

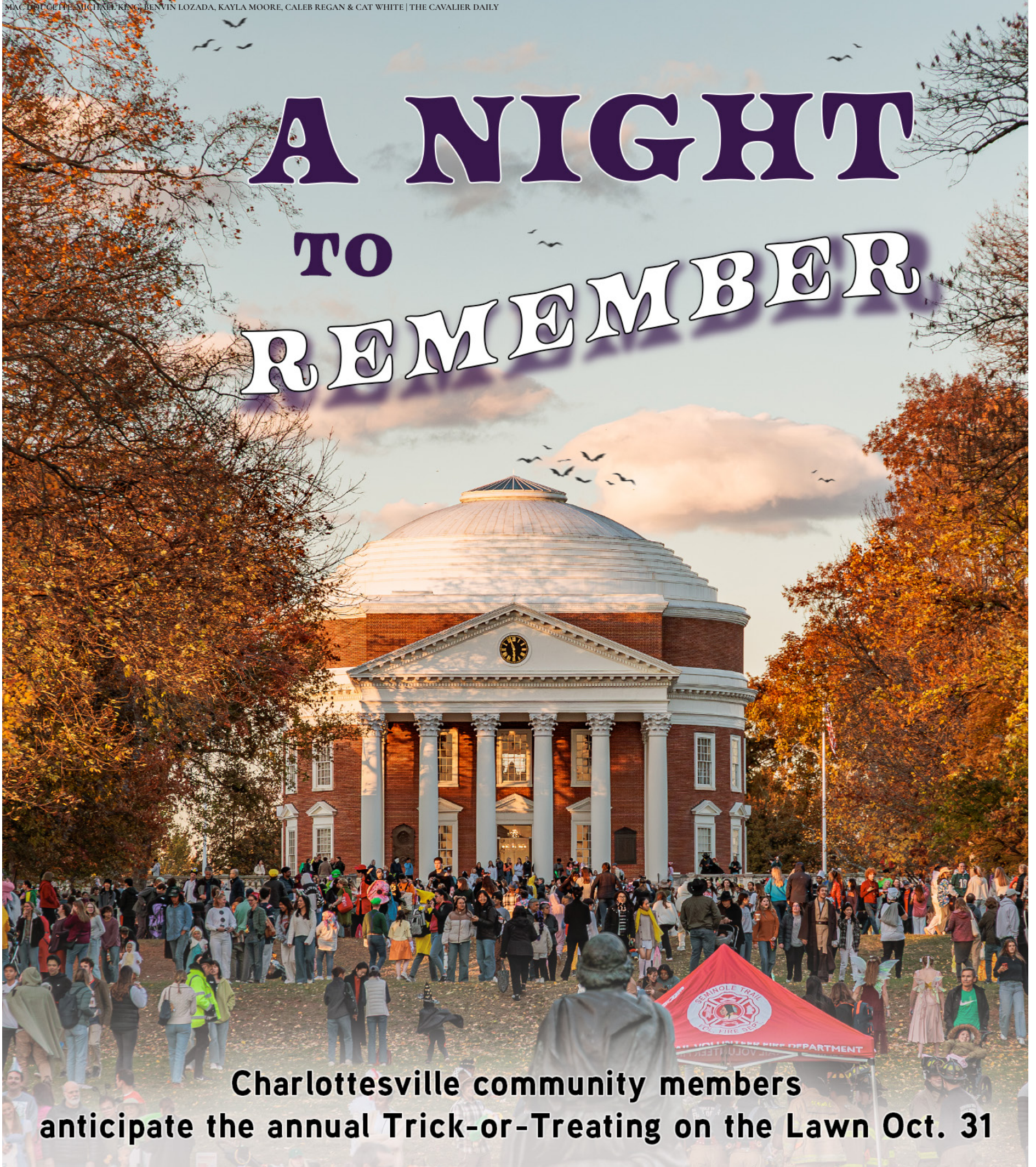
THE CAVALIER DAILY

Vol. 137, Issue 5

Thursday, October 22, 2026

MAC DOUGHERTY, MICHAEL KING, BENJIN LOZADA, KAYLA MOORE, CALEB REGAN & CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER



**Charlottesville community members
anticipate the annual Trick-or-Treating on the Lawn Oct. 31**

NEWS

Madison House begins transition toward ties with U.Va.

After more than 50 years as an independent nonprofit, the student volunteer hub is transitioning its staff to University employment

Komal Reddymachu | Staff Writer

Madison House has entered a two-year memorandum of understanding with the University that could eventually bring its operations under the University, according to a Sept. 18 announcement by the University. Madison House is the independent nonprofit that has connected University students with volunteer work in Charlottesville since 1969.

During the two-year memorandum period, Madison House's professional staff will become University employees and several of its administrative functions will move into University systems. The organization will remain a 501(c)(3) nonprofit for the length of the two-year memorandum.

The agreement is not a finalized merger between the two entities, however. At the end of the two years, Madison House could become a department or division of the University, or it could keep its nonprofit status for certain functions while running other programs under the University. Madison House Executive Director Mary Denlinger described the memorandum as noncommittal, but important.

"The [memorandum of understanding] does not commit Madison House and U.Va. to a merger," Denlinger said. "It establishes a two-year process to evaluate and determine the most sustainable long-term structure for Madison House and our work serving U.Va. students and the community."

According to Ashwin Durvasula, student co-chair of the Madison House Board of Directors and fourth-year College student, Madison House currently runs 27 programs across 129 community sites in partnership with 70 local organizations. More than 200 student leaders and about 2,000 student volunteers take part in those programs.

Why did Madison House pursue the agreement?

Denlinger became executive director in June 2024. She said she arrived when the organization was still rebuilding from the COVID-19 pandemic, even as demand from students and community organizations continued to grow. The pandemic put a strain on Madison House's finances, Denlinger said, and its volunteer members fell from more than 2,500 a year before the pandemic to just over 1,000 in the 2020-21 academic year.

"Although our work has always

been closely connected to U.Va., we weren't able to rely on the University's administrative infrastructure in the way a University unit could," Denlinger said.

Denlinger said financial contributions did not keep pace with expenses after the pandemic. She explained that before she arrived, the organization reduced expenses across nearly every category. Over the past two years, it has continued cutting costs and adopted stronger financial policies and planning practices, although student demand still pushed the organization's functional capacities.

"Our [fiscal year 2026] financials are currently being reviewed, but preliminary results indicate that we expect to finish the year with a slight surplus," Denlinger said.

She further added that a close partnership between Madison House and the University has been discussed for decades. In spring 2025, Madison House approached University leadership to broach the idea, which led to discussions about the memorandum.

Soon after Denlinger arrived, Madison House also began a national benchmarking study of comparable public service centers. Denlinger said the study found that the "overwhelming majority" of those centers operate within their universities. It identified only three other longstanding student-led service organizations in the country operating as independent nonprofits in partnership with their respective universities. Durvasula agreed the University's operating structure is in the minority.

"No other college volunteer hub in the country was operating independently at the scale of Madison House with the proportion of University support that Madison House was getting," Durvasula said. "We needed more University support to sustain and expand operations to meet the growing demand for volunteer opportunities amongst the student body."

Durvasula said most volunteers and program directors did not notice many visible changes to Madison House functioning leading up to the two-year transition agreement.

"It was mainly an administrative decision to maintain continuity in the baseline student experience, before it was at a point where students would be affected," Durvasula said.

Ramzia Ismailzada, Madison

House head program director and fourth-year College student, said she has not seen evidence of the organization's financial and administrative challenges in her own work. Ismailzada volunteered at Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital for two years and served as head program director for Legacy Hospice in her third year. She now oversees 14 programs at Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital and non-hospital providers.

"In terms of finances, no, I don't think I encountered any issues with that directly myself," Ismailzada said.

What changes during the transition?

According to Denlinger, students and community partners should not notice much difference in the short term. Madison House's mission, student leadership model, programs and community partnerships will be preserved under the agreement.

"Most of the immediate changes are happening behind the scenes," Denlinger said. "Our professional staff are transitioning to U.Va. employment, and we are beginning to move some administrative functions, like human resources, technology and advancement, into University systems and infrastructure."

The University also will be providing funding and operational support for Madison House, Denlinger said. As an independent nonprofit, Madison House has maintained its own systems for HR, insurance, finance and other operations, which Denlinger described as inefficient given how closely its work is tied to the University.

Durvasula said if Madison House integrates with the University, it would spend less on costs like maintenance and IT support, and the money would be freed up for volunteer opportunities and student programming. Ismailzada said that regarding the transition, student leaders do not expect their roles to change and that volunteers' day-to-day schedules should stay the same.

"We want student leaders to head the organization, and we want these student leaders to have autonomy over their programs," Ismailzada said. "Same [principle of autonomy applies] for volunteers. That dynamic isn't really expected to change."

Who decides Madison House's future?

At the end of the two-year period, the Madison House Board of Directors and University leadership will jointly determine Madison House's long-term structure, according to Denlinger. She said Madison House has been working with leadership across several University offices, including the Offices of the President and Provost, Student Affairs, Community Engagement and Equal Opportunity, University External Relations and Academic Outreach.

Any long-term changes to the nonprofit itself would require approval from the board, which voted to enter the two-year process. Six of the board's 15 members are University students, including Durvasula, with the other members being University alumni and community members.

Denlinger said the decision whether to merge with the University will be made by weighing how the new structure would impact governance, philanthropy and administrative efficiency. It will also consider the future of Madison House's endowment and building and how the organization fits within the University's broader public service work.

"There are advantages and considerations with each potential structure, and we don't want to predetermine the outcome before we've had the opportunity to fully evaluate them," Denlinger said.

When considering potential structures, Durvasula said both the board and the University sought to preserve Madison House's independence in the two-year memorandum of understanding.

"Going into the [memorandum of understanding], we sought to maintain as much independence as possible, which was a goal of the University as well," Durvasula said. "Madison House has always operated in a student self-governance landscape, and that's what it would be coming into."

Ismailzada said she would prefer that Madison House stay mostly independent while still receiving University support when necessary.

"I don't think a full merge would be ideal," Ismailzada said. "I would like to see Madison House stay independent for the most part, but also allowing that relation and that slight merging with the University to help them in the areas that they need."

Will the collaboration with the University help Madison House meet student demand?

Madison House has struggled in recent years to place all those who want to volunteer, according to reporting by The Cavalier Daily. In the past, students have described the Madison House application process as confusing and disorganized, while staff attributed placement shortfalls in part to the community partners that had not recovered their capacity after the pandemic.

Denlinger said student demand still exceeds capacity in some of the most popular programs and that limited staff capacity has also slowed Madison House's ability to take on new community partners.

"The three areas where student demand most exceeds our current community partner capacity are health and medical services, legal aid and economic empowerment opportunities like our longstanding tax assistance program," Denlinger said.

Ismailzada, who heads programs that deal with health and medical services, said getting a spot in a health-focused program has become harder each year since she joined Madison House her first year due to high demand and limited positions. She said a partnership with the University could help Madison House find new community partners and add programs, giving students more volunteering options to choose from.

"It just gets more and more competitive every year, and that's because the amount of spots that we have stay relatively the same year by year," Ismailzada said. "But the only thing that does change is the number of applicants that we receive."

Denlinger further explained that Madison House recently secured a three-year grant to build capacity in those areas and that a closer partnership with the University will allow it to expand that work faster. For Durvasula, the measure of success at the end of the two years is whether student volunteering keeps growing.

"The most important metric is continuity and expansion of effective and accessible student volunteerism," Durvasula said. "If that's up, as assessed by students and community partners, then that's a good outcome."

Students weigh in on Career Center, call for specialized support

With recruitment season underway, students reflect on advising, access to opportunities and potential for improvement within the University's Career Center

Samya Madhukar | Staff Writer

As job and internship recruitment season gains momentum, University students reported mixed experiences with the University Career Center to *The Cavalier Daily*. Some praised its advising services and resume assistance, while also calling for greater access to professional opportunities and specialized career guidance.

The Career Center aims to support “students in the discovery and pursuit of meaningful lives,” according to its website. The website goes on to write that students of all years are supported during their foundational career journey through bridges with University alumni, industry-specific opportunities and more.

Christian Garcia, associate vice president of career and professional development, highlighted the importance of the Career Center and his desire for students to utilize its services beginning early in their college career.

“It used to be back in the day that career services was something you did in your third and fourth year,” Garcia said. “But we want students to start using us early and often.”

Garcia said engaging with the Career Center early allows students to explore potential majors and career paths, prepare for internships and gradually build professional experiences.

Among the nine students interviewed by *The Cavalier Daily*, several said that the Career Center offers value in preparing resumes, exploring potential career paths and managing their academic decisions, like whether to pursue undergraduate research. However, students also noted challenges in finding field-specific opportunities, accessing advising appointments and understanding the full breadth of the Career Center's resources.

