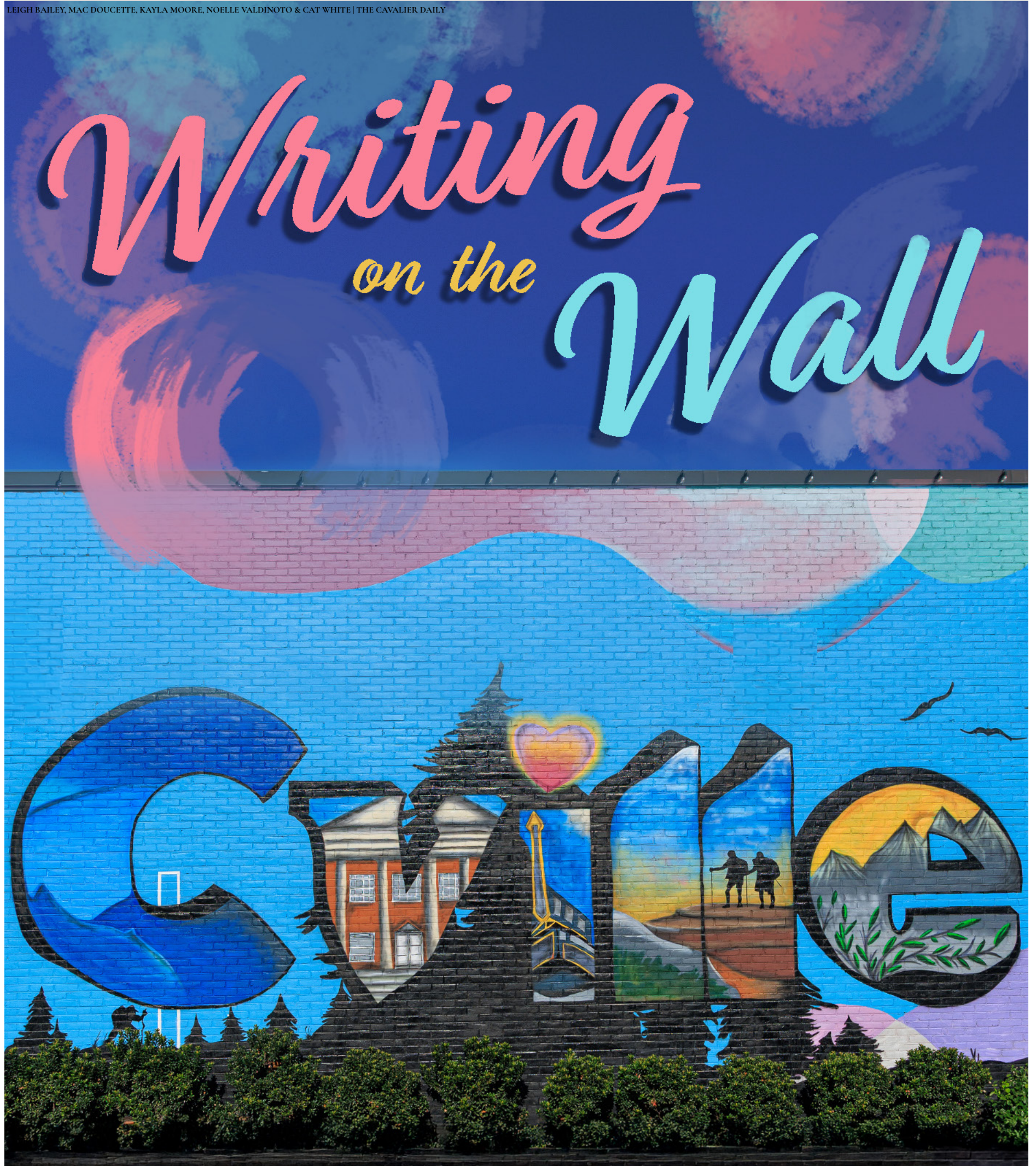


THE CAVALIER DAILY

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LEIGH BAILEY, MAC DOUCETTE, KAYLA MOORE, NOELLE VALDINOTO & CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY



Federal scrutiny or “a good actor?”

CD Staff Writers

U.Va. among nine universities offered to join initiative led by Trump administration

The Trump administration has sent out a letter outlining a proposed set of operating principles for universities that would give select universities preferential access to federal funding in exchange for adhering to certain conditions, the Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday. The University is among the nine institutions the administration invited to join the initiative.

The proposal, called the “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education,” lays out ten requirements to which participating universities would agree in exchange for what the administration described as “substantial and meaningful” federal support.

The compact’s conditions include freezing tuition for five years, prohibiting the consideration of race or sex in admissions and hiring, capping international undergraduate enrollment at 15 percent, requiring undergraduate applicants to take the SAT or other widely used standardized tests, and limiting grade inflation.



Students call for the University to reject the Trump administration’s Compact

Many students on Grounds are calling for the University to reject the “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education”. These students worry about possible negative consequences for members of the University community if the Compact were to be signed, including international and transgender students. Many also have expressed fears of ceding academic freedom and independence to the federal government.

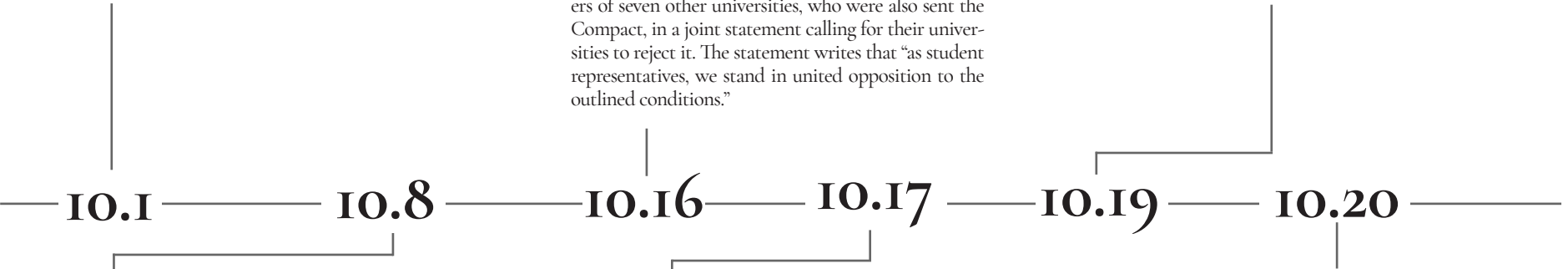
Clay Dickerson, Student Council president and fourth-year College student has joined student leaders of seven other universities, who were also sent the Compact, in a joint statement calling for their universities to reject it. The statement writes that “as student representatives, we stand in united opposition to the outlined conditions.”

‘That’s not reform’: Free speech groups urged Mahoney to reject the Compact

Interim University President Paul Mahoney rejected the White House’s “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education” Friday evening. Opponents of the Compact cited potential violations of free speech, among other issues — the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression voiced concern that the Compact could threaten First Amendment rights in a public statement Oct. 2, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia followed suit in a statement released Wednesday.

FIRE released a general statement regarding the Compact Oct. 2, in which the organization said the Compact raised “red flags.” The statement said that the Compact’s request to ban all staff engaging in political speech is unconstitutional.

FIRE has a stated mission to defend the right to free speech and thought for all Americans and according to Coward, they do so by providing free legal and advocacy support to students and faculty who feel their rights have been violated. For the past six years, the organization has ranked approximately 270 American universities in regard to their state of free speech on campus.



Virginia Senate leaders express “unequivocal opposition” to Compact

The Virginia Senate sent a letter Tuesday to Interim University President Paul Mahoney and Board of Visitors Rector Rachel Sheridan relaying its “grave concern” regarding a Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education which the University received last week. The letter calls upon the University to immediately cease consideration of the Compact, and if not, the Commonwealth will work to negatively impact the University’s funding.

“This is not a partnership,” the letter reads. “It is, as other university leaders have aptly described, political extortion.”

The response said that the University has worked to address continuing challenges posed by the federal government while remaining true to University values.



U.Va. rejects Trump administration Compact for Academic Excellence

The University has rejected the “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education,” which it received from the White House and Department of Education Oct. 1, according to a community statement released Friday evening by Interim University President Paul Mahoney.

“We seek no special treatment in exchange for our pursuit of those foundational goals. The integrity of science and other academic work requires merit-based assessment of research and scholarship,” Mahoney wrote. “A contractual arrangement predicated assessment on anything other than merit will undermine the integrity of vital, sometimes lifesaving, research and further erode confidence in American higher education.”

In his letter, Mahoney did not say that he has definitively rejected the Compact and suggested that he looks forward to future collaboration with the federal government.

‘From facing federal scrutiny to being a ‘good actor’: U.Va. and the Trump administration

Although the University ultimately chose not to sign the Trump administration’s “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education,” Interim University President Paul Mahoney left open the possibility of future collaboration and alternative approaches in his letter to the Education Department. This possibility for cooperation has come despite months of heightened federal scrutiny and leadership turmoil at the University.

According to The Wall Street Journal, May Mailman, senior advisor for special projects at the White House, said that the nine initially invited universities were selected because they could be or are “good actors.”

“They have a president who is a reformer or a board that has really indicated they are committed to a higher quality education,” Mailman said.



Students weigh competing factors in attorney general race

Some students say they will not vote for Jones, even as they express concern over protecting the University from outside interference

Luca Bailey | Staff Writer

The highly contentious election for Virginia attorney general between the Democratic nominee, former Del. Jay Jones D-Norfolk and incumbent Republican Jason Miyares, is tightening. The race is breathing new life into the questions surrounding the federal government's investigations into the University and how the University can respond. And after scandals brought forth calls for Jones to drop out, some students say they will no longer vote for him.

The race was thrust into the national spotlight when the National Review reported Oct. 3 that Jones had sent violent text messages about then-House Speaker Todd Gilbert and other Republicans, to Del. Carrie Coynier, R-Chesterfield in 2022.

The attorney general's race also has large implications for the University following the resignation of former University President Jim Ryan. The Cavalier Daily previously reported that the University likely would not have been able to defend itself from the Justice Department without Miyares' approval, because the school's University counsel is appointed by the attorney general. With Miyares in office, he did not stand up to the Trump administration in its investigations into the University.

Having rejected the Compact and now signing a new deal with the Justice Department, the importance of the attorney general's race for the University continues. Benjamin Muhlendorf, first-year College student and a first-time voter, shared his thoughts on the importance of the race for the University in the wake of recent federal pressure.

"I think [the attorney general election] is pretty critical for the success of the University," Muhlendorf said. "[What] we just saw with the whole Compact thing, that's certainly not over. It's going to keep playing out. Having an attorney general who's going to stand up for the students of the University, and the faculty ... that's really, really important."

At the attorney general debate Oct. 9 at the University of Richmond, both Jones and Miyares were asked a question about academic freedom and the University's now-rejected Compact with the federal government. The Compact would have prioritized signatories for federal funding so long as they agreed to adhere to specific provisions in line with

the Trump administration's policies. Miyares argued that, unlike other schools in the country, Virginia's universities have not been punished financially by the Trump administration.

"Here's a reality, you can look at every Virginia state school. Not a single school has lost a single dime of any funding, or any research," Miyares said. "[Compare that with] other schools. Harvard and Columbia ... have been hit with \$400 million [dollars in] fines ... What we do in Virginia is we protect our schools vigorously ... [and] you can see the results."

Vice President for Research Lori McMahon previously reported that \$73.6 million in research grants had been terminated at the University alone as of Aug. 26.

Later in the evening, Miyares argued that he is not loyal to one administration or the other, pointing out that he has sued both administrations in his time as attorney general.

Jones said that he felt Miyares' office did not do enough to defend Ryan or the University itself in the buildup to Ryan's resignation.

