

# THE CAVALIER DAILY

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MAC DOUCETTE, KAYLA MOORE & CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

## STEPPING INTO SOMETHING NEW





# Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear University community members,

I am honored to share with you all the first print edition of The Cavalier Daily's 137th term. As suggested by the edition's title, several pieces of content in this edition reckon with what it means to be "stepping into something new." Not only are we stepping into a new semester, but we — students, faculty, alumni and community members — are also anticipating the arrival of new

University and state leadership. On what was the first day for many editors and managers transitioning into their new roles at The Cavalier Daily for the 137th term, the University appointed its 10th president. This moment was shaped by several tumultuous months which left many key stakeholders with lingering questions, concerns and feelings of distrust. In what is a period of ongoing change for the University, The Cavalier Daily will remain comprehensive and fair

in its coverage of further developments this year. In an increasingly digital-forward media landscape, the members of this paper must think creatively about how to foster new channels for conversation and engagement, and so far I am confident in the 137th term's ability to do so. Members have already begun developing plans for increased video and social media content in hopes of fostering digital engagement from students, faculty, alumni and community

members alike. This engagement will guarantee a more accurate and representative historical record to leave for future generations of University community members. And you, the readers, are an integral part of the composition of this record. So whether you choose to engage through our website, over email or by picking up one of our print editions, we look forward to your consultation and your feedback. Your continued readership

and engagement make this work possible. Thank you for being part of the conversation and for supporting The Cavalier Daily.

Sincerely,

*Leigh Bailey*

Leigh Bailey  
137th Editor-in-Chief of The Cavalier Daily

## NEWS

### This week in-brief

CD News Staff

#### Scott Beardsley appointed U.Va.'s 10th president

Scott Beardsley, current dean of the Darden School of Business, was selected unanimously in a special meeting by the University's Board of Visitors Friday to serve as the University's tenth president. Beardsley was chosen out of four finalist candidates, and his appointment follows the resignation of former University President Jim Ryan June 27 following pressure from the Justice Department.

Board Rector Rachel Sheridan praised Beardsley as a candidate with "leadership skills required to navigate the challenges facing higher education today." Upon his appointment, Beardsley addressed the Board and members of the public who were in attendance — he thanked the Board, Interim University President Paul Mahoney and Ryan for their leadership and described the appointment process as "rigorous and thorough."

The Board released a statement to the University community around 3:30 p.m. announcing Beardsley's appointment. The statement thanked those involved in the five-month search process and said that the University can anticipate future communication from Beardsley in the coming days about his plan for his upcoming tenure which will begin Jan. 1.

"We are confident that Scott's leadership, vision, and commitment to the U.Va. community uniquely position him to serve as president at this moment," the statement read. "He understands the breadth of the University's responsibilities across education, research, healthcare, athletics, and public service, and he brings a steady, unifying approach grounded in respect for shared governance and academic excellence."

#### Optimism and frustration — students react to Beardsley's appointment

Following the University's Board of Visitors' selection of Scott Beardsley as the University's 10th president, students on Grounds are beginning to reflect on the decision and what it means for the future of the University. Beardsley, currently dean of the Darden School of Business, was chosen out of four finalists and will assume the presidency Jan. 1.

For many students, the news of this appointment seemed surprising following the many pleas for the Board to pause their selection process. Fourth-year College student Noor Naser said she was shocked, and the moment felt eerily similar to the news of former University President Jim Ryan's resignation. Naser said she believed that the Board deciding to announce this on the last day of finals was purposeful.

Similarly, third-year College student PJ Duffy said that he thought the Board choosing to announce this right before break was a strategic move to allow people to have some time off Grounds to take in the news.

Despite differences in opinion about the appointment process and the Board's transparency, several students from across the University see this new presidency as an opportunity for change on a number of levels. As chair of the Range, law student Preston Bowden said that he hopes that the graduate community at the University is heard, and not cut out of the conversation. He said that he hopes the beginning of this new presidency will provide an opportunity to consider ways to bring graduate students into the conversation.

#### Who is Scott Beardsley, U.Va.'s 10th president?

Beardsley, who previously served as the ninth dean of Darden, has spent the past 10 years overseeing Darden's academics and operations. He launched Future Year Scholars — a deferred admissions program for undergraduates — and reintroduced two of the school's Ph.D. programs in Strategy, Ethics and Entrepreneurship, as well as Data Analytics and Decision Science, among a variety of other accomplishments.

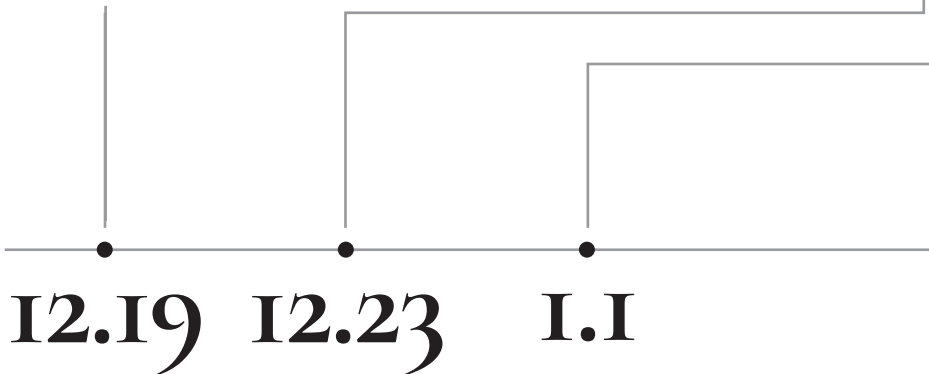
Sankaran Venkataraman, senior associate dean for faculty and research at Darden, has worked closely with Beardsley since he began as dean and described Beardsley's leadership style as "non-hierarchical."

"He's more like a first among equals," Venkataraman said. "He's highly respectful. He listens to ideas very carefully. You don't get a sense [that he is the] boss and things like that. So it's more that we are in this together."

Beyond his work to enhance Darden's academics, Beardsley has also helped raise \$632 million towards Darden's endowment and created the LaCross Institute for Ethical Artificial Intelligence in Business, focused on advancing research and education regarding AI.

Darden student Sarah Hart, who took a course with Beardsley this semester titled Maximizing Leadership Potential in Sports and Business, echoed a similar sentiment, noting that the AI institute serves as an example of Beardsley's forward-looking vision.

Before pursuing a career in higher education leadership, Beardsley spent 26 years with McKinsey & Company, a management consulting firm.



# Democrats take reins of state government in General Assembly

From Spanberger's Affordable Virginia Plan to four proposed Constitutional Amendments, here's what tops the agenda for the 2026 Virginia Legislative Session

Luca Bailey | Senior Writer

The new General Assembly convened Wednesday in Richmond after resounding Democratic victories in November's elections. The start of the legislative session and Saturday's inauguration of Gov.-Elect Abigail Spanberger marks just the second time this century that Democrats have held a trifecta in Virginia state government — a majority in both legislative chambers, plus control of the Governor's office. From Spanberger's affordability plan to major amendments which could end up on the ballot this year, there are a number of key priorities for the new legislature that could affect members of the University community.

Wednesday also officially marked the end of the prefiling period during which members and members-elect proposed their bills. Legislators will consider the bills over the course of a 60-day session. Spanberger, who will set much of the agenda for her party in the General Assembly, will also sign, veto or attempt to amend any legislation that makes it to her desk, once session concludes. Legislation signed into law will go into effect July 1.

Among some of the major legislation introduced includes House Bill 1, sponsored by Del. Jeion Ward (D-Hampton) which would amend existing law to slowly raise the minimum wage in Virginia to \$15 per hour by 2028. The Department of Labor and Industry would then raise the minimum wage further in proportion to any increases in the Consumer Price Index — which measures how the typical cost for standard products like food, housing and healthcare change over time for the urban American household.

Cecelia Parks, member of the Political Coalition and Policy Committee for the University's United Campus Workers of Virginia chapter, told The Cavalier Daily that the UCWVA welcomes this legislation despite thinking that the minimum wage should be higher.

"We're really excited about [the bill]," Parks said. "I know there are folks at U.Va. who make minimum wage...[though] 15 dollars [an hour] working at U.Va. doesn't go but so far [and] we're...advocating for a living wage at a higher level ... it's a really good step in the right direction."

Parks said that the UCWVA's primary focus this session is legislation which would allow all public sector workers to collectively bargain in Virginia. Currently, localities can choose to give bargain-

ing rights to local public-sector workers such as teachers and police officers, while state public-sector workers — such as University faculty and staff — cannot collectively bargain at all.

Parks further added that the UCWVA supports a bill by Delegate Amy Laufer (D-55th), which would require that a staff and faculty member serve as elected, voting members of Virginia's Boards of Visitors. Currently, the University's Board has a non-voting faculty representative appointed by the Board and no staff representative.

Other major legislation introduced this session is Spanberger's legislative package to make the Commonwealth more affordable. The 17-bill plan, announced by Spanberger and Democratic legislative leaders in December, is designed to lower the cost of living for Virginians with bills targeting housing, healthcare and energy.

A key component of the package is that it aims to strengthen tenants' rights. House Bill 15, introduced by Delegate Marcia Price (D-85th), would increase the length of time before landlords could evict their tenants for missing rent from five days to 14. Spanberger's team says this would allow more renters to get their paycheck during that period and avoid eviction. Another bill would expand the Virginia Eviction Reduction Program — a pilot program signed into law in 2020. Its role includes providing temporary financial assistance to certain Virginians at risk of being evicted, helping them to make rent and remain in their homes.

Other Democrats in Richmond have proposed similar bills which would strengthen tenants' rights. House Bill 14, also introduced by Price, would allow localities to sue landlords on behalf of tenants who have been directly harmed by living in unsafe conditions. House Bill 95, introduced by Del. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (D-5th), would require landlords with more than four properties to offer payment plans to tenants who owe up to a month's rent.

Given the University's large population of off-Grounds students — most of whom rent in Charlottesville — there are a number of University organizations that advocate for stronger tenant protections. In October 2021, the Student Council Executive Board released a statement, co-signed by 19 organizations, advocating for codifying the "essential tenants' rights" found in the Charlottesville Affordable Housing Plan. Further-

more, Student Council's statement argued that the city's limited housing supply contributes to a power imbalance between student renters and landlords.

Clay Dickerson, Student Council President and fourth-year College Student, confirmed in a statement to The Cavalier Daily that Student Council stands by the sentiments expressed in their 2021 statement. Furthermore, Dickerson said he believes Spanberger's affordability agenda will be crucial in achieving a more livable Charlottesville for both locals and students.

Sen. Creigh Deeds (D-11th) said he broadly supports many priorities in Spanberger's agenda. As someone who used to represent one of the state's most rural counties — Highland County in Western Virginia — Deeds said he believes the needs of every locality differ drastically depending on size. Spanberger's 17-bill package avoids imposing a "one-size-fits-all" housing plan across the Commonwealth, and Deeds said this will account for differing needs.

"Whatever [bills] we make in Virginia have to work for Fairfax County with a million and a half people and Highland County with 2,200 people," Deeds said.

Noteworthy proposals by Republican legislators include Senate Bill 46, introduced by Sen. Christie New Craig (R-19th), which would shorten the window to vote early and in-person from 45 days before an election to 15. House Bill 51, introduced by Del. Rob Bloxom (R-100th), would eliminate the requirement for local elections to occur in November. When this requirement was passed in 2021, opponents of the measure expressed concern that it would inject national political tensions into local contests.

There are also four proposed Constitutional amendments in Virginia which, pending legislative action, could make it onto voters' ballots in April and November. In order to amend Virginia's Constitution, the General Assembly must first pass an amendment by a simple majority vote in each chamber. The next elected General Assembly must then vote to re-pass that amendment for "second reference." Finally, the amendment is sent to the voters for a statewide referendum vote on its adoption. Democrats are expected to re-pass the four major proposed amendments from the 2025 session during this session, which will then go to a statewide vote. Notably, the governor does not have veto power over



COURTESY MARTIN KRAFT VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Capitol Building in Richmond, Va.

these proposals.

The first proposal would allow for mid-decade redistricting of the Commonwealth's congressional districts by the General Assembly — this amendment would not eliminate Virginia's Independent Redistricting Commission. The General Assembly would be granted the temporary power to redraw congressional district lines until October 2030 in response to other states doing the same.