Garcia acknowledged that the high demand for advising services has led to accessibility issues, with many students waiting three to four weeks for advising appointments.

“I would like the wait time to be a week and a half, two weeks at the latest, and that's just a capacity issue in terms of the number of advisors that we have,” Garcia said.

Third-year College student Zaina Abu-Kassem, studying chemistry with a specialization in biochemistry, reflected on the Career Center's ability to serve students pursuing opportunities in STEM fields. She expressed concerns about the Career Center's ability to provide guidance tailored to specific STEM disciplines.

“I think there is a level of difficulty with catering to specific STEM majors, because there is a high degree of specialization in certain fields ... So in that aspect, the Career Center can't fully encapsulate it,” Abu-Kassem said.

Abu-Kassem also noted the importance of field-specific opportunities in career preparation, particularly research and academic presentations in chemistry. She noted that career preparation varies by field — with some fields requiring students to attend a lot of career fairs for networking, for example — and that she feels the Career Center provides opportunities for what she is looking for in chemistry.

For students pursuing careers in medicine, the Career Center has multiple pre-health resources, and its Pre-Health Pillars emphasize that students pursuing health professions must navigate academic requirements alongside clinical experience. Fourth-year College student Ruqiya Hussein said she initially used the Career Center's pre-health advising services in her first year to plan out her academic requirements and consider the impact of taking a bridge year — time between graduating college and entering graduate school or beginning in a career.

Hussein found the experience helpful in determining the courses she had to take, but said she expected more direct guidance in regards to gaining clinical experience.

“I feel like a lot of the time for pre-health students, either we have to figure it out on our own or get advice from upperclassmen,” Hussein said. “They did mention that you can shadow and gain clinical experience, but there wasn't really advice on how to gain [experience] or what programs that UVa. offers.”

Hussein said she believes she would have benefited from more specific information about clinical training programs and opportunities available through UVa. Health or the Charlottesville community. She noted, however, that the Career Center distributes weekly pre-health newsletters highlighting professional opportunities and programs, which she said can be beneficial in navigating opportunities. Students are able to subscribe to newsletters relevant to various fields through the Career Center, such as business, healthcare and public service and government.

A second-year College student who wished to remain anonymous to critique her experience with individuals in the Career Center also said she had used several Career Center resources, including Handshake and pre-health drop-in advising. She found pre-health advising useful in planning the courses she had to take for her pre-physician assistant track, but she said she struggled trying to balance the planning of her academic requirements before studying abroad.

The same student said her pre-major advisor — which is separate from the Career Center — lacked knowl-

edge about study abroad planning, and pre-health advisors — within the Career Center — were less familiar with how her major requirements would complement an international academic experience.

“There was a big gap in the intersection of [studying abroad and major planning],” the second-year College student said. “When I would go to my pre-major advisor, they would say, ‘Oh, we don't know a lot about study abroad’ and how my major specifically would fit with study abroad ... So it was hard to kind of plan with that.”

Garcia said that pre-health students are often among those who engage with the Career Center early in their undergraduate careers because of the extensive preparation needed for admission to medical school and other health professional schools. According to Garcia, approximately 800 first-year pre-health students attend introductory pre-health advising meetings each year, which they are required to attend before scheduling appointments with pre-health advisors.

As for students pursuing academic fields in the humanities, graduate Batten student Evan Davisson reflected on his experience with undergraduate career services. Davisson said he sought resume assistance during his second year as an undergraduate government student, finding the online resume builder particularly useful, but said the in-person feedback he received from a peer advisor was limited. He contrasted this experience with graduate-level advising, where he said he found more individualized guidance on creating a networking plan tailored to his career goals.

Davisson also raised concerns about the availability of professional opportunities for students in the humanities, noting that these career pathways can be less defined than those in business or pre-health fields.

“It's kind of this gray area of ‘Well, what are even the available opportunities for humanities students to get real world experience over the summer or as they look for their first job?’” Davisson said.

Davisson also expressed interest in seeing how the Career Center could draw on the University's alumni network to help students navigate professional pathways.

“That [alumni networking] is something I've experienced in the real world, but it'd be interesting to see how the Career Center could use that to their favor in helping people find internships, mentors and first-job destinations,” Davisson said.

Fourth-year College student Ann Leslie Riley, studying foreign affairs and global security and justice, has sought out specialized support in the Career Center. Riley said she initially

underestimated the Career Center's services before seeking one-on-one public service and government advising as an upperclassman. She added that she learned about field-specific advising appointments through the Career Center's website and credited advisor Elizabeth Wall with helping her find an internship this past summer.

“She would give me specific jobs that I would be a good fit for,” Riley said. “She'd make a timeline of things I should apply for, like make a really set plan of what my next step should be, and that's something that I couldn't do on my own.”

Although Riley said she continues to meet with Wall approximately once a month as she prepares for post-graduation employment, she identified interview preparation as one area where the Career Center's resources could be improved upon. Riley pointed to the Career Center's consulting case interview preparation as a strong example of field-specific support and suggested similar interview guidance for students pursuing government and social science careers.

“I think there's less of a focus on behavioral interviews or, ‘Here's what an interview is going to look like in a specific field,’ rather than just general interview prep, but maybe that's something I'm just not aware of,” Riley said.

Garcia said the Career Center is working to reach students before they declare a major through initiatives such as summer orientation — which the incoming class attends each year — career exploration programming and other resources designed to help them begin thinking about professional development. He said students' needs tend to evolve throughout their undergraduate careers, with first-years exploring options, second-years beginning to consider internships and third- and fourth-year students focused on professional applications and employment preparations.

To make its resources easier to navigate, the Career Center launched a redesigned website this fall, which organizes career resources into nine different career communities based on professional interests, including, but not limited to, business careers, creative careers and sustainability careers. Garcia said the new website aims to bring relevant resources to students within their intended fields of study without sifting through unrelated career paths.

He also noted Handshake, which provides access to internships, job opportunities and career events, as one of the Career Center's most widely-used online platforms. In addition to online resources, Garcia said the Career Center is enhancing its collaborations with student organizations to connect

students more directly with employers.

One example is the Employer Engagement Partner Network, which the Career Center launched this fall, that facilitates relationships between student organizations and employers interested in engaging with their members. Garcia said 39 Contracted Independent Organizations had joined the network as of the first week of October. Through this network, these organizations can host employer led-conversations, networking events and professional development workshops, as well as help advertise Career Center programming to their members.

Garcia also said expanding access to professional experiences, such as career treks — organizing trips to cities for students to network and find career opportunities — remains a major priority of the Career Center, especially for students for whom unpaid internships are not a viable option. He said he hopes to see opportunities extend beyond regional employers such as Richmond and Washington, D.C. and incorporate additional opportunities in professional hubs like New York City and the Silicon Valley.

“It's easy to say that a student should do an internship, right? But not every student has the luxury to do an internship because of the cost,” Garcia said.

Garcia said he would like to see additional funding allocated to students pursuing internships and shorter-term professional projects, like research, which would enable students to participate in career-building experiences without having to spend additional money or, in some cases, sacrifice the ability to earn money.

The Career Center's efforts come as students prepare to navigate a shifting job market and the growing impact of artificial intelligence on employment. Garcia acknowledged that concerns about the economy and the impact of technology can be intimidating for students preparing to enter the workforce, but he emphasized the continued importance of seeking guidance and developing professional connections. The Career Center offers post-graduation advising support for one year, offering recent graduates prolonged assistance as they search for employment.

Garcia said the Career Center aims to provide individualized support and encouraged students to take advantage of the resources throughout their time at the University.

“We can't force you to use the Career Center,” Garcia said. “We want students to utilize the resources. We want them to start early on, but we also don't want you all to get anxious.”

Gaines, Quaid elected first-year class president, vice president

Gaines and Quaid said they plan to turn student feedback into action through new committees, biweekly forms and a fully utilized budget

Sophie Smith | Staff Writer

The Class of 2030 elected first-year College students Sean Gaines and Zoe Quaid as the University's Class of 2030 president and vice president Oct. 12. The pair campaigned on three main promises — academic-focused programming, more efficient use of the First Year Council's budget and regular "advocacy forums" in which first-year students can flag student-life concerns and request events. Gaines and Quaid said the goal of their term is to keep FYC responsive to the students they serve.

"We know we have two ears and one mouth for a reason. So, we're going to use [those] proportionately," Gaines said. "We're going to make sure that we're listening to the student body far more than we're speaking to them, because at the end of the day, that's what matters to us."

The University's class councils are student organizations for each undergraduate class year — including First Year Council, Second Year Council, Third Year Council and the Fourth Year Trustees. These groups of students organize and fund events aimed at enriching a class's experience at the University. Each council is led by an elected president and vice president, working with a treasurer, a secretary and committee chairs.

FYC is organized differently than the other three class councils — three students from each first-year housing association and two from each Residential College are elected to FYC, as opposed to later years in which students run regardless of residence. According to Gaines, this year's FYC is composed of around 60 members. The president and vice president then select members of the elected general body to executive positions in the fall following their election, including committee chairs, a treasurer and a secretary.

FYC elections for its members, president and vice president are run by the University Board of Elections in two cycles. All FYC members are elected in early September. The first-year class president and vice president were then chosen in a second election in early October from the pool of members.

To guide their time in office, Gaines and Quaid said they are committed to listening to their peers. The centerpiece of their plan is establishing a First-Year Experience Committee, which FYC pitched at its first meeting



COURTESY SEAN GAINES AND ZOE QUAID

Sean Gaines and Zoe Quaid were elected as the University's Class of 2030 president and vice president Oct. 12.

with Gaines and Quaid in their roles Oct. 16. Only members of FYC can apply to the FY Experience Committee, which is now accepting applications.

Once the FY Experience Committee members have been decided, they will read responses from advocacy forms — also a newly introduced initiative. The forms are proposed to be sent to first years biweekly about specific suggestions students have for FYC or class issues they want to be addressed. FY Experience Committee members will then assign tasks to other members of FYC based on students' requests. Since the forms have only recently been launched, it is not yet clear what common issues will arise from student requests.

"[Through the advocacy forms], we can connect the Class Council a little bit more to the class and less to the Council, because at the end of the day, our purpose is to serve the student body, which we're excited to do," Gaines said.

Another issue that Gaines and Quaid focused on during their campaign was the cost of laundry for first-year students. Undergraduate students living on Grounds receive laundry credits through Wahoo Spins that are loaded into their account each semester. Students receive 10 free

Wahoo Spins at the beginning of the academic year, and have the option to pay for more credits as needed. Students use the SpeedQueen app to run loads of laundry in their housing building. Quaid noted that the 10 free credits each student receives — \$17.50 total value per semester — cover only a few loads of laundry. Each washer and dryer cycle costs \$1.75.

"We're definitely trying to work on that and help [first-year students], just because it does end up getting really expensive to do your laundry," Quaid said. "I think it should be free, but hopefully we can get to that point."

The pair also said they want to put FYC's full budget to use. According to Gaines, on average, \$4,000 of the \$28,777 budget allocated to the first-year class each year has been transferred to the Second Year Council over the last eight years because it was not utilized. Gaines said this problem of underutilizing the budget was emphasized by FYC's advisors — Julia Gould, senior associate director of student engagement at the U.Va. Alumni Association, Funlola Fagbohun, associate director of the first year experience, and Donovan Smith, assistant dean of students at Housing and Residence Life.

"Our advisors in the First

Year Council also told us that [we] should be maximizing [our] budget to maximize the first-year experience with that money," Gaines said.

According to Gaines, academic pressure is another top concern for first-year students. During Gaines' and Quaid's campaign, students frequently told the pair they struggle to balance academics with their social lives. When the candidates asked first-years during the campaign what the hardest part of their day was, many said they were constantly stressed about classes, according to Gaines. Quaid said FYC has several ways they are planning to help ease the stress of academics, such as wellbeing initiatives hosted by FYC's wellness committee.

"We have other committees [within FYC] that are delegated to running events for first-years to come together," Quaid said. "We have a wellness committee that can help with first-years who feel overwhelmed or stressed with everything that's going on again because it is a huge adjustment."

Gaines, from Pittsburgh, Pa., was class president at his high school and served as Pennsylvania's youth governor through the YMCA's Youth and Government program after a six-month state-

wide campaign. Quaid, from Los Angeles, Calif., also served as class president at her high school.

In the long term, the pair said they hope the advocacy forms and the FY Experience Committee will prioritize the Class of 2030's voice. In this way, they hope every student feels heard and supported throughout their time at the University.

"Our goal, if anything, is for U.Va. Class of 2030 to be able to look back on their experience here and think, 'My needs were met,'" Gaines said. "[They should think that] Class Council did a great job hosting awesome events and ... listened."

