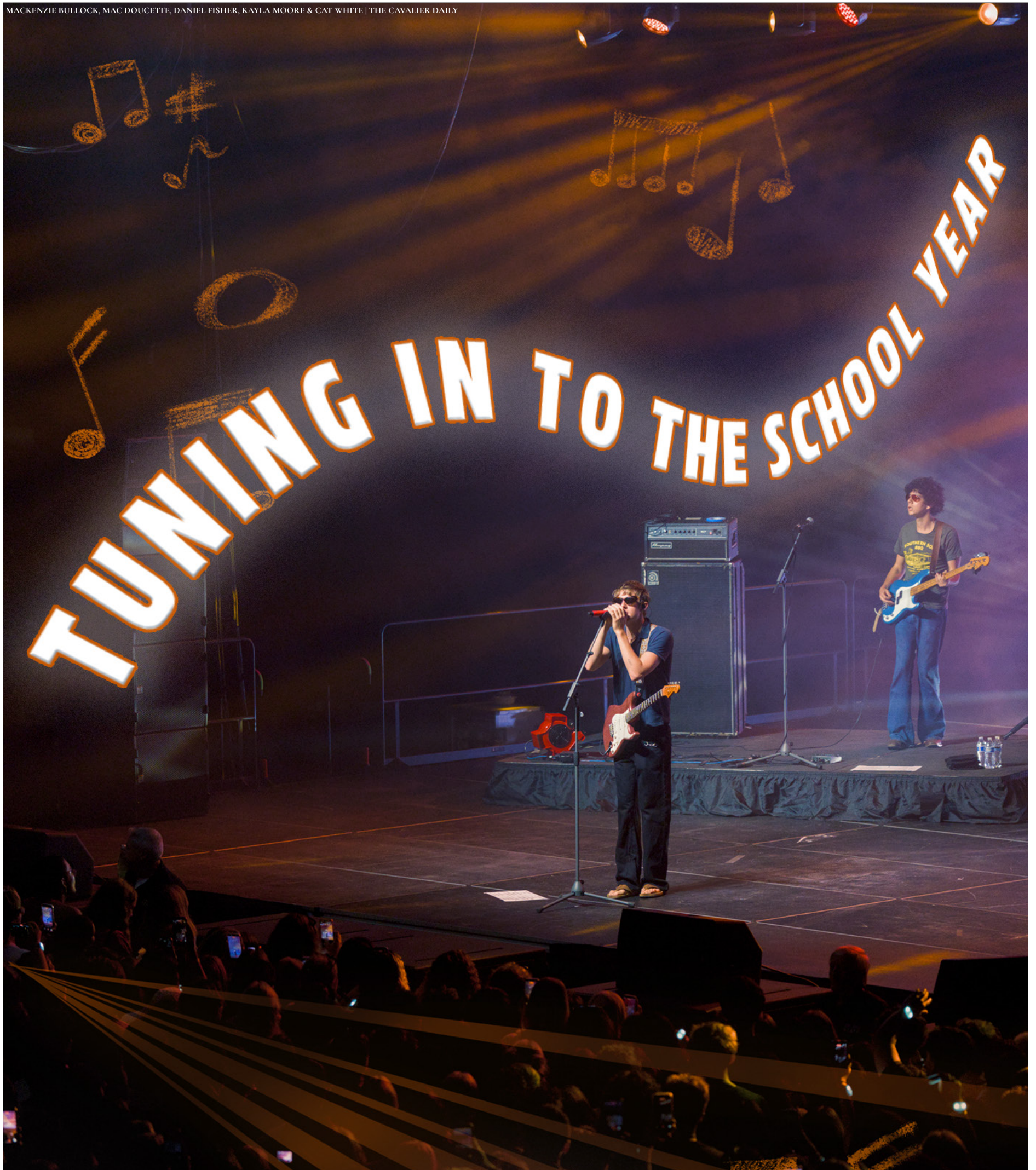


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MACKENZIE BULLOCK, MAC DOUCETTE, DANIEL FISHER, KAYLA MOORE & CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY



NEWS

Tech-sabbatical courses expand beyond English department

Psychology and engineering faculty teaching no-tech classes report stronger discussion and closer reading, alongside extra costs for professors

Komal Reddymachu | Staff Writer

Two years after the University began offering tech-free courses through its Summer Technology Sabbatical, the program has expanded, with courses offered this summer in psychology and engineering. The classes require students to “refrain” from using all devices during class time, as the University’s Summer Technology Sabbatical website states that “constant connection” to devices can negatively impact learning and comprehension.

The program is run through the Office of the Provost, which invites faculty to teach a section of an existing course without devices during the summer session. The policy requires students to keep laptops and other devices away while class is in session with exceptions for emergencies and accessibility accommodations.

Beyond that requirement, the program does not prescribe how instructors run their courses — there is no common curriculum, no shared assessment and no program-wide survey of participating students, leaving decisions about course materials, assignments and enforcement of the tech-free environment to individual professors.

The three technology sabbatical classes this summer were PSYC 3240, “Animal Minds,” taught in session two by Assoc. Psychology Prof. Daniel Meliza, PSYC 4640, “Psychology of Emotions,” taught in session three by Assoc. Psychology Prof. Adrienne Wood, and STS 2600, “Engineering Ethics,” taught in session three by Asst. Engineering and Society Prof. Jesse Pappas.

Summer session is divided into three four-week terms, with session one running May 18 to June 12, session two from June 15 to July 10 and session three from July 13 to Aug. 6. Classes meet for two hours and 15 minutes each day of the week, except Sunday.

Wood said she has taught PSYC 4640, “Psychology of Emotions,” many times during the regular academic year in seminar style lectures with around 25 students. During the summer, however, she taught nine students. She said that the difference in the time and the number of students in a semester-long course versus a summer session made comparing the two environments difficult.

“There’s a couple confounds,” Wood said. “One is that this is a smaller class ... and then the other confound is the fact that it’s a one-month class, so you get this really immersive [experience]. You get to

know each other really well.”

Meliza, who taught PSYC 3240, “Animal Minds,” as a technology sabbatical course in the first summer session, was more cautious about crediting the absence of devices as the reason for higher participation. He said his section enrolled 17 students, which — compared to the University’s Student Information System — is much smaller than the lecture format he taught in fall 2025 with 120 students.

“It’s hard to say [the effect of the tech-free environment] ... because the size of the class is different,” Meliza said. “Yes, there was, per-capita, more participation. But when you have 17 students and you know everyone’s name, it’s easy to call on people and force them to talk.”

Meliza also pointed out that the students who enroll in these courses know that they would be in a tech-free environment, and summer session attracts a different population of students than the fall or spring, which he said makes him hesitant to draw any direct comparisons.

Pappas, who taught his STS 2600, “Engineering Ethics,” class in the third summer session, surveyed his 17 students at the end of the course to see what they thought of the tech sabbatical program and the class specifically. The survey was unique to his course and it asked students to rate several dimensions of the course — including their attention, their participation in discussion and their sense of connection with classmates and the instructor — against what they would expect in a course that permits devices. Students rated each dimension on a five-point scale and were also asked whether the format should continue.

The highest-rated dimension in Pappas’ survey was the connection with classmates and the instructor, in which students scored a 4.08 out of 5, on average.

Pappas said more than half of his students named the same downside in the no-tech classroom — that they could not check something on a device in a given moment. One student wrote that she would regularly intend to look something up after class and forget by the time the class ended, and another wanted to bring in a news article to raise in discussion and could not retrieve it.

Another student reported that being unable to search the internet during class reduced their ability to participate, Pappas said. For one of these students, she wrote that topics arose that she wanted to ask about



OLIVIA THOMPSON | THE CAVALIER DAILY

but could not look up.

More than 80 percent of Pappas’ students said they supported the format of the tech sabbatical program continuing in some form, though several described sustaining attention without technology as exhausting.

What the format did change, all three interviewed professors said, was how the courses were taught. Meliza’s course relied heavily on chalkboard instruction, paper handouts and student-led journal clubs in which students took turns presenting and facilitating discussion. He said using a chalkboard rather than digital slides allowed for a different teaching approach, in which some topics could be further expanded upon than in a large lecture.

“It’s very easy with slides to just run down the track,” Meliza said. “And when you are drawing things out by hand, you realize things that you hadn’t thought about when you were making the notes. And it’s very easy to pivot.”

Wood said the constraint of teaching without devices pushed her toward activities she would not otherwise have used, including a dice-based game about the academic publication process, a round of charades and a debate using only notes and articles handed out during the

course. She said the format also gave her visible proof that students had done the reading — something that she does not have when everything is online.

“You can get a little cynical as a professor and think, ‘Oh, no one’s even doing the reading,’” Wood said. “But ... I could just see that they were really engaging deeply with [the readings].”

Wood said the main challenge with the course format was the cost of preparing the physical notes and articles for her students. She said the University’s print services will not produce copies of copyrighted articles without licensing fee payments. Specifically, Wood pointed out that for a 25-student section, a single article could cost roughly \$500 — across a semester of readings, she said, that is not a bill a professor could afford.

“I personally paid to print off all the students’ binders, and I’m not going to be able to keep doing that, so I need to figure out a workaround,” Wood said.

Wood said she is teaching PSYC 4640, “Psychology of Emotions,” again this fall and plans to implement the tech-free format across the full semester, likely by giving students instructions to print and assemble their own materials. She said

she intends to teach all her 4000-level courses tech-free going forward, but does not expect the 350-person lecture she also teaches to follow suit. She said this is because students in a test-based lecture are far more focused on efficiently taking notes than students in a discussion seminar and could panic without a keyboard.

Meliza is not teaching Animal Minds this fall, having been assigned to cover a different neuroscience course. He said the break gives him time to think about how the format would scale to a larger enrollment.

The Summer Technology Sabbatical remains a summer-only program, and for now, the format’s continuation rests with individual professors. Pappas said he would run the sabbatical during the academic year with some changes — as students wrote on the survey that sustaining attention in a no-tech environment proves challenging. Wood also said she plans to carry the no-tech classroom into her fall section of PSYC 4640, “Psychology of Emotions.”

University doctoral programs are experiencing fewer admissions

Ph.D. programs nationwide are shrinking, and many current doctoral students are facing research funding shortages

Nicolas Biernacki | Senior Writer

The country's more than 300 research universities are defined by their ability to produce research doctorates and collectively receive \$65 billion from the federal government each fiscal year. The Trump administration, however, has made attempts to lessen the federal government's financial support for American higher education. The response from higher education institutions has been to reduce the size of many Ph.D. programs by a factor of around 15 percent, based on data from a group of Association of American Universities member institutions.

When Rebecca Weinstein, Graduate Arts and Sciences student and president of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Council, entered the University to pursue her Ph.D. in Environmental Sciences, she said she did not anticipate that she or her peers would need to remain teaching assistants as they completed their dissertations or need to share money among their lab groups.

"I came in during a time when I never would have thought that my position at UVa. would be uncertain," Weinstein said.

Funding shortages and a worsening postdoc job market are the causes of the uncertainty Weinstein and other doctoral students at the University, and across the nation, have said they feel.

While agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation have seen little change in their Congressional-approved budgets, research grants have still been terminated en masse and funds have been slow to arrive from the agencies to research institutions.

NIH grant data also shows how funding challenges can vary across related fields. Grant tracking by the Association of American Medical Colleges shows that some institutes like the National Human Genome Research Institute have seen notable increases in funding over this time last year.