Deeds noted that, as the language requires, other state legislatures have engaged in mid-decade redistricting. With President Donald Trump encouraging states like Texas, Missouri and Ohio to redraw their congressional lines, Deeds says he believes Virginia must act now to counteract Republican gains from these efforts by first passing the amendment and then a new, heavily Democratic congressional map.

"Never before [has] a president [gone] from state to state, encouraging states to ... redraw [congressional] lines for partisan advantage," Deeds said. "We cannot sit idle while that happens. We have to be able to fight back."

The next proposed amendment would eliminate null and void language about marriage from Virginia's Constitution and replace it with protections for all married couples, regardless of "sex, gender or race." The current language, added to the Constitution in 2006 but subsequently nullified by the courts, recognizes marriage as "only a union between one man and one woman."

Another proposed amendment would guarantee Virginians the right to reproductive freedom. This would mean the freedom of individuals to make choices about their medical care for childbirth,

abortion, fertility and miscarriages.

A final proposed amendment would automatically re-invest all Virginians convicted of felonies with the "fundamental right to vote" after release from incarceration. Currently, the governor must restore the voting rights of those who committed felonies on an individual basis.

Deeds said that Virginians can expect to vote on most of these amendments in the November general election, but that the General Assembly will likely schedule a vote on the redistricting amendment to take place in April. If it passes, he says the General Assembly will go back into session and redraw the lines.

Political organizations on campus are already gearing up for a potential spring vote. Semony Shah, University Democrats president and third-year Commerce student, shared a statement with The Cavalier Daily, indicating U Dems would strongly support the redistricting amendment and work to convince the student body to vote for adoption.

"UDems supports legislation that prevents and challenges bad-faith partisan gerrymandering in other states," the statement reads. "As we approach the spring, U Dems plans to educate and engage the student body through voter education and outreach."

The statement also expressed support for the three amendments which would be on the ballot in November.

The session will conclude March 14. The General Assembly is expected to reconvene April 22 to override any vetoes by Spanberger, as well as to consider her suggestions for amendments on particular bills.



# A look at the University's trend of rising tuition

The cost of attending the University without financial aid has increased fourfold for in-state and out-of-state undergraduates since the 1999-2000 academic year

Nicolas Biernacki | Staff Writer

Since 1999, in-state tuition at the University has risen by \$17,000 for the College of Arts & Sciences. The difference represents a 558 percent increase within 27 years, well outpacing the Bureau of Labor Statistics' reported inflation rate of 94 percent over the same period. Similar increases to the University's tuition have occurred in the other schools and for out-of-state students.

## The University's base cost of attendance has risen sharply

For the current academic year, the estimated total cost of attendance — including tuition, fees and “additional categories” — for a first-year in-state College student is \$40,468. The estimated cost of attendance for first-year out-of-state students in the College is between \$80,328 and \$81,718.

Some schools, such as the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, charge both in- and out-of-state students higher prices than the College. A first-year in-state Engineering student has a total cost of attendance of \$51,160, and a first-year out-of-state Engineering student has a total cost of between \$91,456 and \$92,846.

It is not only undergraduate students who are expected to pay significantly more than they would have just a few years ago. For instance, in-state School of Law students pay \$74,078 in tuition, compared to \$14,201 in 1999. Out-of-state School of Law students currently pay slightly more at \$76,396, compared with \$20,600 in 1999. The relatively small difference in tuition for Virginians and non-residents is in part because the School of Law has been entirely financially self-sufficient since 2002.

## Financial aid offerings from the University have increased

In reality, not all students at the University end up paying the listed cost of attendance. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 42 percent of undergraduates at the University received financial assistance during the 2022-2023 academic year. This assistance was in the form of any grant or scholarship aid, including federal student loans and pell grants, and brought the University's net price of attendance that year to \$17,831 for in-state undergraduates. The net price of attendance is the cost that students receiving

any grants or scholarship aid pay on average to attend the University.

Concurrent with the rise in tuition and fees, the University has expanded its own financial aid offerings — separate from federal aid — which keeps the amount the average student pays more stable. The University's net price of tuition and fees for in-state students who qualify for financial aid has still increased by 208 percent since 1999, when it was \$8,563.

This financial aid also allows the University to retain a reputation of offering good educational value for the price students pay — evidenced by the University being named the second-best-value public university by The Princeton Review. The Princeton Review also gave the University a 93 out of 99 for return on investment.

AccessUVA, the University's financial aid program, was introduced in 2004 to meet 100 percent of need-based aid for students. At this time, the base cost of attendance was \$11,703 for in-state undergraduates, regardless of their enrolled school.

Upon the inauguration of former University President Jim Ryan in 2018, AccessUVA was expanded to cover the cost of tuition and fees for Virginia families with incomes of less than \$80,000 and the full cost of attendance for Virginia families with incomes of less than \$30,000. In 2023, AccessUVA was further expanded to waive tuition for Virginia families with incomes of less than \$100,000 and tuition, fees, housing and dining for Virginia families with incomes of less than \$50,000. The family-income-dependent coverage through AccessUVA is available only to in-state families.

## Understanding the University's tuition model

The discrepancy of the University becoming progressively more expensive while being praised for value can be attributed to its pricing model, which it shares with many other highly-selective institutions across the country such as Yale, Duke and Columbia.

The University charges full-pay students, or those without any demonstrated financial need, to subsidize its promise to meet 100 percent of all students' demonstrated financial need, regardless of residency. Full-pay students' costs also subsidize the University's effort to waive



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Students studying on The Lawn, photographed April 14, 2025.

tuition and fees for Virginia families with incomes less than the thresholds of \$100,000 and \$50,000.

## Some students have criticized the University's tuition model

The University's pricing model has garnered criticism and concerns from some student leaders on Grounds. Clay Dickerson, Student Council president and fourth-year College student and William Rudeseal, College at Wise Student Government Association president and fourth-year Wise student, requested the University to keep tuition flat at the College at Wise in a joint statement released Nov. 20.

“Next, we must prioritize affordability for all students and patients, while providing unmatched economic uplift to our employees, surrounding communities and the Commonwealth,” the two student body presidents wrote.

Regarding the University, Dickerson and Rudeseal wrote that there should not be more than a three percent annual increase to fees for essential services for learning and wellbeing.

In a statement to The Cavalier Daily, University spokesperson Bethanie Glover wrote that the University is committed to involving all stakeholders when setting tuition rates.

“As we work to build the tuition plan for the upcoming fiscal year, we will again be balancing

out costs associated with maintaining our excellence while continuing to find operational efficiencies in our system,” Glover wrote. “We look forward to discussion with all our university stakeholders as we build the appropriate financial plan for UVA.”

Glover wrote that the University's goal is to combine affordability, accessibility and quality for students.

“We have one of the nation's highest graduation rates coupled with great wages upon graduation, making the investment in UVA. through tuition and other sources one of the best [return on investment] in the country,” Glover wrote.

Fourth-year Engineering student Alex Kerr contrasted what he, as an in-state student, pays to attend the University with what his sister pays as an out-of-state student to attend the University of Florida.

“In-state tuition [in Florida] is six to seven thousand dollars and about half the students at the University of Florida are on merit-based scholarships that cover that already,” Kerr said. “[My sister's] out-of-state tuition is cheaper than my in-state tuition, or at least has been for a few semesters.”

For the 2025-26 academic year, the University of Florida costs \$48,700 for out-of-state students. According to the NCES, 84 percent of students at the University

of Florida received financial assistance of any type for the 2022-2023 academic year, compared with 42 percent of students who received financial assistance at the University that year.

Kerr said that he does not think the University's pricing model is sustainable, and students will not continue to accept the rising costs.

“Eventually, tuition is going to spiral out of control, and then, if only the ultra-wealthy are paying for it, they're not going to be satisfied with that, if it's one hundred people just carrying the brunt of the tuition [and] everyone else gets it for free ... it's not going to work,” Kerr said.



# Community events celebrate America's 250th Anniversary

Jefferson's Monticello, the Center for Digital Editing and University student organizations will host educational exhibits and reenactments of the Revolution

Komal Reddymachu | Staff Writer

July 4 will mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The University's founder, Thomas Jefferson, served as a primary author for the Declaration of Independence. In light of this anniversary, both University and Charlottesville groups will hold celebrations throughout the year. Activities and projects — including the reenactment of the declaration and the introduction of digital platforms for curated historical information — will be held by organizations such as Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, the Center for Digital Editing and several student groups on Grounds.

At Monticello, a series of "Pursuits of Knowledge" events will be hosted beginning Jan. 23. These events will feature authors of books written about the American Revolution, and attendees will have the opportunity to meet the authors. Jefferson scholar and biographer Andrew Burstein is one of the featured authors, and he will discuss his book "Being Thomas Jefferson." Individuals can buy tickets on the "Pursuits of Knowledge" page on the Monticello website.

Other events hosted by Monticello include the Declaration Book Club and daily guided theatrical tours starting March 18. The book club is free and available online with readings and guided questions. Participants are provided with a guide to organize their own book clubs or may enjoy the materials on their own, but Monticello is not hosting its own in-person sessions. The guided questions ask participants to think critically about the history of the United States, and some of the reading materials include "Jefferson, Adams, and the Crucible of the Revolution," by Dr. Jane Kamensky, and a rough draft of the Declaration of Independence.

The theatrical tours will take place once daily, Wednesdays through Saturdays, between March 18 and July 31. Guests can sign up by purchasing a \$150 ticket online, and the tours will feature veteran historical actor-interpreter Bill Barker giving visitors a tour of the Monticello as Thomas Jefferson.

Finally, Monticello will be hosting an Independence Day event July 4 commemorating the 250th anniversary of the nation's independence. This celebration will be free for attendees with a reservation and includes music,



COURTESY MARTIN FALBISONER VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Monticello, photographed Oct. 29, 2010.

concessions and children's activities. Additionally, the West Lawn of Monticello will be transformed into an outdoor courtroom, and individuals can take part in the annual Naturalization Ceremony to officially become naturalized American citizens.

Student organizations on Grounds are also celebrating in their own ways. Matthew Foley, president of the History Club and third-year Batten student, discussed the club's plans for the 250th anniversary of the United States, saying that the History Club will host speaker events and field trips to provide club members with different perspectives on the American Revolution.

"We'll have opportunities to tell the stories that we know about Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and the founders of this era," Foley said. "[We are] also highlighting some of the stories of the role of women, the role of African Americans and the role of Native Americans during the Revolution."

The first speaker event of the series hosted by the History Club will occur March 12 with Dr. Jane Kamensky, chief executive officer and president of Monticello. Dr. Kamensky will speak to the club on the role of women and gender during the Revolutionary peri-

od. Foley also discussed plans for organizing an event in February on the role of African Americans during the Revolution for Black History Month.

Similarly to the History Club, Ryan Shoztic, president of the Jefferson Literary and Debating Society and third-year College student, explained that similarly to the History Club, students in the Jefferson Literary and Debating Society will be commemorating the 250th anniversary of independence. Shoztic said that though they have no concrete plans for the beginning of the year, the Jefferson Society will be hosting an event for their alumni and regular members July 4.

"We will be doing a reenactment and reading of the Declaration on Fourth of July in Jefferson Hall or Hotel C West Range," Shoztic said. "This is kind of like an old tradition of the society."

Afterwards, Shoztic explained that the Jefferson Society will have a summer meeting July 14 on Grounds in Jefferson Hall. He noted that this summer meeting has taken place every year for the past 21 years, and members orate on varying topics each year. This year, the content will be related to America's 250th anniversary of freedom. Shoztic described the event as a rhetoric or oratory

contest with a prize being given to the best presenter.

Stories about the Revolutionary period will also be highlighted by the Center for Digital Editing, a specialized center at the University focused on creating and publishing digital editions of historical documents. The CDE received a \$10 million, five-year grant in October from the National Endowment for the Humanities to digitize various historical documents for the general public who may not have access to historical primary sources otherwise.

CDE Director Jennifer Stertzler discussed the grant and how that connects to the goals they have for the 250th anniversary, including a digitization project. Stertzler highlighted that the CDE will be curating content related to the revolutionary era and making it accessible through an online platform they are developing called forgingUS.

