

NEWS

Cavalier Daily's first female editor-in-chief reflects on her term

Marjorie Leedy Green's term as editor-in-chief came in the midst of the Media Board's creation and shifts towards a more diverse study body

Cecilia Mould | Senior Writer

For Marjorie Leedy Green, The Cavalier Daily's first female editor-in-chief, the central focus of her year in the role and her time at the University was not women's newfound presence in the spaces of higher education and leadership roles within the University. Instead, her focus was The Cavalier Daily's concern with freedom of the press under an encroaching University administration.

As Leedy Green wrote in her parting shot — an opportunity for fourth-year Cavalier Daily staffers to write a column on their time at the paper — just before her graduation, “This influence of the student media carries with it a huge responsibility, of which the students in the media are very conscious ... the journalists' concern for fairness and the care with which they treat stories are not often revealed.”

The University adopted full coeducation in 1972 — meaning students were considered for admission without regard to gender for the first time — after smaller groups of women were admitted as first-year students in 1970 and 1971. Leedy Green began her first year in 1973, studying to earn a degree in Government. At the same time, the University established its Media Board in 1976, with the purpose of supervising student-operated news organizations.

After Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward of the Washington Post revealed the Watergate scandal in 1972, Leedy Green said she was sure she wanted to pursue a career in journalism. During the first semester of her first year, she joined the news desk, eventually becoming news editor before she ran for editor-in-chief.

“[News] was never boring,” Leedy Green said. “It just seemed to be what I was best suited for.”

On The Cavalier Daily, Leedy Green found a team that became her strongest supporters — the fast-paced and exciting nature of producing news together in the afternoons and evenings formed some of her core memories of her time at the University. This team would later encourage Leedy Green to run for the position of editor-in-chief and support her efforts to fight the Media Board's increasing efforts to censor the paper.

Shortly after she was elected to lead the paper in the spring of



COURTESY MARJORIE LEEDY GREEN

Marjorie Leedy Green was the first female editor-in-chief of The Cavalier Daily.

1976, the University established the Media Board which had the power to investigate complaints against student media and to take corrective action against organizations or reporters as it deemed necessary.

“[It posed] potential First Amendment violations ... [and was] an immediate threat that we felt had to be dealt with,” Leedy Green said. “We were very concerned, but not shocked, about the creation of the Media Board.”

At that time, she said, the University was going through a period of intense change — women and Black students had only recently been allowed to enroll, bringing both diversity and with it, the challenge of serving a student body with a variety of backgrounds and personal views.

“I was one of the first classes of women, and that upset an awful lot of people at the University,” Leedy Green said. “With the admission of women and efforts to recruit more students of color came more student involvement in commenting on and protesting various University decisions. The University was no longer a school with young white men who tended to come from similar backgrounds.”

The Cavalier Daily, with Leedy Green as news editor and then as editor-in-chief, reported on these changes to gender and racial integration at the University, causing increasing tensions between University administration and the paper.

“It was only natural that some of [these shifts] would be reflected in what was happening with The Cavalier Daily. We were covering all of this, and we were commenting on all of this,” she said. “It was a new world for the University administration to have students providing this kind of coverage and protesting and raising concerns.”

Leedy Green's year as editor-in-chief marked the beginning of a period during which The Cavalier Daily's focus was protecting its ability to report freely on University events. She and her team decided to directly oppose the Media Board's creation, working with the American Civil Liberties Union to contest the decision on the basis of its infringement on the paper's First Amendment rights.

After Leedy Green's graduation, The Cavalier Daily would eventually become entirely independent from the University

in 1979 — a move she had sensed might be needed for the paper to operate free from concerns over University censorship, although the paper did not have the financial resources to do so during her term.

As a student journalist, Leedy Green was experiencing firsthand what it was to be a member of one of the University's first classes of women. Within this community, she found numerous role models — in her residence halls, courses and at the paper — who made her feel comfortable despite some pushback against women at the University.