Phil Trella, associate vice provost and director of the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, confirmed that preliminary data shows that, after a period of climbing Ph.D. enrollment, fewer students are applying to the University's Ph.D. programs, and the programs themselves are becoming smaller.

"Between 2022 and 2025, we had several years of pretty significant increases in terms of both applications and the number of students — I think we saw about a 15 percent increase in our graduate enrollments between [20]22 and [20]25," Trella said. "For 2026, it looks like we're going to be going back down to where we were

prior to those several years [after] 2021."

Preliminary enrollment data for fall 2026 provided by University spokesperson Bethanie Glover shows that 2,213 doctoral students are expected to be studying at the University — down about 5 percent from the 2,332 doctoral students enrolled in fall 2025. The data shows that master's enrollment, at 3,962, is also down from a year ago but slightly higher than in fall 2024.

Glover told The Cavalier Daily that the data includes all master's students at the University but excludes M.D. and J.D. degrees from the doctoral count. The data also shows how research-based programs are being disproportionately damaged by federal funding uncertainty, with master's programs experiencing a smaller enrollment drop of around two percent over the past year — Glover noted that all Ph.D. students at the University engage in some form of research, while master's students engage with research on a program-to-program basis.

Not all doctoral programs at the University and beyond have been impacted equally by federal policy. For instance, a report published by Nature demonstrates that in 2025, some cancelled or frozen grants were for clinical trials, cancer centers and infrastructure. Similarly, Trella said that it is hard to predict how all of the University's many doctoral programs will be impacted by federal policy.

"The University has upwards of 50 different Ph.D. programs [and] they all operate a little bit differently in terms of the numbers of students they have enrolled, in terms of the disciplines that they are learning [and] where the funding comes from," Trella said. "In the aggregate, we can definitely look at changes that are happening both nationally and at the University, but sometimes what's happening in a specific program runs contrary to those trends."

Weinstein's program, Environmental Sciences, has seen declining cohort sizes since she entered the University in 2023. The Environmental Sciences department relies on funding from the NSF, Department of Energy and NASA, she said.

According to Stephan De Weker, Environmental Sciences professor and graduate studies director, the 2026 cohort is the smallest of the past four years, with six students. The 2023, 2024 and 2025 cohorts had 11, seven and 12 students, respectively. The department's decline in total graduate matriculation — including M.S. and M.A. students — were even more linear, going from 21 to 19 to 17 and finally to 14 in 2026.

Many smaller Ph.D. programs

mean more competitive admissions and could place more pressure on applicants. Weinstein said she believes undergraduates planning to apply to graduate school can still take steps to stand out.

"[Undergraduates can] really hone in on specific interests or specific research abilities that they have that will make them stand out to certain advisors more than a typical application," Weinstein said. "[Prospective] graduate students are going to have to be a little more specific as to what they want to do with their research."

Once doctoral students are admitted to the University, they receive funding for a set number of years, which includes work as teaching assistants or graduate research assistants. Trella said that the University remains committed to its current students, but it can be a double-edged sword, hurting prospective graduate students with some smaller incoming cohorts.

"I don't know of any case in which we have said 'oh no, there's a lack of funding in this department so despite the fact that we offered the student five years of funding we're only going to have to provide them three,'" Trella said. "If we're uncertain about funding moving forward, maybe we're going to be a bit more conservative with the number of students we admit. The biggest lever we have to address [uncertainty] is to make sure that we are not making commitments that we cannot fulfill."

While Weinstein echoed Trella and said she believes that the University will not remove any current Ph.D. students, she noted she is still worried that the funding slowdown will cause doctoral students to spend more time as TAs to fund their education and less time conducting research, possibly even causing students to take longer to graduate. Funding shortages also mean the research graduate students do will have fewer opportunities for enrichment, such as conference travel, Weinstein added.

"I think [there are] many benefits to TAing, [but] it obviously takes up a great deal of graduate students' time and because of that it can actually delay a graduate student's program progress," Weinstein said. "This can create issues as to how this graduate student is going to remain a student if they need to take on a couple more years."

With a poor academic job market and fewer government research jobs, research funding uncertainty will follow students even after they finish their doctoral program. According to Trella, less conventional paths for Ph.D. graduates may take on a more important role than ever, which the Ph.D. Plus all-University initiative

helps students achieve. Since beginning his current role at the University in 2011, Trella has spearheaded the initiative, which supports students' professional development and provides work experience, no matter their desired postdoc career.

"About half of Ph.D. graduates go into careers within academia, [both at UVa. and nationally], either as faculty or research scientists, but about half of them go on to a wide variety of careers that are outside of the University," Trella said. "We provide an opportunity for students who have done some training within Ph.D. Plus to apply for funding that would allow them to spend some of their time working either with an internal host or an external host."

Trella said Ph.D. holders can contribute in many ways to solving societal problems without working in academia, especially in a quickly changing world.

"The thing that we're really passionate about in our office is opening the Ph.D. more generously to society," Trella said. "When we see the challenges society is facing, one of the things we know is that Ph.D.s who are trained in research-based doctorates are really, really excellent at solving the very kinds of problems that we see around us every day."

Beyond the Ph.D. Plus program, Trella said, the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs provides students with additional support beyond the funding they receive from the University — which comes in the form of grants and from their departments. He also said that the office provides career planning, coordinates policies and procedures between schools and offers some fellowship and internship funding.

Several student-run organizations on Grounds also support and represent graduate students' interests.

Weinstein said the Graduate Arts and Sciences Council, made up of representatives from each department in Arts & Sciences, holds events for students such as research symposiums and advocates for and directs students to resources.

The Graduate and Professional Council, or the governing body that oversees all graduate students at the University, has also been forced to react to the changing landscape of higher education. However, a former GPC member who is a doctoral student at the University — who wished to remain anonymous — questioned if the GPC has done enough to advocate for the graduate student community through the myriad of crises in higher education over the last few years.

The student said that the body's leadership refused to offer any sup-

port for international graduate students, even as many student visas were under threat. In April 2025, one international student at the University had their visa canceled before ultimately being restored the next month as a result of lawsuits from hundreds of international students and emergency court orders in 23 states.

"Anytime I tried to bring up anything to do with [finding] more resources for international students [or] maybe host[ing] someone to talk in a bigger group for international students, it was always met with a lot of resistance," the former GPC member said. "Every time it was put to a vote, all of the professional schools like the medical school, Law School and Darden [School of Business] would veto any effort."

The former GPC member made it clear that they do not fault Trella and the University administration, but rather the lack of a unified graduate student front in advocating for themselves.

"If it's not just [one school's council] but all of GPC behind something, things can happen a lot more quickly or easily," the former GPC member said. "Every graduate student saying we are having a distinct problem and writing an open letter to the University is a lot more powerful."

In a statement to The Cavalier Daily, Allison Schilling, graduate Nursing student and chair of the GPC, said that the council was never presented with specific workable solutions to address the former GPC member's concerns.

"The council invites both agenda items for discussion and solutions for change. Further, the council votes on position statements or other business, and follows the majority," Schilling wrote. "As far as this particular issue, such as visa revocation of international students, I welcome this student or any others to bring their facts, concerns, and solutions to an upcoming GPC meeting."

Weinstein said she foresees damage not only to graduate students but to the entire University ecosystem as long as the federal government deprioritizes academic research, and she said the GSASC remains pledged to do its part in mitigating the damage.

"I think this is going to affect entire universities and beyond — graduate students play a very big and impactful role at universities whether we're TAs, mentoring undergraduates or helping our own advisors and colleagues with research," Weinstein said. "We continue to remain positive, [the] council is here to help students as best we can."

Computer Science department remains hopeful in AI-era

Faculty and students say that AI is reshaping computer science education, but not diminishing the value of the degree

Lidia Zur Muhlen | Staff Writer

According to National Student Clearinghouse, undergraduate enrollment in traditional information and computer science degrees at four-year institutions fell by 8.1 percent in the fall of 2025 compared to fall 2024. However, at the University, the computer science department has not seen a notable change in enrollment for its bachelors, masters or PhD programs — enrollment dipped for undergraduates in 2024 by 140 students but rose again in 2025 and 2026.

Nationwide, though, a survey done by the Computing Research Association showed that some computer science department heads across universities nationwide believe that this drop in enrollment could be due to concerns about artificial intelligence displacing computer science jobs.

At the University, students can pursue computer science through two undergraduate degree programs. The Department of Computer Science, housed within the School of Engineering and Applied Science, provides the opportunity to earn a bachelor of science in computer science. The College also offers a bachelor of arts in computer science. While students in both programs complete the same foundational courses, the B.S. requires additional science electives, advanced software development work and a fourth year thesis, whereas the B.A. incorporates more coursework from disciplines outside computer science. The department also offers graduate programs including a master of science and a Ph.D. in computer science.

Entering the national conversation on computer science enrollment, Mark Sherriff, University associate department chair of Computer Science, said that fluctuations are not new. Sherriff said computer science has experienced significant increases and decreases in enrollment throughout its history, including surges during the dot-com boom — a time of huge technological change — and at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since enrollment grew so rapidly during those periods, Sherriff said the recent decline may represent a correction from unusually high enrollment rather than a fundamental shift away from computer science. He added that increased competition from other academic programs, particularly the School of Data Science, could also contribute to the decline.

“My biggest hope, I guess, is the fact that our numbers are normalizing,” Sherriff said. “My hope is that we can give more attention to stu-



EDAN DAVIS | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Rice Hall, photographed Aug. 26, 2026.

dents, better direction, really engage with the tools and what they can be doing, and help [students] be even more productive.”

At the same time, Sherriff said there is a misconception that a computer science degree is becoming less valuable because large language models can now generate code. While coding is part of computer science, he said the foundation of the discipline is problem-solving and understanding the broader systems in which code operates.

Similarly, third-year Engineering student Justin Diamond said that people often misunderstand computer science to just be coding, but in reality that is just a piece of the learning. Diamond said that logic and thinking are important aspects of careers that computer science graduates seek.

“The software engineer [needs] to understand the user’s needs and then come up with a plan like an architect [on] how some software feature is going to work,” Diamond said. “The coding is the last part, so [AI] just makes the job easier and faster.”

Computer Science Department Chair Sandhya Dwarkadas said AI therefore functions differently as a tool in computer science than it might in other disciplines. Beyond knowing how to use AI systems, she said that computer scientists need to know how AI works, understand what AI generates and evaluate if AI met the specification given for a task.

To make sure that the computer science degree is adapting to changes with AI, Sherriff said that faculty members meet at various times of the year to discuss the changing landscape and consider curriculum updates.

Dwarkadas and Sherriff agreed that one challenge the department has faced is ensuring students understand fundamental concepts of computer science when AI tools can complete assignments for them. As a result, some courses have shifted away from relying as heavily on experiential learning, including large or design-based projects, and toward more exam-based assessment.

To support this shift, the department piloted a computer-based testing facility located in Gilmer 419A in the spring that has since been used in some introductory computer science courses. According to Computer Science Prof. Briana Morrison, this fall it will be used not only by computer science students, but also other students in the College. Dwarkadas said the facility is isolated from outside digital tools and is monitored, allowing students to sign up to take an exam within a two-week period.

Diamond said that amongst professors, he has noticed they are finding ways to test students’ thinking skills rather than solely technical skills, as students would sometimes resort to AI for technical tasks. According to Diamond, it is becoming increasingly important

for students to be able to evaluate code that is already written, as students need to be able to differentiate between well and poorly written code. As a teaching assistant for CS 2100 “Data Structures and Algorithms 1,” Diamond said that in addition to responsibilities such as grading work and exams, the class’s TAs make students answer additional questions about the work they submit to prove their comprehension of the content.