"The 250th project is something that the NEH was really interested in," Stertzler said. "[Digitizing historical documents] make[s] all of the work that editorial projects do more accessible in an online environment."

Stertzler noted that the CDE plans to collaborate with the University's own scholarly pub-

lishing division, The University of Virginia Press, to create forgingUS. U.Va. Press's extensive collection of scholarly material and their digital imprint, Rotunda — which is a collection of historical documents — allows for the CDE to access digitized scholarly works and primary sources to integrate them into forgingUS.

"We're going to be curating content from projects and from the publishers, and making it more accessible through [forgingUS]," Stertzler said. "We're imagining our audience to be ... high school on up to lifetime learners."

CDE's plan, alongside Monticello and on-Grounds organizations like the Jefferson Society and the History Club, provide University and Charlottesville community members with opportunities to recognize their country's history and Jefferson's prominent role.



## LIFE

## A more realistic slant to doomed January rituals

Why some students at the University are trading traditional New Year's resolutions for more attainable mindset shifts

Abby Snowdon | Life Editor

According to Forbes, 80 percent of New Year's resolutions fail by the beginning of February.

The common and widespread failure of these lofty resolutions has prompted University students to reflect on why these goals so often fall apart.

The traditional ambitious start-of-the-year goal — such as running four miles a day five days a week, for example — leaves little room for flexibility and lots of room for incompleteness. In turn, several University students detail their preference for setting more incremental, mindset-based goals that are more realistic and attainable.

Some students say that rigid resolutions can feel like an extension of the already demanding culture on Grounds. With rigorous coursework, extracurricular activities and personal aspirations, many students, such as third-year McIntire student Tegh Khuman, feel that pursuing an additional new goal is a lot for an already hectic schedule.

"I feel like I can't just add something to my life because I have no time as is," Khuman said. "If I was going to add something, I feel like I might have to remove something or change something else around."

Besides scheduling obstacles, third-year College student Camden Young believes the reason many people's New Year's resolutions remain unaccomplished is due to the pressure these ambitious goals often create.

"I think there's a lot of pressure with creating these goals and having pressure to hit them," Young said. "For me, I find it more valuable to use [the new year] as a period of reflection ... instead of [setting] certain goals, it's more so ideas ... of how I want to see myself in the new year."

Rather than tacking another daunting task onto their to-do lists, students like Young are opting to embrace mindset shifts, creating a more sustainable approach to self-improvement that is proving far more effective than all-or-nothing resolutions.

Third-year College student Seton Gerrity takes a unique, more tangible approach to the re-envisioned resolution. Aside from not participating in traditional resolution-setting practices, Gerrity and her friends from high school have created a New

Year's vision board over winter break for the past three years. She notes how this creative practice has given her and her friends both a fun bonding activity and a chance to grow alongside each other into the new year.

"New Year's is a time to get together, and the [vision boards] are a nice way to do something creative. Because we don't get to spend as much time together as we did before, I feel like it's a nice way to gather and ... [envision] what we want our lives to look like," Gerrity said.

One of the centerpieces of Gerrity's vision board is a runner, materializing her goals of movement without the rigidity of a hard and fast resolution. As a matter of fact, Gerrity ran the 2025 Allianz Richmond Marathon Nov. 15, an achievement she attributes to the flexible and strategic approach to goals she brought into this past year.

"I knew I wanted to run more in the new year, but not having a marathon as the explicit end goal almost alleviated the daunting

element of it. This is something that I am doing because I want to and that can be relatively casual without it hinging on being a big lofty goal," Gerrity said.

Also averse to grandiose resolutions, Young decided to prioritize his commitment to his mental and physical health in 2026. He chose a single word that he wanted to use to define his new year — balance.

"I take the time right before the end of the year to write down my highlights of the year, like what went really well and what went really poorly," Young said. "I really don't know if I believe in the idea of a resolution. I think it's a great time to think about growth, but I don't know if I really believe in hard-set goals."

Khuman, too, reflected on his experience rethinking the New Year's resolution after several attempts that failed to stick in previous years. Ultimately, he attributes his shortcomings to hollow preparation and neglecting to instill accountability systems.

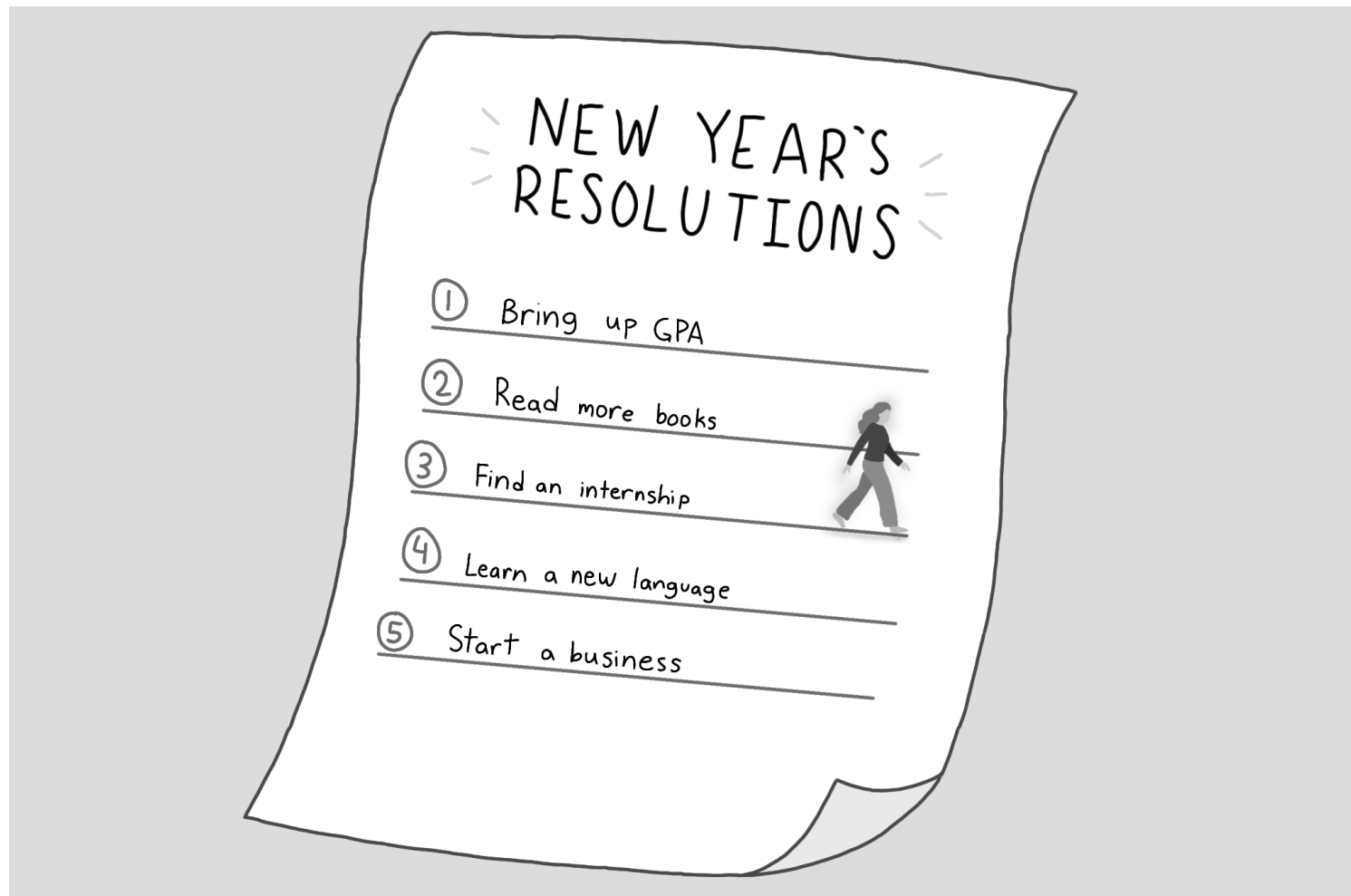
"[My resolutions] I wanted to

do, but I didn't have enough discipline or motivation to do it," Khuman said. "Because it was the new year, it was like, okay, let's make this a thing. But I don't think there were enough systems in place to keep me accountable."

Like Young, Khuman acknowledges that consistency can be difficult to maintain in a college environment where class schedules change daily and social distractions are constant, and decided to focus on building habits over seeking drastic lifestyle changes. With a year-end goal of going to the gym more routinely and eating cleaner, he emphasized the importance of building systems of accountability rather than solely relying on the novel motivation of the new year.

"You have to have the willpower to [do it] ... but I think it helps if you have someone or some type of system to keep you accountable," Khuman said.

Though their approaches differ, Gerrity, Khuman and Young all reject rigidity, and instead emphasize the importance of



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# Molly Isabella is dishing out digital slices of Charlottesville

One University student is documenting the city's culinary culture on Instagram

Ingrid Gay | Life Editor

With all that happens on Grounds, it can be hard for many students to find the time to explore the broader city of Charlottesville beyond what the University itself offers. In turn, students often experience only a crumb of the food and culture scene that is flourishing past the Corner. Fortunately, fourth-year College student Molly Isabella is dishing out digital slices of what the city has to offer for students available right at their fingertips.

At the University, Isabella studies computer science and handles social media marketing for her sorority, Kappa Delta. From her phone, she runs the blog-style Instagram account @MealswithMolls, which has garnered over 8,000 followers by posting content that centers on Charlottesville's multifaceted culinary world.

Students may recognize Isabella from her series of Instagram Reels that detail her pursuit of finding the best coffee shop in Charlottesville, or from her various reviews of restaurants all around the city — Smyrna, Ethos Wine & Tea, The Local and Carmello's, to name a few.

Though she did not arrive on Grounds until 2022, Isabella has been making a name for herself with her account in the food blogosphere since 2017. She started a food Instagram account — the one she still uses today — to post pictures of her meals from restaurants and tag them.

Isabella routinely posted throughout high school, but decided to take a step back from her account during her first year at the University to focus on the transition to college. At the start of her second year, Isabella was struggling with a difficult course load and uncertainty regarding whether she was pursuing the right field of study. Remembering the purpose and joy her food blog brought to her, she decided to revamp her account.

"I was sort of going through an identity crisis with my major, and I [didn't] really know what I [wanted] to do," Isabella said. "I sort of channeled all of that negativity and uncertainty into something that I knew and loved, which was my account."

In hopping back online, Isabella found a familiar sense of joy

waiting for her. She was even able to reconnect with foodie friends she made during the pandemic, transforming her feelings of directionlessness into a renewed sense of purpose and community.

The rehailing brought new opportunities — the biggest one being the Charlottesville culinary scene. Fast-forward, Isabella has spent the better part of the last three years discovering and displaying all that the city has to offer when it comes to good restaurant meals, wineries with amazing views or grab-and-go coffee stops. As of 2024, she has expanded onto TikTok as a secondary platform.

Her content has not gone unnoticed — the City of Charlottesville's Instagram account collaborated with her last May, sponsoring her and her boyfriend on a sunset cruise of the James River. Isabella said that this became one of her favorite experiences her work has given her.

"The @charlottesvilleva, that account has reached out to me to do collaboration," Isabella said. "There was a batteau boat sunset cruise. It was in Scottsville, Va., which is

like 30 minutes away, on the James River. It was the coolest thing ever ... We got to listen to the history of the batteau boats in Virginia. It's so fascinating."

While there are a few University-centered events she has featured, such as her time spending a semester abroad with UVa. in Siena, Italy, she mostly focuses her content on Charlottesville. Not only do her posts allow her to bring more attention to small and local establishments, but Isabella also finds that it ensures she maintains a balance between her life as a student and as an individual.

"[The focus on the City] solidifies the balance of being a UVa. student, but also being an active member in the Charlottesville community," Isabella said. "To me, it's so important if I'm coming to school here for four years, and I want to say I lived in Charlottesville, I feel like I really have to experience it."

One way Isabella explores Charlottesville is with the city's semi-annual Restaurant Week — which runs from Jan. 26 to Feb. 1 — where fine dining establishments offer three course meal specials at \$25,

\$35 or \$45 a person. A food lover's haven, Isabella is excited for the upcoming deals, planning on attending Charlottesville staples like Orzo Kitchen & Wine Bar, Bang! and The Whiskey Jar. With so many great restaurants in the area participating, she looks forward to sharing her experience of Restaurant Week on her accounts.