As they begin their term, Quaid urged classmates to approach the FYC leaders directly, emphasizing their openness to hear from and engage with their classmates.

"Anyone can come up to us and ask anything," Quaid said. "Don't hesitate."

LIFE

Lost — and found — in translation

University students from multilingual backgrounds reflect on how their upbringing shaped their relationships and sense of connection

Minal Qazi | Staff Writer

Once a year, the inevitable cross-family video call rolls around, where all sides of third-year Engineering student Kasia- Esmerelda Wasiak's family are eager to wish her a happy birthday. Putting those wishes into words, however, is where things get a little more complicated — and where a few wires start to get crossed.

Her paternal Polish family sits on one screen, and her maternal Mexican family on another.

When one side wants to send a message to the other, Wasiak becomes the translator, rendering Spanish into Polish. Sailing seems smooth until her grandfather chimes in speaking Polish, her father responds in German and suddenly another translation is needed. Before long, even Wasiak can lose track.

For several University students who grew up speaking multiple languages, communication is rarely just a matter of translation. It is also a way of maintaining family ties, navigating cultural differences and finding a sense of belonging across worlds.

According to Wasiak, switching between languages has been a part of family life for as long as she can remember. Born in Austria to a Polish father and a Mexican mother, she grew up speaking Polish, Spanish and German before later adding English.

"Because of how I was raised, my grandparents spoke only Polish, my mom spoke Spanish and German, my dad spoke Polish and German," Wasiak said. "I think when I started speaking, I started speaking and understanding all three of those languages at once. So my brain was always wired trilingual."

Third-year College student Sarah Imam had a similarly multilingual upbringing, speaking both English and Bangla. However, for Imam, speaking Bangla is a way to protect her heritage — the lone channel for her to communicate with the people who matter most to her.

"[Bangla] is pretty important because my mom knows English, but it's not very strong," Imam said. "So often-times, it's really important that I know Bangla, because it's the only way — [or] the main way — we can communicate with each other."

Imam also noted how being able to speak Bangla has allowed her to develop connections with her relatives that she would not have otherwise had.

"I think [bilingualism] is getting the best of both worlds," Imam said. "I have a lot of relatives that don't speak English, so I wouldn't be able to form much of a relationship with them if I had not known another language."

Similarly, third-year College stu-

dent Cassandra Pita — who speaks both English and Spanish — also found that language opened a door for more meaningful connections within her family.

Although she grew up in a bilingual household in Miami, she noted that living in a primarily English-speaking environment has slightly eroded her ability to speak Spanish, sometimes hampering communication with relatives in Peru. But after spending two months immersed in the language during a summer abroad in Argentina, she said she noticed an improvement when she returned to visit them.

"It was really refreshing to be able to connect with my cousin for the first time in a really genuine way, one that was not guarded by my limited vocabulary," Pita said.

Beyond strengthening familial relationships, several students noted that multilingualism can also foster connections with those outside of their immediate circles — even strangers.

"I think knowing another language not only diversifies your own perspectives on other people and other languages, it also just opens you up to different ways to connect with different people," Imam said.

Building on this sentiment, Wasiak recalled meeting an older man at a restaurant while traveling, an encounter that took a personal turn when they discovered a shared language.

"We started speaking in Spanish, and so much more came out of him — all the stories, where he was from, [with] so much more energy," Wasiak said. "You get a different side to people when you can speak their language ... because they can express themselves ... in a way that they can't necessarily do in a second language that they've learned."

While speaking multiple languages can open doors to new relationships and foster deeper connections, some students have found it more difficult to maintain their native languages amid the transition to college.

Third-year College student Alexandra Bonilla grew up speaking both English and Spanish, but she said her fluency in both means expressing herself in English can sometimes feel like something is getting lost in translation.

"In English, it's harder to find the same word that has the same meaning as it would in Spanish," Bonilla said. "So I feel like sometimes what I want to say is diluted."

While Bonilla said that the discrepancies between languages can fetter her communication with others,



ELIANNE BOBER | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Pita explained that, for her, a community's cultural diversity can hinder how she communicates. She said that the most striking contrast between the University and her hometown was not the amount of Spanish-speaking individuals, but rather the cultural landscape that surrounded her.

"I would say the biggest difference for me isn't necessarily in speaking a different language, but probably in the cultural practices between a Hispanic American community [in Miami] versus Virginia, obviously being less culturally diverse," Pita said. "Miami is a melting pot ... I think that for me, there's more of a cultural difference than a language barrier being what shocks me."

While Pita emphasized the cultural differences between Florida and Virginia, both she and Wasiak spoke to the role their native languages continue to play in their lives, particularly when it comes to expressing emotions that can be difficult to put into words.

"When I'm sad or frustrated, I almost instinctively [speak Spanish]," Pita said. "I've always said it's maybe because Spanish was the first language I learned to process my emotions in, so sometimes it feels easier and [more] instinctive to revert to Spanish."

While language can be a valuable outlet for self-expression and connection, Wasiak explained how navigating several languages and cultures simultaneously made it difficult to feel like she truly belonged to any one of them. Yet, Wasiak now views her multicul-

turality not as an obstacle to belonging but rather as a conduit to a wider range of communities.

"I've really begun to appreciate the fact that this multiculturalism and these languages I speak don't actually make it so that I can't fit into any group," Wasiak said. "It makes it more that I can be a part of so many different communities and feel at home in so many different places."

Similarly, Bonilla noted how growing up bilingual has given her a greater appreciation for the distinct cultural communities she belongs to.

"I don't think growing up bilingual only shows you what it's like to grow up [speaking] two languages, but also what it is [like] to have family, to have cultural ties ... in two countries," Bonilla said. "I've been really grateful to have [experienced] that because I feel like it gives me a bigger perspective on life."

Bonilla has taken this perspective with her to the University, where she has found a community of other Spanish-speaking students with similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds. She noted how these connections, facilitated primarily through cultural organizations like the Latinx Student Network, have helped her to find a sense of belonging in an otherwise unfamiliar environment.

"I feel like I definitely have found a community [in LSN] because a lot of people there share a similar background and upbringing, which is really nice, because it is really hard coming

to UVa. when it feels like everyone around me knows what's going on, what to do," Bonilla said. "But I didn't really have that prior knowledge when I came to UVa. So just having a community already built here to kind of help me navigate like college, internships and things like that was super helpful."

Before coming to the University, Imam said she was the only Bengali student at her high school and had rarely spoken Bangla with people her own age outside of her family. On Grounds, however, her first-year roommate was also of Bengali heritage. Since then, she said she has developed a network of friends and organizations that help her stay connected to her cultural background, such as participating in some of the Bengali Student Organization's events.

Through her experiences both on Grounds and at home, Wasiak explained that her bilingualism has become more than understanding two languages — it has also given her a greater ability to center herself in the cultures and communities that have shaped her.

"I've noticed you can always get more breadth and emotion from people when you speak to them in the language that they've learned to express themselves in," Wasiak said. "There's just a beauty to different languages and hearing people express themselves in that form ... It's an amazing gift that can't be translated."

The art of the half-ass

In an all-or-nothing world, we must remember the value of “some”

Dana Douglas | Assistant Literary Editor

We live at the crux of optimization culture.

You're lifting weights five days a week? Well you should probably be reaching 10,000 steps, too.

You are getting 10,000 steps? You'd better be counting your macronutrients.

You're doing that, too? Guess what — you're actually ruining it all with that glass of prosecco. Might as well spend the rest of the month on the couch cuddling a bag of McDonald's.

Somewhere amidst the widespread infection of the all-or-nothing mindset, we have lost the art of the half-ass — or more simply put, balance. The ability to integrate something into one's lifestyle without making it a keystone personality trait and habitual dictator. Often referred to online as “maxxing,” social media's recent surge of self-improvement and productivity culture has propelled radical optimization to become the new normal.

And like any blanket claim, there's nuance underneath. I'm not suggesting to “half-ass” planning your sister's wedding or to show up to your corporate interview in a suit and flip-flops. I'm just saying that the need to be the best

in everything we do is, in many cases, robbing us of our capacity to be simply great. Good, even.

Despite my thematic lede, the effects of the optimization phenomenon pervade far beyond the fitness niche. Take sustainability, for example. Some climate activists have the capacity and resources to eat a strict vegan diet, use eco-friendly transportation and advocate for more comprehensive environmental policies. These lifestyles, respectively, optimize the human impact on the environment.

However, this top-drawer trajectory is inevitably out of reach for the layman. Realistically, what the majority of people can instead commit to is a simpler, moderate-effort approach — recycling, eating locally-sourced produce, avoiding fast fashion to support ethical vendors. But in today's culture, if you're not eating vegan, what's the point of half-assing it, right?

Enter aesthetic optimization, the niche branded by online creators like the TikTok personality Braden Peters, colloquially known as “Clavicular.” Peters launched his platform in 2025 with content focused on “looksmaxxing,” a term he defines as “the furthest

extent that you could take self-improvement.” His account largely consists of videos of himself “mogging” the camera — posing with the intention to look attractive — and transformation videos that show him before and after intense aesthetic improvement tactics like “bonesmashing,” steroids and testosterone use.

At surface level, Peters' extremist content can easily be chalked up to free will and account engagement strategy. However, what I find problematic is that the media's normalization of “looksmaxxing” has exponentially catapulted what is considered baseline aesthetic maintenance. For boxes that mere youth and drugstore makeup used to check, young people now feel pressure to outsource via cosmetic treatments.

For instance, according to a 2023 study conducted by the University of Southern California, 65 percent of student respondents reported that they planned to get botox injections between the ages of 20 and 30. This norm is particularly evident in wedding culture — many brides now consider red light therapy and lymphatic drainage massages as part of the standard wedding-prep routine.

ding-prep routine.

While there is nothing wrong with folks wanting to look their best for their special day, it's a lot of physical and financial pressure. And subsequently, it has raised the aesthetic bar to such an extent that foregoing — or simply partially doing — today's radical wedding glow-up may as well be a feat of political activism. It is, at large, a lost art to feel pretty without strategically enhancing each individual physical feature.

Now, I'm no hypocrite. I am but a byproduct of this internet-manufactured Stockholm syndrome. I, who have become embarrassingly obsessed with getting my hands on the perfect cool-toned lip liner — that hybrid mauvy-brown to suit a no-make-up-makeup look — will most definitely contribute to the spray tan industry when the time comes to say “I do.” As long as my balanced choices are in the pursuit of a healthy “some” and not patterning into a Clavicular-level obsession, I'll feel no guilt about it.

While I prospectively have many years to mull this genre of possibilities, I have had to evaluate some media-fueled optimization tendencies

in my current life. The line between well-intended efforts and full-blown consumption is thin, and it'll trip up even the most innocent of pedestrians — I warn with my own face down on the pavement. I ditch a walk altogether if I only have 45 minutes instead of 90, and am liable to doomscroll the day away if I sense the risk of leaving a task unfinished. Alas, I am slowly — but surely — learning to forgo my utopian expectations and instead, just consistently try to meet myself where I'm at.

So, as I now remind myself daily, be wary of the media-driven facade that is optimization, because what they don't tell you about the all-or-nothing mindset is that “all” itself is actually the true gateway to “nothing.”

Go to the gym when you can. Take a 20-minute walk on your lunch break. Chase your champagne with a handful of carrots and use your gua sha between sips of Cook Out shake.

But if you find yourself inching suspiciously close to the all-encompassing perfection you're chasing, do look around to make sure it hasn't actually swallowed you whole.

The Class of 2026: Where are they now?

New jobs, cities and routines have given recent graduates both a glimpse of life beyond Grounds and an appreciation for what they left behind

Kendra Mickle | Staff Writer

A little over five months ago, members of the University's Class of 2026 filled the Lawn with caps, gowns and balloons to commemorate the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. For many, the months since May have meant more than simply starting a new job or moving to a new city, but adjusting to a life that looks markedly different from the one they knew at the University.

The Cavalier Daily spoke with three recent graduates of the Class of 2026 about the months since they left Grounds — what they gained, what they left behind and what they are still figuring out. For Class of 2026 alumnus Atticus Sagilir, graduation represented another step on a trajectory he had his eyes on before even setting foot on Grounds — law school.

“I went into college knowing I wanted to go to law school. [I] never really wavered in that,” Sagilir said.

In August, Sagilir began his studies at the George Washington School of Law. On the other hand, Karenna Blythe, a Class of 2026 School of Education alumna, knew she wanted to be a teacher from a young age — but knowing the career she wanted did not necessarily mean knowing how to

begin it.

“Everyone else in my family has gone the business route,” Blythe said. “I just didn't really know what to do. But thankfully, I was relying on my teacher friends, specifically in my cohort at UVa. They got me through everything.”