For entry-level jobs in 2024, computer science and computer engineering faced an unemployment rate of seven percent and 7.8 percent, respectively, which was higher than the unemployment rate of recent college graduates at 4.2 percent. Dwarkadas said it is difficult to know how that is affecting University Computer Science alumni because responses to University career surveys — which collect data regarding students’ post-graduate jobs — have been low over the past few years.

Dwarkadas said she worries students take too much advice from media “hype,” that AI is taking over computer science jobs, which she said is often built off of misconceptions.

“I would say that students shouldn’t shy away from a field because of hype,” Dwarkadas said. “If [computer science] is their passion, they should be there and they will be needed.”

Sherriff similarly said he cautioned against interpreting the

large numbers of job applications that students report they have to submit as evidence that computer science jobs have disappeared. He said he often hears students say they have submitted hundreds of applications without receiving an offer, but argued that one-click applications through platforms like LinkedIn are not adequate substitutes for job applications. According to Sherriff, charts with those application rates create false alarms for students because the numbers are inflated.

Diamond said that just because the entry level job market is changing for computer science graduates, that does not mean the market is dead because of AI.

“Companies are still looking for people to do technical work, so people should just go into the major if they’re interested in it. I don’t think people should be discouraged because you can make the same argument about any job with AI,” Diamond said.

As AI becomes more integrated into industries, Dwarkadas said that she expects knowledge of AI to become relevant well beyond the computer science department. Both Dwarkadas and Sherriff said that they are currently in the proposal process of creating AI minors that would be available to students across the University.

SPORTS

While you were gone, Virginia sports kept moving

The Cavaliers spent the summer winning championships, breaking records and preparing for a new athletic year

Eleanor Lynch | Senior Associate

There is a particular kind of quiet that exists in Charlottesville in July — the Corner is not as busy and the Lawn has more grass than people. Virginia Athletics apparently did not get the memo.

While students scattered across the world, many Cavalier athletes spent the summer doing what they do the rest of the year — competing at the highest level. Several programs broke records and won world championships. Five Cavalier baseball players heard their names called in the MLB Draft. Coaches changed out, and fall sports had matchups before most students had begun to think about move-in.

So, if your mind was elsewhere this summer, consider this your Virginia Athletics catch-up — because the Cavaliers gave us a lot to talk about.

Swimming

The Virginia swimming team made many headlines this summer, starting with the U.S. National Championships in July, where nine current and former Cavalier athletes competed for 13 national titles.

Junior Katie Grimes won the 400-meter individual medley and 1,500-meter freestyle events, with the latter time of 15:55.69 breaking Class of 2017 Leah Smith's Virginia record that had stood since 2017.

Among the many events dominated by Cavalier swimmers, sophomore Madi Mintenko won the 400-meter freestyle event to gain her first national title. Simultaneously, Class of 2024 Alex Walsh's 2:08.59 mark took gold in the 200-meter IM — her second after having previously won the title in 2021. Sophomore Teagan O'Dell stood on the podium with her in third place.

Then, Virginia swimming took its success overseas as 10 Cavaliers represented the U.S. at the Pan Pacific Championships — where Class of 2025 Gretchen Walsh and Class of 2023 Kate Douglass helped the Americans set a world record in the mixed 4x100-meter medley relay of 3:36.70. Walsh also won the 50-meter butterfly.

To top it all off, sophomore Sara Curtis had an incredibly impressive weekend. On Aug. 12, Curtis broke the world record in the 50-meter backstroke at the European Championships in Paris, touching the wall at 26.56. She broke her own record of 26.63, set

the day prior. She also finished third in the 50-meter freestyle, setting an Italian record with a time of 23.99.

All told, Virginia swimming had a summer for the history books.

Rowing

After finishing fourth at the NCAA Championships in May — the Cavaliers' best national finish since 2016 — several Virginia rowers took their talents across the Atlantic as six Cavaliers competed at the World Rowing U23 Championships in Duisburg, Germany. Representing five countries, two athletes returned with gold medals.

Senior rower Lila Henn helped the U.S. win the women's quadruple sculls event, while recent alumna Elsa Hartman was part of the American eight that won gold. Henn's quad defeated Great Britain by just under five seconds, giving the U.S. its first win in the event since 2007.

For a Virginia program that has spent years climbing back toward the top of the NCAA, these international results offer another indication of where the Cavaliers are headed and prove they can win anywhere.

Baseball

Virginia baseball players got a special kind of sendoff — five Cavaliers were selected in the MLB Draft. Notably, junior outfielder AJ Gracia was selected ninth overall to the Atlanta Braves, making him the 17th first-round pick in Virginia baseball history and the first Cavalier selected in the top 10 since Pavin Smith and Adam Haseley in 2017.

Junior infielder Eric Becker followed on the first night of the draft, going 58th overall to Cincinnati. And later, three more Cavaliers heard their names called — junior outfielder Kyle Johnson in the sixth round, junior infielder Joe Tirolly in the seventh and graduate pitcher Tyler Kapa in the 14th.

For first-year Coach Chris Pollard, the draft was the final punctuation mark on a promising future for the program, as Virginia went 37-23 and returned to the NCAA Tournament. This year, the Cavaliers will aim for the same success with an influx of young talent.

One Virginia team, on the other hand, decided not to change



COURTESY VIRGINIA ATHLETICS

Sara Curtis' escapades on the world stage were just some of many notable Cavalier accomplishments this summer.

much.

Men's Basketball

While the transfer portal continued to turn college basketball rosters over at an increasing speed, the Cavaliers' men's basketball team managed to hold on to much of its core.

Virginia went 30-6 last season and lost several important players including Malik Thomas, Jacari White, Ugonna Onyenso, Dallin Hall and Devin Tillis. But, first-team All-ACC sophomore forward Thijs De Ridder returned — so did sophomore guard Chance Mallory, senior guard Sam Lewis and sophomore center Johann Grünloh.

For Coach Ryan Odom entering his second season in Charlottesville, that continuity is significant. Last summer was about assembling a team, while this off-season has been about figuring out what that team can become. In a time of so much change amid the rise of NIL, Odom seems to be doing a solid job of showing players what is so special about Virginia.

While it may be too early to call the Cavaliers a national contender this season, it is not too early to notice that Odom has something increasingly valuable in college basketball — familiarity.

Another team, however, had exactly the opposite.

Women's Basketball

Coach Aaron Roussell took over the women's basketball program in April after seven seasons at Richmond, where he led the Spiders to three consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances. His first Virginia roster features five returners, four freshmen and four transfers.

The Cavaliers spent eight weeks of summer workouts learning Roussell's system — emphasizing pace, spacing and quick decisions. There is a lot to absorb and convert before playing a single game.

Virginia will get its first major test against Mississippi State in the SEC/ACC Challenge in December — until then, the team needs to continue figuring out what this new version of Cavalier women's basketball is going to look like.

Men's Lacrosse

Virginia men's lacrosse also has a new head coach in Kevin Cassese — although the program did not exactly turn its back on the past when building its new staff.

Former Cavaliers, Class of 2019 Mikey Herring and Class of 2025 Matthew Nunes, both returned to

Charlottesville as coaches. Herring, a member of Virginia's 2019 national championship team, is now the offensive coordinator while Nunes — who spent four seasons as the Cavaliers' starting goalkeeper — will work with the defense and goalkeepers. Chris Feifs also joined as associate head coach and defensive coordinator after a decade at Vermont.

This summer produced plenty to keep track of — world championships in swimming and rowing, new professional baseball players and several programs beginning new eras. At the same time, it reinforced something that was already becoming difficult to ignore.

Virginia is not relying on one sport to carry its athletic department — the Cavaliers finished fifth in the final Learfield Directors' Cup standings for 2025-26, their third top-five finish in four years, and won five ACC championships in the past academic year. This summer merely strengthened the evidence of Virginia's dominance.

Now, with the students back and another athletic year brewing, the only question is which Cavalier squad will begin their dominance first.

After a renaissance, what comes next for Virginia sports?

Entering the new fall season, three writers provide insights, predictions for Virginia

Sofie Keppler, Cierra Lyles and Ben McNiff | Senior Writers

As Virginia's programs sought postseason success elsewhere and students left Grounds for the summer, the practice facilities largely closed their doors.

Now, athletics are already back in full swing. Women's soccer played its first game Aug. 12, kicking off the 2026-27 season. In 2025-26, a historic season from Virginia football, a return to excellence for men's and women's basketball and sustained dominance from several programs raised the bar for Cavalier athletics.

But expectations must be met in reality. Ahead of the new season, three Cavalier Daily writers mull over Virginia's chances to meet that high bar once again.

What athlete will be worth the price of admission?

Sofie Keppler, Senior Writer: Fourth-year swimmer Claire Curzan is cementing herself as one of collegiate swimming's all-time greats. She enters her final season with five individual NCAA titles, eight NCAA relay titles and 21 All-American honors priming her to lead Virginia women's swimming in its pursuit of a seventh-straight National Championship. Curzan is looking to repeat her historic sweep

of the backstroke events while chasing the unprecedented 47-second barrier in the 100-yard backstroke.

Cierra Lyles, Senior Writer: After a stellar first-year campaign, second-year outside hitter Reagan Ennist is at the top of her game. Ennist found herself at the top of the leaderboard during her first season, leading the Cavaliers with 383 kills, 375 kills per set and 1,071 attacks. Her success earned Ennist AVCA East Coast Region Freshman of the Year and a spot on the ACC All-Freshman Team. This season, Ennist will be a prominent leader on the court and a special talent.

Ben McNiff, Senior Writer: Virginia fans loved JMari Taylor last year. After the first few games of the 2026 season, fourth-year transfer running back Jekail Middlebrook will be just as loved. Over the summer, running backs coach Keith Gaither described Middlebrook as a potential All-ACC player and compared him favorably to Taylor. Middlebrook could lead the team in touches and highlight plays — he averaged 5.4 yards-per-carry and 10.3 yards-per-reception last season. The Cavalier offense may well become the Jekail Middlebrook show.

What is one word you would use to

describe the state of Virginia Athletics right now?

SK: In a time where college sports have become increasingly chaotic, Virginia Athletics has remained remarkably cohesive across all 27 sports teams, "Cohesive" represents an administration that has focused all its programs toward one goal. Virginia has finished top-five in three of the last four Directors' Cups for a reason — Cavalier teams are thriving. Because the administration trusts its coaches to align their players with Virginia's standards, programs have adapted to NCAA change without sacrificing team culture.

CL: If there was one word that encapsulates Virginia's 27 programs, it would have to be "promise." Men's basketball turned itself around under Coach Ryan Odom, making a return to the ACC Championship. Saturdays in Scott Stadium used to be optional — now, they are the hottest tickets in town after a trip to the ACC Championship. Though volleyball struggled last season, the transfers they added significantly increased their potential. Women's swimming is going for a seventh-consecutive national title. There is so much promise for Virginia Athletics.

BM: "Diversified" is the word for the University's athletic programs. Certain programs consistently contribute to Virginia's trophy case — women's swimming and their six consecutive national titles come to mind — while others remained mired in mediocrity. In the 2025-26 academic year, however, contenders emerged across the athletic department, with the Cavaliers achieving top-10 poll rankings in 18 out of 27 sports. There are few Division I schools around the country that have both the resources and the will to build winning programs in every sport, and Virginia is one of them.

What program is primed to win Virginia's next national championship?