Despite the work that being a content creator requires — from managing social media's less-glamorous analytics side and judgment from strangers for her content — Isabella still holds that Instagram is her outlet. From giving her avenues to connect to new people and finding new places in the community to explore, her blogging has become a fixed and beloved facet in her day-to-day life as a student at the University and a Charlottesville resident.

"By creating content, I'm showing what I'm doing and what I liked and my UVa. experience," Isabella said. "You have to get over the embarrassment of being perceived, but I feel like I've just sort of embraced it. This is what I love to do."

## A fish in a sea of alcohol

Dealing with the social pressure to party as someone who avoids partying

Kendra Mickle | Staff Writer

I was eating lunch with a group of new friends in Newcomb dining hall at the beginning of last semester when they asked me the question that never fails to fill me with anxiety — "Do you want to go out with us this weekend?" The bite of pizza I took just before hardened in my mouth as stress stripped me of any appetite. After a few moments of awkward silence and hesitant chewing, I admitted that I had never gone out before. Their eyes widened and heads tilted, clearly wondering how I — a college student — had never been to a party.

Partying has never been my "thing." I come from a small town in Northern Virginia where most people my age spend their weekends shopping at what I'm certain is the world's smallest mall or driving to a nearby city just to find something to do. In high school, the "popular" kids threw house parties, but my friends and I were never a part of their friend group. Ultimately, I turned out to be a 20-year-old non-partier.

Don't get me wrong. I have fun — just not in the way that other

students might expect. My version of fun involves watching movies with friends and hosting intimate game nights, not going to frats or drinking alcohol like several of my peers. There is a simplicity to my college experience that I enjoy greatly and hardly ever regret. Still, whenever the topic of partying comes up, I feel embarrassed to admit that I don't go out.

Now, in my third year, I have come to recognize that this embarrassment arises for several reasons. The most prominent is that partying is understood as an integral part of college culture.

I know this not only from the way that TV shows and movies portray college life, but also from the conversations I hear and engage in with friends. Just recently, as I was leaving class and preparing to spend my evening studying, I overheard a group of peers planning to go out later that night. In that moment — and in countless others since arriving at college — I felt like an outsider. A fish in a sea of sharks, as I often describe it.

I also can't help but feel like an outsider — a fish, if you will

— whenever I witness people bonding over various aspects of party culture. Numerous times, I have sat and listened to friends discuss their favorite and least favorite alcoholic drinks and their wildest drunken stories. In these moments, I nod and laugh along, all the while feeling incredibly disconnected from the conversation. Even so, I enjoy listening to my friends share their experiences, not only because they are entertaining, but also because their drinking horror stories reaffirm my decision to remain sober.

As a self-proclaimed fish, becoming friends with sharks is inevitable in college. It's a swim-with-the-sharks-or-be-eaten kind of a thing. I've learned that these sorts of friendships only succeed when both people genuinely respect each other's lifestyles. That respect means accepting that we may not always share the same interests or participate in the same activities. Attempting to change one another is neither effective, nor desirable, since true friendship requires allowing people to be fully themselves. Instead, mu-

tual understanding and a willingness to find shared activities are what allow friendships between sharks and fishes to thrive.

While it has its challenges, being a fish also has its pros. For instance, choosing not to party has given me the time and space to explore hobbies that differ from what college culture might encourage, such as reading a book on a Saturday evening rather than pre-gaming. It has also encouraged me to make friends with people who share my quieter passions. In fact, my first-year roommate and I decided to room together because we both enjoyed the same hobbies and did not plan to party. She is now one of my best friends on Grounds.

Now, despite my own personal preferences, there is nothing wrong with being a shark. If having fun means going out, drinking and spending late nights with friends, that is completely valid. Finding like-minded people to spend time with is a special gift that should not be taken for granted. But to all the fish out there, I want to remind you that

you are not alone. Choosing not to drink does not make your college experience any less meaningful, and it certainly does not make you any less of a "normal" college student.

Whether you are more of a shark or fish, I encourage you to define your college experience on your own terms. Discover the things that bring you the most happiness and pursue them, regardless of if they are deemed socially acceptable. I also encourage you to remain open to new experiences. While resisting pressure to conform is important, you might find that stepping outside your comfort zone brings you more joy than you initially assumed. Attend that new club meeting. Take a class you would not expect yourself to take. Maybe even give partying a shot one of these days — I might.

College is your ocean, or whatever the saying is, so don't forget to explore it. After all, we only have four years of this.



# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## U.Va's 'Writing with Sound' class is a crash course in podcasting

Students learn the techniques of audio storytelling from concept to publication

Adrian Weakley | Staff Writer

Typically, University students cap off their semesters with essays, exams and projects that sum up everything they have learned in their courses. But in some cases, the audience for their work is a lot larger than a single professor and a handful of teaching assistants. One such example is ENWR 3640, "Writing with Sound," a unique course that gives students a glimpse into the world of narrative podcast production and publishes their work for a broader audience to enjoy.

The 16-student class has been one of the University's hidden gems for nearly a decade, especially for those looking to fulfill the second writing requirement in an unconventional way. Steph Ceraso, associate professor of digital writing and rhetoric, created the course to help students hone their writing skills while harnessing her research in sound studies and composition.

"When I got hired in 2016, I developed 'Writing with Sound' as a kind of experiment, and it has become my signature course," Ceraso said. "It's truly my favorite class to teach."

Throughout the semester, students produce a season of an original podcast series of their own creation completely from scratch. In recent years, the course has focused on mental wellness around Grounds as part of the "U OK UVA?" series, which lasted for three seasons over the course of three semesters. However, this past fall, students had the chance to start fresh with a brand new series. After voting on a variety of potential themes, the students in the course landed on the concept of failure, and the podcast "Failing into Place" was born. Focusing on the young adult perspective, the four-episode show explores topics such as an over-reliance on artificial intelligence in academia and the experience of students who dropped out of college.

Specifically, students in the class are split into teams of four to create one 15-20 minute episode per team that blends narration, interviews and sound design. At the end of each semester, the four episodes make up a larger podcast series. Through a variety of exercises and workshops, they cultivate skills to become more thoughtful listeners, writers and editors. Everything on



ASMA SANALLAH | THE CAVALIER DAILY

the syllabus is done in pursuit of completing a polished piece that will be released on major platforms, such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts, for the world to hear.

The four episodes are published together at the end of the semester to create a cohesive, comprehensive season of the podcast. The final product is the result of 16 weeks of brainstorming, collaboration and revision.

Fourth-year College student Nicole Connolly described the challenges and benefits of working on a single project for an entire semester.

"A project like this takes trial, error and revision to be truly successful," Connolly said. "At the same time, working on only one project is beneficial because you can take lots of time to perfect your work."

Over the course of the semester, students have the chance to refine their episodes based on feedback from classmates and guest listeners who stop by for a week in the second half of the semester. In past years, these have included professional podcasters such as Lulu Miller, co-host of the acclaimed show "Radiolab." Ceraso said that she finds having multiple cycles of revision and input from various people results

in a much stronger show, and it allows students to feel a deeper connection with their work.

Through the course's flexibility and outlet for expression, the students are able to channel curiosity for significant issues in a nontraditional format. Connolly particularly appreciated the creative freedom the class offers.

"My class and I got to create the theme of the podcast ourselves and each branch out in our own creative directions for each episode," Connolly said. "Most professors don't allow you that type of freedom ... our professor, Steph Ceraso, always trusted, pushed and put her faith in us to accomplish this project."

In line with the non-traditional medium of expression, a major focus of the course is teaching students to write for the ear as opposed to the academic style they have grown accustomed to. They have to ensure their writing will resonate with listeners when spoken aloud, which often involves cutting back on complexity in favor of a more streamlined, natural voice. The pacing and flow of the narration is also crucial to keep a listener's attention. Ceraso explained how participating in this process helps students sharpen their communication

skills.

"Many students tell me that learning to write this way has helped them improve their writing in other classes — that they're using less fluff and academic jargon and instead focusing on communicating their thinking in lucid ways," Ceraso said. "Getting to the essence of an idea is difficult work, but it makes the writing so much better."

In addition to scriptwriting, students conduct interviews for their episodes and learn how to use the audio editing software Audacity, an approachable yet professional technology for podcasts and voiceovers. From the writing practice to the technical know-how, the course offers a well-rounded experience in every step of the creative process. Fourth-year College student Irene Si said she enjoyed stepping outside of her comfort zone over the course of the semester.

"I had zero audio editing or storytelling experience coming in, but I ended the course with an entirely new skillset," Si said. "Taking on new experiences like this gives me the courage to take on similar creative challenges in the future when I find a new medium that piques my interest."

According to Ceraso, the ex-

perience of leaving the course with new skills and passions is common among "Writing with Sound" students. She said she has been consistently blown away by their growth as writers and the quality of their final podcasts.

"I find that students are extremely motivated," Ceraso said. "Each semester they put an enormous amount of effort into the class, and I'm so proud of what they have been able to produce with no previous experience."

"Failing into Place" can be found on Spotify and Apple Podcasts. In addition, all previous shows produced by "Writing with Sound" students are hosted on the Virginia Audio Collective website. A different section of "Writing with Sound," taught by Asst. Prof. Piers Gelly, will be taking place in the Spring 2026 semester.



# Intriguing and imaginative arts courses to take this spring

Five arts classes that can be taken to bring inspiration to your stressful schedule

Calla Mischen | Staff Writer



PRATHA RAVANI | THE CAVALIER DAILY

As students fret over perfecting their schedules last-minute, some struggle to select a holistic courseload to engage in all that the University has to offer. There are many exciting art-related classes available every semester, in which students often take advantage of the opportunity to broaden their horizons, fulfill graduation requirements and in certain cases boost their GPA. Whatever the case, here is a list of a few, waiting to be added to schedules and hidden in the Student Information System.

## ENGL 3611 “The Art and Science of Time Travel”

“The Art and Science of Time Travel” is a small, discussion-based course that would be a dream for any science fiction fan. Taught in the English department, the course offers an interdisciplinary look at time travel as seen through novels, film and music. Students will learn about concepts in physics related to time travel and use them to investigate the idea in various art forms, such as the movie “Interstellar,” the novel “Kindred” and music by Bob Marley.

According to the course de-

scription on SIS, assignments may include designing a time machine and drafting proposals for policy in time travel — presenting a distinctly imaginative learning environment. Assoc. Prof. Njelle Hamilton teaches the cohort of 25 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 to 1:45 p.m. To explore time travel in art with an academic lens, students should consider enrolling.

## DRAM 1010 “How Theatre Works”

“How Theatre Works” is a great opportunity for those looking to explore theatre who may have passed on the opportunity in high school. Throughout the semester, students will read, watch and create their own plays, getting a well-rounded and intensive look at theatre. The 50-person lecture has sections on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. and 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Senior Lecturer Cady Garey teaches the course, helping students study plays and production style in an effort to uncover how theatre artists can fashion creative messaging. “How Theatre Works” is sure to provide a cre-

ative outlet and exciting way to engage in theatre to any student looking to get involved in the art form.

## DRAM 1220 “Art of the Creature”

For a wholly hands-on experience, students can take “Art of the Creature,” a 20-person course instructed by drama department Lecturer Annie Temmink. In this course, a semester’s efforts culminate in the construction of ornate creature puppets. Moreover, it introduces students to the physical and artistic methods involved in their creation, involving unorthodox designs and industrious engineering.

The handheld or human-size wearable puppets crafted in previous years were featured as supporting characters in the Stan Winston & Steve Warner Festival of the Moving Creature, an unparalleled and vibrant celebration of large-scale puppetry. Rarely do classes at the University end in a parade, but this course’s final festival will mirror the joy and enthusiasm cultivated in the classroom.

## MUSI 3065 “Africanfuturism”

“Africanfuturism” offers compelling lessons on science fiction in African culture, history and mythology, particularly through its music. The course covers works by artists like Janelle Monae, Octavia Butler and Sun Ra with additional explorations of the genre in African film and literature. Students will learn how African thought and creativity evolved throughout history via these mediums of speculative fiction.

