BESI-C integrated into routine cancer patient care. She hopes integration will particularly help patients living in rural areas and help patients to avoid unwanted hospitalizations.
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