SK: Despite a first-round NCAA Tournament loss last year, Virginia field hockey has incredible upside this season — especially since first-years scored 14 of the Cavaliers' 45 goals last year. With three players named to the preseason All-ACC roster, the Cavaliers deserve consideration as a title contender thanks to a mix of young talent and experienced veterans. As long as Virginia can navigate the ever-talented ACC and find offensive consistency, this squad's depth elevates its ceiling as high as any team in the

country.

CL: Women's swimming is primed to win their seventh consecutive national championship. Over the past decade, Coach Todd DeSorbo and his staff have put together an elite squad of swimmers. As Sofie mentioned, Curzan is a decorated world swimmer, appearing in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics alongside third-year swimmer Katie Grimes. Second-year swimmer Sara Curtis spent her summer setting world records on team Italy. These three, in addition to the Cavaliers' plethora of talent, will keep the national championship in Charlottesville.

BM: Men's basketball has as good a chance as any program in the country to cut down the nets this season. National media is optimistic of the team's chances — Jon Rothstein, host of CBS' Inside College Basketball, has Virginia consistently in the top 10 of his preseason rankings — and for good reason. With most of the contributors from the previous year's Top-20 squad returning, the Cavaliers are in prime position to contend for an ACC Championship and a top-three seed in the NCAA Tournament.

The boys of summer: Virginia takes on summer leagues

From Charlottesville and beyond, Cavaliers keep at it outside of the academic year

Drew Dillman | Staff Writer

For Virginia baseball, the season concluded with a loss in Hattiesburg, Miss. May 31. Afterward, Coach Chris Pollard and his staff returned to Charlottesville, presumably to recruit, re-tool and assess the Cavalier program as it prepares for year two of the Pollard era in 2027.

Of those not returning to Grounds, some upperclassmen players were drafted and others inked undrafted free agent deals. But for some of those who will be back on Grounds this spring — or on Grounds for the first time — the summer was spent playing dozens of games in various cities and towns, honing their game during the heat of the summer in collegiate summer leagues.

But what exactly does collegiate summer baseball look like? There are dozens of leagues, which generally share certain unifying factors — they are for players with collegiate eligibility remaining and use wood bats akin to the ones used in Major League Baseball. Additionally, teams are often within close proximity to each other, with some unifying geographical factor common to a particular league, like the central Florida-based Florida Collegiate Summer League or the Shenan-

doah-based Valley Baseball League.

The wood bats and near-everyday play of collegiate summer leagues, in contrast to the aluminum bats and primarily weekend matches of NCAA competition, allow scouts for MLB teams to view players with similar tools and an analogous schedule to prepare them for the big leagues. Several Virginia players play in these leagues.

Third-year outfielder Zach Jackson is one Cavalier in the Cape Cod League, playing for the Orleans Firebirds. He only played a few games over the summer and posted middling numbers, but drew good attention from his manager in the process.

"I thought Jackson was our best option at leadoff," Firebirds manager Kelly Nicholson said to Ben Petteruti of the Cape Cod League June 17. "He can run and handle the bat."

Second-year pitcher Christian Lucarelli also saw a smattering of action, albeit good action, allowing only a single earned run over his two appearances and 5.1 innings for the Bourne Braves.

Two players saw action in upwards of 20 games in the NECBL — second-year outfielder Will Mahala

on the Ocean State Waves and second-year catcher Thomas O'Connell on the Mystic Schooners. Both played in more games in the summer than during the 2025-26 NCAA season, providing valuable playing time and learning opportunities. While neither player lit up the statistics page, the experience can help if they take a step up the depth chart this spring.

A few more Cavaliers played in the NECBL this year — third-year pitcher Michael Yeager for the Danbury West-erners and fourth-year pitcher Nate Bassett of the Keene Swamp Bats.

A number of Virginia baseball players competed in the MLB Draft League, a summer league based in Pennsylvania and surrounding states. Before the MLB Draft in July, it operates as an amateur showcase for college players of all years. After the draft, it becomes a professional league for those done with their university playing time.

Among these Cavaliers is fifth-year pitcher Joe Colucci. He posted a strong 4.10 ERA over 24 appearances for the Trenton Thunder this year. In late July, three no-hit innings earned him a league Pitcher of the Week award.

Other Virginia baseball players include two more pitchers, first-year pitcher Pierce Quinn and fourth year pitcher Drew-Koenen. For the Aberdeen IronBirds, Quinn posted a 9.00 ERA over two appearances and Koenen threw his way to a 6.14 ERA over seven appearances for the Mahoning Valley Scrappers.

While some Cavaliers fanned out to play in various leagues, primarily along the East Coast, some stayed close to home, including a few right in Charlottesville with the Tom Sox.

For second year infielder/outfielder Bryce Neely, his time with the Tom Sox and in the Valley Baseball League has provided experience he hardly saw on Grounds last season. For Virginia, he appeared in 15 games, but played overwhelmingly as a pinch runner, with his only notable accomplishments at the plate including a singular plate appearance ending in a flyout and a hit-by-pitch.

Neely had 97 plate appearances for the Valley Baseball League runner-up, notching 15 hits and 17 walks. Although he nearly led the league in strikeouts, the live competitive experience for the Tom Sox far outstrips any he has seen at Virginia so far.

Neely noted that proximity to the University was a benefit while on the Tom Sox.

"Obviously, [the Tom Sox are] close to my school, UVa., so I've had the luxury of using those facilities this summer to get lifts in, to be in the area and really experience the campus in a different way," Neely said to Dane Steele of CBS19 News Charlottesville July 17. "You know, during school and the season, I don't really have a lot of time to get around and enjoy it as much."

The local aspect is further amplified with local prospect Will Yow, a first-year shortstop who withdrew his name from MLB Draft contention earlier this year in order to play at Virginia. A product of St. Anne's-Belfield School just down Ivy Road, he continued his time in Charlottesville with the Tom Sox.

He posted a respectable .226 batting average across 16 games in his first competition against college-level athletes.

Yow, Neely, Colucci, Jackson and everyone else have spent the summer working and preparing, readying them for a retooled Virginia squad that will look to run rampant through the ACC come this spring.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Professor Kiki Petrosino explores her heritage in ‘Perfect Italian’

Through poetry, Petrosino demonstrates the impact that her African- and Italian-American roots have had on her life

Carly Smith | Senior Writer

While University professors may seem fond of assigning lengthy writing assignments to their students, they themselves are often prolific published writers. In subjects ranging from politics to biology, professors often turn their expertise and knowledge into a piece of published writing and occasionally assign their own works in their courses for a unique, intimate academic experience. One of the newest such titles is “Perfect Italian,” a poetry collection by Poetry Prof. Kiki Petrosino.

In this work, Petrosino examines her own heritage and identity, using engaging yet deeply personal language, vivid imagery and carefully crafted syntax as ways to express her connection, and lack thereof, to her family’s history. She is holding a reading to officially launch “Perfect Italian” Sept. 25 at 7:00 p.m. at New Dominion Bookshop in downtown Charlottesville.

Petrosino works primarily in the University’s English department, specifically in the Creative Writing Program, teaching both undergraduates and master’s students. Her connection to the University also traces back to

her time as an undergraduate at the University, receiving her bachelor’s degree in English in 2001 and participating in the creative writing community on Grounds.

In recent years, Petrosino has explored the relationship between her African-American and Italian-American heritages, ideas that ultimately inspired the creation of “Perfect Italian.” Petrosino studied Italian for the first time in her life as a student at the University in the late 1990s, with the desire to learn more about Italian culture and be able to speak the language with her paternal grandfather, who was born in Italy.

“The book is about being what you might call a heritage learner of a language, meaning you didn’t maybe grow up as a mother-tongue speaker of that language, but you have, because of your own family heritage, a personal connection to it,” Petrosino said. “The book explores the idea of belonging and family from the lens of learning another language.”

“Perfect Italian” is the third installment in Petrosino’s trilogy about identity, heritage and belonging from a multiracial perspective — all extreme-

ly personal topics. In 2020, Petrosino released “White Blood: A Lyric of Virginia,” a poetry book written from the professor’s perspective as a descendant of African-American Virginians. This work discussed the complex legacies of Black identity in Virginia from Petrosino’s perspective. For the second installment in 2022, Petrosino wrote the memoir “Bright,” sharing stories about diasporic identity through prose vignettes. “Perfect Italian” acts as a closer to this series, where the author touches on the presence and absence of her Italian-American heritage throughout her life.

“I think that each book feels excruciating in its own way because I think that writing, especially from a personal place, makes you vulnerable,” Petrosino said. “You know, that’s something that I help my students kind of put language around as well — is that you bring to the page something of your real self with every project.”

While Petrosino has imbued her knowledge of and experience with poetry through her teaching, her journey with the art form began when she herself was a student. The author said that she began writing when she

was young, finding her love for poetry in high school. Petrosino said that her high school English teacher held weekly poetry writing workshops with some of her students and told the future University professor that she had a talent for poetry.

“There’s usually one amazing teacher that you have in your youth that kind of helps to set you on your path,” Petrosino said. “And I gained a lot of confidence from her, from her insight and from her belief in me.”

“Perfect Italian” is broken into multiple sections, with Petrosino choosing the order of the poems after they were written. In each of her works, along with the common thread of heritage and identity, Petrosino said that she experiments with different forms and styles of poetry. While creating this poetry book, Petrosino said that she challenged herself with writing in certain syllabic patterns, taking inspiration from both English language and poetic style and Italian music.

The opening poem in the book also stands out to Petrosino, beginning with a line from the television series “The Sopranos” that the main character says — “I came in at the end.”

In Petrosino’s context, which differs greatly from that of the show, she said that these words connect to belonging and family, two topics vital to the creation of this compilation of poetry.

“Each new generation comes in [at] a certain place within the trajectory of [their own] family,” Petrosino said. “I kind of wanted to think about what it meant to occupy the space that I occupy in my particular family line, and I also wanted to reference the whole universe of Italian Americana that’s out there in the culture.”

Petrosino said that poetry facilitates self-expression and freedom, an art form enabling people to use language, writing and music as meaningful ways of communication to convey important messages.

“What I love about writing poetry right now is the capaciousness that poetry gives us as a genre to address different topics in a variety of forms,” Petrosino said. “I think about language as material. The way that a painter has paint, poets have language, and if we think about language that way, then suddenly poetry becomes this massive field that opens up.”

‘Then & Now’ exhibit showcases history of local activism

Organized by the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society, the exhibit highlights crucial moments in Charlottesville’s social development

Darya Bartol | Senior Writer

In celebration of the Downtown Mall’s 50th anniversary, “Then & Now: Charlottesville in the 1970s” contextualizes the present by providing an intimate view of life and social activism in Charlottesville five decades ago. The exhibit was curated by the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to showcasing the history and culture of the Albemarle-Charlottesville area. Anchored by portraits of local activists, the exhibit utilizes paintings, photographs and historical documents to tell the story of the Downtown Mall’s construction and its inception in 1976.

At Vault Virginia, within the 110-year old Bradbury Building — which formerly housed the People’s National Bank — at the heart of the Downtown Mall, the exhibit guides visitors through a documented decade of change across the walls of the first floor. It highlights not only the opening days of the Downtown Mall, but also the nationwide watershed movement for social change that was the 1970s. Pieces within the space detail local strides in feminist and Black history, as well as racial challenges through time, including the demolition of the

Vinegar Hill neighborhood.