Recently, Blythe has moved beyond the job search and into her career as a first-grade teacher at Rosemont Forest Elementary School in Virginia Beach.

For Sagilir and Blythe, the months after graduation meant turning life-long aspirations into viable career paths. Conversely, Class of 2026 alumna Shalmali Rao was less certain of her professional goals during her time at the University.

Although she was preparing for a career in software engineering, Rao said she also had a long-term goal of exploring project management. However, she was unsure how that goal would become a reality until she discovered Capital One's Product Development Program during her third and final year at the University. After graduation, she landed a position as product manager in Capital One's McLean, Va. office.

While their career paths may look different, Sagilir, Blythe and Rao all said that finding a job is only a small part of the adjustment that accompanies post-grad life. Sagilir explained that leaving Grounds has involved getting used to a world that feels much less contained than the one he knew at the University.

“Nothing is close. I don't have friends down the block, I don't have a collection of buildings and people and faculty and restaurants and entertainment events that are all clustered within your little five-six block radius,” Sagilir said.

Similarly, Blythe said that at the University, community felt almost inherent, with opportunities to connect readily available through classes, friends and activities on Grounds. Now, away from Charlottesville, she finds that building that same sense of connection requires more intention.

“Going from college, when you're surrounded by your friends [and] some of your friends are just two houses down from you, I feel it's really hard sometimes to go from having that really close-knit community to suddenly now [needing] to build that on your own,” Blythe said.

Like Sagilir and Blythe, Rao has also had to adapt significantly since leaving the University. Although the transition has brought its challenges, Rao has found that one particular change — the transition to a more structured workday — is one she appreciates. Despite these adjustments, Sagilir, Blythe and Rao have also found that the University prepared them for this next chapter of their lives in ways they did not necessarily anticipate while they were students.

For instance, Blythe found the hands-on experience she gained at the University's School of Education and Human Development helped make the transition into teaching first-graders much less daunting, but she said the continued support of her professors and mentors mattered just as much — if not more — to her career development.

“It was definitely a stressful [job search] process. But the only way I got through it ... [was] my professors,” Blythe said. “They were still just as dedicated [to] landing my job [as] I was. And truly, that meant so much to me, because I didn't expect to still get that continued support — especially after graduating.”

Months into their postgraduate careers, Sagilir, Blythe and Rao have realized that not every lesson from the University had to do with a class or resume. Leaving Grounds prompted them to reflect on the time they spent at the University, and think about the ways in which they might have spent it differently.

“I wish I could go back, because you don't realize how good it is until you don't have it anymore ... go do all of those things, maybe even try something you haven't yet,” Blythe said.

For each of the graduates, leaving the University marked more than the end of classes. It meant stepping away from a familiar environment and creating a new life beyond Grounds. For the Class of 2026, that transition is still unfolding. But for Blythe, the uncertainty of what this new chapter holds is, in her perspective, what makes one's time in college worth savoring.

“Whatever your path is, that's what you're meant to do. It is going to work out the way that it is [supposed to],” Blythe said. “Just enjoy, have fun right now, because you're going to have plenty of time later to be an adult.”

PUZZLE

Shreyas Agnihotri | Puzzle Editor

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

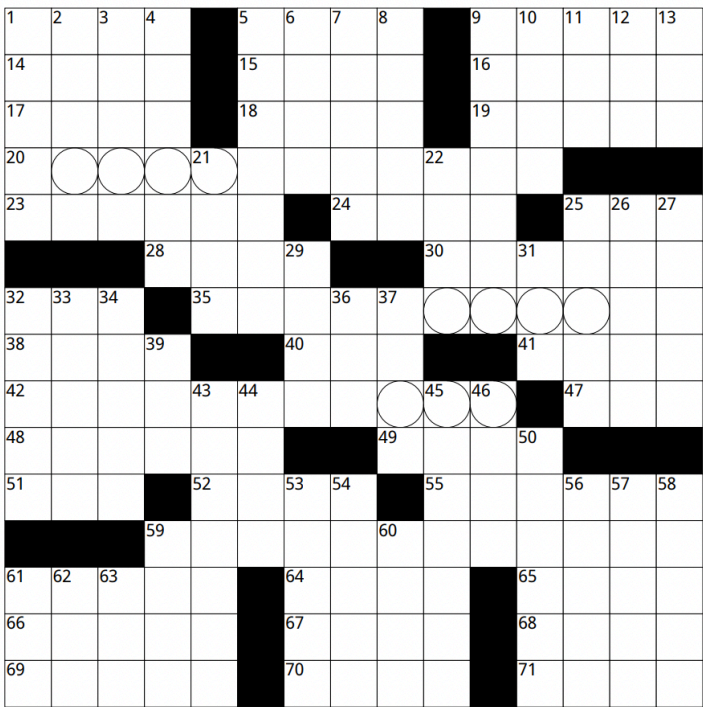
ACROSS

- 1 Feature of Ella Fitzgerald's recording of "Blue Skies"
5 Old tape players (abbr.)
9 Birdlike
14 Asado offering
15 "I bought this before ____ went crazy"
16 Like many crossword enthusiasts
17 Suffix with govern or avoid
18 Catch the trolley, say
19 Band behind "Cobra" and "2122"
20 Halibut, literally, or the New York Jets, figuratively
23 Kind of seed on a Bodo's bagel
24 Like some world language exams
25 Electric guitar hookup
28 Santa Monica's has a Ferris wheel
30 Hero of Philadelphia?
32 Gadot who delivered the line "Kal-El, no!"
35 Like stained glass windows
38 Kind of code
40 What a sphynx cat lacks
41 Gadget review site
42 Namesake of the U.Va. school attended by NBA Rookie of the Year
47 Score in rugby
48 What's left of a dinosaur
49 Some remote control batteries
51 Palindromic farm animal
52 Rolling stones lack it
55 Salary bumps
59 Charlottesville attraction celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026 ... or home to the locations of the circled letters
61 Home that may be made of logs
64 CHEM 2410, familiarly

- 65 Cunning trick
66 _____ Drafthouse
67 Character who delivers the opening lines of "Hamilton"
68 Leisurely pace
69 Kamala Harris "Von dutch" fancams, e.g.
70 Field for classes such as 64-Across
71 Part of DOE (abbr.)

DOWN

- 1 Sharp pains
2 Boat that's an anagram of "ocean"
3 Places to make bank deposits, for short
4 Technique for many sideline catches in football
5 "Girl with a Pearl Earring" painter
6 RXBAR competitor
7 Debut studio album for Travis Scott
8 Villainous look
9 Late poet who Dove referred to as a "beacon"
10 Turn sharply
11 Dudgeon
12 Show stoppers?
13 TV's "Science Guy"
21 Neglect to include
22 "Matilda" author
25 Recipient of thanks in an Oscars acceptance speech
26 One who goes for the gold?
27 Trifling
29 Tennis' "King of Clay," familiarly
31 Group for the Hoos
32 Faux pas
33 The In-N-Out Burger logo has a yellow one
34 University Apartments document
36 Pecan, for one
37 Ms., in Mexico
39 RSVP, e.g.
43 Japanese robes
44 Throw away, as a lead
45 Ella Langley's "Choosin' Texas," for one
46 Bread served with butter chicken

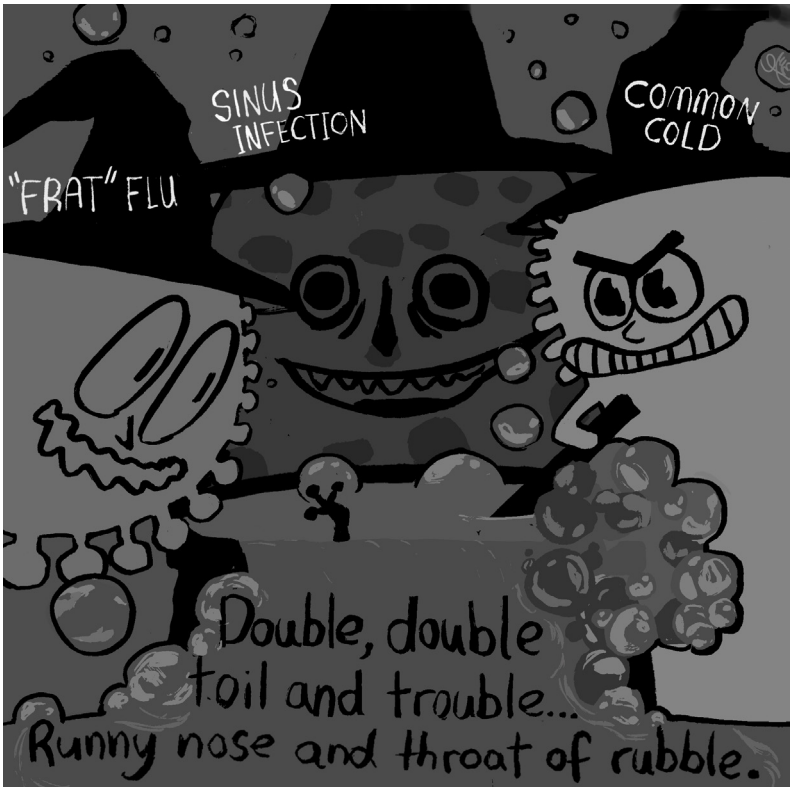


- 50 Easy as pie
53 Snooty sorts
54 Walk with a swagger
56 Beauty spot?
57 Wed like Romeo and Juliet
58 More foxy
59 Thinnest U.S. coin, or a perfect throw
60 Dungeons & Dragons monster
61 Mitchell's husband on "Modern Family"
62 Boylan Heights order
63 Adebayo who scored 83 points in an NBA game

CARTOON

Sick or Treat

Sarah Meisner | Senior Associate



Lawn Pumpkin

Sophia Lee | Cartoonist



LUCKY CAT NEWLY OPEN



ENJOY FREE! APPETIZER.

present this ad
coupon at store



Visit our store today.
946 Grady Ave.
Charlottesville VA 22903

Best Thai
in town



Crafted
with love



Fast THE HAPPINESS

-EVERY BITE BRINGS COMFORT AND JOY-

silkthairestaurant.com **(434) 977-8424**
2210 Fontaine Ave., Charlottesville, Virginia

BEST MENU

ORIGINAL TASTE



RAMEN



NIGIRI



SUSHI

TREASURE OF JAPAN



RECEIVE OUR COMPLIMENTARY APPETIZER
WHEN YOU PRESENT THIS AD COUPON

MASHUMEN WWW.MASHUMEN.COM
434-400-9007 2208 FONTAINE AVE. CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA



POKE BOWL

YOUR WAY

present this ad coupon at store
GET YOUR APPETIZER, FREE!

DAIRY
Market
EST. 1937
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA

Store Location :
946 Grady Ave.
Charlottesville
VA 22903

SPORTS

By maturing, Caleb Tunks got his starting shot

This season, the fourth-year goalkeeper won the starting role for the first time in his career

Michael Liebermann | Senior Associate

Caleb Tunks was homeschooled his whole life, in a childhood split between Hawaii and Texas. So coming to Virginia forced quite the transition.

“Going from a one-person class to 20,000 is a big, big jump,” Tunks said.

As is going from always being the starting goalkeeper to living jumbled among a swollen unit of five, and entering college a year early as a 17-year-old. He struggled. To the point that, looking back, Virginia Coach George Gelnovatch is blunt about Tunks.

“To be honest with you,” Gelnovatch said, “I didn’t think he was going to make it here.”

Adam Perron, Virginia’s goalkeepers coach for Tunks’ first three years at Virginia, could see the talent in the player when he arrived. Even with some raw qualities to his goalkeeping, Tunks clearly had the shot-stopping ability, the athleticism.

Yet Perron kept telling him the same things.

“Maturity,” Perron said, “and discipline, and professionalism.”

That was one Tunks. This Tunks, according to his teammates and coaches, has grown over his four years into a professional, not to mention a fantastic goalkeeper who has started 10 straight games, one of which saw him produce a six-save performance against Stanford that excited Gelnovatch — “it’s been a while since I’ve seen a goalkeeper in a single game do that.”

Virginia kept two clean sheets in a row Oct. 9 and 13 for the first time this season, a large part of that effort coming from Tunks — his shot-stopping, his intensity, his consistency. He is a long way from the player that first came here.

“Little by little, semester by semester, he grew,” Gelnovatch said. “I told him, at the end of this summer, coming into the fall, that his emotional maturity has been some of the greatest development that I’ve had in a guy.”

As his fourth year drew nearer this past spring, Tunks, computer science degree nearly in hand, considered transferring. He had spent his first and second years somewhere in a five-keeper pecking order, his third year as the No. 3 and was staring at an uncertain starting battle heading into his fourth year.