"I was a law student when then-Professor Jim Ryan was [at UVA], and he was adored, revered," Jones said. "For him to have been put in a position to make that choice [to resign] is utterly despicable. The attorney general's office is supposed to advise and support and protect our public institutions ... We have not gotten that from [Miyares]."

Notably, Miyares' office is defending the University in a lawsuit that sought to allow Democrats to block Gov. Glenn Youngkin's appointments to the governing boards of higher-education institutions across the Commonwealth, including at the University. Senate Democrats successfully argued in a lawsuit brought before the Fairfax County Circuit Court that Youngkin appointees, serving without the confirmation of the Virginia General Assembly, were doing so illegally. If Jones is elected, he would have the opportunity to settle this case and decline to litigate the issue further.

The text messages, in which Jones discussed shooting Gilbert, were also a heavy focus of the debate. Jones implied he hoped Gilbert's children would "die in their mother's arms" in order to move him to act on gun violence, drawing immediate condemna-

tion from politicians across the political spectrum, including all four party leaders in the Virginia General Assembly.

The Democratic nominees for governor and lieutenant governor, former Rep. Abigail Spanberger and State Sen. Ghazala Hashmi, D-Chesterfield, also issued statements online condemning the messages. Jones apologized for the texts in a statement and during the debate.

"I'm ashamed, I'm embarrassed and I'm sorry," Jones said.

Many Republican politicians, including President Donald Trump, have called on Jones to withdraw from the race. The statement, which Trump released on Truth Social condemning Jones' messages as "SICK" and "DEMENTED," was also the first time he endorsed a Republican in Virginia this election cycle.

Gianna Hunsche, secretary of the University's College Republicans and second-year College student, shared her thoughts on the messages when weighing in on the race.

"The messages that Jay Jones sent out to his co-worker are ... absolutely disgusting," Hunsche said. "The kind of rhetoric that he was displaying was advocating for political violence, and I just don't think that has a place in our political climate today."

Hunsche also said that while she believes Jones should drop out of the race, the responsibility is on his endorsers to call on him to do so and to pull their support.

"I think [Spanberger and others] should have ... at the bare minimum ... rescinded their endorsements," Hunsche said. "When you ... are still endorsing a candidate where a very central part of the news around his campaign are those texts ... by omission you are endorsing that behavior."

Brianna Sharpe, the president of the University Democrats and fourth-year College student, shared a statement to The Cavalier Daily with her thoughts on the race.

"The AG race will certainly be the tightest top of the ticket race this election season. A factor of this is of course the recent Jay Jones texts. What he said is appalling," Sharpe said. "It is up to voters to decide on the personal level if this is disqualifying for them."

Given the fact that a large number of voters have already cast a ballot, it likely would not

be possible for Jones to be replaced with a new Democratic nominee. If Jones did withdraw from the race, he would remain on all ballots, and votes cast for him would not count. Additionally, a notice would be put up at every polling place in the Commonwealth indicating that Jones is no longer a qualified candidate, effectively leaving Miyares unopposed.

While it is likely that Jones retains an advantage in a traditionally-Democratic city like Charlottesville, there were a number of students who indicated that the messages were enough to sway their vote for Miyares.

Second-year College student Caleb Quiroga is among them. Quiroga said that while he had some previous concerns about Jones' record, after some uncertainty, he ultimately planned to support him before the news about the messages broke.

"I was a bit back and forth throughout the whole race," Quiroga said. "I had gotten my ballot right before the scandal had happened ... I was going to vote for Jay Jones, and then the scandal came out, and that's when I decided that I could not, in good conscience, [vote] for someone who says things like that."

Third-year College student Henry Grieco shared a similar experience, saying that the texts should disqualify anyone running for public office.

"I was just kind of assuming I was going to vote for the Democrat, Jay Jones," Grieco said. "Since the ... Jay Jones texts were leaked, I changed my opinion, and I ended up voting for Miyares early a couple weeks ago."

Grieco also said that he is disappointed with the way other Democrats responded to the situation.

"I think they should have told him to drop out of the race immediately ... [or] come out and [denounced] him ... the [recent] spike in political violence can't be disassociated from this," Grieco said. "These statements cannot go unnoticed. [I think] they need to be ... rooted out immediately and shunned from politics."

Quiroga said he believes that at this point, many people are familiar with the messages, but he is unconvinced that it will affect the decision of most students, as most people he knows support the full Democratic ticket. Grieco said that while he is almost certainly in the minority

of Democrats who will split their ticket, he pointed out that voters who cast a vote in other races but leave the attorney general ballot blank could increase this year.

Sharpe, while not revealing her or UDems' preference one way or the other, pointed out the ability to defend the University from outside interference as an important factor.

"When looking at the records of both candidates in the context of this university, it is important to note that the AG is responsible for the UVA legal counsel, who provides legal services to the university and its medical center, representing the Rector and Visitors in all legal matters," Sharpe said.

How the developments are affecting the state of the race also remains to fully be seen. Kyle Kondik, the managing editor of Sabato's Crystal Ball, shared some insight.

"Even as Spanberger remains clearly favored to be the next governor, the AG race has become much more unpredictable thanks to the ... messages combined with Miyares' pre-existing money advantage, which gives him the ability to spread the word about the story," Kondik said.

Assuming Spanberger is elected governor, Kondik said that her margin of victory will be key in determining whether Miyares can remain competitive. The smaller Spanberger's margin is, the fewer of her voters Miyares must convince to support him, as well. The latest poll of the race from State Navigate, released Wednesday, showed Spanberger with a 13-point lead and Jones with a five-point lead — an eight-point gap between the two Democrats.

"If Spanberger wins by a 2017-esque margin in the gubernatorial race — Democrat Ralph Northam won by 9 points that year — there may just not be enough ticket-splitting to win," Kondik said.

Muhlendorf said he believes that while Jones' messages were unbecoming of a state attorney general the decision should still come down to the differences in the candidates' platforms.

"Obviously this has ... negatively impacted my assessment of Jay Jones, but I don't think that necessarily means that Miyares is ... now a better candidate than he was two weeks ago. I still want to evaluate both candidates on the merits of what they're saying," Muhlendorf said.

Spanberger, Buttigieg draw over 1,000 in Charlottesville

The pair teamed up to create enthusiasm locally before the final votes are cast

Ford McCracken | News Editor

Democratic gubernatorial nominee Abigail Spanberger drew a large crowd Tuesday evening to Charlottesville's Jefferson Theater, exactly two weeks before Election Day. The candidate was joined by two popular figures in Democratic politics — former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Scientist Bill Nye, known to most as “Bill Nye the Science Guy,” both of whom gave the opening remarks before Spanberger came out.

The event marks Spanberger's return to her alma mater for her last scheduled Charlottesville appearance before Election Day. In her speech, she reflected on how it felt to return to Charlottesville now in her current position.

“When I was walking across Grounds many years ago ... I would have never guessed that one day I would be here in this building running to serve the Commonwealth and the communities that I love across Virginia,” Spanberger said.

Spanberger ran through her platform if elected governor — one that primarily hits on the cost of

living and cuts to the federal workforce by the Trump administration.

Having served three terms in Congress, the candidate pointed to her experience crafting legislation. She previously campaigned on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed under the Biden administration and discussed her experience working with Buttigieg on the bill. She said it was her experience working on legislating in Congress that made her want to run for governor, saying that state governments can work more efficiently to pass legislation.

“There is nothing more extraordinary than being able to witness people's lives, to be welcomed in and to be told the challenges that people face,” Spanberger said. “I realized that so many of the issues that people would bring to me ... that my state government is the place where you pass a bill, the governor signs it into law and you are meaningfully impacting people's lives.”

Despite the rally taking place on the Downtown Mall, the University

was the backdrop of the event, with students surrounding Spanberger and holding signs which said “VOTE.” Speakers urged students to register ahead of Friday's deadline and to cast their ballot in the election.

Spanberger also touched on issues which have outsized importance at the University, namely federal pressure on higher education.

The University has received a great deal of federal pressure since President Donald Trump took office, with seven investigations opened — two of which have now closed with the other five suspended — by the Justice Department. The administration also asked the University to sign a Compact for Excellence in Higher Education. The Compact, which the University rejected Friday, asked schools to agree to certain provisions in order to be prioritized for federal funding.

“Here in Charlottesville, we know that academic freedom is also under attack,” Spanberger said. “We need a governor who will stand up

for the ideals put in place with Mr. Jefferson's University.”

Spanberger had previously indicated that, if elected governor, she wanted to make reforms to protect the University from outside influence. Potential reforms pushed by Democrats include changing the process by which the governor can make appointments to university governing boards, as well as making a university's top attorney report to the school, not the attorney general's office.

The Democratic nominees for lieutenant governor and attorney general — State Sen. Ghazala Hashmi, D-Chesterfield, and former Del. Jay Jones, D-Norfolk — have not appeared at the University during the campaign.

Tuesday's rally left no mention of Hashmi or Jones, both of whom are running behind Spanberger in polling. Jones was plagued with scandals in recent weeks regarding text messages he sent encouraging violence against Virginia Republican politicians.

Spanberger also shared a mes-

sage with students, hitting on a component of one of her campaign's slogans, “Service. Country. Commonwealth.” Spanberger comes from a law enforcement background, having served in the Central Intelligence Agency. She encouraged students to find a way to serve their community, even if it is not in combat.

“I say that because, as we have so many students who are here gathered today, I just want to impress upon you ... that there are so many examples for the ways that you can choose to serve a community, through advocacy, through education, through service in the military or in public service,” Spanberger said. “And I welcome you.”

Overall, the rally appeared a victory lap for Spanberger, who has never trailed in a public poll of the governor's race. She closed with one final question for the crowd — which set a Downtown Charlottesville political rally record of over 1,300 in attendance.

“Are you ready to win?” Spanberger asked.

Lt. Gov. Candidate John Reid speaks in Rotunda

Reid will be running against State Sen. Ghazala Hashmi in the election for lieutenant governor Nov. 4

Grace Little | Senior Associate

Republican lieutenant governor candidate John Reid spoke in the Rotunda Tuesday in an event co-hosted by the Center for Politics and the Jefferson Council. Reid spoke on his background as a TV anchor and radio commentator, his goals for Virginia's economy and prioritization of the “Right to Work” law, private school choice and the current “culture war” in the Commonwealth.

While fielding questions from the audience after his speech, Reid also addressed topics including homelessness in Richmond, Youngkin's initial lack of support of his campaign and his decision to run independently of Republican gubernatorial candidate Winsome Earle-Sears.

“I truly believe if I'm elected, I ... can't be obsessed with settling scores with every person who attacks me or does something wrong. I have to stay focused on the end goal,” Reid said. “For the next four years, if I'm sent to Richmond, it is to do what is right for the people of Virginia

and show ... bravery.”

The Center for Politics hosts events to encourage political participation, and The Jefferson Council is a conservative alumni group that aims to “preserve Thomas Jefferson's legacy.”

Third-year Batten student Marie Kenney said she attended the event to become more politically knowledgeable, especially because she finds the media can be misinforming and many issues impact the lives of students.

“Coming to events like this is just a good way to stay informed in your local politics, especially as a student,” Kenney said.

Before shifting to a career in politics, Reid was an intern for former President Ronald Reagan, spent over a decade working as a television news anchor and investigative reporter, served as communications director for U.S. Senator George Allen and has been the host of the WRVA Morning Show — a conservative talk radio program — for the past eight years.

Reid said that the Black Lives

Matter demonstrations in Richmond inspired him to take a stand for justice when the current leaders were “cowards.” He also said he believed COVID was handled “tyrannically” by those in power in the Commonwealth at the time, and the culmination of these events and more led to his decision in January to run for lieutenant governor.