The exhibit revolves around 10 portraits painted by Frances Brand — a prolific local artist whose “Firsts” collection highlights individuals who made pioneering civil strides in the Charlottesville and Albemarle community. With over 150 portraits in this collection, the paintings provided ample material for the creation of “Then & Now.” Selecting which depictions would be displayed, however, proved to be a challenge according to Perry Raymond, ACHS collections and exhibit assistant.

“The first step in the exhibition was selecting who was going to get put in the Vault,” Raymond said. “It was really hard because thematically we had to work out the similarities and differences between everyone and make sure that we were representing a broad scope of all the people who were influential to Charlottesville in the ‘70s.”

Utilizing Brand’s portraits and photographs sourced from ACHS’ historical collections, the exhibit is divided into five categories — one being specific to developments at the University, for example. Each

describes social progress across the greater Charlottesville area, with small accompanying plaques that contain historical information. According to ACHS Executive Director Olivia Brown, an aim of “Then & Now” is to bring attention to Charlottesville’s rich local history in civil rights activism.

“In schools, we’re taught about ... Martin Luther King Jr., we learn about Malcolm X, we learn about Rosa Parks, or even ... Ruby Bridges and the Little Rock Nine,” Brown said. “We have exactly those stories here in our local community, and we just have to learn about them.”

Some of these related figures include Grace Tinsley, who was appointed as the first female Black member of the Charlottesville City School Board in 1971, and Nancy O’Brien, who was elected as the first female mayor of Charlottesville in 1976.

Beyond tales of activism, the exhibit paints a candid picture of day-to-day life in 1970s Charlottesville. Alongside civic leaders were images of local events such as the Dogwood Festival and the annual University Easters weekend tradition. Towards the end

of the exhibit, one section showcases a local calendar on the Downtown Mall’s opening day, featuring humble mundanities like Parent Teacher Association meeting schedules or community theater performances.

The ACHS sifted through an array of historical sources during the creation of “Then & Now.” According to Raymond, arranging these often donated, sporadic primary works led to a unique curatorial research process.

“We have a collection of vertical files ... but they’ve been filled and collected over the years with newspaper clippings, pamphlets, manuscripts, photos, all these things that people, either in the library or from the community, have donated,” Raymond said.

Locally donated materials situate the display as an intimate look at both Charlottesville’s history and that of its constituents. Brown explained that the chronicles of only 50 years ago are still contributing to the future vision of the time-honored city, being fresh in the mind of local residents.

“We’re not so far removed from a 50-year-ago history,” Brown said. “To look at the ways that we have succeeded in improving our community, and

... that we haven’t succeeded in areas where we can still improve, that’s really one of the benefits of highlighting local people in this way.”

The exhibit’s artifacts detail that vital moments of social activism happen not only on a national level but also on a local one, per the efforts of groundbreaking community members. Raymond — a Charlottesville native herself — said that knowing these important figures who lived in her own community shaped her perspective of local history.

“We can’t necessarily take these [social changes] for granted because of all the people who have worked so hard to make Charlottesville what it is now,” Raymond said.

Weaving the story of local activism and its effects on daily life in the 1970s, the exhibit reminds locals of the people and moments that led Charlottesville to be the city it is today. “Then & Now: Charlottesville in the 1970s” will be on display through Sept. 15. Located on the first floor of Vault Virginia, admission is free and open to all curious about or celebrating Charlottesville’s evolution over a half-century.

How generative AI is — and is not — affecting arts education

As artificial intelligence encroaches on the arts, University arts professors consider its place in their classroom

Alena Touve | Senior Associate

When OpenAI released ChatGPT as the first consumer large language model in 2022, the program was nearly unable to render any version of visual or written “art.” Distorted human bodies, glitching movements and robotic writing was the limit of artificial intelligence’s artistic ability, which gave some in fine arts a sense of security within their profession and passion. But over the last four years, the capabilities of generative AI programs have evolved exponentially, casting doubt on whether the arts will remain a solely human industry.

Although AI still leaves a slightly robotic mark on its work, generative models can now render realistic footage, effectively edit video and produce organic writing comparable to human production. Consumer models like Gemini and ChatGPT have all been updated to deliver more naturalistic writing and higher quality image generation. Even trade-specific AI programs have been released, such as scriptwriting tool NolanAI and post-production editor Runway, which aim to supplement industry professionals.

Amidst these rapid advances in AI technology, many companies in the entertainment industry have officially begun incorporating AI into their production processes, leaving artists and arts industry members wondering if, how or when their career will change in response to the technology. As University arts professors begin teaching in the new semester, the industry-wide debate about AI’s role in art will frame how professors approach class discussions, assignments and preparing students for what awaits after graduation.

For Asst. Media Studies Prof. Jülide Etem, the academic goal is to strike a balance between the use of traditional processes and the addition of AI. Etem teaches classes on film history, social justice and documentary filmmaking, and explained in a statement to The Cavalier Daily that she allows students to use AI on a case-by-case basis.

“I consider the central purpose of each assignment,” Etem wrote. “The central question is whether a tool supports the intellectual or creative process or substitutes for it.”

Etem provided a specific instance of students in MDST 2200, “Introduction to Film” who, when creating their film for a class project, used an AI-assisted editing tool to remove objects from the



MACKENZIE BULLOCK | THE CAVALIER DAILY

background of a scene. Etem said that reshoots would have created serious difficulties for the students, and thus she deemed the use of AI as “reasonable” in that scenario. Etem wrote that she sees AI being reliably used in similar scenarios as a post-production tool, but also recognized that students should fashion their own informed opinions on how the technology may be used in art.

“A strict ‘no AI’ rule may be appropriate for a particular assignment, but ... education works best when students are not merely taught whether a technology is good or bad but are taught how to ask questions about it,” Etem wrote.

Outside of implementing AI policy, some professors have chosen to educate students on AI by dedicating class modules or entire courses to studying the technology. Assoc. Drama and Art Prof. Mona Kasra created ARTS 2559, “Art + AI: The Future of Creativity,” taught in Spring 2025, which focused on the potential relationship between human art and AI technology. Students in the class explored the artistic capabilities of various AI models, from consumer LLMs like ChatGPT to arts-specific programs like Nano Banana, and conducted experiments to see if the “promise” of AI truly compares to human-produced artwork.

Similar to Etem, Kasra said

that she believes students should come to their own conclusions about AI’s place in their discipline. Still, Kasra noted that she thinks students should learn the full capabilities of AI before they make that decision, as she believes AI has already begun making irreversible changes to art.

“This tool is here ... and it’s going to impact our way of making, our way of looking at the world,” Kasra said. “I think we’re just going to change our view of art, how we evaluate it, and see how art ... [is] going to change and utilize this in different ways.”

However, there are professors who choose to teach arts mediums via traditional methods absent any discussion of AI — even if they believe that AI has the potential to seriously impact art. Assoc. Drama Prof. Doug Grissom has taught at the University since 1986, and said that while he thinks generative AI will have some impact on the arts, his teaching style has not changed in response to the technology.

Grissom explained that there are many reasons for continuing to teach playwriting and screenwriting in a more analog way, but the most prevalent is the fact that students in his writing classes seem genuinely interested in learning the traditional form. His students seem to, according to Grissom, be relatively uninterested in using an AI program to

complete the intrinsically human process of creating art.

“Until AI can think and feel for us, and literally take over our consciousness, I still think people are going to want to do their own work for the most part,” Grissom said.

Grissom recognized that artists like his students could eventually become part of a future industry that is philosophically split between those who use AI and those who do not. Kasra and Etem emphasized the same importance of the human artist as Grissom, though they added that they feel it is important for students to understand AI regardless of whether they choose to use it in their artistic process. According to the two, students unfamiliar with AI could find themselves left out of the larger industry discussion about AI’s place in the arts.

Beyond the classroom, Etem and Kasra also agreed that the ultimate decision of how far AI is integrated into the arts will not be made by students, professors or industry executives — it will be made by audiences, as they are who truly determine the value of art.

“Audiences are crucial,” Etem wrote. “People decide when something feels moving, hollow or manipulative. Human fascination with storytelling will not disappear simply because the available tools change.”

Artists have already seen this very theory in motion, largely in negative responses to public collaborations between film studios and AI labs. Kasra, Etem and Grissom all highlighted that there is a societal connection to human art which corporations and executives cannot seem to shake, even as AI models become increasingly advanced. That connection, they said, can be reasonably traced back to the very process of creating that art.

“We are interested in where the art comes from, what ideas it’s presenting, what the process is. One of the issues, especially with generating [AI] tools, we see more and more is that that process is lost,” Kasra said.

Most corporate use-cases for AI in the arts revolve around increasing production of content, decreasing time spent on the creative process and decreasing labor expenditures. The endless creative applications for AI seem to fall by the wayside in favor of lower costs and faster results, which may not sit well with general audiences seeking carefully told human stories. Therefore, University professors, regardless of how they choose to implement AI in their classrooms, will be working towards a similar goal — teaching students how to create art that speaks to audiences, and to themselves as artists.

Watching “Off Campus,”
on campus.

Reading “ACOTAR.” → I <3 Rhys

Wearing a Hokies
shirt to the pregame.
Orrrrrrr maybe not. → definitely not

Getting your Greek letters
tattooed on your arm.

Showing up for the
7 a.m. tailgate party.

Cheering on the Cavaliers. → #GoCavMan!

Painting your face orange to watch
the game from Boylan Heights.

Respectfully debating
your roommate on who
should’ve won “Love Island.” BRINITY 4 EVER

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LIFE

The Virginian — where Charlottesville comes to stay

How the oldest restaurant in Charlottesville remains a community cornerstone 103 years after its opening

Sadie Adams | Staff Writer

For many generations of University students and Charlottesville residents, the rustic booths of The Virginian hold centuries worth of cherished memories. Whether it be locals gathering for conversations over spinach dip, nervous orientees enjoying their first dinner on the Corner or University students dancing on the booths far past midnight, The Virginian has been a witness to a changing Charlottesville — and a constant for the people passing through.

Known colloquially to many University students as “Virg,” the restaurant sits tucked between Mincer’s and Raising Cane’s on University Avenue. The Virginian’s weathered blue sign is easy to overlook amid the bustle of the Corner. But inside, it is hard to mistake the place for anywhere else.

Although Charlottesville is known for its vibrant food scene — with more than 300 restaurants to choose from — students, locals and visitors alike have continued to flock to The Virginian since it first opened its doors in 1923.

Amanda Bilchick, local patron and second-year Data Science stu-

dent, said that The Virginian’s staying power comes down to something increasingly rare — authenticity.

“There [are] multiple Christian’s Pizzas,” Bilchick said. “There [are] so many Starbucks all over the country, but The Virginian has that homey feel that makes you want to bring people there so they can enjoy something special.”

Echoing this sentiment, Julia Hopkins, general manager of The Virginian, said she believes the genuine and communal atmosphere is a central facet of the establishment’s pull.

“I think students are looking for a dining experience that is affordable, social and welcoming,” Hopkins said. “We offer great food and drink specials, but being a smaller restaurant also allows us to provide a more intimate social atmosphere.”

While that atmosphere has changed with the times, The Virginian itself has not.

Since its opening over a century ago, The Virginian has occupied a unique place in Charlottesville history. During Prohibition, it operated as

a soda fountain — a detail that now feels almost incongruous with its reputation as a late-night destination. But the restaurant has found ways to make its past and present coexist.

Its “Virg Elite” loyalty program, for instance, caters directly to the student crowd. Members can earn points by frequenting the restaurant and participating in Instagram commenting contests to unlock perks such as discounted drinks and appetizers, customized shirts and even a group brewery excursion.