Prof. Nicole Mitchell Gantt and graduate Arts & Sciences student Dilshan Weerasinghe teach the 22-person course on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. The course offers an uncommon way for students to engage with African music and art, teaching unparalleled lessons about its roots and evolution.

## MDST 2810 “Cinema As An Art Form”

Students looking to expand their film repertoires may be interested in “Cinema As An Art Form,” a Media Studies class that reveals how film is made and how its role in art has morphed over time. Taught by Lecturer Mat-

thew Marshall, “Cinema As An Art Form” meets on Mondays from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. to tackle a distinct movie each week. The class carefully scrutinizes film techniques in works ranging from niche black and white classics to modern staples of entertainment. In the large 230-person lectures, students will pick up on how to spot artistic techniques, critique film and analyze it within its periodical context.

Whatever art form calls your name, Grounds likely has an opportunity in store deep within SIS. This spring, STEM students looking to enroll in a one-of-a-kind art class and humanities majors vying for new genres of lectures should take advantage of the riveting arts classes the University offers.



# Netflix's looming Warner Bros. deal unnerves young creatives

With Netflix at the forefront of the bidding war for the company, students voice concerns over the direction the film industry is heading

Darya Bartol | Senior Associate

In an over 80 billion dollar deal, Netflix is emerging as victorious to take over Warner Bros. Discovery. This deal comes after a bidding war in which entertainment giants such as Paramount Skydance and Comcast have thrown their hats in the ring. While the deal is not final, Warner Bros. has rejected other advances, leaving Netflix at the forefront of this war. This monumental deal, however, raises concerns over the trajectory of the entertainment industry.

Sitting as the number one streaming service in the nation, Netflix already holds a significant amount of power in the entertainment industry. This purchase would only increase their power, as the proposed acquisition of Warner Bros. includes HBO, their film and television studios and the intellectual properties. Netflix would also own the third largest streaming platform in HBO Max.

While the deal still has to undergo government approval and finalization, the possibility that this will create a monopoly due to unequal ownership of entertainment has been troubling for many, including Daniel McCain, a filmmaker and third-year

College student, as the proposed acquisition raises professional concerns for his pursuit of a career in the film industry.

"If you have one single company controlling conditions for workers, where it's either you accept [their] standard or you find work somewhere else, except [in this case, Netflix] bought a lot of the competition," McCain said. "At least in the mainstream studio space that is terrifying."

Along with concerns of a monopoly come concerns from many writers about a potential hindrance in creativity. By condensing the number of studios and production companies, creatives will have fewer places to turn to in order to get their projects off the ground. The Writers Guild of America East and West issued a joint statement opposing this merger.

"The outcome would eliminate jobs, push down wages, worsen conditions for all entertainment workers, raise prices for consumers and reduce the volume and diversity of content for all viewers," the statement reads.

Netflix, and other streaming platforms, have become notorious for cancelling up-and-coming shows af-

ter the first season if they don't reach a certain level of success measured by cost efficiency and impact on the platform. According to Ansh Pathapadu, filmmaker and fourth-year Engineering student, this line becomes blurred as Netflix hides some of its own data.

"Netflix doesn't show that data to their artists," Pathapadu said. "So they have this power to control what gets made and what doesn't get made."

In addition to concerns about creative freedom, the deal poses a threat to the future of theatrical releases. While Warner Bros. initially started as a movie studio, Netflix started as a DVD rental company, later expanding to streaming, meaning they have less experience with investing in the theatrical experience. Netflix has stated that it expects "to maintain Warner Bros.' current operations," despite Netflix's success coming from being a streaming platform, which could lead to a shift away from the theatrical focus.

Further complicating the consequences of the acquisition, Deadline recently reported that Netflix plans to adopt a 17-day theatrical window

before being moved to streaming platforms and video-on-demand. This would greatly cut down the length that most movies are played in theaters from a 45-day cycle, which may heighten the phenomenon of many consumers turning to streaming services out of convenience rather than traditional movie-going.

McCain mentioned that in enacting a shorter theatrical release period, Netflix prioritizes larger films that will make a profit within this smaller window over indie projects that need more time in theaters for buzz to spread on social media and by word of mouth.

"Anything that's not an award season contender doesn't really have a great shot at getting into theaters with Netflix," McCain said. "I think that's antithetical to what theaters can be, where it's a chance to go a step outside of yourself and see a new voice and a new story or a new twist on something you've already seen."

As movie-going has declined in the past years, this merger indicates the beginning of an end for a timeless industry. With technological advances in the film industry, Maggie

Polistina, a member of the theater community at the University and fourth-year College student, states that this merger is symptomatic and will lead to further changes in the film industry.

"The merger is definitely an indicator of how streaming services have become increasingly more common and powerful in our media industry," Polistina said. "But I also see this merger as an active diminution of competition that would essentially limit the scope and power of major film companies, like Warner Bros."

While the uncertainty with this deal leaves many students anxious for the future, there is still hope for young filmmakers in this uncertain climate. McCain said that the desire to create meaningful stories will always exist even if this merger comes to fruition.

"There's still a way to make your dreams come true," McCain said. "To take that feeling that you have in your bones and in your soul, the need to tell stories, and to turn that into a reality, even if the system is increasingly not favored to you."

## SPORTS

# How Johann Grünloh elevates Virginia on both ends

The German seven-footer has quietly been one of the most productive freshmen in college basketball, and is instrumental in the Cavaliers' system

Thomas Baxter | Senior Associate

Boiled down, basketball is a game of possessions. Winning a game requires one, if not both, of two things — scoring points more efficiently than an opponent, or simply creating a higher number of shots. What makes the sport so compelling to millions around the world is that there is no simple formula for either.

For the past decade under Tony Bennett, Virginia basketball's answer was to slow the game down — methodical offense and the notorious packline defense — while others tried to speed it up. Now, under Coach Ryan Odom, it is the opposite.

The new-look, No. 16 Cavaliers (15-2, 4-1 ACC) play an aggressive brand of basketball. They pressure after made baskets, they take shots early in the shot clock and they shoot a lot of three-pointers. It is a system that asks players to buy into their roles, and also to play those roles with energy, consistency and precision.

Few players exemplify this dynamic better than freshman center Johann Grünloh.

One of the more notable adds from Odom's first offseason in Charlottesville, Grünloh was projected by some as a possible second-round pick in June's NBA Draft. Born in northwestern Germany, Grünloh joined professional club Rasta Vechta as a teenager, rising through their youth teams and eventually earning professional experience in the top flight of German basketball.

Now, the 20-year-old seven-footer makes up one half of what Odom recently called a "two-headed monster." Grünloh and senior center Ugonna Onyenso are two of the most fearsome shot-blockers in the nation, both menaces in drop coverage who consistently deter rim attempts and allow the guards to play more physically in the Cavaliers' high-pressure system.

"My role is to kind of slow it down so a guard can fight back in

front," Grünloh said. "It's not to jump at the ball or stop him high, my role is to stop him at the rim [and] give the guard as much time to fight back in front to make it a two-on-two again."

Negating rim attempts is part of what makes Grünloh so vital to that possession-by-possession equation for winning basketball games. With 44 blocks on the season, he ranks 10th in the country in blocks per game, all while often avoiding swatting at the ball to mitigate the risk of fouling.

In a system that asks for comfortability within a given role, Grünloh's style of play has allowed him to excel on both ends of the floor. He plays low-usage basketball where he thrives as a screener and under the basket — he has made 67 percent of his close two-point attempts and already has 20 dunks on the season — but his offensive abilities do not stop there.

Those ancillary offensive skills are especially visible with his

floor-spacing ability. Odom and the Virginia staff have encouraged Grünloh to take three-point shots when left open, and he has made a handful up to this point. The percentages are improving, currently at 34 percent, but simply having a center with a real volume of three-point attempts can force opponents' hands.

"When a five-man can shoot like Johann can, it's just a blessing for guards that like to get downhill, like myself and our other guards," graduate guard Malik Thomas said.

Grünloh's offensive game is certainly more of a complimentary asset in the Cavaliers' attack. He does not find himself at the free throw line very often, nor is he particularly effective from that location, but Grünloh is a polished play finisher that is comfortable far away from the rim, leading the team in two-point shooting percentage.

Revisiting his value on a possession-by-possession level, Grünloh is a capable scorer that opens

up a lot offensively for Virginia. But that is not where the big man thrives. The Cavaliers are a top 10 offensive rebounding team in the country — an accolade to which every player has contributed — but Grünloh has by far been the most important player in getting those second chances at shots. He has 51 offensive rebounds on the season — 13 better than his next teammate — averaging more than three per game.

For a system like Odom's that forces opposing teams to start their actions late in the shot clock with full court defense, and in turn, thrives in pace and movement on the offensive side, an anchor like Grünloh only increases in importance against tougher competition. As the season progresses towards an ACC tournament and possibly a national one, an excellent drop defender, play finisher and offensive rebounder could be the difference maker in tight games.



# Simmonds, off to MLS after torrid season, keeps moving fast

The No. 3 pick was a force at Virginia, a big, strong forward with a professional demeanor to match

Michael Liebermann | Senior Writer

On a warm night in November, 17 games into what had clearly become the only college season for freshman forward Nick Simmonds, time was dripping low in a deadlock. No. 1 seed Virginia and No. 9 seed North Carolina, ACC Tournament quarterfinal, knotted 1-1.

Simmonds delivered a crackling volley winner in the 78th minute. It marked the ninth goal of the season for the eventual ACC Freshman of the Year and first-team All-American. Dec. 18, five weeks later and the day after his 19th birthday, FC Dallas drafted Simmonds with the third pick in the 2026 MLS SuperDraft.

It all happened rather fast.

Simmonds arrived in Charlottesville last spring and failed to score a single goal in the unofficial spring season. So after the Nov. 9 win against North Carolina, a question arises. Two months prior — before the season and the goals and the mounting hubbub — would he have had the confidence to take on that volley against the Tar Heels?

The coach is amused by the question. He throws back his head and laughs.

“I actually would say probably he shoots more than anyone, so I don’t think he’s ever lacked confidence,” Coach George Gelnovatch said.

The father, still in the stands, is earnest. He trusts in the process.