“I stand up for law and order,” Reid said. “There didn't seem to be much concern about stomping on the individual rights of citizens, about closing businesses, watching it unfold [and] picking and choosing who the winners and losers were.”

Reid listed the economy as one the forefront issues of his campaign, and he said he will prioritize keeping jobs in Virginia through the “Right to Work” law which says that employers cannot mandate union membership for their employees. Reid also said raising the minimum wage comes with economic consequences including businesses firing employees and lowering living condi-

tions across the board.

Reid also spoke on the topic of education, first by addressing the ad that his opponent State Sen. Ghazala Hashmi's, D-Chesterfield, ran that claims Reid will close all public schools and funnel the money into private schools. Reid said that this assertion is “outrageously” wrong, and he has many relatives who worked in public schools. Reid said he attended St. Christopher's School — a private Episcopal school in Richmond — and the opportunity to attend a private school with smaller class sizes allowed him to get the extra help he needed.

“Why are we restricting other families from having an opportunity?” Reid said. “If you are stuck in a neighborhood where you go to the public school that's offered to you, and objectively, the public school is not delivering for those students, they're graduating people who can't read and write.”

According to Reid, the Commonwealth should provide an option for students and parents

who feel like the school system is not serving them and who seek an alternative. He assured attendees that allowing families this opportunity would not collapse the public education system.

Shifting from the topic of education, Reid addressed the current “culture war” by bringing up his time in the Middle East during the Arab Spring, and he said he does not want that reality to come to Virginia.

“If I go to the Capitol, I want to be the person that you look at and are confident that I will be reasonable ... and most importantly, that every decision I make, I will put aside those emotions and the hostility that comes from being in this arena,” Reid said.

In a poll from State Navigator released Wednesday, Hashmi leads Reid by 11 points, though other polls have the margin closer. Early voting is currently underway and will run until Nov. 1, and in-person voting will take place on Election Day, Nov. 4.

U.Va. removes supplemental essay prompt

The future Class of 2030 will not be asked to submit a writing prompt which asked them to discuss their background and perspective

Leigh Bailey | Staff Writer

As both early decision and early action deadlines approach for the future Class of 2030, applicants will no longer have the opportunity to submit a supplemental essay prompt which asked about a piece of an applicants' individual background that would serve as a strength for them at the University. The only supplemental writing prompt that remains is for applicants applying to the School of Nursing.

During the 2022-2023 application cycle, a variety of writing samples accompanied the main Common App essay, a personal statement typically around 600 words. Additional prompts required applicants to respond to a range of shorter writing samples, and all applicants additionally had to respond to two, 50-word, creative prompts.

The 2023-2024 application cycle saw the removal of both these creative prompts and school-specific essays. During this cycle, the University added a prompt asking students about their identity. Now, for the current 2025-2026 application cycle, the identity prompt has

been removed for applicants, leaving only one supplemental essay for students applying into the School of Nursing.

According to University spokesperson Bethanie Glover, the University removed the supplemental essay prompt from this year's Common App to alleviate the workload that applicants take on to apply to the University.

"High school seniors are applying to more colleges and universities than ever, which requires completing a large number of short answer essay responses during their already busy fall semester," Glover said. "Our hope is that this will lighten the load and reduce stress and anxiety around the college application process."

Despite this rationale, the general sentiment felt by some undergraduate students — all of whom completed some form of supplemental essays as a part of their application to the University — has been one of confusion, according to an intern for the Office of Admissions who asked to remain anonymous to speak freely about the changes.

"The same sentiment I had when I first heard about it ... it's just kind of general confusion for the most part," the intern said. "When we applied, there was a lot of value placed in those supplementals [and] showing your voice."

Changes made to the University's supplemental essay prompts during this time came in the midst of the Supreme Court's 2023 reversal of race-based affirmative action in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* and *Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*. The majority decision in these cases argued that essays discussing background or experience were still allowed under civil rights law — although the Trump administration has publicly opposed the use of essays and other proxies to determine applicants' race or identity.

This reversal in 2023 meant that University Admissions officers were no longer able to have access to any self-disclosed checkbox information about an applicant's race. Within the same year of this ruling, the University changed the supplemental essay question for

all Class of 2028 applicants to a prompt that allowed students to write about an aspect of their "individual background, perspective or experience" that could serve as a source of strength for themselves or their peers at the University.

Results from the makeup of the Class of 2028 — the first class to be admitted after the Supreme Court's reversal of race-based affirmative action and the first to complete this revised supplemental prompt — revealed minimal demographic changes from previous classes such as the Class of 2027. Results from the racial and ethnic makeup of the Class of 2029 are not publicly available.

Aiming to ensure that the University was complying with the 2023 Supreme Court decision, the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division sent the University several letters between April and June of this year. These letters requested information about the University's admissions policies, as well as admission data broken down by race and ethnicity for admitted classes over the past five years.

The Cavalier Daily asked sev-

eral members of senior leadership whether the removal of supplemental essays was connected to recent Justice Department investigations. Jeannine Lalonde, senior associate dean of admission, referred The Cavalier Daily to Vice Provost for Enrollment Stephen Farmer and Greg Robers, associate vice provost for Enrollment, both of whom did not respond. Glover did not confirm or deny a connection.

According to the anonymous intern for the Office of Admission, they felt that the University was transparent in the past when there were significant changes to the application. They said this year's removal of the supplemental prompt did not come with much explanation from the University.

"I think U.Va. is normally very open about what its reasonings [are] for some stuff and I think this one's just kind of the one where people don't really know at the moment," the intern said. "I hope there's some more clarity in the future."

Prospective students will submit their applications for this year's early decision and early action deadlines Nov. 1.

THE CAVALIER DAILY

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Fitness fanatics: University students coaching workout classes

Undergraduate coaches exercise leadership skills in Charlottesville's group fitness scene

Lindsay Lian | Staff Writer



COURTESY CECILY TATE VIA BREE BONNER

According to Bree Bonner, her coaching job allows her to combine her passion for exercise with her interest in performance



AALI SIDDIQUI | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Helen Allison teaches a low-impact, high-rep curriculum and fosters a calming atmosphere for participants



CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

SJ Lloyd said that taking such an outspoken role requires determination and practice

As the voices behind many Charlottesville workout classes, these four University students have the spotlight on an unconventional stage. While juggling academic and extracurricular involvements, these students also work part-time jobs as instructors at local fitness studios. Whether on the bike, mat or reformer, they empower students and Charlottesville residents on their fitness journey.

The Charlottesville workout studio scene offers a variety of choices for clients seeking group fitness classes. This lively and social option for staying active, fueled by mutual accountability, has become a popular option for Charlottesville locals and University students alike.

While all genres of group fitness generate plenty of customers, each type offers a unique environment and structure. In a spin class at Pürvelo, participants are met with a concert-like atmosphere, featuring a combination of cycling, strobe lights and occasionally dancing from Bree Bonner, Pürvelo instructor and fourth-year Batten student. According to Bonner, her coaching job allows her to combine her passion for exercise with her interest in performance.

"I feel like this is a really good way to combine my interest of singing and dancing and also exercise," Bonner said.

Meanwhile, Helen Allison, Pure Barre instructor and fourth-year College student, leads a mellower, classic-style class. Here, she teaches a low-impact, high-rep curriculum and fosters a calming atmosphere for participants, focusing on their headspace while playing tranquil music. She said that the mental focus of Pure Barre sets it apart from other types of workout classes.

"[Pure Barre] is the one workout where I've really understood the whole mind-body connection thing," Allison said. "With other workout classes, I feel like I'm constantly thinking about the workout itself, rather than being able to escape."

Through coaching, these instructors develop leadership skills in addition to adaptability as they lead classes of varying size and energy. Einmon Tha, Hot Yoga Charlottesville instructor and fourth-year Batten student, noted that this job requires her to accept that no two classes will look or feel the same.

"Teaching has taught me how to lead a room," Tha said. "Specifically, yoga has taught me how people's energies can really vibrate off of each

other ... I've taught so many classes [and] no class is exactly like another class."

With all of the nuances of teaching group fitness, SJ Lloyd, Solidcore instructor and fourth-year Batten student, said that taking such an outspoken role requires determination, practice and, oftentimes, stepping outside of one's comfort zone.

"It's hard for me to go into a room with 17 other people ... and hype myself up to be able to talk for 50 minutes straight," Lloyd said. "I'm not a super extroverted person ... I felt like this would be such a good way for me to practice speaking more outspokenly and loudly."

In addition to self-assurance, these instructors say that mentally preparing to coach takes time and energy, especially considering the detailed choreography they must memorize — and sometimes, create — before each class.

At Pürvelo, Bonner is responsible for choreographing her classes, though she said that she largely improvises at times. She plans her classes around an upbeat song — at the moment, her favorite is "Hard" by Rihanna — then pulls from her dance background to fill in the rest of the class.

Conversely, Solidcore provides Lloyd with a rotating set of choreography focused on different muscle groups for her to memorize. While the layout of each class is predetermined by the company each week, the choreography is pulled from a finite list of options.

Other studios, like Pure Barre, innovate the class layout on a regular schedule. Each week, Allison memorizes 50 to 60 minutes of new choreography for two different class types. As with the confidence that comes with practicing coaching a large group of people, the ease of memorizing choreography has increased with practice for Allison.

"At first, memorizing the choreography was really hard, taking me hours and hours before each class, but now I'll usually give myself about an hour the night before a class, and just sit down and drill the choreography," Allison said.

At Hot Yoga Charlottesville, Tha writes her own choreography, creating sequences personalized by muscle group and focused around a "peak posture" — or key yoga pose — to work up to during the class.

To properly plan for and facilitate their classes, coaches are required to complete extensive training. To become certified as a yoga instructor, Tha endured a 200-hour

training program through CorePower Yoga. Through Solidcore, Lloyd spent eight hours each Saturday and Sunday last spring semester in training sessions to become certified.

With skills honed from the training process, Lloyd said that instructors must use their judgment to identify the needs and boundaries of their students during each class. She emphasized that there is a limit to what each body can handle, and it is up to the participant to recognize and respect those limits.

"[I've learned] not to be perfect all the time," Lloyd said. "I think [Solidcore] is such an effective workout, but it only is effective to the extent that you're not pushing your body to a dangerous place."

The class, as Bonner noted, is each student's personal time. Attending a workout class is an opportunity to spend selfish time — investing in one's well-being, unhindered by distractions.

"Not everything is about looks and you don't earn anything from going to workout class. It's just for you," Bonner said. "It's your 45 minutes or an hour ... I've tried to emphasize that this is just your time for yourself."

Despite the time commitment and daunting responsibilities, the coaches said that the drive for teaching comes from connections built in and out of the studio. These instructors have seen their communities come together in remarkable ways. Upon the breast cancer diagnosis of a Pure Barre instructor, the studio has recently hosted fundraising events to support her in her battle.

The Charlottesville workout community empowers each other through the momentous, trying times of life, as well as the day-to-day. Each class, though only around an hour long, is an opportunity for students and instructors alike to spend time bettering themselves.

According to Tha, practicing yoga is a lasting journey with applications throughout every stage of life. From coaching students through postpartum strength training to helping a new client pick up yoga later in life, she said the experience has been rewarding and meaningful. Tha said she will continue teaching yoga throughout her life, as there is always room to deepen the practice of yoga.

"My dad's always told me that learning is a lifelong journey, and I think that holds true," Tha said. "Within yoga practices, there's always, always room to continue learning."

Student by day, worker by night

Navigating the balance between overnight shifts and school life

Patteson Branch | Staff Writer

As third-year College student Lauren Rylander arrives back to her dorm at 6 Monday morning, she can barely walk or think straight. Fresh off a 12-hour shift as an emergency medical technician for the Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad, the only way for Rylander to combat the sleep deprivation is by taking a warm shower. She then assembles her daytime outfit, packs her backpack and heads off for a day in academia on Grounds.