The restaurant also regularly transforms its dining area for themed late-night events. In addition to these themed evenings, they also offer University-themed cocktails — such as the “Streak the Lawn” drink and specialty menus with themed cocktails for events like Midsummers and New Year’s Eve. For Hopkins, these traditions are as important as the restaurant’s history.

“I think our history is obviously a huge part of what makes The Virginian unique, but we also have traditions of our own that create a sense of community,” Hopkins said.

Today, The Virginian is open seven days a week for lunch, dinner and drinks. But reducing it to just another restaurant or college bar misses exactly what has kept the establishment alive and well for over a century.

Jaden Kline, manager at The Virginian and fourth-year College student, says that the restaurant’s history is tangible the second customers shuffle through the door.

“You’re sitting in the wood booths where families have gathered, students have gathered for 100 years, and that tradition will never die,” Kline said. “You’re coming back where people have created ideas, people have celebrated after winning national championships, people have cried, people have done so many things in that restaurant.”

According to Kline, it is precisely this invitation to linger that has established the eatery as one of Charlottesville’s most enduring traditions.

In a world increasingly designed around convenience — takeout windows, delivery apps and fast food restaurants where a meal can be consumed without ever sitting down —

The Virginian asks its customers to stay awhile.

“We turn the music up just loud enough so that the next booth can’t hear your own booth because we want you to have a conversation with the people in front of you,” Kline said. “We want to welcome you inside of the door, and we want you to be able to have a nice conversation, enjoy a warm meal.”

While the restaurant’s clientele may change by the hour, the pattern remains constant — students arrive in Charlottesville as strangers and eventually leave as alumni. In between, they find themselves in the same wooden booths as generations of students and Charlottesvilleans before them.

The Corner outside its doors has evolved. Businesses have changed hands, national chains have moved in and students who once filled the sidewalks have graduated and moved away. But inside The Virginian, the withered wooden booths still stand tall.

And every year, a new class of students takes a seat.

THE CAVALIER DAILY

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ROUNDTABLE: The ins and outs of sexual health on Grounds

Sex and relationship beat writers discuss the plethora of sexual health resources available to students at the University

Ingrid Gay, Summer Hoffman and Madigan Wirkus | Life Editor, Staff Writer and Staff Writer

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

Alongside new classes and new beginnings, the start of the Fall semester also brings the possibility of new romantic and sexual experiences for students across Grounds. Meet-cutes in the classroom can turn into one-night stands and matches from dating apps can be the start of a long-term partnership. Regardless of your relationship status or sexual trajectory, it is important to know about the sexual health resources available to you as a student.

Below, three sex and relationship beat writers from The Cavalier Daily's Life desk discuss their approaches to navigating sexual health on Grounds and beyond.

What free sexual health resource do you find most valuable on Grounds?

Ingrid Gay, Life Editor: Last January, Student Health and Wellness partnered with Student Council to announce free Plan B for all students — an over-the-counter form of emergency contraception specific to the prevention of pregnancy after unprotected sex. Since college life can be unpredictable at times, having a “plan B” can help ensure that life stays on track for students. According to Danielle D'Andrea, director of marketing and communications for SHW, approximately 850 free doses of Plan B were provided in Spring 2026. At other pharmacies frequented by University students like the CVS on University Avenue, emergency contraception can cost up to \$49.99 pretax. By offering it for free, the University ensures that students can get the healthcare they need in a crunch without worrying about the high price tag.

Summer Hoffman, Staff Writer: Currently, over 50 percent of all cases of college sexual assaults happen during what has come to be known as the “Red Zone” — a period of time that begins on the first day of classes and ends the last day of Thanksgiving break. Therefore, it could not be more necessary to discuss the resources SHW offers surrounding sexual assault.

While these are not services anyone wants to think about needing, the University offers several free resources to support sexual assault survivors during their time on Grounds. These resources range from the 12 free virtual therapy sessions every student gets with Counseling and Psychological Services to emergency contraception, referrals to off-Grounds support and hotlines. Although it feels odd to say these are my “favorite” resources, I feel as though knowing about these



VERONICA HASS | THE CAVALIER DAILY

resources are crucial to ensuring your time on Grounds is safe and healthy.

Madigan Wirkus, Staff Writer: Although the conversation around sexually transmitted infections is not glamorous, as college students, it is a conversation worth having. SHW offers free STI screenings periodically throughout the semester that detect HIV 1 and 2, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia and hepatitis C. Remember, sex is the most enjoyable when it is safe and protected, and taking advantage of these free STI screenings at SHW is one of the best ways to ensure this.

What tips or recommendations do you have for navigating conversations on sexual health and safety with partners?

IG: I am a firm believer that conversations about sex should not be limited to the bedroom. Candid discussions about boundaries, preferences, contraception and other key components to safe, enjoyable sex can and should happen before intimate moments occur. While often unsexy, these conversations have made sexual health and pleasure more of a priority — and something taken more seriously in the moment.

SH: Sex and sexuality is one of the most human experiences in adulthood, so I think it is of the utmost importance that they are handled with care in conversation. Sometimes, it's easy to get so

wrapped up in what we want to say ourselves, we forget that there is another individual with their own wants and needs who also deserves to be listened to. Whether it be with a long-term partner or a one-night stand, the art and importance of active listening cannot be overstated. As important as it is to speak your truth, it is equally important to listen to your partner. When you are truly listening — rather than simply contemplating your response — you can understand someone's point of view. Only then can productive conversation surrounding sexual health and safety transpire, which usually lends itself to greater enjoyment, safety and pleasure overall.

MW: One of the best ways to have a productive conversation regarding sexual health and safety with your partner starts by looking inwards. Oftentimes, we allow conversations with partners to be stagnant because we have not even taken a moment ourselves to understand our boundaries. I think everyone should take a step back and deliberately acknowledge what they like and do not like, what they are willing to try and where they will draw a line — and all that lies in between. Like with every important conversation we have, clear intentions and wants deliver the best outcomes. Once you get clarity and a firmer understanding of your boundaries, what follows will be safer and more satisfying.

In your opinion, what aspect of sexual wellness is not discussed widely but navigated frequently by students?

IG: For students with female anatomy, one not-so-fun milestone for turning 21 is the pap smear — a cervical swab to screen for cancerous cells. With routine tests every three years — unless otherwise recommended by your gynecologist — cervical cancer can be detected early, making it a lifesaving medical procedure. Despite its importance and the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control, only an estimated 63.7 of women aged 21-29 have been screened.

Full transparency — pap smears can be uncomfortable, but talking through the procedure and expressing your candid thoughts with your healthcare provider can relieve a lot of stress around the test. All in all, while the procedure lasts only one to three minutes, it is essential to maintain proactive sexual health.

SH: Often, college is depicted in the media as sex, parties and rock 'n' roll. Unfortunately, this can lead to those who have a different day-to-day to feel excluded or insecure about their perceived lack of experiences. However, research shows that this mainstream depiction of college is not totally in line with reality. In 2024, in its annual survey of the freshmen class, The Harvard Crimson found that 68.6 percent of the Class of 2028 had entered

college without having had sexual intercourse. This contrasts with the stereotype in popular culture that in college, everyone is having — and has had — bountiful amounts of sex.

In reality, not only are most people entering college without having had these experiences, but our generation is having less sex on average than previous generations. All of this is to say that there is no timeline to sexuality. While perhaps not as openly discussed, having not lost your virginity in college is a completely normal thing.

MW: When discussing sex, I have found that the physical component is all too often in the spotlight while the emotional one is pushed aside. Let me be loud and clear — it is normal and healthy to experience lots of emotions when being sexually active. I have noticed that when we discuss sex, we typically reach for sentiments about how it was physically, rather than “it made me feel special and valued” or, conversely, “it made me feel more drained than I anticipated.” Understanding that there is value in addressing the emotions that come along with sex rather than just physical sensations lets us be more in touch with the experiences we enjoy — and avoid the ones that have not fed us emotionally.

The graduate admissions exam grind

Students tackle studying for graduate school admissions exams

Charley Thomas | Staff Writer

Just when University students think they have left the prep-work perils and score obsessions of standardized testing back in high school, entrance exams for graduate program applications ring in round two. These exam scores can punch a ticket to a dream university or rule out candidacy for elite institutions, raising the pressure to perform well. Consequently, those looking to take their education beyond bachelor's degrees must balance exam preparation with classes, extracurriculars and other undergraduate experiences, straining University students' already busy schedules.

The LSAT, MCAT and GRE are three of the most common exams required by graduate school programs. Faced with a tough job market, a rise in the inflation rate post-pandemic and the uncertainty of artificial intelligence's impact on the workforce, more and more students are pursuing graduate degrees — a trend captured by the New York Times' article titled "The Master's as the New Bachelor's." For test-takers, this spike in demand has translated to rising exam registrations and score medians, further encouraging students to study hard.

Along with the psychological burden of impending exams, test-takers face a sizable financial barrier. The MCAT, LSAT and GRE cost \$355, \$253 and \$220, respectively — for exam registration alone. Preparation services add to this total, often reaching into the thousands as students strive for a perfect score.

Fourth-year College student Kristin Tidey will graduate from the University in 2027 and hopes to begin law school the following fall. With increasingly competitive admissions cycles in mind, she began studying for the LSAT in September 2025. Tidey said the preparation process was unlike her past exam-taking experiences.

"It's more time-intensive and harder than the ACT," Tidey said. "If it was the ACT ... I would have studied for a month and been fine, but ... it's not as easy as the standardized tests that we've done [before]. You need to dedicate a lot of time."

The LSAT consists of two types of sections — Logical Reasoning and Reading Comprehension — as well as an unscored argumentative writing part at the end. Despite their differing structures, both sections require a quick understanding of complex material, which Tidey highlighted as a key challenge.

"The timing is definitely [difficult]. I've never had an issue with timing for standardized tests before," Tidey said. "The questions are just a lot harder. You have to train your brain to work in a certain way that you don't have to train your brain to

work in for other standardized tests."

Similarly, fourth-year Education student Riley Kane aims to earn a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree. Kane must take the GRE to apply to most programs in the field. The GRE requires students to demonstrate mastery in a wide variety of subjects through three sections of Analytical Writing, Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections.

So far, Kane has approached GRE studying similarly to how she prepares for University course exams — by exploring online resources, such as recorded video lessons or even TikToks, to fill in any gaps in understanding.

"In college, if I'm really confused on topics, I can find someone on YouTube or online who can explain it better," Kane said. "Especially with a test like this where it's so generalized and so broad, if I can get any tips from [a source] that's free, like YouTube, that would be great."

Kane said she learns best through active recall, which involves writing or talking out answers to cement them into her memory. This strategy has served her well in the University's kinesiology program, but Kane voiced slight concern about its applicability to GRE content.

"It will be an adjustment because I've been doing so many of my major-related courses, whereas now I'm going to be doing [topics like] grammar," Kane said.

While Kane's approach to studying is mainly self-directed, Tidey has opted for formal LSAT preparation services. She utilized 7Sage, an online LSAT course before taking the exam for the first time this past April. However, Tidey said the program's generalized teaching style did not always resonate with her. In the hopes of boosting her score on the August LSAT, she switched to Blueprint, which offers live classes, recorded lessons, homework practices and office hours.

While the Blueprint program charges a lofty \$1999 price for these luxury study services, it comes with a caveat — if Tidey does not score a 170 on the August LSAT, which would place her in the 95th percentile, she gets all of her money back.