For the second-longest tenured player in the program, that is a

long time to avoid budging with no guarantee of starting, or even playing. But the Virginia community anchored Tunks to Virginia, on top of the fantastic engineering school from which he almost had a degree, as well as the hue of the leaves as they change colors in the fall.

“I decided I love this place,” Tunks said.

Tunks and third-year Spencer Sanderson competed “neck-and-neck” all spring and summer. But Sanderson ultimately won the job.

When the decision went final, Assistant Coach Jermaine Birriel, who took full control of the goalkeepers after Perron left last spring for the head coaching job at Coastal Carolina, had a message for Tunks. The second goalkeeper in the goalkeeper union, Birriel told him, has the hardest and most important role on the team. Of course, he has to support the starting goalkeeper.

But he also has another role.

“I told him, if you look back on the history, our second goalkeeper has got an opportunity to play,” Birriel said. “So I was like, ‘You gotta make sure that you’re staying ready.’”

Five games in, that paid off. After Virginia conceded seven goals in its first four games — and after Florida Gulf Coast beat Virginia in the 86th minute when Sanderson spilled a routine ball across the box — the coaching staff switched from Sanderson to Tunks.

Tunks started the fifth game of the season — against Boston College — and Virginia kept a clean sheet.

At 6 feet 0 inches, Tunks is undersized. He makes up for it with springiness and an uncanny ability to make ridiculous saves. Earlier in his career, with his control of his area and decision-making still developing, Tunks could always deliver on one point.

“The thing that he’s always been able to do is make saves, man,” Birriel said. “His bread and butter is [you] look around like, ‘How the hell did he make that save?’”

Maybe relatedly, Tunks is possessed of a kind of madness, an animatedness that sends him pointing and roaring at his defenders when they make him unhappy or bounding off the ground after making a big save. His chest rises. His gloved finger points.

There is an unmistakable comparison here to Jordan Pickford,



AHNA HAMPTON | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Tunks has waited for his moment to hold the starting role for years, now he refuses to let it slip away.

of England and Everton. Tunks has heard this before — from goalkeeper coaches, teammates, even his dad. The parallels are almost uncanny. The shorter stature, shot-stopping as a principal skill, the fiery gesticulating at defenders, springy pre-shot movements, the posturing after big saves.

The only thing missing is Pickford’s signature slicked-back hairstyle.

“I tried that once,” Tunks said. “It wasn’t my best look. But maybe we’ll bring it back one day.”

When Tunks took over the starting role this season, he did so with a confidence that belied his position as backup. He started every spring game his first year, then roughly half of them his second year. But he had regular-season experience, too.

This was last season, in an even bigger game than the early-season tilt with Boston College — a home game in late September against North Carolina. Sanderson, the No. 2, had been nursing a hamstring. Casper Mols, the starter, was trying to play through a concussion. On a Wednesday, ahead of the game Saturday, Mols walked off during practice, Tunks remembers.

“I was next up,” Tunks said. “I’m watching him walk off, and

I’m like, ‘Wow, yeah, it’s gonna be fun.’”

Tunks kept a clean sheet against North Carolina, then started against Milwaukee, only conceding from a penalty and a world-class rocket in a 3-2 win.

“That was just huge for me,” Tunks said. “It was incredible.”

Since coming in, Tunks has been a reliable starting goalkeeper, pulling off big saves left and right. He tipped a last-ditch header over the bar in the monumental win at No. 6 Stanford. He made two other fist-pumping saves against the Cardinal. On Oct. 13 against Gardner-Webb, he sprawled to his right for a fingertip save. There have been others.

It has been a strange year to be the goalkeeper at Virginia. The Cavaliers have unsure footing on the NCAA Tournament bubble at 7-6-1 and 3-3 in the ACC. A large reason, in Gelnovatch’s words, are the “funky” goals they keep surrendering.

Often, an attacker has looped the ball into the box, and rather than it flying back the other way, ejected off a defender’s foot, the ball pinballs around until it gets stuck in the net. These “second phase” goals, as Birriel calls them, are tough to practice for a goalkeeper.

The goalkeepers have dealt with it by staying connected and keeping the mood light. At any rate, Tunks has the right mentality to deal with the funkiness. Every goalkeeper, in Birriel’s mind, has some sort of quirk that helps them manage the stress of the position.

Tunks?

“You can joke, but as soon as you get into a rep, he can be locked in and almost have this swagger killer in his eyes that he’s like, ‘I can make that f—ing save,’” Birriel said. “It’s a thing that goalkeepers need to have — they almost need to have this arrogance.”

Tunks always had that arrogance and, on top of it, the athleticism. Just one thing was missing.

Perron’s forecast two years ago proved prescient.

“He’s just someone that needs to get experience,” Perron said. “Get a little older. Get pushed. That kind of thing.”

Fifth-year defender Parker Sloan, the longest-tenured player on the team and the only one to have been here the whole time with Tunks, sees it too.

“His progression from his freshman year to now has been night and day,” Sloan said, “and we trust him wholeheartedly.”

No. 21 women's soccer seeks success against the ACC's finest

Three beat writers assess the Cavaliers' midseason performance and tournament chances

Sofie Keppler, Alain Buensuceso and Anderson Kim | Senior Writer and Staff Writers

Fresh off a rivalry win against Virginia Tech and with three points secured in the ultra-competitive ACC, No. 21 Virginia women's soccer is edging closer to showcasing the kind of dangerous team Virginia fans have long believed it could be. Behind the Cavaliers' stout defense and the offensive firepower of players such as second-year forward Addison Halpern, Virginia has the potential to become a real threat come tournament time.

Still, Virginia has struggled to capitalize against ranked opponents. From giving up three goals in two minutes to then-No. 1 North Carolina at Klöckner Stadium to late-game struggles finding the back of the net in Winston-Salem, the Cavaliers must place emphasis on putting 90 minutes together and finishing its shots if they hope to assemble a deep tournament run following the regular season's end.

Three women's soccer beat writers break down Virginia's ceiling with three games remaining on its regular-season schedule.

What has been the most surprising development so far in Virginia's season?

Sofie Keppler, Senior Writer: The most surprising development has been how quickly Virginia's defense has come undone against the nation's best. Giving up three goals within the first 15 minutes of play to North Carolina at home was jarring for a team with such a dominant defensive line, and it showed how thin the margin is when facing opponents of overwhelming caliber. Against then-No. 18 Notre Dame, the problem flipped, as the Cavaliers gave up a goal in the 83rd minute off a turnover. Though recent wins against the Hokies and the Mustangs show this team can respond in tight ACC matchups, Virginia must pair defensive discipline with more consistent finishes offensively.

Alain Buensuceso, Staff Writer: While portal transfers in college soccer generally require time to integrate, third-year forward Gio Canali's seamless integration into Coach Steve Swanson's system has been one of the most surprising and impressive developments so far. Coming off an ACL injury that sidelined her for the entire 2025 season, the former Miami striker arrived in Charlottesville having earned All-ACC Third Team honors as a freshman after scoring nine goals in her 2024-25 season. Even after taking a midseason hiatus to play for the Brazil U20 National Team, Canali provided an immediate spark as the point of the Cava-

liers' attack — she already has three goals and two assists in her new campaign with Virginia, proving that she did not need a lengthy adjustment period to become one of the Cavaliers' most impactful offensive upgrades.

Anderson Kim, Staff Writer: Second-year defender Liv Rademaker's versatility has been one of the most surprising developments this season. Rademaker frequently takes on different responsibilities depending on the situation. The Cavalier defender may start as a fullback, but she fulfills different tactical responsibilities across a match. Rademaker is often seen advancing high up the pitch to provide width, allowing a Virginia winger to shift inside and perhaps create a numerical advantage in the final third. Her positioning also helps stretch opposing defenders to create space and generate more options for her teammates. Rademaker's versatility allows her to shift into a center-back role — she can play high, or as a wide center-back in a makeshift back-three. Her technical ability and speed provide support in build-up play and defense during counter-attacks. This adaptability gives Coach Swanson tactical flexibility and allows the team to adjust on the fly. Rademaker's development in her role has made her a vital part of Virginia's possession-heavy system.

Aside from Addison Halpern's goalscoring, who else has stood out for the Cavaliers?

SK: Having fourth-year forward Aniyah Collier back on the field is a difference-maker after devastating knee injuries plagued her last two seasons. Not only is she tied as Virginia's second-leading goalscorer with four goals thus far, but her quickness and agility — especially coming off the bench — is a spark plug for a Cavalier squad that, at times, struggles to finish its shots on goal. Including in matches against Miami and Syracuse, Collier has repeatedly stepped up when Virginia's offense has stalled. Sifting through the defense and sparking late-game explosions, her presence is both a driving force behind the Cavaliers' attack and a remarkable comeback story.

AB: Third-year forward Sophia Bradley has established herself as one of Virginia's most clutch attacking weapons, as she possesses a knack for stepping up when the match is on the line. Every single goal she has scored this season has been a game-winner. Her late-game heroics give the Cavaliers a dependable finisher when opposing backlines start to wear down. Against



MAHER KHALID | THE CAVALIER DAILY

As the season draws to a close, every ACC win — like the one above against Miami — will be critical for Virginia.

Virginia Tech, Bradley delivered her biggest moment of the season in the 86th minute by chipping in a ball over the keeper, breaking a scoreless deadlock and securing a 1-0 victory for the Cavaliers. Earlier in non-conference play, she broke a 1-1 tie against Yale in the 75th minute. In a 5-1 road win against SMU, Bradley netted the decisive go-ahead goal in the 15th minute. As Virginia enters the final stretch of games before the ACC playoffs begin, having a proven closer like Bradley on the front line gives the Cavaliers an edge in matches that can be decided by a narrow margin.

AK: Fifth-year defender Tatum Galvin has been one of Virginia's standout players this season. Swanson is known for his possession-based philosophy, and Galvin fits his tactical system wonderfully. Her ability to play out from the back makes her critical to the beginning phase of Coach Swanson's buildup play. Virginia's ball-playing defender consistently makes smart decisions with the ball and can find line-breaking passes to advance play through the midfield. When necessary, she can also deliver accurate long passes to switch the point of attack or exploit space behind the opposition's defense. Galvin provides stability and confidence to Virginia's back line beyond her distribution. Her technical ability and smart decision-making make her a crucial part of how the Cavaliers execute their possession-based patterns of play.

What does Virginia need to change to play a full 90 minutes against elite teams?

SK: Beyond fixing midfield turnovers and early-game lapses, Virginia must address its rotational depth and pacing. Because national team absences throughout September and injuries have forced a reliance on a narrower core of starters playing a hefty load of 80-plus minutes per game, fatigue is inevitable against elite opponents down the stretch — risking both player energy and tactical control of possession. Especially for a team that has consistently outshot its opponents — even in losses — how Virginia approaches its rotations and keeps its players fresh is crucial to closing out games.

AB: Virginia's most vulnerable stretches against elite teams have come in the first 20 minutes of matches, where unforced errors directly lead to multi-goal deficits. For instance, in their game against then-No. 1 North Carolina, the Cavaliers fell to a multi-goal deficit over a three-minute stretch in the opening 12 minutes. To eliminate these early-game mistakes against top competition, the Cavaliers need to preemptively recognize these traps and avoid rushing passes that can lead to unforced errors. Instead of trying to thread risky passes through a tight press, the Virginia backline has to try a new tactic and go long to force their opponent's defenses to back up, relieving

pressure near the Cavaliers' goal. If they can do this against elite teams, Virginia can capitalize on opportunities and score first. Securing the early goal can change the feel of the match, as the Cavaliers tend to rush their attack when they fall behind early, leading to rushed passes and forced plays.

AK: Virginia women's soccer must improve its finishing and chance creation. Virginia has scored 29 goals on 218 shots for a 13.3 percent conversion rate — only 41.3 percent of the shots were on target. Despite averaging 16.8 shots per game, Virginia scored just once in losses to Wake Forest, North Carolina and Notre Dame. Those results show why creating clearer chances and finishing them matters. Virginia also needs more consistent and creative patterns of play. Several opponents the Cavaliers faced this season have had many of their players drop deep and defend with numbers. Virginia lacked the planned, detailed patterns that allow quick combinations and coordinated runs to pull defenders out of position and open passing lanes. This put Virginia at a numerical disadvantage in the final third. Stronger execution and more creative play would help Virginia create better chances and play competitively in upcoming postseason play.

LYNCH: Why field hockey's historic triumph was a trap

The Cavaliers beat North Carolina in Chapel Hill after 12 years — now the season looks nothing like that win seemed to promise

Eleanor Lynch | Senior Associate

On Sept. 20, Virginia did something no Cavalier field hockey team had done in 14 years — it won in Chapel Hill, N.C. Second-year back Lauren Sloan scored first, third-year midfielder Amelie Rees tipped in a corner on the final play of the first half and fourth-year goalkeeper Nilou Lempers made five saves in a 2-1 win over then-No. 11 North Carolina.