In these moments, the most important thing to Rylander is that she keeps her focus on the school day ahead. For her, this means separating her EMT shift from her student life and making sure to never “carry the call into class.”

Like Rylander, many students at the University face the routine challenges of balancing their responsibilities as night shift workers with their regular lives during waking hours. Whether they are an EMT, a certified nursing assistant or a Resident Advisor, these individuals are not only responsible for keeping up with sleep, but also managing their school work, social lives, extracurriculars and personal health.

Third-year Education student Mary Gombos, who is a CNA at the University Medical Center, encounters similar experiences balancing work with other commitments. Awake for 30 hours at a time, she finds herself

fueled by Celsius and stamina after 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. hospital shifts. Gombos, who also serves as the Vice President of Finance for Pi Beta Phi sorority and a CPR instructor for CavsCARE, was transparent about the difficulties of navigating an already-involved week with 12 fewer hours.

“It’s definitely a lot of planning ... It’s just the mentality [that] somehow I’ll make it work,” Gombos said. “All the things I’m a part of I’m really dedicated to and interested in, and I love doing them, so it doesn’t make [the shifts] as hard.”

Organization is key, so these students must plan their days — often-times by cutting things out — to consider both work shifts and academic work. Nema Saleh, RA in Gibbons House and fourth-year Engineering student, said even though she’s only on call a few times each semester, she will postpone her daily gym time or leave a social event early to accommodate an in-residence shift that could keep her up as late as 4 a.m.

While typically uneventful, these nights — which start at 10 p.m. — require Saleh to be ready for any situation. She keeps her phone ringer on until 8 a.m., periodically checks common spaces and steps in to help if an issue arises. To stay alert, Saleh ensures that her working evenings are entirely free from any outside commitments.

“[For] the night shifts, I just plan

around them, which is really helpful.” Saleh said. “The nights I have coverage, I have to adjust [my schedule] ... but otherwise it doesn’t bother me.”

On the other hand, Rylander takes a more proactive approach to clearing her schedule. She said that she selects her classes each semester with EMT shifts in mind, making sure she has enough downtime to recover from weekly nights at the station.

Despite the sizable commitment, the drive of these students — fueled by a passion for their work and the communities they serve — make it more palatable for them to live these arduous double lives.

Rylander became certified as an EMT in May 2024, motivated by the opportunity to show up for her neighbors in moments of crisis. Over the last few months, Rylander has realized the impact that she can have when she is there for someone in an emergency.

“What’s important is ... to take the time to listen to their concern, to address their need and to make sure that who you hand them off to next has a thorough understanding [of] what they need,” Rylander said.

While night shifts like Rylander’s can be physically and emotionally exhausting at times, they can also create communities that better integrate students into the fabric of the University and greater Charlottesville. Whether it be cooking dinner for her fellow

EMTs or hosting Harry Potter movie nights off-call, Rylander said her night shift has connected her to a network of people motivated by similar goals.

At the hospital, Gombos has also fostered a strong sense of community. During her Thursday and Friday night shifts, Gombos works with her colleagues to attend to eight patients at a time, assisting with their hygiene and administering treatment. As Gombos spoke about forging bonds with both her patients and a tight-knit crew of nurses, she pushed back against the misconception that working through the night is isolating.

“[It’s] been really great to have this network,” Gombos said. “I’m being exposed to different kinds of people all the time and building great relationships that I think will last forever.”

Not only can these bonds provide companionship for students, but they can also supply comfort in the face of emotionally resonant situations. This has especially been the case for Rylander, who — unlike her peers conducting bathroom checks and taking vitals — must stay resilient in the face of “gut-wrenching” 9-11 emergencies.

She described one such emergency this past spring as a particularly challenging moment. Rylander said she was dispatched at 5 a.m. to respond to a call that concluded long after her shift was supposed to end. Upon returning to the station, she saw a friend on the

upcoming day crew who noticed her exhaustion. Rather than interrogate why she was on the verge of tears, he offered her Bodo’s and accompanied her while she wrote up reports from the night before, which Rylander said “meant the world” to her.

Even after forgoing a night’s sleep — and sometimes dealing with tough situations — these students shower and attend class each morning like everyone else, the focus of their day still on schoolwork and achieving the best versions of themselves.

Oftentimes, being able to show up for others and put your best foot forward requires an emphasis on wellness. While the definition of “self-care” varies by person, Gombos said she sees value in taking downtime for herself when it becomes available. When she does, Gombos said that she tries to block outside noise and focus on being present — strategies that, she said, can help all students appreciate the little moments that disappear under the demands of University life.

“I’ll really just try to be in the moment,” Gombos said. “I think that’s a huge thing for a lot of UVa. students — you’re never going to have huge segments of time where you can fully relax and be present, but you have to take those little parts of the day where you can decompress.”

A take on Eleven Madison Park’s world famous granola

Crunchy, sweet and inexpensive to make, this granola is sure to replace your overpriced store-bought favorite

Abby Snowdon | Staff Writer

Over the summer, I was lucky enough to be able to dine at Eleven Madison Park, a three-Michelin-star restaurant on New York City’s famous Madison Avenue. It was the most exquisite meal I’ve ever had, not to mention that, at the time, it was entirely plant-based.

The tasting menu featured a brilliant hassleback potato with plant-based caviar, an artichoke with green garlic and alyssum blooms, a delicious buckwheat soba noodle dish with shiitake mushroom and wasabi and many more bite-sized delicacies. Yet the best part of the entire experience was the free parting gift they sent us home with — a jar full of homemade granola. The granola didn’t last a week in my pantry, and I’ve been trying to recreate it ever since. After three attempts, I think I’ve finally gotten pretty close.

In my replica, the rolled oats become crunchy with their topping of brown sugar and maple syrup, and the olive oil adds a wonderful depth to the flavors. The salt adds a stunning savory fold to an otherwise saccharine granola. The crunch of the coconut chips, pumpkin seeds and dried fruit adds a wonderful texture to the dish. I could eat this granola by the handful, and my roommates can attest that I do so frequently.

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 25 minutes

Yields: approx. 6 cups (about 20 1/3 cup servings)

Ingredients:

- 3 cups oats (I use Bob’s Red Mill Old Fashioned Rolled Oats)
- 1 cup shredded, unsweetened coconut (You can

roughly chop flakes if you can’t find shredded coconut)

- 1/3 cup unroasted, unsalted sunflower seeds
- ½ tablespoon salt (Trust me on this one*)
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Optional: 1 cup dried fruit of choice (I’ve made versions with strawberries, bananas and apples and have loved all of them equally. Use one fruit per batch, unless you prefer otherwise)
- Aluminum foil

*I realize this amount of salt may be alarming. I find it adds a wonderful savory fold into the dish, but if you want your granola on the sweeter side, you can use a bit less.

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, combine the oats, coconut, sunflower seeds and salt.
3. In a small saucepan over low heat, combine the brown sugar, maple syrup and olive oil. Remove from heat when sugar has just dissolved.
4. Pour the saucepan mixture into your dry ingredients, and mix until well combined.
5. Line a cookie sheet with aluminum foil. Pour your granola mixture onto the cookie sheet, spreading it evenly.
6. Bake for 25 minutes or until golden brown. Stir the granola around on the pan several times while baking.
7. Let cool completely on a baking sheet.
8. Optional: transfer granola to a large mixing bowl. Incorporate

dried fruit until evenly dispersed.

9. Package in an air-tight container for pantry storage and enjoy.

This granola is the highlight of most of my mornings — whether I use it to top Greek yogurt bowls or just snack on it à la carte. It’s also wonderful as an addition to plain fruit, cereal-style in a bowl with some milk or a great way to add some texture to muffin or pancake batter. Plus, as we approach the holiday season, it also makes for a wonderful gift! The sugar preserves the granola quite well, so it will remain fresh for over a month as long as it’s stored in an air-tight container. I am confident that you will love it as much as I do.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

State of the art: A study in Charlottesville's vibrant mural scene

In recent years, murals have transformed the city of Charlottesville into a living canvas of creativity and connection

Caroline Lee | Senior Writer

The writing is on the wall in Charlottesville, in the best way. From Belmont to Barracks and from the Corner to the Downtown Mall, murals have been woven into the fabric of the City, blurring the line between public space and personal expression. Each piece invites passersbys to pause, to look closer and to see their home a little differently.

Artist Christy Baker began her journey with murals growing up here in Charlottesville, where she returned after attaining her BFA in New York City. In 2020, Baker founded the artistic painting and design studio greenyellowblue as an avenue to pursue her passion in murals and other large-scale public artwork.

"Anytime attention is paid to an environment in which people interact, there is the possibility for deeper connection to that place, and therefore to their community at large," Baker said.

Baker's impact can be seen in bold colors and clean geometrical patterns displayed across the City's structures, including her bison mural outside of Guajiros, a vision of public art as mutual inspiration — not only across the arts community, but the City as a whole.

For artists like Baker and James "Jae" Johnson, a fellow muralist and Charlottesville native, that sense of connection lies at the heart of the City's growing public art scene. Johnson reflected on how the City's creative landscape has developed in recent years, an evolution that has brought public art — and the artists behind it — into clearer view.

"Whether it's at the IX Art Park, the McGuffey [Arts Center], the [University], [public art] has been pushed to the forefront and helped lift up the art scene here," Johnson said. "Right now, it's pretty much thriving. This area is rich with talent, whether it's dance, art, photography, everything."

Johnson's first major mural can be found on the exterior of the Starbucks on West Main Street, where bright, kinetic figures bring movement and optimism to what would otherwise be a familiar and unremarkable facade — an extension of his philosophy that art should energize the spaces of the everyday.

"I'm just a normal guy just trying to share my gift," Johnson said. "One of the best gifts that people do give me, they'll send me a ran-

dom text of them taking a picture in front of my art."

Baker expressed a similar vision for her murals, as an encouragement to the public to expect the unexpected. She spoke of the joy and delight that comes with encountering public art, citing the bison mural and the sense of place and connection that she sought to create with it.

Where Baker knew her interest was in murals from an early age, Johnson pursued his degree in studio art and only came to murals around the time of the pandemic when he was approached to create a design for the psychiatric ward of the University Hospital. Interspersed in the design with vignettes from Charlottesville life and portraits of individuals are the words "fellowship," "community," "persistence" and "hard work," reflections of the larger message that he hopes to convey.

"Everybody [has] gotten more and more open to my style and what my strengths are," Johnson said. "They give me the green light to be creatively free."

For Johnson, the design process is not something with a defined timeline or end date, but rather a series of revisions and refinements working towards an ultimate goal. Such a necessity for ongoing adjustments prompted his transition from working on pen and paper to an iPad, as he found that going digital allowed for a more streamlined modification phase.

Baker said that her design process often begins with listening — to the client, to the space, to the neighborhood around it, with the goal to incorporate multiple voices into a single expression of community. Depending on the scope of the project, Baker will occasionally turn over some of the prep work to a trusted contractor, but all of the painting she does herself with the highest grade materials available to her.

"Every time a person interacts with that color and that experience, there's a sense of ownership, of place, of connectedness," she said. "My goal and hope is that then they would take that out into their experience throughout the day and [see] how that impacts other people."

For both Johnson and Baker, art exists as a vehicle not only for them to impact others, but for others to impact them. Baker described a mural as an "unexpected experience of being," an idea John-

son incorporates not only into his work but into his life, as he leads mural camps, paint n' play events and other creative projects at the Art Bar Cville.

"A lot of people are afraid to, for lack of a better way of putting it, do art because they're not good in their aspect," he said. "We all have different levels of talent, but at the end of the day, it's not about your talent. It's just how it makes you feel."