"The explanations [on 7Sage] weren't great ... It just didn't make that much sense to me," Tidey said. "Being able to ask my own questions and understand things myself, I feel like it's a lot better [for] my learning style ... [Blueprint is] definitely more focused on one-on-one learning and supporting each individual."

Fourth-year College student Catherine Goldstein took the MCAT this month to broaden her clinical career opportunities after graduation. Unlike the LSAT, the MCAT con-



ELIANNE BOBER | THE CAVALIER DAILY

tains content questions, meaning that exam-takers must memorize specific facts that will not be present within passages on the test. Over its four sections, students must show mastery and in-depth knowledge of biological, chemical and psychological phenomena. Fortunately for Goldstein and her fellow pre-med students, University courses shoulder some of the significant study burden.

"A lot of the classes I'm taking ... have overlapping content with [the MCAT], so that has been really helpful," Goldstein said. "Learning that [information] for exams is honestly like [MCAT] studying in itself."

In addition to its weight in admissions, the MCAT matters as an indicator of how well-prepared an exam-taker is to tackle the demanding environment of medical school. Goldstein said it is critical to emerge from undergrad with a strong science background, and the MCAT helps gauge what content from University courses really stuck with her.

"At its most basic level, it is a key part in your medical school application," Goldstein said. "It kind of combines everything I've ever learned in science since getting to college, so it will be interesting to see how well I can remember and synthesize information."

To give herself enough time to learn, practice and memorize content, Goldstein did the bulk of her MCAT studying over the summer. She said balancing full-length practice tests — which take roughly 75 hours — with full-time studying and University classes would be very difficult.

Kane is in a similar boat — she was balancing GRE summer studying with both outpatient sports medicine physical therapy shadowing and a job at a restaurant in her hometown of Newport News, Va. Tidey, on the other hand, began studying for the LSAT during the school year. She dedicated several hours a day to studying throughout both semesters of her third year, layering exam preparation onto a busy academic calendar.

"I definitely didn't go out or hang out with my friends as much, but I definitely did still [have] balance," Tidey said. "I still went to the gym every day, I still had time for homework ... and I went to all my friends' birthdays and stuff. I think it's definitely doable, but you do have to prepare for not having any free time."

Despite differing experiences, one common thread among graduate school exam-takers interviewed by The Cavalier Daily emerged — a general lack of guidance from advisors and career-centered staff.

"I thought that I was ahead when I was studying over the school year, and then I learned that people have already taken [the LSAT]," Tidey said. "The last time to take it, if you want to go straight through [to law school], is August ... Nobody really tells you what the timeline is or when you need to get stuff done."

Goldstein shared a less critical opinion, noting that her professors and teaching assistants sometimes take the time in class to draw students' attention to content that they encountered on the MCAT. However, she still noted several preparation areas where the University's curricu-

lum could improve.

"A decent amount of the questions on the MCAT are scientific paper-based," Goldstein said. "Learning how to analyze scientific papers [more in class would be helpful] because that's a skill that is super important."

What is more debatable, though, is how accurately exams like the LSAT, MCAT and GRE can capture a student's ability to succeed in a wide variety of degree programs. In Kane's view, for instance, the GRE comes second to hands-on physical therapy education.

"I would equate it to probably the same as the SAT ... it can show that someone could be really good at taking a test and that you could do very well ... I wouldn't say it's a very accurate [predictor of PT school success]," Kane said.

Whether exam-takers bomb their first GRE, knock their LSAT out of the park or take the MCAT a few times for good measure, Tidey stressed that a test score is not the end-all-be-all of University students' graduate program applications. It is simply one of many steps that students must take on their long, unique pathways to their professional careers.

"Trust the process. Either way, it will work out," Tidey said. "Even if you end up not getting the score that you want, you'll end up going to law school, grad school or med school ... it's a process that takes time."

PUZZLE

Max Goldberg | Puzzle Editor

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

ACROSS

- 1 Word following "Duck, duck ..."
- 6 U.Va. Chief of Police Timothy
- 11 Degree in math?
- 14 Prey for a ladybug
- 15 Places in the heart
- 16 Furious feeling
- 17 Rarefied perk for internships
- 19 Itinerary word
- 20 Gin-flavoring fruit
- 21 Bakery purchase
- 22 Basis for U.Va. financial aid
- 23 Teslas and Tahoes ... but not Toyotas
- 27 Bedtime after a marathon study session, perhaps
- 30 Singer with the 2016 hit "Cheap Thrills"
- 31 "Hey, lay off!"
- 37 Civil War letters for Virginia
- 38 Former vice president Quayle
- 39 In the know

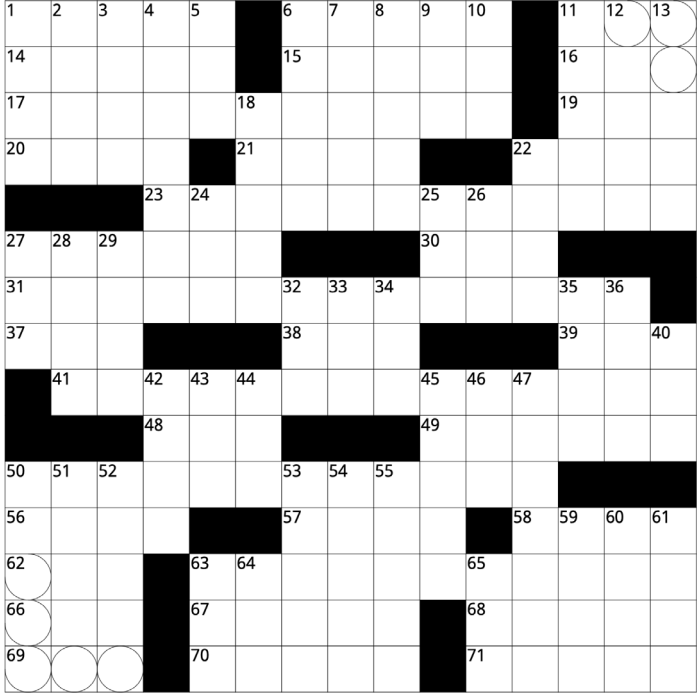
- 41 Album where one might listen to 17-, 23-, 38- and 63-Across ... or, more literally, what's occurring on the diagonal axis of this puzzle
- 48 Infamous general for the 37-Across
- 49 Debut album for crossword icon Etta James
- 50 Mansplained, perhaps
- 56 Flower of one's eye?
- 57 Ansari who played Tom on "Parks and Recreation"
- 58 Elmer's product
- 62 Hidden ---
- 63 Calendar period where many U.Va. fall semesters begin
- 66 Upstate N.Y. school
- 67 Type of steak or car accident
- 68 Simmons and Wilder
- 69 Hit up a dining hall
- 70 One of the Affleck brothers

- 71 Avenue intersecting University Circle and Rugby Road

DOWN

- 1 Concerns for an orthodontist
- 2 October 62-Across
- 3 Home of Columbus
- 4 Special delivery from Disharoon Park?
- 5 Summer hours in Cville
- 6 Pulitzer-winning rapper Kendrick
- 7 "Saturday Night Live" alum Cheri
- 8 Org. housed in John W. Warner Hall
- 9 Animated pic with a pronunciation debate
- 10 Doofus
- 11 Olay rival
- 12 Judge or juror
- 13 One of two potential coin toss calls
- 18 Self-checkout count
- 22 Org. behind March Madness
- 24 Fannie ---

- 25 Pack animal
- 26 Financial concern for many in the 22-Down
- 27 Org. that threatened Jimmy Kimmel and ABC
- 28 Remove from power
- 29 State that adopted a new "Beehive Flag" in 2024
- 32 Laudatory poem
- 33 Barnyard sound
- 34 Tolkien's Treebeard, for one
- 35 With 40-Down, styled figurine used to sprout a plant
- 36 Little goats, or humans
- 40 See 35-Down
- 42 Antlered animals
- 43 "Well, golly!"
- 44 Color identified with a 1950s "scare"
- 45 "Who's the Boss?" star Tony
- 46 Addams family cousin
- 47 Many an Instagram influencer
- 50 Un gato grande



- 51 South American cornmeal cake
- 52 MATH 1320 calculation
- 53 Carpentry grooves
- 54 Gas layer protected by the Montreal Protocol
- 55 Hubby's partner
- 59 Lovegood of "Harry Potter"
- 60 Purchase option at the U.Va. Bookstore
- 61 Online marketplace since 2005
- 63 List-shortening letters
- 64 LeBron's org.
- 65 Footwear brand that sounds like a groan

CARTOON

Four Blinks

Sophia Lee | Cartoonist



Growing Pains #15

Kiefer Kettenis | Cartoonist



OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL: U.Va.'s chance to resolve institutional distrust

As University leadership engages in strategic, long-term planning, they must make clear a transparent and structured plan for how to tackle issues imperiling trust in universities

A critical conversation around trust in universities is upon us. In April, Yale University's Committee on Trust in Higher Education published a 58-page report detailing that confidence in higher education had fallen 21 percent in the last 12 years, and giving recommendations on how to reverse the trend. Earlier this month, Education Secretary Linda McMahon pointed to the Yale report as she called on universities to publish statements on the federal government's priorities by the end of the year. There are multiple key topics covered across both documents, including affordability, free speech and artificial intelligence — three topics important to our University. With University President Scott Beardsley having named the committee for our University's next strategic plan, it is crucial that our next multi-year plan focuses on these issues. In doing so, the plan must reflect the depth of the Yale report and the transparency called for in McMahon's letter, a facet that remains important despite the Trump administration's continuous unwillingness to act in good faith.

For many students, no issue is more relevant than the fact that our University has grown to be unaffordable. Tuition for the 2026-27 academic year was increased by 3.6 percent, with collective bargaining and financial aid cited as primary reasons for the increase. The University states that it meets 100 percent of demonstrated financial need, with families with income and assets under \$100,000 being fully supported, and limited support provided to families with income between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Positively, this provides support and access to many first-generation and low-income families. But when out-of-state tuition combined with room and board costs still often exceeds \$70,000, it is clear that for the majority of families, this support is not enough. Indeed, concerns from students and Board members around the increase echo that the present support for financial aid does not dispel the strife faced by families trying to afford their child's tuition.

This predicament damages the faith people have in our University and raises several questions. What are the future targets for tuition and finan-

cial aid to ensure that our University is worth its cost for students? Why, when our endowment has increased by \$1.5 billion over the last year, must tuition increases be the necessary medium for supporting costs? Given the emphasis put on affordability, it is crucial that a clear direction is clarified in our ensuing strategic plan to ease this burden on students.

Beyond the affordability of our University, concerns abound surrounding the direction of our institution's academic culture. Notable in this discussion has been the rise of AI, a divisive topic that has segmented universities. AI presents a fork in the road for our institution — should the University embrace it as a necessity in preparing students for a professional landscape that is steeped in technology? Should they reject its use as a sidestep of the pathway to intellectual knowledge? Or is there a way to hold a clear middle ground? Yale's Committee recommends a device-free policy in classrooms to ensure students fulfill the nominal reason they are supposed to come to university — to learn. The answers to this debate and the Univer-

sity's current overarching position on it are not clear, and the pathway ahead remains clouded. As our University moves forward, it must spell out its take on the matter, and ensure that a culture of intellectualism is protected.

AI is not the only force threatening to undermine the long-held culture that cultivates great minds at our University. The Yale report notes that many feel universities have catalyzed a culture of intellectual homogeneity at the expense of free speech and debate. Our University fell 20 places over the last two years in the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression's free speech rankings, with 72 percent of students reporting that they feel uncomfortable disagreeing with a professor on a controversial political topic and 55 percent with a student in class. Though leaders across our University continually affirm the importance of free speech, these statistics clarify that their words are not enough to safeguard free speech. The decline in free speech sentiments at our University necessitates clearly defined actions to restore trust in a tolerant community of spirited debate.