The result ended the Tar Heels' 17-game win streak against ACC opponents. For Virginia, which entered the season ranked fifth nationally after an ACC Championship final appearance in 2025, the victory looked like confirmation that its experienced core could contend for a conference title of its own.

Here is where things stand just one month later — the Cavaliers are 8-5 overall and 3-4 in the ACC, ranking No. 10 in the national poll. The span of one October week captured both versions of this team. On Oct. 9, an unranked Boston College which had yet to manage a conference win beat Virginia 4-1. In their next game, the Cavaliers went to No. 6 Wake Forest and captured an overtime win without conceding a goal.

Call it inconsistency if you like, but that word only describes the results

and not the problems behind them. The easy mid-season slump blame cannot be placed either, because it does not account for the issues that surfaced in the season opener weeks before the first loss. Across its losses, Virginia does not protect leads, it does not turn territorial advantages into goals and there is an overreliance on individual performances instead of a durable system.

A championship-caliber group knows how to lock down a match once it gets ahead. The Cavaliers, however, have repeatedly allowed opponents to claw their way back into games during crunch time. At Penn State, Virginia built a comfortable 3-0 cushion only to watch the Nittany Lions score three unanswered goals in the fourth-quarter. The Cavaliers ultimately escaped with an overtime winner from fourth-year back Mia Abello, but the comeback exposed a vulnerability that resurfaced in the weeks that followed.

One week later against Rutgers, a 2-0 advantage shrank to 2-1 late in the fourth quarter. And just two days after that matchup, when facing Ohio State, the Cavaliers carried a one-goal lead into the fourth quarter and lost 2-1 after surrendering two goals in just over 60 seconds.

Controlling possession and dominating the box score means nothing if it does not translate onto the scoreboard. Against then-No. 11 Syracuse, Virginia took 14 shots to the Orange's six and generated eight penalty corners compared to three, yet took a devastating 3-0 blow. While the Cavaliers did not score on a single corner, Syracuse capitalized on two of its three opportunities. The disparity exposed a problem that raw possession and shot totals can obscure — generating chances is valuable only if a team can finish them.

On that front, the team seems to value individual heroics over a collaborative system that gets it done. Against then-No. 11 California, the Cavaliers' midfield transition collapsed and allowed the Golden Bears to generate 25 shots and 17 corners — considerably more than Virginia earned. In the cage, Lempers delivered a resolutely absurd 15-save performance to drag the game into overtime, but California eventually walked away with the 2-1 win. Relying on an All-American goalkeeper to stand on her head is an indictment of team organization, not a long-term strategy for dominating in the ACC.

The same concern runs through

the Cavaliers' broader results. Against the Golden Bears, the defense faced a relentless attack. When facing Ohio State, it conceded twice in quick succession after entering the fourth quarter ahead. While these games differed in their circumstances, each showed how quickly Virginia's possession could deteriorate when it failed to manage pressure. The Cavaliers need a defensive structure that holds when opponents find momentum, otherwise even strong individual performances can be undone by a brief stretch of disorganization.

The 1-0 victory over Wake Forest complicates the picture in an important way, as Virginia did not simply stumble into another result. The Cavaliers held the Demon Deacons scoreless, limited them to five shots and eventually secured the win on first-year forward Caitlin Connell's goal less than four minutes into overtime.

After the defensive struggles against California, Lempers' first conference shutout of the season was meaningful. It demonstrated that Virginia could remain composed against an elite opponent and deliver a result without needing to outscore its mistakes. The triumph also challenged the idea that the North Carolina game

was the only evidence of the squad's ability to compete at the highest level.

The wins over the Tar Heels and the Demon Deacons were not flukes, and the losses around do not erase them. However, it may have encouraged an overly generous assessment of what this team can accomplish.

With one regular-season game remaining, the Cavaliers have shown they can produce an elite performance, but not sustain one. The distinction between potential and performance is hardly a new concept. It becomes particularly important, however, when a team's end-of-season ambitions depend on its ability to deliver under pressure. This Cavalier squad has shown they can compete with elite opponents but also struggle to sustain leads, capitalize on opportunities or control games.

If the Cavaliers fix their defensive structure and stop relying on individual heroics, they can still be the most dangerous wildcard in the country. If they do not, Chapel Hill will not be treasured as the start of a golden era — it will be remembered as the moment Virginia field hockey peaked too early and mistook a single win for a championship.

THE CAVALIER DAILY

THE CAVALIER DAILY

The Cavalier Daily is a financially and editorially independent news organization staffed and managed entirely by students of the University of Virginia. The opinions expressed and advertisements shared in The Cavalier Daily are not necessarily the views of the students, faculty, staff or administration of the University of Virginia. Editorials represent the majority opinion of the Editorial Board. Cartoons and columns represent the views of the authors alone. The managing board of The Cavalier Daily has sole authority over and responsibility for all content.

No part of The Cavalier Daily or The Cavalier Daily online edition may be reproduced in any form, in whole or in part, without the written consent of the editor-in-chief. The Cavalier Daily is published every other Thursday in print and daily online at cavalierdaily.com. It is printed on at least 40 percent recycled paper. 2026 The Cavalier Daily Inc.

HAVE AN OPINION?

The Cavalier Daily welcomes letters to the editor and guest columns. Writers must provide full name and University affiliation. Letters should not exceed 400 words in length, and columns should not exceed 900. The Cavalier Daily does not guarantee publication of submissions and may edit all material for content and grammar. Submit to opinion@cavalierdaily.com or P.O. Box 400703, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4703

WANT TO ADVERTISE WITH US?

The Cavalier Daily offers print and digital advertising reaching thousands of readers across the University community and Charlottesville. Our advertisements connect local and national businesses with UVa. students, faculty and Charlottesville residents every day. For information on rates, deadlines and placements, contact ads@cavalierdaily.com



FOLLOW US @CAVALIERDAILY
WWW.CAVALLIERDAILY.COM

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

Notes from Newcomb

A daily newsletter by The Cavalier Daily



MANAGING BOARD

Editor-in-Chief

Leigh Bailey

Managing Editor

Nina Broderick

Executive Editor

Scarlett Sullivan

Operations Manager

Kayla Moore

Chief Financial Officer

Shahnoor Chaudhry

EDITORIAL BOARD

Leigh Bailey

Scarlett Sullivan

Wylie Brunman

Michael King

Joshua Hawkins

Lucy Duttonhofer

Beckett Anderson

JUNIOR BOARD

Assistant Literary Editor

Dana Douglas

Assistant Managing Editor

Elizabeth Adams

(SA) Chris Bordonaro

(SA) Eva Goldrich

(SA) Evelyn Kuzminski

(SA) Alena Martin

(SA) Lillian Smith

(SA) Maddie Weinstein

News Editors

Grace Little

Lauren Seeliger

(SA) Luca Bailey

(SA) Michael Racz

Sports Editors

Emory Huffman

Ryan Weiner

(SA) Michael Liebermann

(SA) Eleanor Lynch

(SA) Margaret Piatos

Arts & Entertainment Editors

Benjamin Apostol

Zachary Geller

(SA) Alena Touve

Life Editors

Ingrid Gay

Abby Snowdon

(SA) Sadie Adams

(SA) Phoenix Banks

Podcast Editors

Anniston Li

Hareem Mubashar

Opinion Editors

Wylie Brunman

Michael King

(SA) Beckett Anderson

(SA) Lucy Duttonhofer

Humor Editor

Clare Pelli

(SA) Nafeesa Naz

Cartoon Editor

Ada Malpani

(SA) Sarah Meisner

Puzzle Editors

Shreyas Agnihotri

Max Goldberg

(SA) Heer Patel

Photo Editors

Mac Doucette

Cat White

(SA) Kennedy Coffin

(SA) Clarke La Serte

Design Editors

Mackenzie Bullock

Eva Creighton

Asma Sanaullah

Chinese Translation Editor

Austin Li

Spanish Translation Editor

Blanly Rodriguez

Social Media Managers

Abby Boursiquot

Lahari Kunapaneni

Video Editors

Arpita Behera

Kate McDermott

Finance Manager

Jake Friedman

Advertising Manager

Russell Fisher

Website Managers

Taylor Petrofski

Kyle Song

Analytics Manager

Sohum Mehrotra

Newsletter Editor

Adair Reid

Archivists

Annabelle Nee

Livia Shrednick

Community Chair

Nat Taylor

Fundraising Chair

Will Peres

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Cavalier can be anyone in 2Tall Animation's 'The Ride'

2Tall Animation re-designed a modern version of the animated Cavalier to connect and hype up University football fans

Nina Gravlee | Staff Writer

A skeleton pine monster, a swarm of man-eating cardinals and a rabid HokieBird mech all have one thing in common — complete and utter defeat at the hands of the Virginia Cavalier in episodes of 2Tall Animation's "The Ride."

"The Ride," a spinoff of "The Adventures of CavMan," has taken over as the animated opener for University home football games. These animated hype videos, both the original and the revival, feature the Virginia Cavalier claiming grand victories in battle over villainous mascots of opposing teams. "The Adventures of CavMan," filled with comedic bits and the glory of 2000s graphics, ran from the 2001-15 football seasons and for the 2017-18 season. After that, it was not until 2024 that the Cavalier returned to the big screen.

The installation of Scott Stadium's 6,700-square-foot Ramon W. Breeden Jr. Videoboard in 2024 created an opportunity to reintroduce an animated Cavalier to the fans. According to Greg Walter, owner and creative director of 2Tall Animation, Ryan Mahanes, assistant athletics director for creative services and digital strategy at the University, sparked the University's connection with 2Tall after seeing their work firsthand at a fateful Cleveland Cavaliers game in 2003. More than two decades later, the sports animation and video production studio based out of Columbus, Ohio, Seattle and Portland, Ore., debuted "The Ride," an updated version of the Cavalier's deadly battles that plays on the videoboard right before the Virginia football team enters the field.

Each episode contains three parts, summing to roughly 53 seconds in total, beginning with a heroic introduction of the Cavalier featuring a Tolkien-esque poem written by Eric Ward, associate athletics director for revenue generation and marketing at the University. This is followed by a 15-second fight scene personalized to the game and mascot at hand, as well as a final sequence in which the Cavalier runs through iconic locations, such as Virginia Beach's King Neptune Statue and down the Lawn. This pregame show culminates in the appearance of the real-life Cavalier on horseback — currently Julie Caruccio, University Student Affairs assistant vice president for strategic initiatives — leading the team onto the field.

According to Walter, one of the



COURTESY 2TALL ANIMATION FOR VIRGINIA ATHLETICS

A skeleton pine monster, a swarm of man-eating cardinals and a rabid HokieBird mech all have one thing in common — complete and utter defeat at the hands of the Virginia Cavalier in episodes 2Tall Animation's "The Ride."

studio's main goals when taking on the project was to create an interpretation of the Cavalier that showcased the culture of the University. Walter explained that in addition to its role as hype for fans and players entering the field, "The Ride" is designed to connect with the University and its students. This version of the Cavalier takes himself and what he represents seriously — and as a result, invites fans to do the same.

"We also wanted something that really would connect with students on hopefully a deeper level ... with UVA's code of honor, with the identity of UVA. and UVA. students as ... the hardest working, smartest, most honorable people of good character that were out [on the field]," Walter said.

In addition to thematic changes, the new artistic style is a difference longtime fans may notice between "The Ride" and the original "The Adventures of CavMan." The modern animated Cavalier is dark and vigilante-like in his shrouding cape and mask as a solemn counterpart to the original goofy crusader. The animation design for "The Ride" is led by 2Tall Art Director Ian Mork, and Walter cited Sam Raimi's horror aesthetics and Mike Mignola's comic series "Hellboy" as key inspi-

ration for this fresh rendition.

"We wanted to really make a strong break from it being silly to something where it didn't seem ridiculous that the Maryland Terrapin was rising from the water. It kind of seemed awesome," Walter said.

The animated Cavalier himself also has a new look. Walter described the design of the masked crusader as one of the main logistical problems for "The Ride." The Cavalier has been portrayed in many ways over the years, from the classic male mascot costume with the dark goatee to Caruccio. Instead of leaning into either interpretation, Walter said 2Tall decided to reinvent the Cavalier as a mythological and faceless phantom crusader. The Cavalier takes on a universal identity with this design, one in which any fan can see themselves.

"I always thought of it as possibly the 'first Cavalier,' you know, the spirit of the Cavalier that was there before the Cavaliers on the field ... [The Cavalier] could be any student. It could be any grad. It could be any player," Walter said.