Together with a broad network of local artists, Baker and Johnson are helping define a new chapter in Charlottesville's creative landscape, one where public spaces exist as reflections of shared creativity and community. While each approaches the urban canvas of Charlottesville differently, both see murals as bridges between artist and audience, individual and city. Each mural serves as a reminder that art is not just to look at but to live with, and each artist adds new color to the city's story — one of connection, of memory, of love.

"I love Charlottesville," Johnson said. "I didn't realize how much Charlottesville loves me."

Both Baker and Johnson are parents, and both have woven their families into their art — sometimes literally. On the backside of Circa in McIntire Plaza, Baker's mural depicts her son blowing bubbles, a moment she says was both joyful and deeply personal. Years later, though the mural has faded some, its meaning has not and continues to make Baker smile every time she drives by.

"There's something about creating, or having an impact on, an environment in which your children are growing and developing," Baker said.

Johnson has also included his children, incorporating them into his mural for the Red Cross on Rose Hill, a vibrant display spotlighting images of those impacted by climate change. The backdrop of this piece depicts his own home neighborhood, and the higher energy costs they face as a result of a lack of tree coverage in the area — a choice that stems from a desire to see his own identity reflected in his work.

"[My art] may outlive me," Johnson said. "I can go any day, but this art will still be there. And so every mural, I ... leave a piece of me there, just so [Charlottesville] can have some type of memory of me."



TABITHA SHIN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Johnson's first major mural can be found on the exterior of the Starbucks on West Main Street, where bright, kinetic figures bring movement to what would otherwise be an unremarkable facade



TABITHA SHIN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Baker's impact can be seen in bold colors and clean geometrical patterns displayed across the city's structures, including her bison mural outside of Guajiros



CALEB RAGEN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

"I love Charlottesville," Johnson said. "I didn't realize how much Charlottesville loves me."

The Rare Book School tangibly interacts with textual artifacts

Through its summer classes and events, the institute encourages the University community to experience its interactive approach

Darya Bartol | Staff Writer

Anchored in Shannon Library is the Rare Book School, a research institute dedicated to the historical study of books and their material context. RBS is open to students, faculty and local community members alike, with classes and exhibits that work to highlight their mission of understanding our cultural history through physical text.

During Shannon Library renovations, the Rare Book School moved from the basement to the more visible second floor. Now situated in between study spaces and Saxby's, Katie Hodges-Kluck, assistant director of communications at RBS, explained that RBS wants to re-introduce itself to the community.

"We really wanted to let people see our new, beautiful space, see what we do, make it so that we're part of the community here on campus," Hodges-Kluck said. "Administratively, we're separate but we're based in [the University]."

The RBS is an independent, non-profit institute that employs around 100 faculty members and over 20 staff members, with a collection of around 80,000 books and 20,000 prints dating over 2,000 years old. While it has called the University

home since 1992, it operates separately from the University with other locations across the country and abroad such as in Chicago, Princeton and Oxford. This separation allows for both students and Charlottesville community members to participate in their summer classes and events.

RBS encourages students of their programs to fully immerse themselves and view these texts, not only as the words on the page, but also as a book created within its cultural contexts. Michael Suarez, the executive director of the RBS, explained that looking at the paper and other materials of these books in their original form reveal more about them.

"The future study of the humanities will be very much tied up in a material term," Suarez said. "These things are really important because they're about human labor that we tend not to think about but recovering that human labor and understanding the book is almost a kind of wormhole into a particular era in history."

Along with these classes, the RBS hosts free events monthly. These events take careful planning, and the curators have to figure out both what theme they want to have for the

books on display and the logistics of getting these books on display. Hodges-Kluck explained that the curatorial team frames their exhibits around the fragility of these materials.

"Part of their work is not just deciding [they'll] pull these [materials] out," Hodges-Kluck said. "But how do we pull them out and display them in a way that preserves the terminal body of the book?"

One such event was their open house hosted Oct 17. The event itself was open to the general public allowing for anyone to stop in and out throughout the afternoon. Guests were invited to try their hand at letterpressing, gold stamping and given the opportunity to view items in the school's collection.

Visitors were welcome to touch some of the books on display — as long as they washed their hands first. Keanan Berry, first-year College student, explained how seeing these books physically changed his perspective on what learning looked like years ago.

"It's interesting, especially looking at the anatomy books ... how different learning processes look like in older times," Berry said.

The open house also allows the

RBS to spread the word on their main mission — their summer classes. The RBS offers a long list of five-day courses that traditionally are limited to around 12 students learning for nearly 30 hours a week. Tuition ranges from \$600 to \$1,500 with the school trying to keep tuition as affordable as possible. These courses focus on old and rare pieces of texts and their printing history, aiming to highlight broader human history through the details of their textual artifacts.

Undergraduates and graduate students alike are encouraged to apply but so are professors and even employees at the RBS. Led by a professor, these small class sizes encourage discussion among seasoned professionals and English majors alike.

While they offer around 40 summer classes currently, new classes are constantly being introduced as interest in this field shifts from one topic to another. Laura Perrings, the director of programs and education at RBS, said that student input greatly influences the courses offered.

"We are always listening to the students," Perrings said. "And trying to find out what we're not offering that they want to [take]."

RBS also offers numerous fellow-

ship programs geared towards undergraduate and graduate students of the University. These fellowship programs provide a scholarship to a student interested in taking a RBS course. The programs differ in their requirements, but all involve a fully paid five-day course and the ability to use these courses towards a greater project such as a distinguished major program, a thesis or even term papers.

According to Suarez, the RBS's unique course offerings and fellowship opportunities allow for students to both expand on their original passions and explore a variety of new intellectual pathways.

"Students who are interested in this kind of thing can have all sorts of career possibilities [and] can also open up new intellectual vistas and help people get excited about the work they're doing intellectually on Grounds," Suarez said.

The RBS hopes to show the greater University community, through events such as the open house, their core mission — a uniquely social and firsthand experience of textual artifacts spearheaded by shared passions and hands-on experiences.

Screenwriting Club is an exciting addition to U.Va.'s film scene

This student-led writers-room allows those interested in a different side of filmmaking to explore their passion and gain experience

Alena Touve | Staff Writer

Although Charlottesville is known for hosting the Virginia Film Festival, the film scene at the University is remarkably small. Until recently, there were only two film production-focused student organizations on Grounds — the Filmmakers Society and the Virginia Student Film Festival. And while these organizations have been able to offer students practical experience in film production and presentation, there were aspects of filmmaking behind the camera that had yet to be explored.

ENTER: Rachel Conniff, founding president of the Screenwriting Club and third-year College student.

Officially declared as a Contracted Independent Organization in the spring of 2025, the Screenwriting Club is the newest addition to the film scene at the University. Every semester, students take turns writing parts of a film script, which is then workshopped until the script is finished. Fourteen active members are split into two groups, placing around seven members at each of their two weekly meetings to mimic real writers-rooms

found in the film industry.

Conniff said that her inspiration for the club stemmed from a desire for screenwriting experience. Conniff enrolled in a screenwriting class in fall 2024, and following the conclusion of the class, she hoped to continue her screenwriting journey. However, there were no opportunities for further practice outside of the class.

"After I took the screenwriting class, I was kind of like, 'Where do I go from here?' and couldn't really find anywhere, because there's no Screenwriting II or anything like that," Conniff said.

So, she decided to create the Screenwriting Club, modeled after the table-reads she had done in her class. Conniff enlisted two friends, third-year College student Hannah Frakes and second-year Commerce student Katie Korb, to serve as vice president and treasurer, respectively.

"I felt just having a collaborative environment, even if it was outside of class, would really help people workshop their writing and get better at something they're passionate about,"

Conniff said.

Club members write everything from short films to full-length features, emphasizing the story they are telling rather than the format they are telling it in. The Screenwriting Club also writes in many different genres, including coming-of-age, drama and comedy, with their scripts featuring a wide range of protagonists both similar to and different from the college-aged writers creating them.

The club welcomes writers of all skill levels, connecting novice writers with more experienced students who can help them improve. Frakes said the club's inclusive atmosphere makes it a great starting point for beginner filmmakers to gain exposure.

"We have a lot of people who have never written before, like myself," Frakes said. "It's a really good environment for people to just dip their feet into the world of screenwriting."

Club members second-year College student Anika Kashyap and third-year College student Julia Shuttleworth both had varying levels of writing experience before joining.

While Shuttleworth spent years writing play scripts, Kashyap specialized in acting. They said the Screenwriting Club gave them an outlet to explore a new medium and brought them into a collaborative space, helping them improve their craft.

"There's so much to be learned from the way that other people think," Kashyap said. "I found that just being surrounded by so many talented writers ... there's something specific you get from working with every person, and I think that's been a really invaluable experience."

This communal atmosphere does not end with their weekly meetings. The Screenwriting Club hosts a variety of other social events, such as organized trips to the movie theater and their recently-introduced guest speaker talks — the latest of which featured career screenwriter Alec Sokolow. Having written on hit films like "Toy Story," Sokolow was able to offer students advice on various elements of screenwriting and filmmaking.

"He gave a lot of good advice, just on the practicality of screenwriting as

a career, and getting started in your scripts and what to do once you've actually written them, which I think is something that you can't really teach in a course," Frakes said. "It's something someone would have to tell you about their own personal experience."

With an established rhythm of weekly meetings and the ability to host events like guest speakers, the Screenwriting Club has comfortably achieved its initial goal of being both a creative and social space for those interested in screenwriting. Members are able to enjoy an artistic community that welcomes a variety of different perspectives, while gaining practical screenwriting experience that can be translated to a real writing career, should they choose to pursue it.

FADE OUT: The Filmmakers Society, Virginia Student Film Festival and now the Screenwriting Club at the center of the University's filmmaking scene.

Students interested in joining the Screenwriting Club can sign up for the GroupMe linked in their Instagram bio @screenwritingclubatuva.

PUZZLE

Shreyas Agnihotri | Puzzlist

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

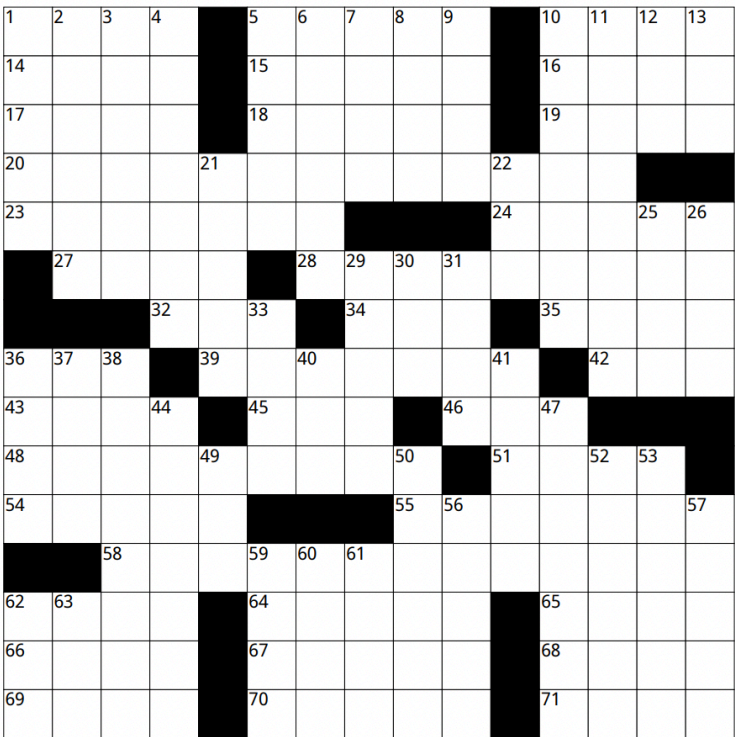
ACROSS

- 1 Lead-in to boy or girl
- 5 What you might do at the AFC
- 10 Teen detective Nancy
- 14 "Feel the ____" (campaign slogan for Sanders)
- 15 Island nation near Sicily
- 16 Prefix meaning "wine"
- 17 Room at The Standard
- 18 Part of a "Game of Thrones" costume
- 19 Quadri- doubled
- 20 Designer of the Rotunda / \ Place for a picnic
- 23 Donald Glover series set in Georgia
- 24 "Shark Tank" investor's rejection
- 27 Bone-dry
- 28 First word of the United States Constitution / \ "Doctor" portrayed by Benedict Cumberbatch
- 32 CAT scan alternative