Upon Beardsley's appointment as president, we enumerated certain issues that he would do well to consider. Now, with a new Board and a committee for developing our next strategic plan in place, it is paramount that our University's leadership ensures they also tackle these critical issues affecting trust in universities head-on. And more than that, it is crucial that they do so in a transparent way that rebuffs the opacity often displayed by our prior Board. Affordability, AI use and free speech — these are all issues critical to ensuring that our University is accessible to all and that its culture is rigorous, rational and accepting. All that is left is for the committee and University administration to recognize this moment and address these fundamental issues for our community.

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ELJAZZAR: The 'accommodation nation' misses the mark

Rising accommodation numbers across higher education are not a cheating scandal. They are an institutional reckoning with the competitive culture we have normalized

Students are requesting disability accommodations at record rates, and the debate over what that means has never been more crucial. The Atlantic claims that we are now living in an "accommodation nation," citing top universities such as Stanford University — where 40 percent of students have accommodations — and claiming that students feel that they would be doing themselves a disservice to not gain potential testing environment advantages by applying for such accommodations. Further, the column notes accounts from professors at other prominent universities who recount their lecture halls being empty during exams, while specialized testing centers for accommodation testing continue to fill up.

Looking at the numbers at face value, the accommodation nation argument holds — over the last decade, there has been more than a 50 percent increase in the amount of college students registering an accommodation. The percentage of undergraduates at Brown University and Harvard University with a disability registration comes in at over 20 percent. And, over the past eight years at the University of Chicago,

that figure has increased by more than a factor of three. Higher education's hyper-competitive culture undoubtedly medicalizes the pressure to perform — routing the stress of brutal academic environments through a medical diagnosis system and transforming the culture of accommodations from a tool of equal access into a de facto arms race to keep up.



What an accommodation looks like today may not resemble what it looked like previously, but the conditions that produce it are no less real."

However, numbers alone cannot be representative of the full story. Instead, we must primarily acknowledge that the mental health crisis associated with the increase in accommodation requests is real. The argument points the finger at students, casting them as cheaters vying to "game the system." However, disability service professionals have difficulty finding evidence of students self-diagnosing, which would be the main mechanism of "gaming" such resources.

Instead, it is environments such as those that create the illusion of the accommodation nation. Concerns regarding increases in accommodation requests should refocus away from the argument that students are falsifying diagnoses with disregard for honor and pivot towards questioning why competitive academic environments have lowered the threshold for when real, but

mild symptoms feel urgent enough to formally medicalize. One hypothesis is that the root of such a surge in academic accommodations might lie in increased competition for higher grades. This creates an institutional structure in which a generation of students whose real, lived distress is being expressed through the only formal channels available to them. What an accommodation looks like today may not resemble what it looked like previously, but the conditions that produce it are no less

real.

The University is notorious for the pressure cooker environment that it prompts. Competitive pre-graduate tracks, the suffocating consulting recruiting season and rumors of grade deflation trends are just some of the avenues by which students have understood that testing performance has never mattered more. Higher GPA requirements

of academic performance are so high that students will reach for any available tool just to stay afloat.

The accommodation nation argument is not entirely false — the numbers are real. But its premise is false. This is not a nation of cheaters. Rather, it is a nation of students with a higher need for mental health attention than ever, coupled with a more competitive environment in higher education, trying to navigate within institutions that have placed exceedingly unattainable expectations for results. The question the University must start asking is not how harshly students should be scrutinized for seeking accommodations, but why so many of them feel that they have no other choice. That begins with an honest institutional conversation — one that stops pointing fingers at students and starts examining the pressures we have normalized in their name.

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OPINION

CARON: The manosphere could be tomorrow's election results

While its loudest voices may represent a minority, content glorifying patriarchy and male domination creates a perfect storm that jeopardizes legal protections for women

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

Over this summer, you have probably scrolled past an Instagram reel of a room of men with microphones talking about women's roles on podcasts such as "Whatever" with Brian Atlas, "Fresh and Fit" with Myron Gaines and "Tate Speech" with Andrew Tate. This online discourse encompasses an online phenomenon known as the "manosphere."

Discourse on these manosphere podcasts often starts with self-improvement and fitness content, but then rapidly shifts toward commentary on men's and women's roles according to their biological differences — that "real women" should be feminine, submissive and traditional, and men should embrace domineering attitudes to be considered masculine. The mindset of these influencers has significant consequences.

On the "Whatever" podcast, a regular guest believes sexual violence is "only bad for certain people." On the "Fresh and Fit" podcast, Gaines demonizes the feminist movement, sharing that a woman's value is defined by what "caliber of man she can attract and obtain." This content has been made attractive to college-aged men by making them feel insecure for not being able to meet impossible standards. Since it is difficult for young men

to meet these exceptional standards, heightened insecurity can make them more vulnerable to apply this rhetoric to their own lives.

The impact of such rhetoric has escaped our screens. Studies have shown that younger men who follow these manosphere influencers were more likely to internalize misogynistic ideas and vote accordingly. Therefore, the manosphere has a dangerous political

old-fashioned, this ideology has now entered educational spaces. Gaines has appeared on college campuses through Uncensored America chapters, an organization that hosts polarizing figures to encourage discussion. Gaines degrades women at these events by promoting his book entitled "Why Women Deserve Even Less." He refers to women as "incredibly entitled, rude and narcissistic," and even called for

While digital media is just a platform, the messages shared in this space impact our day-to-day lives. Recent movements for household voting, growing proposals to restrict abortion and reproductive care access, the growing number of Generation Z men voting right-wing and attacks on the Nineteenth Amendment often start digitally, demonstrating how an online space can create harmful political

ly be accounted for due to manosphere content, young male voters still swung significantly to the right in 2024, arguably in part due to increased online content that promotes conservative ideas.

While banning or regulating podcasts is not the answer, society can consider increasing media literacy for young men to support their well-being. Increased literacy, in combination with more conversations about healthy masculinity and positive role models, could help audiences distinguish healthy masculinity from domination, entitlement and emotional suppression. The University could welcome guest speakers, fund men's support groups on Grounds and add manosphere content as an example of harmful discourse in media literacy classes. Ultimately, the University and society can take action to help men and women understand how the manosphere harms everyone. But without such intervention, women's rights will continue to be on the ballot every election.

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While banning or regulating podcasts is not the answer, society can consider increasing media literacy for young men to support their well-being."

cal impact, as it encourages outdated gender roles. Unfortunately, this has become a gateway to other extremist right-wing ideas that justify the subordination of minorities. Certain internet personalities, namely Nick Fuentes and Andrew Tate, have taken the manosphere from an online meme into a real political ideology through social media influence. When that worldview enters politics, the rights and autonomy of women become negotiable — and appear on the ballot each election.

While one might consider discourse around gender roles to be

the repeal of the Nineteenth Amendment on the Pennsylvania State University campus. While free speech is important, bringing speakers that call for the oppression of women is harmful and not conducive to a safe environment. Pushing patriarchal attitudes does not allow for students to enter the real world through an equitable lens — if organizations on campuses continue platform for these creators, these influencers will not just monetize patriarchy, but they will also shape harmful opinions that influence how we educate college-aged men as a whole.

ical movements by translating trendy social media posts into belief systems. Understanding how the media amplifies misogynistic rhetoric thus gives universities the chance to push back.

Political candidates have also become aware of this growing online culture, and have utilized the male-oriented platform that the manosphere provides. During the 2024 Presidential Election, President Donald Trump appeared on "The Joe Rogan Experience," Logan Paul's "Impaulsive," Theo Von's "This Past Weekend" and Andrew Schulz's "Flagrant." While the male majority of Trump's votes cannot sole-

HUMOR

BREAKING: New UVIMCO hire spends entire endowment

Administrators reassure students that "core priorities" will remain intact, most notably football

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

The University of Virginia Investment Management Company, or UVIMCO, is responsible for managing the University's more than \$16 billion investment portfolio, including roughly \$8 billion in endowment assets. However, all it took was one night for the entire endowment to be invested in tangible, thoughtful changes for student life.

On July 1, with the University's growing endowment requiring additional oversight, UVIMCO hired its newest investment analyst, Grant Fortune, a history major and longtime Wahoo fan. Fortune's upbeat attitude, polished resume and seemingly prestigious Ivy League education made him an easy choice for the role. It wasn't until Fortune's onboarding paperwork had been processed that UVIMCO Managing Directors realized his diploma was from Columbia College in Columbia, South Carolina — not Columbia University in New York.

The endowment is fueled by gen-

erous donations from alumni, wealthy benefactors and that one family whose last name appears on every building. Those donors' contributions ensure the University can continue funding financial aid, groundbreaking research, endowed professors and the occasional construction project that no one asked for.

Determined to make an immediate impact, Fortune spent his first few weeks learning the basics of institutional investing. Holden Returns, UVIMCO Senior Analyst and Fortune's boss, shared his initial impressions of the new hire.

"Grant is great. We had a lot of productive meetings where we'd circle back, level-set expectations and align on next-steps to create scalable solutions for stakeholder alignment," Returns said.

When *The Cavalier Daily* asked for further comment, Returns said he would reconnect offline after "socializing the feedback internally," a process that sources confirmed would likely involve several completely pointless Teams meetings.

Despite numerous socializing internalizations with Fortune, UVIMCO senior management eventually realized that the fundamental purpose of an endowment had somehow never come up. Believing the purpose of an endowment was to "endow stuff," Fortune reportedly liquidated the University's entire \$8 billion core endowment and immediately reinvested the proceeds into what he described as "actually important stuff students don't know they need."

Among the analyst's first investments was a \$2.5 billion allocation toward expanding the football program, after Fortune's analysis revealed that the average student experienced a 400 percent increase in school spirit after storming the field following an upset win. While the report has not yet been publicly released, UVIMCO senior management's review of the findings reportedly led to one heart attack, two strokes and the immediate deployment of 13 University attorneys.

Another \$2 billion was directed toward constructing a permanent therapy zoo on the Lawn after Fortune

discovered that student stress was reaching unprecedented levels. The idea was inspired by a TikTok he saw featuring a goat tap dancing on people's backs while delivering personalized motivational messages. Upon further review, Fortune admitted he had become increasingly concerned that the video may have been artificial intelligence, particularly after noticing the goat had seven legs and the students appeared to have identical faces. If the video was AI-generated, Fortune acknowledged this would tragically alter the original investment thesis, as the University's newest wellness initiative may have been based entirely on a computer-generated goat.

The remaining \$3.5 billion was allocated toward expanding financial aid after Fortune determined that the University's affordability crisis was caused by students not having enough money. His solution was simple — provide every student with additional funding until tuition no longer became a concern. When asked how the University would continue funding the program after the endowment had

been completely depleted, Fortune explained that the payments could simply be "written off" and then reinvested back into financial aid, creating a never-ending money loop.

After presenting his strategy to the 13 University attorneys brought in to review the situation, three lawyers were reportedly hospitalized due to stress-related complications, while two others have since left the legal profession entirely.

Unfortunately, Fortune has been placed on immediate house arrest by UVIMCO, preventing *The Cavalier Daily* from obtaining a direct comment. Still, his influence on the University will not soon be forgotten, as students, faculty and administrators continue to navigate the lasting effects of his unprecedented approach to institutional investing.

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