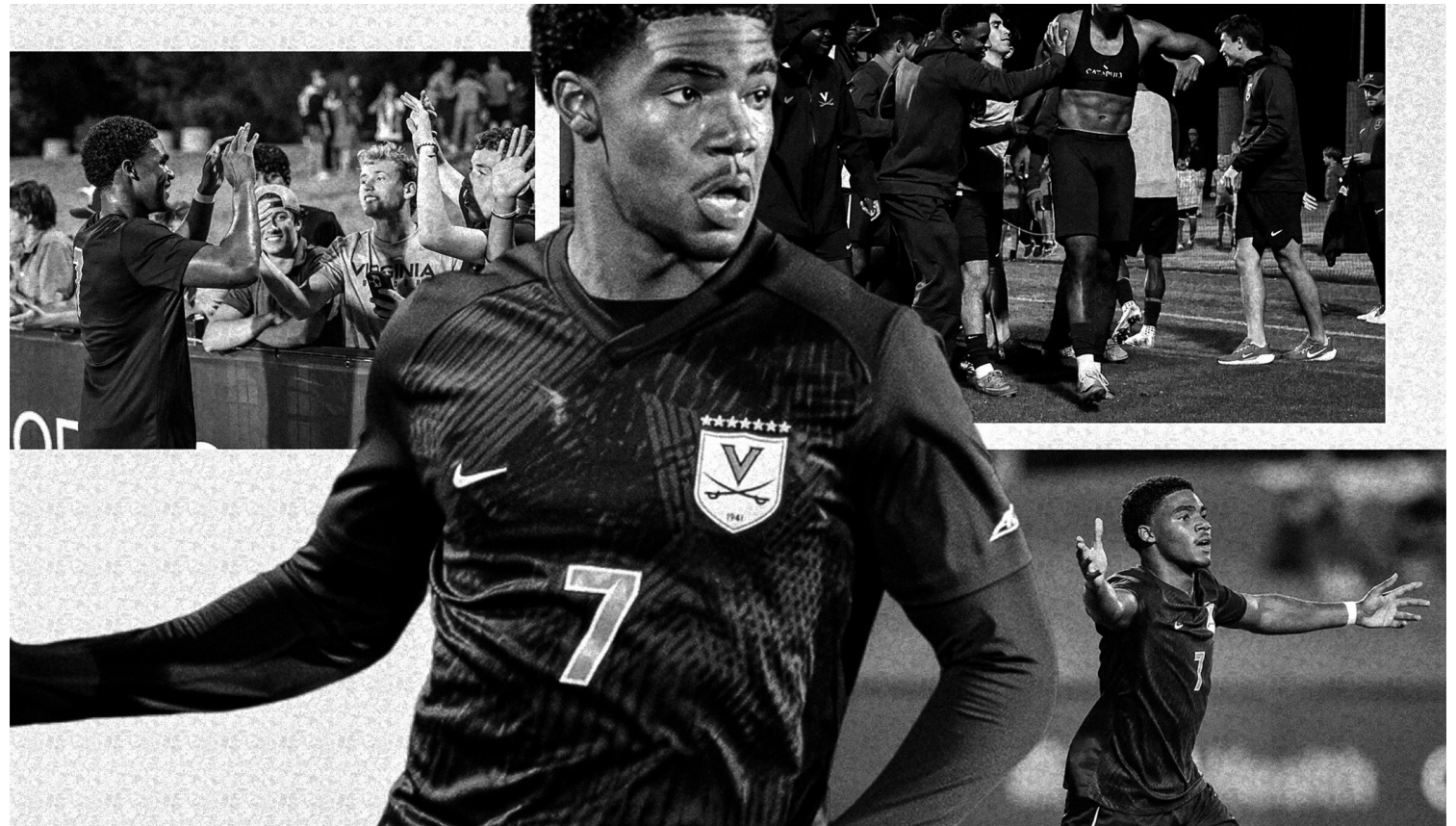
“Oh, definitely, yeah,” Greg Simmonds said. “Whatever you see he is doing now, he’s been doing that a lot throughout his youth career, a lot of extra training outside of his team setting. So everything that you see, he’s had a million reps of that already.”

Still, practice reps are not the same thing as having the conviction to — in a tied quarterfinal — take a floated ball down off the chest, maintain stride and, the angle closing down, the ball bouncing, strike it despite the open teammates trailing the play.

The player thinks for a second about the question and gives a half smile. He has the real answer.

“I want to say yes,” Simmonds said. “But, you know, obviously confidence builds over time, and I think scoring some goals gives me the room to take shots like that. So yes and no.”

If this sounds similar to perspective, like wisdom at such a young age, that is probably exactly what it is. Simmonds looked and spoke like a professional from the day he started the sea-



AHNA HAMPTON | THE CAVALIER DAILY

son-opener over a fusillade of older talent. Quickly it became clear that, before too long, he was going to officially become one.

His rise happened with the speed of that volley. People who played with Simmonds in his youth in Richmond say there was nothing remarkable about him for a while, he was just a kid playing club soccer with the rest, and then all of a sudden, in the span of a season, maybe two, he was off. Big and fast. A lethal forward.

That is the tale from down I-64 in Richmond. Already it has passed into myth.

As a player, Simmonds is far from those days. He scored 10 goals this year in 19 games, two of them from outside the penalty area, thunderous strikes. He can be a target man — at 6-foot-4 — big enough to hold off defenders and win balls in the air, and also a distributor, frequently dropping in to receive and play on the way to five assists.

“You don’t find nines like that, that have his ability to play back to goal but also create his own shot,” California Coach Leonard Griffin said this season. “And then his ball-striking is elite.”

Virginia this season was a team stocked with talent, like a net had gone into the sea and pulled up a batch of luminescent

fish. Virginia had three other forwards — senior Triton Beauvois, freshman Bacary Tandjigora and sophomore AJ Smith — that played meaningful minutes at the top of the 3-5-2. Smith, a returning draft pick, managed six fewer goals than Simmonds, who attracted the spotlight both up top and across the field.

Against North Carolina, Simmonds assisted the equalizer late in the first half before scoring the winner. He galloped onto a through ball, his blue shirt punching through two white-shirted defenders like a stone through paper. His first touch pushed the ball across to Beauvois, who thumped it home.

Three minutes later, Simmonds lifted his head from the corner of the box and pummeled a swerving, dipping shot that dinged the top of the crossbar, as if to say hello. The winner came roughly an hour later.

Then a curious thing happened in the goal celebration. Simmonds’ shirt divorced his back. He launched it into the night sky, flinging it over the on-rushing crowd of teammates — and with impressively tight form, as far as shirt removal goes.

This time, Gelnovatch took issue with the celebration. Two weeks prior against Clemson, the first time the shirt was flung, had been one thing. The game

was basically over. Long decided. Simmonds had just capped a hat trick, for crying out loud, the program’s first since 2012 and first by a freshman since 2009. Gelnovatch that time even offered Simmonds a hug.

But now? In a quarterfinal, separated by one goal?

There was no explaining this one.

“Early to do it,” Simmonds said, a little sheepish. “But thankfully we got it over the line. So I didn’t look dumb.”

He looked a little abashed. But only a little. Simmonds, after all, just turned 19. He is still a kid.

Gelnovatch kept that in mind as the chatter climbed. He wanted to keep the player insulated, keep him in the moment. There was plenty of time after the season to focus on the draft.

“He’s got a lot of things going for him,” Gelnovatch said this season. “Big body, athletic, yet technical, can come back for the ball. He can hold the ball up. He’s good off the dribble. Good engine. Tremendous, really, really good work rate. Great, coachable kid. Also a technical finisher ... He’s only going to get better.”

Simmonds had his misses this season. He failed to convert in the 1-0 ACC final defeat against SMU, the loss that broke a 14-game unbeaten run. Then, despite converting from the pen-

alty spot in regular time against UNC Greensboro in the NCAA Tournament, Simmonds’ penalty in the opening round of penalty kicks struck the crossbar. Virginia, the tournament’s No. 2 seed, dropped out after one game.

Simmonds, as he begins at FC Dallas, is fortunate to have his whole family with him on the journey. It helps that his father, Greg Simmonds, played in the MLS. He was at every game this season — along with a mini section of family, a few rows up the stands to the left of the bench.

“To have their support means the world to me,” Simmonds said. “I wouldn’t be here without them. Truly my strength. My mom, my dad, Aunt Rachele, Uncle James.”

After every goal, Simmonds performed some celebration, often running to the corner to slap hands with the kids lining the fence. Then, at some point on the walk back to midfield, the disarray melting back into the order of kickoff, he’d raise his hands in a heart toward that mini section.

At the final buzzer against North Carolina, Greg Simmonds rotated a circle in the stands, phone out, videoing the scene.

It was a moment he wanted to remember. Things, for his son, have been moving so fast. He wanted to make sure not to forget.



# NCAA's near-miss on sports betting shows true stakes

The NCAA nearly rolled the dice on sports betting's most vulnerable demographic — there's no guarantee it won't try again

Aimee Crosbie | Sports Editor

Not long ago, conventional wisdom painted the typical gambler as a weathered middle-aged man in a smoky casino or a bookie's parlor. Today's reality is starkly different. Betting — especially on sports — has undergone a radical transformation in the last few years, expanding from shady backroom activities into a highly commercialized and media-driven industry.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down federal prohibitions in 2018, 38 states have embraced legal sportsbooks and Americans have wagered over \$250 billion in this seven-year span. As talk of gambling now permeates broadcasts and leagues, this rapid normalization of sports betting is opening a Pandora's box — look no further than the NBA's latest black eye.

Just two months ago, a massive federal investigation exposed an illegal betting ring involving none other than a current head coach and a star player. Portland Trail Blazers Coach Chauncey Billups — an NBA Hall of Famer — and Miami Heat guard Terry Rozier were arrested and indicted alongside over 30 others for allegedly running rigged betting schemes.

The allegations are frankly jaw-dropping. Rozier was accused of leaking insider information and planning his own in-game actions to manipulate bets. Prosecutors say Rozier tipped off associates that he would leave a 2023 game early with a fake injury. Lo and behold, he exited after nine minutes, enabling his co-conspirators to bet over \$200,000 that he would underperform.

So why should college sports care about an NBA scandal? Allowing NCAA athletes to bet on professional sports blurs a critical line. Today, it's 'only on the NFL' or 'only on the NBA,' but the normalization of gambling opens the door to more insidious behavior. If a Hall of Fame coach is susceptible, how can we expect unpaid — or now, partially-to-heavily compensated — 19-year-olds to resist engaging in illegal activity with potentially lucrative results?

Historically, the NCAA has taken a hardline stance — student-athletes and staff are strictly prohibited from betting on any sport, at any level. Yet as gambling becomes ubiquitous, enforcing that blanket ban has grown increasingly difficult. Recently, that safeguard came per-

ilously close to being dismantled.

In an eyebrow-raising move, the NCAA's Division I cabinet approved a rule change Oct. 22 that would allow college athletes and staff to bet on professional sports. While the proposal barred betting on college games, it signaled a willingness to let amateurs wager on the very professional leagues they aspire to one day join.

The proposal was initially set to take effect Nov. 1, but public backlash triggered a rescission window that ran through Nov. 22. By the end of that period, more than two-thirds of Division I schools had voted to overturn the change. The NCAA leadership had defended the rule as one that "recognizes the realities of today's sports environment," even as campus administrators, commissioners and addiction experts were warning it was a major step in the wrong direction.

The NCAA insisted the change was "not an endorsement of sports betting" and that they remained committed to protecting integrity. But that stance rings somewhat hollow when considering the broader climate. The NBA scandal shows how quickly insiders can be entangled in unethical behavior.

Even beyond the NBA case, alarm bells have already been ringing over the past few years within the collegiate world. Many institutions have seen an unsettling uptick in betting-related scandals, despite the NCAA's current strict bans.

One of the most notable cases occurred last year at Notre Dame, where an external investigation discovered that over 60 percent of the men's swimming team had been betting among themselves on their own meets, as well as events like the Super Bowl and March Madness games, behavior completely at odds with NCAA rules.

The Notre Dame scandal demonstrated how deeply betting culture has permeated campus life, even in less scrutinized sports. Notre Dame's athletic director Pete Bevacqua lamented "a culture dismissive of Notre Dame's standards," and for good reason. Notre Dame's administrators responded by suspending the entire men's swimming program for at least one year due to the widespread gambling violations, leading to many student-athletes transferring and incoming recruits decommitting.

The situation in South Bend,



BENVIN LOZADA | THE CAVALIER DAILY

The NCAA was stunningly close to bringing sports betting into the collegiate world.

Ind. was not an isolated incident. Over the past year, dozens of student-athletes at schools like Iowa and Iowa State were implicated in betting violations, ranging from wagering on pro sports to allegedly betting on their own teams. In one recently adjudicated case, a Fresno State men's basketball player was found to have intentionally altered his performance as part of a prop-bet scheme.

Allowing student-athletes to gamble — even strictly on professional games — would send the message that gambling is a normal part of sports culture and a standard component of being an athlete. The fact that the NCAA came so close to telling student-athletes and athletic staff, "Well, okay, you can go ahead and bet on the NFL or NBA" seems naïve at best and reckless at worst. College sports are certainly not immune to the forces that led to the NBA scandal or the rise of betting apps that are predatory by design.

In fact, they may be more fragile — student-athletes are younger, less financially secure and under significant academic and athletic pressure. The last thing they need is the added strain of gambling losses or the ethical quicksand of betting entanglements.

Here in Virginia, the state legislature is grappling with this issue. While sports wagering is legal in the Commonwealth, state law currently forbids betting on Virginia's college teams to protect amateur athletes. Still,

every legislative session brings renewed pressure to lift that ban to capture tax revenue from the black market.

Unlike pro athletes, college players often aren't insulated by private security and walk the same campuses as their peers and fans, making them far more accessible to retaliation.

Old Dominion men's basketball player Jason Wade recalled that after a tough postseason loss, an enraged bettor — upset about losing a prop bet — actually confronted the team in person to complain that he couldn't cash out his wager. As this altercation goes to show, the monetary implications have the potential to not only affect spectators, but the safety and privacy of players too.