- 34 31-Down, for one
- 35 Tattle
- 36 "____ Kapital"
- 39 Relevant
- 42 Easter egg coloring
- 43 Las Vegas WNBA team
- 45 Cartoon frame
- 46 Home to M.S.G.
- 48 Like a surrender flag / \ Unit of cabbage
- 51 SK Coffee offering
- 54 Jazz, for Chet Baker
- 55 Sun block?
- 58 Critical decision-making point ... or a hint to the clues divided in two
- 62 168 hours
- 64 One introducing a cappella groups at Lighting of the Lawn
- 65 Ballerina's bend
- 66 Stare at
- 67 "Paradise Lost" and "Beowulf," for two
- 68 Pizazz
- 69 Silently agrees

- 70 Subtle attention-getters
 - 71 Cries from Homer Simpson
- DOWN
- 1 Nigeria's capital
 - 2 Guiding principles
 - 3 Spongy British dessert
 - 4 Tiny insects' environment
 - 5 Like some watches and phones
 - 6 "The Pianist" setting
 - 7 Red resident of Sesame Street
 - 8 Lots
 - 9 Protective cover
 - 10 One might say "Welcome"
 - 11 Figured
 - 12 Tolkien tree creature
 - 13 Try to win over
 - 21 Primer mes del año
 - 22 Televisé
 - 25 Like many Christmas sweaters

- 26 The "T" of TV
- 29 Viral disease named for a river in Africa
- 30 Deplete
- 31 Pub on The Corner, for short
- 33 Rainfall measure
- 36 University of Georgia athlete, familiarly
- 37 Tooth trouble
- 38 Sitcom which coined the expression "yada, yada, yada"
- 40 Casual shirt
- 41 It may be vicious
- 44 "The Adults Are Talking" band, with "The"
- 47 Tweeted
- 49 Always, poetically
- 50 Pick up on
- 52 NASA program that sent astronauts to the moon
- 53 Old Testament prophet
- 56 "Mental torture," per Garry Kasparov
- 57 Pristine places



- 59 Remain fresh
- 60 Members of a 123-year-old U.Va. secret society
- 61 CBS military series
- 62 Came out on top, like U.Va. football against
- Florida state
- 63 Bigheadedness

CARTOON

White House Writes Back

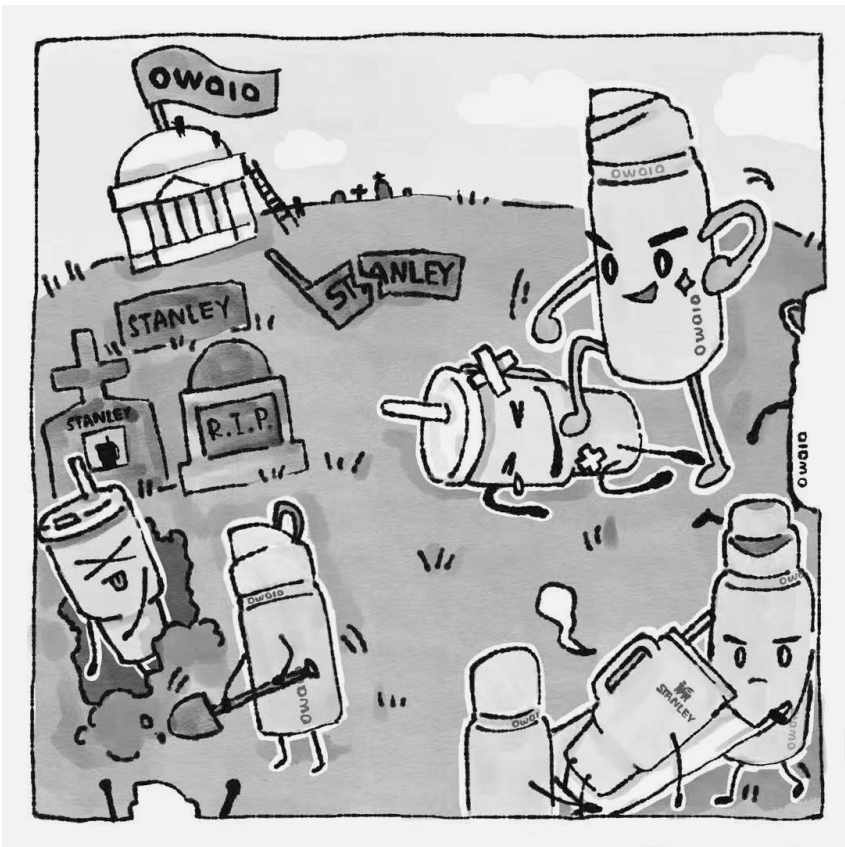
Melody Moore | Cartoonist

The U.Va. Board of Visitors receives response from the White House after rejecting the Compact ...



Graveyard of the Stanleys

Agnes Zhou | Cartoonist



SPORTS

Discussing the dawn of the Ryan Odom era

Three men's basketball beat writers talk roles, road tests and resumes with the season starting in less than two weeks

Thomas Baxter, Emory Huffman, Aimee Crosbie | Staff Writers

Get your popcorn ready. Virginia basketball stands less than two weeks away from the formal kickoff of the Coach Ryan Odom era, an occasion caught at the crossroads of quiet excitement and bittersweet reflection.

This time last year, Virginia was still processing the shocking resignation of Tony Bennett. Now the program is starting anew — new coaching staff, new energy, almost an entirely new roster.

Odom may be a familiar face, from his roots with the program to a fateful spring night in 2018, but the brand of basketball that he brings will feel alien to those used to packlines and patient possessions. And the talented team assembled seemingly overnight has only a few familiar faces.

So what to expect this season? It might help to start with the basics — the same questions everyone has in those few weeks before college basketball that we call October. Three basketball writers from The Cavalier Daily discuss.

Which player are you most excited to see in a Virginia uniform?

Emory Huffman, Senior Writer: We have already seen sophomore guard Elijah Gertrude rep the orange and blue, but it's been a long time — Gertrude missed the entirety of the 2024-25 season with a knee injury. Despite having already spent two years on Grounds, Gertrude is somewhat of an unknown quantity. Still, it's hard not to be excited about the electric bounce and ball-handling abilities he showed in limited time two seasons ago. The sophomore is one of the only holdovers on a roster packed with brand new talent, perhaps forcing Gertrude into more of a complementary role than his play style would otherwise dictate. If he can adjust to the new faces and find his role, though, the game-changing potential remains.

Thomas Baxter, Senior Writer: Graduate forward Devin Tillis is just a funky player — in the best way possible. There's something so fun about the old-school/new-school intersection of a robust post-scoring power forward that lets it fly from beyond the arc and plays point guard sometimes just because he can. What he lacks in explosiveness he makes up for with nimble footwork and feather-light touch around the rim — check out his game-winner against UC Santa Barbara if you don't believe it. A player like that is everything a

winning side wants in its rotation, and Tillis' larger-than-life personality has him hosting YouTube shows and serving as the team's self-designated “glue guy.” He's a great player, and he's really fun to watch — who cares about dunks anyways?

Aimee Crosbie, Staff Writer: I'm picking the guy with the shortest — pun intended — intro, local hero and freshman guard Chance Mallory. In an era of mercenaries, a homegrown guy will be comforting to fans searching for familiarity on the floor of John Paul Jones Arena. Sentiment aside, Mallory initially decommitted upon Tony Bennett's retirement, but his subsequent recommitment to the Cavaliers after Odom's hire just made sense. Odom has a proven track record with smaller guards — UMBC starter Darnell Rogers stood at just 5-foot-2. With rim protection aplenty in 7-foot centers — freshman Johann Grünloh and senior Ugonna Onyenso — it leaves space for Mallory to get under the dribble and really funnel the ball aggressively. His stature-driven style allows for a unique switch-up when graduate point guard Dallin Hall inevitably needs to get off his feet.

What is your biggest concern about this team heading into the season?

EH: Nobody knows anyone. Not the team, not the coaches, not the fans. Maybe that's overstating things, but this team has been reconstructed from scratch. Every team needs an identity — when a team does not have one, the consequences are clear. Virginia will need to find its identity quickly or it will risk dropping critical early-season games. Will the Cavaliers play the fast-paced brand of offense featured by Odom at VCU? Will Odom trust a few key playmakers to create shots, or will the team live behind the three-point line? These are all questions that had clear answers for most teams this offseason, but not for Virginia. The Cavaliers cannot spend too long finding their identity to start this season — if they come out of the gate limping, the season could slip away quickly.

TB: Can this team win on the road? Virginia is going to be playing some of its toughest games away from home. Sure, JPJ might be seeing a lot of Cavalier wins, but a team with March ambitions not having that home-court ad-



COURTESY VIRGINIA ATHLETICS

The Ryan Odom era officially begins Nov. 3.

vantage in high-stakes matchups is worrisome. Texas away in early December, then starting conference play with games at Virginia Tech and NC State, does not give the team a lot of time to come into its own. Facing the potential two strongest teams in the conference — Louisville and Duke — away just adds to that. The Cavaliers need to steal a few wins on the road against top teams while maintaining a strong home record to keep their tournament hopes realistic, which is always easier said than done.

AC: Unfortunately for this particular team, there's only one basketball on the court. A lot of the new Cavaliers were the Robins at their previous stops — and graduate guard Malik Thomas was indubitably Batman during his time at San Francisco. Thomas sat near a 30 percent usage rate, junior guard Sam Lewis and graduate guard Jacari White lived in the mid-to-high 20s and Dallin Hall was always closing at BYU. That's a lot of muscle memory to recalibrate, especially when the players are under the pump — some old habits will have to die so they can get by with fewer touches night to night. Odom has mentioned his early-season philosophy includes an aversion to labels, but perhaps clearer roles could be the fastest route from many talented parts to a more cohesive whole.

What is one storyline to watch as the season gets underway?

EH: Who will take control of the scoring duties? Once again, Virginia lacks a ringleader. After the departure of Reece Beekman in 2024 — and Tony Bennett's subsequent departure — the Cavaliers relied on a committee approach for the primary scoring duties in 2024-25. The results were subpar. With a fresh batch of scorers on Grounds, it will be interesting to see who takes command. My guess is freshman forward Thijs De Ridder, the 6-foot-9 Belgian. European basketball is no joke, so De Ridder might make the transition to the ACC more easily than other newcomers. A sneakier choice is graduate guard Jacari White, an experienced scorer from North Dakota State who averaged 17.1 points per game last season. The door truly remains wide open to scoring opportunities, so it remains to be seen who will take advantage.

TB: The Commonwealth Clash could be really fun this year. The Cavaliers split the series against Virginia Tech last season, with the away team winning each matchup. While Virginia's team this year looks the part of a top team in the conference, the Hokies' roster — its starting five especially — should not be overlooked. Coach Mike Young and his staff brought back three of their four best play-

ers — a rarity in this day and age — and also had an impressive off-season marked by the additions of junior forward Amani Hansberry from West Virginia and 6-foot-9 freshman guard Neoklis Avdalas from Greece. The rivalry is completely up for grabs this year, and the two games bookending conference play could make that second meeting in Charlottesville all the more consequential.