“It felt like a moment of promise for women at the University,” Leedy Green said. “And there were a lot of women moving into student government, on the Honor Committee, on the [University] Judiciary Committee. So it really felt like we had a real fraternity of women who just were doing good things at the University.”

And although some men at the University expressed opposition to the admission of women, Leedy Green said she found at The Cavalier Daily a group of people who supported and respected her leadership, regardless

of the fact that she was the first woman to hold the paper's top leadership role.

Following her time at the University, Leedy Green began a career as a daily news reporter for the Alexandria Gazette, in her hometown of Alexandria, Va. For her, The Cavalier Daily had provided something that the University had not — a journalism education.

“The Cavalier Daily was the way we learned how to be good journalists and how to master the basics that would enable us to move on and develop as journalists,” Leedy Green said. “I will be forever grateful for that. It was just an unbeatable experience.”

While reflecting on her term, Leedy Green revisited her parting shot piece, and those of other members of her team.

“What was consistent in all of those [parting shots] was how we talked about each other and how much we valued one another and how close we were,” she said. “And I think that really is one of the major things that I take away from [The Cavalier Daily] to this day. My best friends of many years are mostly people I met through the [paper].”

Philip Bourne leaves legacy of being more than just a leader

Following the passing of Philip Bourne, his friends and family members remember not just his achievements, but his unshakable character

Lauren Seeliger | News Editor

Philip Bourne, founding dean of the School of Data Science, passed away March 8 after a battle with cancer. According to his close friends, colleagues and family members, he will be remembered for his commitment to the communities which he was involved in and for going above and beyond in everything he did, from his scientific discoveries to his care for the people around him.

Bourne's array of accomplishments include co-directing the Protein Data Bank during his time as a professor and associate vice chancellor of innovation and industrial alliances at the University of California, San Diego to advance drug discovery, spearheading the Big Data to Knowledge initiative at the National Institutes of Health and authoring over 400 papers and five books. Beyond those achievements, he is credited for his establishment of the SDS — a “school without walls” — and what many described as his exemplary character.

Ian Solomon, dean of the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, was a close friend of Bourne's. In an interview with *The Cavalier Daily*, he emphasized Bourne's humble, yet devoted, esteem and the way Bourne connected so impactfully with those around him.

“Here's someone who's ... made some of the really profound discoveries of the 20th and 21st century, who's worked with some of the most eminent scientists and scholars and discoverers ... and yet is also so normal,” Solomon said. “That ability to both operate at the highest levels of the academy in science and yet also talk to just about anybody ... It's a sort of role model for citizenship, for scholarship [and] for leadership that I really admire.”

Jim Ryan, former University president and Law professor, spoke at the memorial held for Bourne Friday. In his speech, Ryan explained how Bourne first floated the idea of turning the Data Science Institute into the University's 12th school early in Ryan's presidency. Originally, Ryan turned down the idea — he said that the establishment of a new school would both be costly and could potentially silo data science, which Ryan said was a subject he believed should be incorporated into all studies at the University.

However, Ryan emphasized what he called Bourne's ability to be a visionary. Bourne developed plans for the future — including for the field of data science, hence the need for a school, rather than just an institute — far before others could understand them.

“Phil would explain something to me that I couldn't quite see immediately, but we would continue talking ...

until I could see what was already clear to him,” Ryan said at the memorial. “Then I [would] do what he suggested, which I believe gave him satisfaction, not because he won, but because he loved when others finally saw what he did.”

The SDS, which opened in 2019 and had its first full cohort of Bachelor of Science students in the fall of 2024, offers an undergraduate B.S., an undergraduate minor and three graduate programs. Bourne is honored for not just establishing the school, but for creating an environment in which, according to several of Friday's speakers, individuals work collaboratively and creatively.

SDS Interim Dean Jeffrey Blume — who stepped into his role March 9 — also spoke during Friday's memorial and cited the innovative nature of the SDS and its students, professors and administrative members.