"Who's to say someone who is a million-dollar sports bettor wouldn't offer my starting pitcher a million dollars to throw a game?" University of Lynchburg assistant baseball coach Cam Lane said.

His hypothetical isn't far-fetched, either — high-rolling bettors have attempted to bribe athletes in the past. With more money sloshing around in both the collegiate sports and betting universes comes greater temptation for unscrupulous actors to see college kids as targets for co-opting outcomes.

Student-athletes at the University typically receive regular education on NCAA gambling rules — which, for now, is still a strict zero-tolerance policy — and Virginia's athletic de-

partment emphasizes that any betting could cost players their college and professional sporting careers.

Yet these kinds of rules and reminders can only do so much when flashy sportsbook ads are everywhere and the NCAA itself almost allowed betting by collegiate athletes and staff. The reality is, gambling isn't going anywhere — in fact, it's likely to grow even more intertwined with college sports through NIL, sponsorships and media presence in the coming years.

On Nov. 22, the NCAA ultimately chose to preserve the guardrails that protect student-athletes and the integrity of college sports. That outcome matters, but so does how close the NCAA came to a different result.

The warning signs are hard to ignore — it is abundantly clear that this is not the time to experiment with loosening boundaries. Even with the proposal reversed, the NCAA has demonstrated its willingness to experiment with the edge of integrity. If the NCAA attempts again, it risks chipping away at the very values college sports are meant to uphold.



PUZZLE

Ali Hunter | Puzzlist

Answers are available on the digital version of this puzzle which is published at [www.cavalierdaily.com](http://www.cavalierdaily.com).

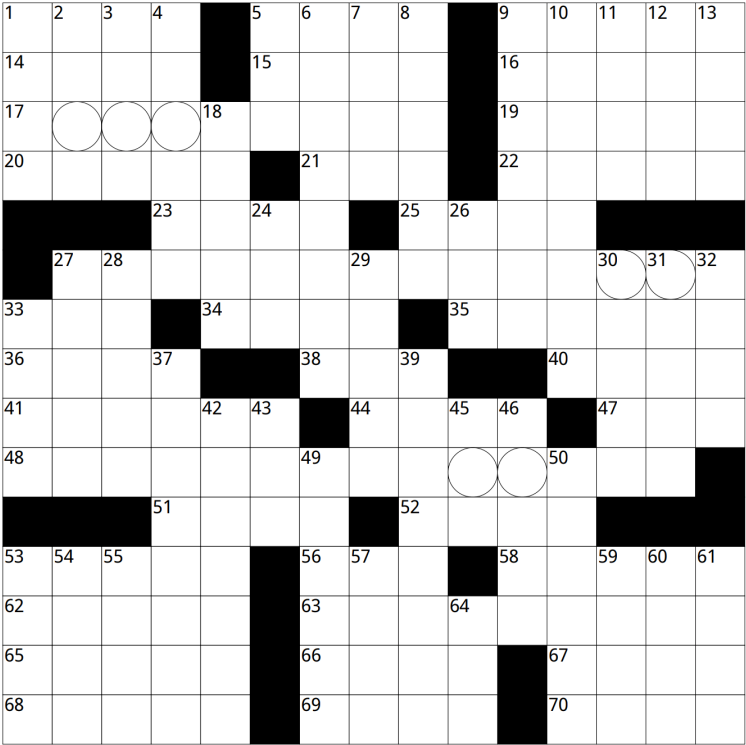
ACROSS

- 1 Drops from the roster  
5 Brings onto the roster  
9 Plant used to make tequila  
14 “Sundress” singer Rocky  
15 Brag about  
16 \_\_\_\_\_ well (is a good sign)  
17 Charlie Parker and Lisa Simpsons’ instrument  
19 Dartmouth and Brown  
20 Kirk on “This is the Turning Point” tour  
21 AFC unit  
22 Indie folk, for 48-Across  
23 Crossed out  
25 Still life fruit  
27 Female empowerment activist involved in a Bill Clinton scandal  
33 Justin Herbert’s team, on scoreboards  
34 Be defeated in triple overtime, say  
35 Like a runner-up, often  
36 Words after live or give  
38 Chin scratcher’s utterance

- 40 TikTok alternative  
41 Affluent Northern Virginian community  
44 Tucson school, for short  
47 Investment stat  
48 “Scott Street” and “Waiting Room” singer  
51 New Zealander  
52 “Waitress” composer Bareilles  
53 Introductory course?  
56 Mil. rank  
58 NCAA game channel  
62 William & Mary fans’ nickname  
63 Popular Sabrina Carpenter song...or part of visiting the circled letters during sorority rush  
65 Shirley Temple drinker, perhaps  
66 Shrek, for one  
67 Spanish “she”  
68 Some orders at Sombremos  
70 Rising \_\_\_\_\_ Gourmet
- DOWN

- 1 Consultant’s assignment  
2 Org. for part-time soldiers  
3 Uber or Lyft alternative  
4 Said  
5 NWSL participant  
6 GrubHub competitor  
7 2021 sci-fi film starring Timothée Chalamet  
8 Treeless plain  
9 Spanberger of Virginia  
10 9-Down’s elected position  
11 Tennis score favoring the server  
12 Swerve suddenly  
13 LATI 1010 verb  
18 Popular antidepressant  
24 Prefix with friendly or logical  
26 Sounds of disgust  
27 Hinge success  
28 Sight-related prefix  
29 Mammal of Madagascar  
30 Produce cross words?  
31 What one may play for  
32 Every 12 mos.  
33 Favor one side?  
37 Game that helps babies learn object permanence

- 39 Target of a dehumidifier  
42 Ones acting in accordance  
43 Cabell antecedent  
45 Org. that regulates Ozempic  
46 What nouns and verbs must do  
49 King protector  
50 Day to put all your eggs in one basket?  
53 Monthly bank acct. summary  
54 Diva’s solo  
55 The \_\_\_\_\_ (Eagles’ stadium nickname)  
57 Type of dancer or boot  
59 Ralph Lauren brand  
60 Empty, as a math set  
61 Europe’s third-longest river  
64 Course evaluation abbreviation



THE CAVALIER DAILY

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# OPINION

## LEAD EDITORIAL

### A letter of counsel to our new U.Va. President

*Amidst a multitude of challenges to our institution's educational mission, the 136th and 137th Editorial Boards suggest actionable reflection for new University leadership*

Dear University President Scott Beardsley, congratulations on your ascension to the role of University President, and thank you for your eagerness to support our institution.

This appointment occurs within a continued crisis — in the past year, the forces of federalization and politicization have come to stand alongside a corporatization that distracted from our educational mission. The University's former president was ousted by the federal government, later granted the prerogative of continual investigations. We have been warped into a political football thrown between competing state interests — resulting in an incomplete Board of Visitors and a spectre of dubious legitimacy surrounding their actions, including your appointment. And in the midst of this crisis came distress at the thought of who would lead our community.

Most devastating to those stakeholders experiencing these crises was the lack of transparency with and empathy for our community disturbed by the circumstances forced upon them.

These are the same circumstances that we on the Editorial Boards experienced with unease, and these are the conditions of the stormy present under which you assume the presidential office. This cloud of crisis necessitates clear-eyed and empathetic leadership. Moreover, these circumstances demand the reaffirmation of the mission that is at the core of our University — not the triumvirate of corporatization, politicization and federalization that threatens our institution.

As you declared in your message to our University community, we are bonded by love for this University that imbues us with a determination to rehabilitate this attacked institution. To this end, we composed suggestions as you begin your term as president.

One facet of former University President Jim Ryan's leadership that heartened stakeholders was his commitment to connecting with those in the University community — it was the opening of Carr's Hill to students, the significant investments of time and money into student organizations

and other actions which created an impression of genuine empathy for the community he led. Since his resignation, we have been resoundingly dismayed that University leadership lacks a similar desire to involve stakeholders in their decisions. While your promises to listen to stakeholders are amiable, they risk misdiagnosing sentiments — earnest engagement is not represented by scheduled listening opportunities, but by an unceasing dedication to connecting with community members who presently feel ignored. Only with this consistent cooperation can we ensure that all University stakeholders are motivated to commit to our educational mission's ideal of a "collaborative, diverse community."

Committing to our mission requires more than care for the community. Given the attempts to exert influence on our University, your leadership must traverse a federal government willing to besmirch the core ideals of education and reopen investigations into our University at any time. You must also navigate a state

government divided over appointments to the Board and funding for our operations. While your pledge to not be a "politically-driven leader" is valuable, it is important to reflect on what this means. Prioritizing our educational mission over politics may mean avoiding internal community debates. But it also necessitates taking political stances when outside political forces threaten to destabilize our educational ideals.

Ensuring our University is protected from damaging attacks is a tall task — that is why defending our University also demands ensuring that institutional leadership structures are reformed. This year has shown how vacancies in key University positions can weaken both the defense of our University's mission and the trust in institutional leadership. Therefore, it is important that you take measures, such as transparent appointment and operational processes that inform the community, to ensure a leadership structure that is trusted.

What these suggestions have in common is their centrality to ensuring that our educational mission is secured amidst the climate of circumstances polluting our University. Our educational mission stands at the core of our University, clarifying the need to ensure that concerning events do not produce a corrosive status quo.

Your email to our community ended with a recommitment to our University's mission — let our letter back to you, President Beardsley, help clarify what we hope this commitment will mean in practice.

Sincerely, the 136th and 137th Editorial Boards.

*This has been a joint editorial from the 136th and 137th Editorial Boards. THE CAVALIER DAILY EDITORIAL BOARD is composed of the Executive Editor, the Editor-in-Chief, the two Opinion Editors, two Senior Associates and an Opinion Columnist. The board can be reached at eb@cavalierdaily.com.*

## HAWKINS: Virginia Democrats, do not blow this up

*Virginia Democrats can choose to be the party of competent governance or the party of ideologues, but they cannot be both*

On Jan. 9, 2026, the Virginia General Assembly swore in a new delegation of representatives. For the first time in four years, Democrats entered the legislative session with a governmental trifecta. With this power, some wish to overthrow decades of Virginia law and ram through sweeping agenda items. Consequently, Democrats risk misinterpreting the 2025 election as a mandate for these policies. If Democrats are serious about governing Virginia, they need to temper their chimerical eagerness and stick to sensible policies.

Many Democrats appear anxious to jump the gun. Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell, for example, has floated the repeal of Virginia's longstanding right-to-work law — a statute that has remained materially unchanged since 1947. In the past two years, the Democrat-controlled General Assembly has passed a tsunami of legislation increasing the size of Virginia's bureaucracy, strangling business and impinging on the Second Amendment. The only impediment to this was Gov. Glenn Youngkin's aggressive veto power. With Youngkin out of office, many of those proposals now risk inflicting tangible damage.

While Democrats may have the votes, they do not have the mandate — 2025 was a unique case fueled by Trump's unpopularity. The government shutdown ignited the perfect storm of disillusioned Virginia voters. Republicans in Washington made an enemy out of much of Virginia, and the voters punished them for it. These are not ordinary

“

**With stability at the federal level quickly deteriorating, Democrats in Virginia have a generational opportunity to juxtapose their policies with national Republicans.”**

circumstances.

With the turmoil in Washington dominating the campaign, voters did not cast their ballot for left-wing activism — they cast their ballot hoping for normalcy. Gov.-elect Abigail Spanberger ran on a platform of pragmatism rather than ideological pandering. This is quintessential Virginia politics. Just as Youngkin was elected in 2021 due largely to President Joe Biden's floundering, the rationale behind Spanberger's victory shows that voters are averse to political upheaval.

Despite these signals, such up-

heaval seems to be the direction that Virginia Democrats want to steer. While many of the Democrats' aspirations are conventional liberal items, such as loosening abortion restrictions, other proposals are ridiculous. Some of these outlandish ideas include a full ban on gas vehicle sales by 2035, mirroring California and putting about 90 percent of the

Virginia car industry out of business.

Another is a sales tax increase on basic services. These new taxes would increase cost of living expenses and intensify hardship for working families. This would not only be an atrocious failure, but a betrayal of the voters, whose primary concern in the 2025 election was the cost of living. Democrats should be focused on alleviating high prices, not driving up the cost of laundry.