AC: Virginia is no stranger to international imports, but few have arrived with resumes quite like those of Belgian power forward De Ridder and German center Grünloh — this faux-freshman duo will likely set Virginia's defensive ceiling this season. Their experience in their respective professional leagues means they've both played minutes beyond their years — making them two of the most battle-tested on this roster. Thijs, nicknamed “The Tank,” will largely be a constant at the four. De Ridder will be a matchup problem in ball screens — most fours won't be comfortable defending his pick and roll reads. Grünloh has both verticality and timing at the rim, but is also comfortable stepping outside the arc and shooting threes. These two Europeans will no doubt play a key piece in Odom's frontcourt this season.

Men's soccer's bold scheduling is paying off once again

Virginia's unflinching non-conference scheduling philosophy got early validation this week

Michael Liebermann | Sports Editor

Coach George Gelnovatch has a minor fixation with scheduling. The way he sees it, come the postseason there is a goal — to get the highest seed possible — and there is one surefire scheduling strategy to reach it.

“Philosophy?” Gelnovatch said pre-season. “Play a tough schedule.”

The theory, by now, has become science.

Further proof of it came Friday, exactly one month from the unveiling of the NCAA Tournament bracket, when the NCAA Men's Soccer Committee ranked Virginia at No. 3. The team's strength of schedule, presently ranked fifth in the country, once again is boosting it to a high postseason seeding.

Virginia may be ranked No. 11 in the national poll and No. 6 in the RPI. But the selection committee rankings — a compilation of what the bracket's top 16 would look like if the season ended now — are the ones that will ultimately matter.

“The top four teams have been exceptionally competitive in their schedules up to this point in their season,” Brian Mackin, the chair of the committee, said. “Developing a top-16 ranking was extremely difficult as the

next group of teams were very competitive and have strong resumes.”

For yet another season, Gelnovatch can adopt his typical arms-crossed pose and chuckle. He pieced together just about the hardest schedule he could find, because he knows where it will land Virginia on a bracket.

“If you can get 10 wins, 11 wins in that schedule, that generally translates into a top-10 seed,” Gelnovatch said when asked about his scheduling philosophy. “So that's kind of been our formula.”

Virginia's final strength of schedule has ranked top in the country two of the last three years. Since 2013, when strength of schedule rankings first showed up on the NCAA's statistics website, Virginia has three times ranked first and six times ranked in the top five. Not since 2016 has it ranked outside the top 10, excluding the patchwork season of 2020.

That high strength of schedule has unerringly delivered high seeds. Virginia has made it to eight tournaments since 2015 and has received a top 12 seed in all eight.

Among the seven selection criteria listed by the NCAA, strength of schedule is one. RPI, the committee's

preferred metric and one that takes into account strength of schedule, is another. Virginia schedules hard because it knows it helps — and it knows it can handle it. That dauntless mentality has become a point of pride.

“Over the past three seasons, we've consistently played one of the toughest schedules in college soccer — and this season will be no different,” Gelnovatch said in the team's schedule release.

Not all of it is by choice. Virginia competes in the ACC, perennially the spikiest conference in the country, in which just navigating the league slate is like walking through a street of falling bricks. Every team in the league has a lofty strength of schedule.

Virginia's separation comes in its non-conference lineup. Scheduling those games begins with a mass message. The coaches put out a document, a list of available dates. From there schools reach out to each other to set up games.

Virginia is always looking for home games. It rarely travels for non-conference games — this season, for example, seven of its eight non-conference games are at home. It was the same last season, and since 2014, Virginia in any

given season has not played more than one true road game. Even then, those road games are never further than in-state jaunts to James Madison and George Mason or trips to Maryland.

Gelnovatch has never seen the point, he has said, of taxing his team unnecessarily with travel. Teams can come to him, if they want. But if they do, he knows they will be good.

“You're not going to come in here as a coach unless you know you have a veteran team, or you've had a good year the year before,” Gelnovatch said.

Virginia, of course, loses some of those non-conference games. Most teams that stand up for the fight have veteran rosters and so may have an advantage early in the season. Colgate beat the Cavaliers last year. George Mason thrashed them this year.

But the tradeoff, as the results have shown, is well worth it. And scheduling these opponents reflects the coaches' confidence in their team.

“I know that the coaches believe in us, and I know we are good enough as a group to meet that schedule as well,” graduate defender Sebastian Pop said. “We know we have such a high level in our team — every player, even the ones that are not starting.”

Speaking pre-season, Gelnovatch compared this year's schedule to those of the last few years.

“This might be our toughest schedule,” Gelnovatch said with conviction.

That has failed to pan out, as Denver and Dayton, ranked No. 4 and No. 12 pre-season, have tumbled out of the rankings, although unranked UNC Greensboro has risen to No. 18.

But the seeding is only the difference between the hardest schedule in the nation and the fifth-hardest schedule. And it has not stopped the high NCAA Tournament ranking from coming together.

Virginia hopes to, unlike in past years, make something of it. Recently, like going through a series of doors, the scheduling philosophy has led to a high seed, the high seed has provided a first-round bye and home-field advantage, and then the key has jammed and the team has lost.

“We've reached the Round of 16 in back-to-back seasons,” Gelnovatch said, “but the next step is a true post-season breakthrough — and I believe this team is ready to deliver it.”

Cavaliers' Four Horsemen give opponents plenty to fear

No. 16 Virginia has a close-knit running back room that leads the charge against defenses

Ben McNiff | Senior Writer

For Virginia's opponents, this spooky season has gotten even spookier thanks to a relentless running back room, a cavalry of Four Horsemen who can just about do it all.

“They all have the ability to make plays for us in all aspects of the game,” offensive coordinator Des Kitchens said.

Graduate running backs J'Mari Taylor and Harrison Waylee, senior running back Xavier Brown and junior running back Noah Vaughn have given defenders plenty of nightmares. Beyond their exploits on the field, this unit has grown closer in its time together to form a community. Taylor testified to the group's comfort with each other before the season began.

“We hang around each other outside of football, and do a whole bunch of things, actually,” Taylor said. “In meeting rooms, wherever we go, we travel as a group. So you never see one or two running backs ... Y'all always see us as a group, so that's how we get our bond.”

Taylor rumbled for 150 yards and three scores in a close road loss to NC State, but the rest of the cavalry rode onto the scene in a 55-16 stampede of William & Mary. The explosion featured 379 yards on the ground, including touchdowns by Taylor and Brown, with two 100-yard rushers in Waylee and Vaughn. These performances early in the season showcased the comfort these players have with each other, a sentiment echoed by Waylee, the most seasoned of the group.

“Being a running back, we all just got together pretty easily and pretty fast,” Waylee said. “The guys welcomed me when I came in and welcomed J'Mari when he came in, so just like an easy community that we just built with each other.”

Waylee was the standout against the Tribe, rushing for 151 yards and three touchdowns, including a 97-yarder, the longest in program history. The transfer from Wyoming is the active career NCAA rushing yardage leader and has reached on-

field speeds of nearly 22 miles per hour. In Charlottesville, Waylee's experience and athleticism have manifested in his adaptability.

“He's very experienced,” Coach Tony Elliott said. “He's a little bit bigger, so he runs more downhill with power ... He's starting to become more comfortable in this system, so you're seeing his feet allow him to be more elusive.”

Brown and Vaughn have taken the transfers of Taylor and Waylee in stride — the newcomers and career Cavaliers have adjusted well to each other.

“I think it's just a testament to us as a group, bringing two new guys in and just all of us meshing so well together,” Brown said. “No matter who's in the game, it's all support.”

Brown has made his presence known these past two seasons since missing 2023 with injury. Before the bye week, he was proving pivotal to the Cavaliers' offense in close games, catching a touchdown pass to tie the game early in the fourth quarter en-

route to an upset over then-No. 8 Florida State.

Taylor's own clutch moment came with an overtime game winner against Louisville. He arrived in Charlottesville after a season with nearly 1,400 total yards and 17 touchdowns at NC Central and has become a player that Elliott feels he can rely on in tight situations.

“[He's] an eraser type of back,” Elliott said. “He just has a knack for the big play.”

The Carolina kid has more than justified the coaches' trust. Taylor has six carries on fourth downs, second in the ACC. He has accumulated over 50 yards with these attempts — the next closest ACC rusher has only 16.

Vaughn broke 100 yards alongside Waylee against William & Mary. Across other contests, Vaughn has produced a quiet breakout campaign — averaging 7.7 yards per carry, he has already exceeded his yardage total from last year whilst being the fourth option in the backfield.

The junior may be getting more

work soon — in Virginia's last non-conference clash against Washington State, Brown went down with a non-contact injury. After he exited, Taylor and Waylee rallied to get the Cavalier offense rolling in a come-from behind victory. The outlook on Brown's injury remains unclear. If needed, Elliott has expressed confidence in Vaughn's ability to step up.

“I've said for a long time, prior to Harrison and J'Mari coming in, that I thought that Noah was the most complete back because he can do a lot of different things well,” Elliott said. “He's just going to get better as he gets more experience.”

The Cavaliers march on. Of their remaining schedule all opponents save one are in the top half of the ACC in most rushing yards allowed per game. Virginia, meanwhile, averages the third most rushing yards per game. These defenses may, understandably, have a tough time sleeping at night — there is plenty to fear about the Four Horsemen.

OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

On the ballot this November, keep U.Va. in mind

The gubernatorial and attorney general elections present the University community with an opportunity to elect candidates who will protect the University's autonomy

This November, Virginia is presented with a watershed election. The contest is between the Democrat, former Rep. Abigail Spanberger, and the Republican, Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears. Additionally, incumbent Jason Miyares and Jay Jones are running in the Virginia Attorney General election.

Over the past four years, this University has become more acquainted with the influential power of the governor and the attorney general than we perhaps ever wished to be. The past few months specifically have showcased how pivotal these two roles are to upholding academic freedom and institutional autonomy at the University. While this is a state-wide election with ramifications for all of Virginia, it is also an election with implications which will resonate deeply at state institutions of higher education.

Most crucial this November in the context of the University are threats of federal overreach, both past and present. In June, former University President Jim Ryan resigned from his position following unprecedented federal pressure from the Department

of Justice. His resignation was met with no objection from the governor or attorney general of the Commonwealth — two individuals who could have provided critical support for the University in a time of unprecedented federal overreach. This silence is reminiscent of the incremental decisions taken over the last four years of Gov. Glenn Youngkin and Miyares' terms, decisions which have politicized our University and undermined its commitment to academic freedom.

This year, we must choose a different path. This means choosing a governor who is invested in depoliticizing our Board of Visitors and supporting the mission of the University. Equally as important, from the perspective of our University, is the selection of an attorney general who is able and willing to defend it.

The duties and expectations of the future governor in relation to institutions of higher education are quite expansive. However, when done incorrectly, the consequences for the University are significant. As governor, Youngkin has been overreactive in times that called for distance and

underreactive during crises that called for action, a dichotomy which had the effect of hyperpoliticizing norms like academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

His treatment of appointments to the Board has been particularly destabilizing for the University. Gov. Youngkin's replacements on the Board have proven themselves overzealous and disparaging, leaving the University guessing on how partisan appointments will inconsistently shift outcomes for the University's community and policies. Responding to the Virginia Senate Democrats' rejection of Board appointees earlier this fall, Gov. Youngkin stopped reporting appointments to the Virginia Senate — a refusal to uphold transparency in the University's very own governing bodies.

Spanberger, in contrast, has stood firm in her commitment to maintaining institutional autonomy in response to Ryan's forced resignation and preventing Virginia schools from becoming a "punching bag" for partisan agendas. Earle-Sears has not made strong claims on similar fronts. Spanberger

publicly labeled the Compact as an "outrageous proposal" that threatened the University's academic freedom, and Earle-Sears has not made a public statement. Silence in these moments is telling — demonstrating the protection Spanberger could spearhead for this University.