2Tall puts this same intentionality into all aspects of "The Ride." The process of creating any episode takes roughly two and a half

weeks. The team responsible for the game-specific fight sequences, led by Walter, begins by redesigning the mascot of the University's upcoming opponent as a terrifying villain. The resulting villains are creative, diverse and dangerous, including monsters like a kaiju-esque Coastal Carolina Chanticleer, a telekinetic Syracuse Otto the Orange and a Richmond Spider large enough to cover the Rotunda.

"We need to make sure that whatever we do is scary enough and feels ... powerful enough that it means something when [the Cavalier] defeats it," Walter said.

Production of the video is also composed of style samples — which are single frame images showing generally what the final piece will look like — animatics made up of moving storyboards used to show composition, flow and timing and finally, animation. Most of "The Ride's" fight sequence animation is done by Mike Lee-Graham, an animator and horror illustrator who works as a contractor with 2Tall. "The Ride" was previously created using largely 2D animation, but 3D techniques, 2D textures and layering were integrated for the 2026 season.

Walter said 2Tall takes care to

make sure every episode of "The Ride" feels authentic to the University. He said his crew aspires to nail the passion and identity of any team so the final product feels like it could have been created by a fan. Walter and his cohort work closely with Virginia Athletics to make sure episodes have a local voice, be it through the showcasing of the University's values or staging fights in iconic University locations like the Lawn or the notorious steam tunnels.

"There are a lot of teams out there who don't have a tenth of the sense of identity that UVA. does. You have a lot of stuff to work with, and that makes it really fun," Walter said.

"The Ride" continues as upcoming University home football games are scheduled for Oct. 23, Nov. 14, and Nov. 21. Although Walter said 2Tall cannot give any hints, each new episode is well on its way to being as epic as its predecessors. The 2026 season will only involve three more episodes, but 2Tall's Cavalier remains an embodiment of the University's spirit and honor that can last long after gameday.

Hello Comics cultivates community beyond comics

The neighborhood fixture connects local residents through a shared love of comic books

Preet Manukonda | Staff Writer

Lined with graphic novels, manga and posters, Hello Comics offers Charlottesville residents more than a place to browse their favorite titles. With two colorful, densely stocked locations nestled on the Downtown Mall and near Seminole Square respectively, the store hosts a variety of community events, maintains educational partnerships and offers programming for readers of all ages and interests. Extending beyond its role as a traditional comic store, Hello Comics has established a space where community remains central to its work.

Originally founded in 2013 as Telegraph Art & Comics, the store operated as a retail art gallery featuring work by local comic artists. However, as customer demand called for a more comic-centered focus, the store's owners, Class of 2004 alumnus Dave Murray and Class of 2007 alumna Kate DeNeveu, rebranded the store as Hello Comics in 2023. Transitioning the store's focus from locally-crafted art to comics, Hello Comics' primary target became comic books, manga and other collectibles. Murray said this change reflected both customer needs and the store's broader evolution.

"Over the years, people were so excited to have a comic shop downtown that we started leaning more and more into comics," Murray said. "So we used to be [an] art gallery that sold comic books, and now we're a comic shop that does occasional art shows."

Their comics-centric transformation also reflects Murray and DeNeveu's own appreciation for comic books and graphic novels. For them, comics are special in part because of their diversity, with infinitely imaginative narratives that could appeal to anyone. Additionally, DeNeveu said that comic book shops are one of the sole places to judge a book by its cover, as their visual elements serve as integral parts of the story.

"It is one of those things that makes comics really approachable to kids and families," DeNeveu said. "You can look at a cover of a [comic] book and you have an instant connection [and] an instinct for what the story is going to do for you."

This overarching belief in comics' accessibility extends past the store's shelves. Through events and programming for readers of various ages and backgrounds, Murray and DeNeveu

have made Hello Comics a space for connection and inclusivity. When the store operated as Telegraph Art & Comics, its regular artistic events built Murray and DeNeveu's founding relationships with the Charlottesville arts community. DeNeveu said local support welcomed and embraced the store when they first opened, and continues to do so.

Today, the store leans heavily into family-oriented programming. Every Sunday, they hold "Comic Collage Craftermornings," where children and parents can create their own comic book collages using store-provided supplies. Transforming the store from a retail space to a communal one, according to Murray, brings interpersonal connection back to purchasing books.

"With the ubiquitousness of Amazon and people getting stuff online ... if you're not doing events in your community, what's separating you from just the convenience of online shopping?" Murray said. "You [have] to bring that human touch and that community element."

Over time, Hello Comics also fostered partnerships with local schools,

libraries, and nonprofit organizations. The store works closely with the Free Book Bus, a local nonprofit that operates out of a repurposed yellow school bus. Founded by Charlottesville resident Sharon Stone, the organization distributes free books and school supplies to local children. Hello Comics supplies the Free Book Bus with a plethora of books at a discounted rate, inspired by Murray and DeNeveu's joint emphasis on the importance of childhood literacy.

"We would be very foolish to ignore that opportunity to both provide books that kids want and also make a bit of money doing it," DeNeveu said. "It's really fun knowing these books are not going to be read by just one person but a whole bunch of kids."

Hello Comics additionally serves as a vendor to the University Library System, where they curate special orders designed to help expand the library's collection of graphic novels. Murray and DeNeveu have presented at numerous University classes, helped prepare materials for courses and hosted field visits for students to explore the store.

"[There was] a class about vampires

that they asked us, 'Hey, can you give us a vampire tour of the comic book store?'" DeNeveu said. "We found all the vampire books, everything in a comic book shop that could possibly be about vampires."

Hello Comics also hosted a table at the University's first Daigakon, a student-run anime and gaming convention that took place last spring. Alongside these existing connections, Murray and DeNeveu said they are continuously looking for ways to increase their involvement with University students, especially given their connection as alumni.

"We loved our time at UVa. and whatever we can do to be more welcoming to UVa. students, we would love to do," DeNeveu said.

Emphasizing community, accessibility and connection in every facet of their store, Murray and DeNeveu have transformed Hello Comics into more than just a simple store front. The shop offers Charlottesville residents a space to discover new stories, explore different perspectives and connect with others through a shared love for all things comics and reading.

Archives live onstage in 'Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?'

In six performances, the University drama department will portray the Hollywood experience of a dark 1950s period

Carly Smith | Senior Writer

From the 1930s-1960s, the United States House of Representatives created the House Un-American Activities Committee in an attempt to expose communists living in the United States. During the nine-year period from 1947-1956, the Committee focused their attention on Hollywood, attempting to uncover famous stars as members of the Communist Party. Eric Bentley was a scholar, translator and advocate for those blacklisted — ostracized from their personal and professional associations for being a suspected communist — during this "Red Scare."

Using actual testimonies, letters and documents from Hollywood figures who had to testify before the Committee, Bentley created the play "Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?," which will raise its curtains at the University's Ruth Caplin Theatre from Oct. 29 to Nov. 7.

The adaptation of the play — in which the players embody students in a classroom learning about the events for the first time — is being directed by Assoc. Drama Prof. Dave Dalton, who also teaches directing and acting classes in the drama department. This rendition of Bentley's work fea-

tures an entirely female cast, with 11 actresses ranging from second- to fourth-year students. According to Dalton, he found it important to choose this verbatim play — a show compiled from real life interviews and sources — because it touches on issues relevant to the current political climate.

"It's a period of time that is, for a generation of Americans, definitional in the relationship between the United States government and the political independence of its people," Dalton said. "Now I think we have a harder time imagining what those changes that took place during the time were."

In the traditional production, actors play the Hollywood stars as they testify before the Committee. In Dalton's adaptation, his actresses play student characters in a modern classroom who are reading these trial transcripts aloud for the first time, while the events of each testimony are acted out by other performers on stage.

Since the play is composed of testimonies before the Committee, each scene features investigators interrogating their celebrity targets. Dalton

cast each performer as both an investigator and a famous defendant — or several characters in each category — so everyone has the opportunity to act from different perspectives. For example, fourth-year College student Gigi Stewart plays the Hollywood figures Abe Burrows and Marc Lawrence, as well as an investigator and chairman in other scenes of the performance, allowing her to act out a wide variety of onstage personalities.

"[Abe Burrows'] role is very bubbly and energetic, which comes very naturally to me because that's very much like who I am," Stewart said. "But the investigator that I play is also really intense and complex, so I also enjoy that."

Second-year College student Jessica Rosenberg, who also plays Abe Burrows and various investigators, said that she learned the importance of ensemble energy and audience reaction throughout the rehearsal process.

"I think it's really taught me that there's a lot to add from just the energy you bring to a scene when you're not speaking," Rosenberg said. "I think that ... the importance of reaction in theater for an audience has

been something huge that I've really seen in this [play]."

Dalton said that another unique aspect of this play is that these 11 female actresses are playing students from the 21st century encountering these materials and testimonies for the first time. Rather than doing impressions of 1950s Hollywood stars, the performers play characters who find these dialogues in a classroom setting. Rosenberg said that this structure allows the actresses to have input while creating the characters.

"This has been a very collaborative experience from day one," Rosenberg said. "I think that it's kind of nice in that way of having that sense of guidance and professionalism, but also being able to have our voices heard is something that I think is very unique to this."

To add excitement to this serious historical topic, Dalton said that the show includes some light audience interaction, with actresses speaking to the audience at different points throughout the play. The cast also engages in many dramatic, riveting moments within individual testimonies.

"There's a lot of compelling moments," Dalton said. "Particularly a

very long testimony in the middle of the play, where an actor named Larry Parks testifies and ... goes from absolutely refusing to name names to finally feeling like [he's] been reduced to the place where [he] can't refuse any longer."

Bentley's play teaches audiences about an important time in history through an artistic lens. Stewart said that the play may even encourage audience members to think about this time period in a new light, bringing up questions and a newfound understanding of this era of American history.

"It's a great opportunity to see something new, see something kind of meta and to step outside your comfort zone," Stewart said. "But also to come prepared to question things, to have your mind jumbled and have a new idea of something that I think has been [viewed as] very 2D."

"Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?" will run Oct. 29 and 30, as well as Nov. 4 and 7 at 8 p.m. at the Ruth Caplin Theatre. Tickets are available now on the University Arts Box Office website and are free to all students.

OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL: Voters cannot accept silence as strategy

The decline of political debates in Virginia and nationwide has left constituents with fewer opportunities to be informed and hold candidates responsible

There was once an expectation of running for office — eventually, a candidate had to face their opponent and defend their opinions in real time. Recently, however, that expectation has disappeared. Candidates across the nation have increasingly declined, neglected or avoided public debates. Less than a month away from the midterms, this reality leaves voters missing the opportunity to watch candidates respond to questions on the spot, unfiltered. As those opportunities increasingly decline, it is imperative to remember that those forums uniquely provide a chance for voters to evaluate candidates when neither the questions nor the course of the conversation is entirely within their control.

Candidates in several of the Commonwealth's key districts have yet to meet on a debate stage. In the 5th district, Rep. John McGuire declined Tom Perriello's invitations to debate due to comments Perriello made regarding McGuire. In the 6th district, Rep. Ben Cline and Beth Macy remain locked in an argument over debate en-

gagement terms and have yet to face one another. And in the 9th district, Rep. Morgan Griffith has declined to debate Joy Powers altogether, citing that his constituents already know where he stands on certain issues. On a national level, 21 out of the 35 Senate seats up for election this year do not have a debate scheduled. In gubernatorial races such as Arizona, Florida and Ohio, candidates from both parties have also refused to share a stage. The reasons for declining differ from race to race, yet the trend itself crosses party lines, demonstrating a broad transformation in how candidates are now approaching campaigns.

One reason debates seem increasingly dispensable is that, for a candidate looking to control risk, they are. In modern political settings, social media is a powerful tool that gives campaigns a direct, regulated link from a candidate's office to millions of citizens. Messages are perfectly curated, algorithmically targeted and completely under the candidate's control. Take Rep. McGuire, Charlottesville's

own representative. McGuire has built a disciplined digital presence through polished video messages and carefully crafted posts. Yet, he has largely avoided unscripted settings to describe his political platform, including the debates Perriello has challenged him to. Declining to debate overall is not just an oversight or a scheduling conflict, but a deliberate choice to preserve a narrative often divorced from articulating real policy aims or answering challenging questions. The political culture rewards viral moments over sustained, rational arguments.

The democratic value in a debate does not lie in flawless conversation flow. It lies in the surrender of candidate control. Debates disrupt the machinery of a perfectly crafted response by putting the candidate outside of their comfort zone and forcing them to answer their constituents' most pressing questions. Political candidates, if successfully elected, will need to address the public and work in a timely, unscripted manner. Although social media accounts have become

the backbone of many candidates' campaign strategies, accessibility is not the same as accountability. Debates provide a space full of unpredictability, a setting that voters should be entitled to observe before they cast their ballots for a candidate — regardless of a scheduling conflict, dispute over venue or need for an apology.