Unfortunately, in politics, common sense is an uncommon virtue. It would be a violation of such common sense to bludgeon Virginians

with a sledgehammer when so many are struggling. With stability in Washington quickly deteriorating, Democrats have an opportunity to juxtapose their policies with national Republicans. They should not squander this chance by pivoting leftward and alienating Virginians whose principal demand is effective, competent management.

Despite Spanberger's landslide victory, Youngkin is still popular, signaling that Virginia voters' grievances lie primarily with the Republican Party nationally. In fact, Youngkin's economic policies reflect the conservative approach that Congressional Republicans have abandoned. Virginia's economy continues to post robust economic output and has attracted an influx of investment. When Youngkin leaves the Governor's Mansion, Virginia will be in a strong fiscal position. Democrats should understand that maintaining a strong fiscal position

is imperative to Virginia's future.

State politics have sometimes avoided the toxic pitfalls that beset national politics. Yet, with partisans playing an increasing role in politics, there grows a temptation to pander to the fringes. Policies that reflect such pandering are rarely successful. Spanberger, to her credit, appears to be moving in the opposite direction, pushing for sharp tax reductions in an attempt to stabilize the cost of living. If this is the direction that Virginia Democrats take moving forward, it will be a winning message.

2026 presents an opportunity for Democrats to display that they know how to govern rather than grandstand, contrasting themselves with Washington. If Democrats balk at this opportunity, however, everyone will feel the consequences.

**JOSHUA HAWKINS** is a senior associate opinion editor for *The Cavalier Daily*. He can be reached at [opinion@cavalierdaily.com](mailto:opinion@cavalierdaily.com).



# CLIPPINGER: In praise of the ENWR during the age of AI

*The ENWR offers a lens into what writing education can accomplish amidst rapid technological change*

Generative artificial intelligence is reshaping how universities think about teaching writing. Some scholars have even called for eliminating the first-year composition course, or FYC, claiming that the skills around which it typically centers can now be so easily offloaded to AI that there is no longer any real human need for them. Indeed, no discipline can be fully equipped to handle and adapt to the changes posed by AI models' rapidly expanding capabilities. In the University's own FYC — dubbed the ENWR, or English Writing requirement — it is true that students could rely on AI to complete some of their coursework.

But, the FYC has not outlived our need for it — precisely because writing is a mode of human thought, inquiry and learning. Writing allows us to clarify complex ideas, wrestle with ambiguity and engage critically with texts and concepts. It is a practice that teaches us to think critically, developing skills that no model can yet replicate. The University's ENWR stands as a clear commitment to these ideals, and thus, underscores the continued importance of writing education.

Years before the release of the large language models, the Univer-

sity put forth their goal of creating a "culture of writing," in which students engage in writing across academic disciplines in two distinct ways. These consist of writing to learn, which involves personal reflection on topics, and writing to communicate, involving academic research assignments meant to be read by others. Indeed, the Univer-

“Thus, students become acquainted with the process of writing to learn — and machines cannot yet learn for us.”

sity's two requirements provide a compelling framework for writing education amid an era clouded by concerns about its obsolescence.

When students arrive on Grounds, they are first split into one of three ENWR pathways, dependent on their test results. The first pathway — which consists of the two-semester course pair ENWR 1505 and ENWR 1506 — provides students with a decelerated pace for completing the ENWR requirement in smaller class sections.

The second pathway, encompassing the ENWR 1510-1530, shares

the first's goal of critical inquiry, but ENWR 1520s distinguish themselves through community-engaged writing that grapples with issues affecting the Charlottesville area. Some classes even take students out of the classroom to work directly with local organizations, such as Assoc. English Prof. Kate Stephenson's 2023 course ENWR 1520-02, "Where

We Live: Writing about Housing Equity." ENWRs provide qualities resistant to mechanization, such as personal and communal reflection. Students engage deeply with both course content and real issues, with strengthened communicative ability being an apparent byproduct.

Even the strongest writers are not exempt, adding to the University's commitment to their culture of writing. In the third pathway, engagement only deepens, and students are encouraged to think and communicate at higher levels, which requires direct engagement with

course material. First years may fulfill the requirement through ENWR 1510-1530, 2000-level English Literature and Creative Writing courses or an ENWR 2510 — ensuring that the most advanced writers continue to develop their skills. This insistence on sustained writing extends beyond the classroom — the critical thought and communication prove incredi-

bly useful skills in any fields of study. In a highly automated world, they may be what employers will come to value the most.

ENWRs rarely put composition at the forefront of their curriculum. They do not emphasize that which is easily mechanized. AI can mimic syntax and structure, but it cannot replace reflection, nor feeling, nor real-world engagement. Its ideas and outputs are an amalgam of an existing body of human knowledge and art.

Students in ENWRs are expected to write often, study rhetorical

choices, read deeply and draft essays. But writing is a means of deep engagement with a topic, not merely an abstracted exercise in technical skill that can be offloaded to algorithms. In my ENWR 2510, we used writing to probe a number of questions about Japanese aesthetics, the ethics and limits of translation and specific works of literature. Although topics differ, courses across the program utilize writing to foster critical thinking and deep engagement with texts. Thus, students become acquainted with the process of writing to learn — and machines cannot yet learn for us.

Nevertheless, AI is changing education. But, with the ENWR, the University is well-situated to face these unprecedented times. Its commitment to writing instruction reminds us that the most valuable sort of writing is that which develops our personal ideas, insights and connections to the world — things an algorithm can never replace.

**GRACE CLIPPINGER** is an opinion columnist who writes about politics for *The Cavalier Daily*. She can be reached at [opinion@cavalierdaily.com](mailto:opinion@cavalierdaily.com).

## HUMOR

### Student Health and Wellness's tips for spring semester

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

Dear Hoos,

Welcome back to Grounds! We understand that your Winter Break may have been filled with involuntarily opening Canvas 15 times per day, worrying about your internship prospects from your childhood bedroom or believing every single post you saw on Rush Yak.

With the spring semester underway, Student Health would like to remind you to take care of yourselves during this exciting time of academics, extracurriculars and social obligations. That's why we've created these four simple mindfulness exercises you can easily integrate into your already-overbooked schedule.

#### 1. Box breathing

Seek out a tranquil sanctuary for reflection — we recommend taking advantage of Food Truck Fridays, or spending time on the Tralcony on a Thursday night. Sit down on the floor as comforta-

bly as you can, even if people are standing or moving around you. Close your eyes — unless you're in Edgar Shannon Library during midterms, in which case please keep them open in case you lose out on an empty seat.

Inhale for four counts.

Hold for four counts.

Exhale for four counts, and visualize the stress leaving your body as that one student finally leaving the study spot you've been eyeing since the beginning of your generational lock-in in the East Wing of Shannon.

Hold for four counts.

If your thoughts begin to wander towards unfinished readings or your club event, gently redirect your attention back to your breath. These thoughts are not urgent. Canvas and Google Calendar will remind you of them again shortly.

#### 2. Gratitude reflection

Take a moment to reflect on three things you're grateful for.

Start small — perhaps your phone charger still working de-

spite bending at a deeply concerning angle.

Move outward — the thrill of realizing you watched a two-hour movie without taking a break to scroll Instagram Reels.

Finish strong — your deep appreciation for all of your professors posting lecture slides after class instead of before.

Remember — gratitude is about focusing on what you have, not what you are missing, such as a normal sleep schedule or the ability to read for pleasure.

If it helps, you may write your gratitude list in a 2026 planner you will stop using by February.

#### 3. Grounding through sensory awareness

As you walk to class, take note of your surroundings using your five senses like the following example.

Five things you can see — brick, brick, brick, Veo, someone crying

Four things you can hear — construction, birds chirping, brakes hissing on a 30-minutes-late

bus, someone crying

Three things you can feel — cold air, backpack straps, existential dread

Two things you can smell — Newcomb Hall Starbucks, someone still waiting to take their first shower of 2026

One thing you can taste — regret because you skipped breakfast

This exercise helps bring you into the present moment, which is happening whether you are ready or not. Enjoy it while it lasts.

#### 4. Affirmations for academic resilience

Look in the mirror of your communal bathroom, and repeat the following affirmations silently or aloud —

I am more than my productivity.

Rest is important.

I do not need to be involved in everything.

It is okay if I am not optimizing every second of my day.

If any of these feel untrue, that's okay because they probably are.

These affirmations are all about acknowledging your thoughts without judgment, then continuing to sign up for things anyway.

Student Health hopes these exercises help you feel balanced and emotionally resilient as you navigate the spring semester. Please remember that burnout is real, but with proper mindfulness, hydration and time management, it can be postponed until at least after midterms.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, support is available. Student Health offers counseling services, wellness workshops and additional posters in high-traffic restroom stalls.

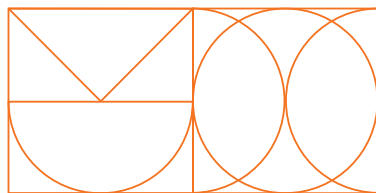
Wishing you a peaceful, productive and exceptionally busy start to the semester.

Warmly,

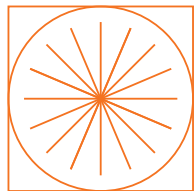
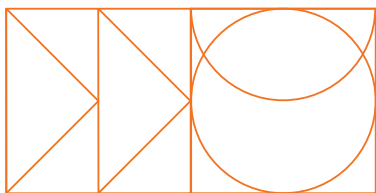
Student Health and Wellness

**NIKITHA PRABHU** is a humor columnist for *The Cavalier Daily*. She can be reached at [humor@cavalierdaily.com](mailto:humor@cavalierdaily.com)





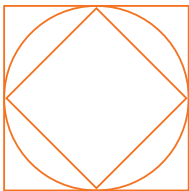
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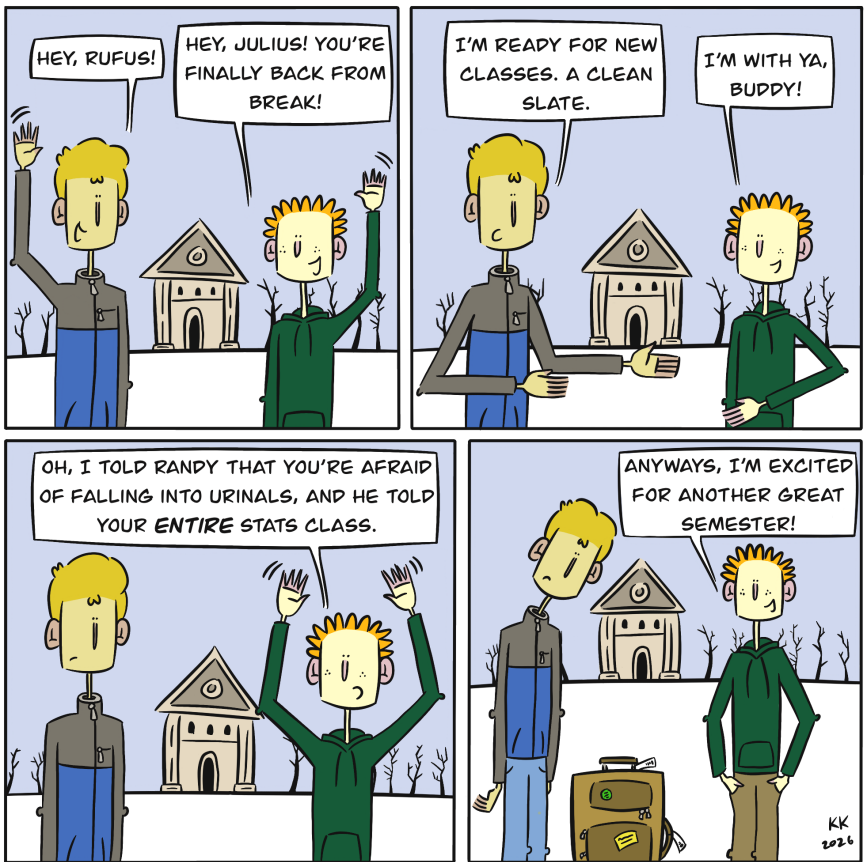
Student Affairs

CARTOON

Growing Pains #5

Kiefer Kettenis | Cartoonist

Two awkward college students navigate college and life.



Presidential Leftovers

Jackson Xiang | Cartoonist