The next governor will not defend this institution alone. As the Commonwealth's chief legal officer, the attorney general bears the responsibility of defending the institutional autonomy of public institutions like the University. All members of the University's legal and regulatory Counsel are appointed by the attorney general. In his capacity, Miyares has been entrusted with the University's legal defense, and yet, countless challenges against the University from the federal government have been met with no substantial action by Miyares himself.

To be clear, Jones is far from a perfect candidate, and recent revelations have raised concerns about his ethical fortitude to be attorney general. These concerns are understandable, as is the idea that, for some voters, Jones' comments should take precedence over

other issues.

Nevertheless, from the position of prioritizing our University, Virginia's current governor and attorney general have been absent during a time of unprecedented change in higher education. Their successors must match the needs of this institution, acknowledging the power they hold to protect the University at vulnerable moments and uphold its autonomy at others. Spanberger is the gubernatorial candidate who has shown the ability to rise to these expectations.

The external, federal challenges we face demand statewide leadership that acts to protect academic autonomy and shared governance. While change will not come overnight, it begins with those we choose to represent us.

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.

HUMOR

A letter to the U.Va. Crosswalk Ambassador

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

Dear University Crosswalk Ambassador,

It has been almost two months since I arrived on Grounds as a first-year and several weeks since we first crossed paths. After much deliberation and many egregiously high step counts from day to day, I have finally managed to string together a few sentences that capture my feelings towards you and how you have changed my life.

During my first few months on Grounds, I woke up with intense anxiety each morning — not because of ECON 2010 or BIOL 2100 or even the sheer idea of having to eat at Newcomb Dining Hall once more. In fact, those anxieties paled in comparison to the real terror of every day — having to cross the intersection of McCormick Road and Cabell Drive. Unlike the many shorter crosswalks

on Grounds, or even the few and far between that have signs with flashing lights, this particular crosswalk has no such warning system and is a much farther gap. In staring down the white stripes painted on the concrete stretching endlessly, I could feel my eyes blurring and my head spinning. It was petrifying.

Even though I was intimidated by this stretch, I knew I had to make it across this particular crossing on my way to my 10 a.m. lecture, and my only source of comfort came from the fact that I was just one out of hundreds of students making the same treacherous journey. I could hardly get the courage to walk, but I knew I would never walk alone. However, the nervousness I felt approaching the horrific 20-foot gap in the sidewalk never seemed to go away. As the days dragged on, I was starting to lose hope that it ever would. But then, one fateful day, you appeared.

It was a Monday, and the pit in

my stomach grew as I approached the most dangerous stretch of pavement on Grounds. Just as I thought that my nerves would force me to forge an alternate way to Clark Hall, I saw you.

Well, I saw your bright yellow vest first. Then, I saw you.

You stood bravely in the middle of the road, commanding cars and, more courageously, Veo scooters with your arms. No one moved unless you said so, and you were completely fearless as Chief Keef's top hits blared from your clip-on JBL speaker. I was captivated by your confidence. I even remember the very first words you said to me.

"CAN I GET A STOP ON MY LEFT AND MY RIGHT, PLEASE?!"

With the way you projected your voice, maybe you were technically speaking to the entire group of students, but there was something about the way you looked vaguely in my direction as you spoke that

showed me that our connection was different — it was special. Your bravery was inspirational, so inspirational that my anxiety dissipated immediately. As I made my way across the crosswalk — only after you said I could — and then up the hill to Clark Hall, I could still hear your voice echoing in the distance.

"GOOD MORNING!" I heard the words reverberating from the concrete of the sidewalk into the sky. "CAN I PLEASE GET A STOP ON MY LEFT AND MY RIGHT, THANK YOU!!" you continued, even though you had to know I was already safe on the other side of the crosswalk. I suppose you really wanted to make sure I was protected until the very moment I was seated in the lecture hall.

Ever since that day, I noticed that you have tried to get my attention in new ways — I am not sure how you knew that my favorite candy is Laffy Taffy or that my post-breakfast craving is anything blue raspberry-

ry-flavored, but I guess our connection just really is that strong. I saw you try to play it off by offering the sweets to every student who walked past you, but I know deep down that the gesture was for me.

On the days where I wake up and all seems wrong in the world, the one thing I know I can count on is you protecting that crosswalk. Seeing you on my walk to class is like a blessing, and your influence on me and my peers only grows stronger by the day.

I hope this letter has adequately conveyed my admiration for all you do. Maybe one day I will find the courage to express it face to face, but for now, I leave you with this letter.

Sincerely,
Your secret crosswalk admirer

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

Removing supplementals forgoes individuality for convenience

Eliminating essays undermines the University's commitment to holistic admissions in favor of convenience and superficial prestige

This summer, the admissions office announced that the University would no longer require supplemental essays for most applicants. For decades, these essays have served as a way for applicants to share information that helped inform admission officers' decisions, offering a glimpse into their values, experiences and ambitions outside of the Common App Personal Statement. With their elimination, the admissions office loses a window into applicants' backgrounds, limiting its ability to holistically evaluate if a student would be a good fit for the University.

Interestingly, this announcement came a month after the resignation of former University President Jim Ryan. For the past three years, the supplemental essay asked students, "What about your individual background, perspective, or experience will serve as a source of strength for you or those around you at UVa.?" This prompt was introduced following the Supreme Court decision against affirmative action. Its sudden removal shortly after Ryan's resignation, which was accelerated by political pressure from the Trump administration — including an investigation into their diversity policies in admission — is difficult to see as a

coincidence.

This change will likely increase the number of applications the University receives because it is easier to apply, which will lower the acceptance rate. This tactic, which has been used by schools like Northeastern University, can create the appearance of greater selectivity without changing the quality of admitted students. In the University's case, however, this

thrives at the University.

Removing essays entirely, rather than just reverting to their previous tradition of using expressive, personable prompts from before the 2022 switch to the background essay, marks a departure from the school's admissions culture. For years, students were asked questions like "What's your favorite word and why," and "If you could choose a theme

paper, but less engaged. By reducing the gamut of expression previously required on the application, admissions officers are left with fewer ways to evaluate how students might contribute to the University beyond academics and their high school extracurriculars.

One justification for this change is the increasing role of artificial intelligence in essay composition.

will be submitting their applications without any essays beyond their personal statement. However, the University has the chance to act for future applicants. For the 2026-27 admissions cycle, the University should plan to restore supplemental essays in some form, ideally through prompts that encourage creativity and reflection. Whether that means reverting to the background prompt, the previous quirky essays or implementing new prompts, having a supplemental essay is essential for reaffirming the University's commitment to holistic admissions.

The University has both the resources and reputation to design an application process that is fair and authentic, and choosing not to do so signals a willingness to reduce students to numbers at a time when institutions are under heightened scrutiny. If the University is serious about fostering a student body that advances the school's values, it must give applicants the opportunity to express those qualities.

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With their elimination, the admissions office loses a window into applicants' backgrounds, limiting its ability to holistically evaluate if a student would be a good fit for the University."

is counterintuitive. The University boasts a 17 percent acceptance rate and is ranked as the fourth best public school in the nation, so there is little need to artificially boost selectivity. The change likely stems from practical considerations — convenience for applicants, reduced workload for the admissions office or the appearance of increased selectivity. Yet, these rationales undermine the University's commitment to evaluating students as whole individuals. Instead, this move prioritizes convenience over a nuanced assessment of who would

song to play every time you walked into a room, what would it be?" These prompts encouraged an opportunity to show individuality beyond transcripts, extracurriculars and test scores.

Without supplemental essays, admissions officers are forced to rely on metrics that favor students from well-resourced backgrounds, since these students have a disproportionately high level of access to academic resources. To this point, removing supplemental essays could result in a university that is more impressive on

Schools like Duke University and the California Institute of Technology have changed their admissions policies to accommodate this by using evaluation methods that focus less on polished prose and more on the content, insight and personal perspective to emphasize students' authentic voices. By contrast, the University's decision to remove supplemental essays entirely ignores the intention that other top schools had to preserve personal expression.

Prospective applicants for this admissions cycle have submitted or

HRL's revised DEI policy achieves nothing but harm to students

Removal of inclusion and belonging training for Resident Staff hurts students by detracting from their ability to build community and foster student self-governance

Earlier this year, Housing and Residence Life quietly cut a number of training modules concerning diversity, equity and inclusion for resident advisors. While the impetus of this change may be related to the July 29 guidance document from the Office of the Attorney General, these sudden and undiscussed changes nullify the benefits that prior inclusion and belonging training had for RAs. Moreover, HRL did not inform their own student leaders, intensifying a continuous division between students and the administration in residence hall governance. By trying to sweep under the rug their debilitation of RAs and their apathy towards students, HRL tangibly disadvantages the residential communities it seeks to build.

Over the summer, HRL conducted its annual orientation program for RAs, older students who live in on-Grounds residence halls and act as mentors and guides for these students. This orientation program consists of different modules designed to prepare them for the upcoming year. This year, any modules pertaining to DEI and "bias" were removed from the program. Previously, RAs were trained

on reporting and resolving what were referred to as "bias incidents," whereas this year, there is practically no guidance on handling such incidents. No justification was offered for the decision beyond a boilerplate response.

In this case, the decision to nix

RAs should be trained to create a welcoming environment for their students, and consciously removing content that enables RAs to reach that goal ultimately does a disservice to their efforts."

these modules was inadvisable, as they create an outline to help RAs address situations that may arise when people from different environments live together. Going to college is a difficult adjustment for many, and a new environment poses challenges. Acclimating to those changes takes time, and it is much easier when someone lives in the hall with the responsibility of tailoring an environment that confronts bias and comforts those of all identities and backgrounds.

The punitive nature of the removal of this training can be seen when considering the contents of

the removed modules. One module dealt with implicit bias, which is an integral lesson to understand as RAs must document concerns of bias in their halls. Ironically, the documenting requirement remains, and so cutting the module that educates RAs on how to do this will

create even further continual harm. RAs should be trained to create a welcoming environment for their students. Removing content that enables RAs to reach that goal ultimately does a disservice to their efforts.

Beyond the aforementioned reasons, this training for RAs was never about exclusion — the criticism often levied by those opposed to DEI initiatives. Instead, it was a recognition that every student has a unique background, and that it is important for RAs to recognize this when creating a welcoming environment in their hall. Indeed, em-

pirical evidence exists that indicates socialization with disparate groups increases student performance and happiness. In that respect, the decision to remove the modules was objectively wrong. It makes little sense that RAs, as quasi-chaperones of new students, should not learn

effective methods to foster a hall environment where this happens. It makes even less sense that an institution of higher learning, an organization that should hold empirical evidence in high regard when making decisions, would decide not to do so.

Equally important is the fact that RAs themselves were not consulted. This is especially problematic when the University explicitly claims that HRL is an organization "firmly rooted in the spirit of self-governance," which is a foundational precept of the University. Not bothering to announce

any of the decisions made by HRL to Resident Staff does not evoke the spirit of self-governance, unless the government in question is a banana republic. That an organization committed to student self-governance granted such little say in the organization's operation to those students renders the proclamation on the University's website little more than lip service.

The University's decision to axe the DEI and bias modules makes a statement about the vertebral integrity of the administrators, and it is not a positive one. There will be consequences to the University's policy of stumbling over itself in its obsequiousness to an unappeasable administration, instead of standing by its students. Continuing to neglect their responsibility to student self-governance and student well-being, as the University has repeatedly done, will blemish its reputation if it continues to acquiesce to the administration's increasingly asinine strictures.

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