However, none of this is to romanticize the debate. The criticisms regarding debates are legitimate. Not every district voter will watch a debate in its entirety. Isolated moments are extracted from conversations, circulated as viral clips. However, these arguments against debates must be for reform, not abolition or abdication. Debates serve a purpose that advertisements, video campaigns and X posts cannot replace — they demonstrate that political disagreement need not curdle into political contempt. Watching two opponents contest one another in good faith models the civic habit of engaging the other side rather than simply dismissing it. Silence, by contrast, breeds far more distrust than

even the most heated exchange.

Running for a public office must require more than communicating with voters on the candidate's own, preferred terms. It must require a willingness to tackle hard conversations and take the time to answer questions without a scripted response — the exact kind of engagement governing demands. Candidates may have little strategic reason to debate, but that is exactly the reason why voters must demand that they do engage. As Virginia's own unfulfilled debates make clear, voters should not be forced to judge candidates based only on what they see when the candidate controls the message, setting and terms of engagement. Avoidance by candidates cannot be the new normal.

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

HANNA: The Cornell Seven deserve due process

We can demand accountability for Cornell University's handling of Jane Doe's allegations without declaring the accused guilty

Editor's note: This article contains mentions of sexual assault.

In light of events surrounding the "Cornell Seven," the media and the public are outraged, with some celebrities calling them "sick monster[s]." However, should we not apply the same treatment that anyone accused of a crime receives — the presumption of innocence? We cannot claim to believe in "innocent until proven guilty" while treating allegations against seven men as established criminal guilt before the evidence has been brought through the legal process. Taking Jane Doe's allegations seriously does not mean that we must treat the accused as guilty, especially before the investigators examined the evidence. We cannot claim to value due process if we cannot extend that same principle to a case that provokes public outrage.

Jane Doe filed a civil lawsuit alleging that seven former Cornell University students sexually assaulted her Oct. 2024. On Sept. 28, 2026, Tompkins County District Attorney Matthew Van Houten issued a statement explaining his office's assessment following the allegations in Nov. 2024. According to Van Houten, the ac-

count provided by the Cornell University Police Department did not establish the elements necessary for sexual assault charges.

Concerns about Cornell's investigation may be valid, but they do not establish the guilt of the accused. In The Cavalier Daily, Ayat Younis' column argues that Cornell protected the accused. There is some truth to the notion that Cornell's investiga-

tion was flawed. However, whether Cornell's investigation failed Jane Doe is a separate question from whether there was sufficient evidence to justify arrests. Any investigative failures deserve scrutiny, but the information prosecutors received did not establish grounds for the applicable sexual assault charges.

Taking Jane Doe's allegations seriously does not mean that we must treat the accused as guilty, especially before the investigators have fully examined the evidence."

Some may argue that the DA's initial assessment relied on an account that did not include all relevant information. However, an incomplete in-

vestigation is reason to investigate further — not to make a predetermined conclusion about all seven men. A complete investigation must be conducted to examine the full evidence and make these distinctions.

Later refers to the accused as "assailants." These words present criminal guilt as settled, when it remains unresolved. If we have already decided that the Cornell Seven are guilty, what meaning does the presumption of innocence actually have as investigations remain ongoing? Although opinions may strongly criticize a university's response, that criticism should not present unresolved accusations as established guilt.

Supporting Jane Doe does not re-

quire disregarding the rights of the accused by declaring them guilty. Doe deserves support, and her allegations deserve a thorough investigation. The accused also deserve an opportunity to respond, and these responsibilities can coexist. Demanding justice for Doe means demanding that her account be heard, that relevant evidence be examined and that any failures in the investigation should be addressed. Public

outrage can draw attention to an overlooked case, but it should not replace the evidence needed to establish guilt.

The Cavalier Daily and public officials should also consistently differentiate allegations from established guilt. "Innocent until proven guilty" is foundational to our democracy, and treating any case differently undermines the principle. Its legal importance lies in placing the burden on the government to justify punishment rather than forcing individuals to prove they

deserve freedom, effectively limiting government power. The same concern for fairness should decide how we discuss unresolved allegations. People can form opinions about available evidence, but public accusations can damage reputations before the accused have a meaningful opportunity to respond. We should demand a complete, independent investigation that assesses each accused person individually. If the case proceeds to a jury trial, criminal guilt should be decided by the evidence presented and challenged there.

Younis' call for institutional accountability deserves attention, but that accountability should rest on a complete investigation rather than an assumption of criminal guilt. Our commitment to due process is measured by how we respond when allegations are disturbing. If we truly believe in this nation's principle of innocent until proven guilty, that must be upheld even when it is difficult.

EMILY HANNA is a viewpoint writer who writes about politics for The Cavalier Daily. She can be reached at opinion@cavalierdaily.com.

TAYLOR: U.Va.'s quest to ensure free speech remains ongoing

The University rises to No. 9 on the FIRE college free speech rankings, but work is still needed in bridging strong administrative policy with student perceptions and attitudes

The University weathered many threats to student expression in the 2025-26 school year to achieve the ranking of No. 9 on the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression university free speech rankings. Whether it was the ousting of former University President Jim Ryan, the Compact for Excellence in Higher Education offering grants in exchange for adherence to federal viewpoints on free speech or national controversies surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict sparking intense debates, there were many challenges to free speech. And as the leading university in Virginia during a time of increased threats to our First Amendment, maintaining robust public discourse on Grounds is vital.

Perhaps no better measure of this is the FIRE free speech rankings. This metric scores American university campuses on their free expression climate using a combination of student surveys, controversy reports and analysis of policy guidelines. On Sept. 9, FIRE released its annual rankings, moving the University up to No. 9. Although effort has been put into an environment of vibrant opinions, critical rifts remain in the day-to-day experience at the University. This dis-

parity reveals the true essence of free speech — as the active, communal participation in discussion. Crucially, this cannot just be a responsibility for the University's administrators, but also for faculty and students to empower all individuals to speak up and disagree.

There are several shortcomings for the University to address on free speech tolerance, but none are more

in the FIRE free speech rankings amid major controversies. Police clashes with student protesters contributed to a provocative culture in 2024. Regardless of your political views, the University's decision to call in more than 50 law enforcement officers — including Virginia State Police in riot gear — and deploy pepper spray on pro-Palestinian protesters is inexcusable.

Furthermore, students themselves

continuing to support civic discussion initiatives as a University administration, the University can remind students why they should value unfamiliar perspectives.

But this issue goes beyond just University officials and roots itself in needing students to change the way they interact with those they disagree with. Too many students shut down discourse when confronted with op-

a thousand students, professors and workers. The Karsh Institute of Democracy's new Think Again initiative encouraging students to disagree with their professors — a glorious example of emerging University and student partnerships on this subject — or the student-led Civil Discourse Initiative, dedicated to fostering non-partisan political discussion, are examples of advancing free speech.

Free speech is an unquantifiable metric by design. Although the research FIRE does is admirable, the service it provides is the opportunity to reflect on how to improve acceptance of different perspectives. The University must continue to abide by its ambitious policies and give a foundation of support for free speech. However, if there is one thing the FIRE rankings indicate for our institution, it is that it will take the conscientious work of every one of us to produce a space where all students truly do feel comfortable expressing themselves.

NAT TAYLOR is an opinion columnist who writes about politics for *The Cavalier Daily*. He can be reached at opinion@cavalierdaily.com.

“Yet again, FIRE’s spotlight rating on official regulations remains green, but political tolerance and administrative support rank at a pitiful F grade.”

important than administrative support, or whether students perceive that their institution supports free speech. Yet again, FIRE's spotlight rating on official regulations remains green, but political tolerance and administrative support rank at a pitiful F grade. Because FIRE solicits these rankings using student and faculty perceptions, key negative events can often influence this metric across different years. Thus, the problem could date back to last year when the University dropped

felt unwilling to discuss political issues with one another according to the FIRE report. Although the University scores strong in its policies by adopting a version of the Chicago Statement on institutional neutrality, the University's lofty free expression policies are hollow if administrators cannot back them up with tangible programs and actions that encourage civil discourse. Students often look to the University as a model of the values and practices they should embody themselves. By

posing perspectives. The University only has so much power, and it is up to students and Contracted Independent Organizations to work toward solutions for building a more tolerant political environment.

To understand more about the University's budding improvement to free speech, multiple examples are needed. The University was the first of the public universities to decline Donald Trump's corrupt Compact, in no small part due to the rally of almost

HUMOR

Top 10 assignments to complete at Trinity Irish Pub

For whenever your work needs to get done somehow, somewhere

If you have ever walked down the Corner on a Tuesday evening, odds are you've seen at least one person at the bar who was on their laptop. You may be wondering why this phenomenon haunts Trinity Irish Pub on Tuesday evenings. To quench that curiosity, one only needs to turn to the literature, which clearly aligns with this approach to coursework.

In a study that was recently revealed to me in a dream, researchers found statistically significant improvements in GPA for students who reported doing at least two hours of schoolwork in bars each week. Setting aside frivolous concerns like “effect size,” here are the top 10 assignments this study suggests are optimal to complete at bars.

1. Upload a discussion post

Discussion posts are a scholastic cornerstone when it comes to completing assignments last minute, and are thus especially suited for completion on the Tralcony. Didn't do the associated reading? No problem! Just look at what everyone else said and write something along those lines. We

promise your TA will not notice. They probably read 300 of these in one sitting. You may even see them doing this on the Tralcony.

2. Complete a two-question reading check quiz

More work tied to readings! It sure would be a shame if students could guess the answers based on the structure of the questions, or if using Command + F turned up relevant parts of the text. Thankfully, every student out each weekend is caught up on their readings. They wouldn't be out otherwise!

3. Reply to at least two other discussion posts

If discussion posts are a “scholastic cornerstone” of last-minute work, replies to discussion posts are practically a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Of course Timmy's thoughts on the readings were super insightful and took you back to a personal experience! This is crucial dialogue that your TA will be more than happy to consider thoughtfully and grade in alignment with merit.

4. Practice a group presentation on Zoom

Double-booked between a group project and a group of friends? The easiest way to satisfy both sides of this situation is to simply take the call at the bar and go right back to making memories. After all, Zoom comes with automated backgrounds and a blur feature for a reason.

5. Complete your required psychology study credit hours

If you've ever taken a psychology course at the University, you'll know that you're required to complete six credit hours' worth of studies to receive your grade, and unfortunately, many of these studies aren't available until late in the semester. If you happen to see one of these credit hours pop up on your phone while on the Corner, why not go ahead and complete the study right then and there? You might look a little strange doing word associations or looking at grayscale facial expressions at the function, but it'll save you some stress down the line all the same.

6. Record a foreign language video assessment

Qu'est-ce que c'est? You've noticed a foreign language video assessment on Canvas due at 11:59 p.m. that you haven't completed? Thankfully, all this assignment format requires is the camera on your phone, and maybe a European basketball player from across the bar could help you out.

7. Read three chapters of “The Kennedy Half-Century” by Larry Sabato

John F. Kennedy was a very complex man. It is of utmost personal importance that you complete the three chapters Larry Sabato has assigned to you before Wednesday's lecture. This is non-negotiable. It might even require a left AirPods to enhance your lock-in that much more.

8. Write an international policy memo

This one's a walk in the park! Politicians don't know what they're doing, so any given problem you look at here would actually be pretty easy to solve. For further insight, ask the British frat brother drinking a Michelob Ultra next to you about what he thinks.

9. Write an eight-page close reading on “Waiting for Godot”

“Waiting for Godot” is one of the most significant absurdist works ever made, so why not analyze it in one of the most absurd areas on Grounds? It's not like you're going to understand this thing any better if you're on Clem One, heavily caffeinated and pulling your hair out. You've gotta write this one in an Irish pub, just as Samuel Beckett and the holy Trinity intended.

10. Perform a regression analysis for your research methods course

Whether you're on Stata, RStudio or straight up making up your data, this is the final boss of assignments to complete on the Tralcony — those who are able to pull this off have truly won the college experience. If you're feeling ambitious and want to etch your name in the annals of academia, you could even regress your GPA against time spent at bars!

OWEN ANDREWS is a humor columnist for *The Cavalier Daily*. He can be reached at humor@cavalierdaily.com.

CAN YOU SEE THIS?

GREAT! THAT MEANS YOUR VOTE IS CRITICAL
TO CHOOSING WHO WILL REPRESENT **YOU**
IN CONGRESS THIS NOV. 3RD.

REGISTER TO VOTE
AT THE POLLS AND
MAKE YOUR VOICE
HEARD, CAUSE IT'S
TIME GEN Z TAKES
OVER.



**VOTERS
OF TOMORROW**

PAID FOR BY VOTERS OF TOMORROW ACTION.
VOTERSOFTOMORROW.ORG