“As founding dean of the School of Data Science, Phil built something extraordinary here — not just an institution, but a place defined by people, curiosity and a sense of possibility,” Blume said at the memorial.

Several of Friday's speakers also underscored Bourne's love of working to advance all initiatives on Grounds and his ability to integrate the SDS within the broader University community. Solomon said in an interview with *The Cavalier Daily* that Bourne took the subject of data science and found a way for it to contribute to the greater good of humanity.

“You can imagine sometimes, ‘Oh data science, that's all about algorithms and high-level math and machine learning,’” Solomon said. “Dean Bourne showed you very quickly, ‘No, it's about our humanity and ... how are we improving lives and improving medicine and improving public services?’”

Kemi Jona, University vice provost for online education and digital innovation, began working with Bourne in 2023 to amplify the SDS's online master's program. In an interview with *The Cavalier Daily*, Jona said this program is one of the fastest growing online programs at the University, and the two worked to increase enrollment and improve overall operations.

Jona recalled Bourne's curiosity and care for all things happening on Grounds, even throughout his battle with cancer.

“I don't think there was a minute that he took his foot off the gas in terms of work,” Jona said. “[Bourne] was always wanting to talk about new ideas, or things that were happening on Grounds, even ... 48 hours before he passed.”

Despite Bourne's continual commitment to the University, his friends and family members spoke to his out-



COURTESY SANJAY SUCHAK VIA FLICKR

Philip Bourne, founding dean of the School of Data Science.

side passions. Speakers said Bourne had an extraordinary love for those around him and for his hobbies — namely, motorcycling and spending time with his family.

Bourne's son, Scott Bourne, reflected Friday on the unwavering love he received from his father, and how that same love shone through to the University and to his friends.

“When [my sister and I] did get [my dad's] attention, he was always the most devoted father — impossibly funny, ever-optimistic and encouraging to my sister and I,” Scott Bourne said at the memorial. “He wasn't just Phil Bourne the dean, he was Phil Bourne the Cub Scout leader, the Go Kart builder, the field trip organizer, the computer fixer, the career advisor, the driving instructor.”

Scott Bourne's positive sentiments were carried amongst multiple speakers Friday — that Bourne had an outstanding love for everything he did, and he never changed the way he loved. Whether it was the scientific work he devoted himself to, the University which he aimed to innovate or the kids which he raised, remembrances of Bourne highlighted the personality which he stood true to.

“Phil was always himself — an irresistible combination of deep intelligence, empathy, optimism, energy, endless curiosity and good humor,” Ryan said at the memorial. “He took his work seriously, and he knew it was important, but he had no trace of self-importance. Whenever you mentioned his name around Grounds, the reaction was always the same — ‘I just love Phil Bourne.’”

Also on the list of Bourne's many commitments stood his love for motorcycling. Hell's Administrators was a motorcycle gang which included Bourne, Solomon and for some time, John Unsworth, former dean of the University libraries and English professor.

The name, Hell's Administrators, is both satirical and stemmed from the “rebellious” nature of deans riding around on motorcycles, according to an interview between UVA. Today and Bourne in August 2025.

On weekends with nice weather, Hell's Administrators rode around the greater Charlottesville area, and Bourne and Solomon took a trip through the Rocky Mountains during the summer of 2025. Solomon said their rides were unique because rather than communicating through earpieces as they rode, Hell's Administrators would ride in silence and save their valuable conversations for mealtimes.

“We'd stop and have lunch [and] the way he would treat the people at the restaurant ... There was just an ease and a right and a decency about him,” Solomon said.

A group of Bourne's friends — including Solomon and Unsworth as well as motorcyclists Bourne rode with throughout his life — went for a ride around Charlottesville before the memorial Friday and finished their ride in front of the SDS.

Unsworth, who spoke Friday on behalf of the Hell's Administrators, read aloud a section of Bourne's blog from a solo motorcycle trip he took in 2023.

“The first part of the day has its

own unique characteristics. It's cooler, the air is fresh, there's a sense of adventure for what will unfold today,” Bourne wrote in his blog. “The backroads of America tell a wonderful story. Each day, fate has its say.”

In this blog entry, Bourne went on to write about a friend he made at breakfast and emphasized the “sites along the way” of his trip were memorable, but what was most important were the people he came across.

Unsworth echoed this part of Bourne's writing in his speech — he, just like Solomon and others Bourne interacted with, said there was a special way in which Bourne addressed individuals he met, no matter their background.

“Phil was more about satisfying his curiosity than he was about ticking off accomplishments. And he was especially curious about people,” Unsworth said at the memorial. “He was gathering data about humanity, but he was also learning stories from strangers about their experience.”

For many, Bourne was a mentor, dear colleague and adventurous partner, and all of Friday's speakers agreed that the legacy he leaves behind on the University is beyond profound. Ryan pointed to Bourne's leadership as outstanding.

“He'll ... leave a legacy of being an amazing leader, and that means not simply having a compelling vision, which he did,” Ryan said. “It means being able to get things done, which he was able to do, but it also, in his case, meant he was unbelievably kind and empathetic to everyone he met.”

Higher education bills await Spanberger's approval

On Spanberger's desk include bills that would require state universities' governing boards to adopt formal policies defining and implementing shared governance

Lucia Gambacini | Senior Writer

The Virginia General Assembly adjourned March 14 after advancing several pieces of legislation concerning higher education, including proposals that would reshape university governance and campus policy for the University and across the state. Proposals include changes to university governance boards, free speech on campus and federal immigration enforcement activity.

Following the session's conclusion, Gov. Abigail Spanberger (D) has 30 days to sign, veto or recommend amendments to legislation that both the House and Senate passed, according to Virginia law. If Spanberger takes no action within the 30 days, the legislation will automatically become law and come into effect July 1.

HB 1385 and SB 494

A bill that has not been fully passed — but a conference report has been agreed upon by both the House and Senate — is House Bill 1385 and its Senate equivalent, Senate Bill 494. Del. Lily Franklin (D-41) introduced HB 1385 Jan. 21, and Sen. Creigh Deeds (D-11) and Sen. Scott Surovell (D-34) introduced the Senate bill Jan. 13.

Both "identical" bills will likely be amended then either signed or vetoed by Spanberger, according to Claire Gastañaga, former chief deputy attorney general of Virginia. In cases of similar bills, the legislature will continue to modify the legislation before consolidation into one bill to be sent to Spanberger.

HB 1385 and SB 494 — if passed — would have significant effects on the way university governing boards will function at Virginia's public universities. HB 1385 and SB 494 require each university's governing board to adopt formal policies defining and implementing shared governance. These policies must clarify how authority and responsibilities are distributed among different groups within the institution, including administrators and faculty. The requirement applies to all public higher education institutions that award baccalaureates.

The legislation does not require a specific model of shared governance but instead asks that institutions define their own policies.

"[The bill requires the governing board of each public institution of higher education to] adopt policies defining and implementing shared governance among the components of such institution's organizational structure," SB 494 reads.

SB 494 was introduced in the Virginia Senate Jan. 13 after federal pressure on the University in the form of the Trump administration's proposed "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education" and the resignation of former University President Jim Ryan in June. Gastañaga said the bill reinforces that the Board of Visitors acts in the interest of the Commonwealth, with the aim of limiting the influence of external federal pressure.

"[The Board seems] to be acting in the interest of the federal government ... It was not clear that they understood that they were supposed to advocate for U.Va. [and] that they had a duty of loyalty to the institution," Gastañaga said.

Deeds similarly expressed that SB 494 was in response to the Board's involvement with Ryan's resignation and cooperation with the federal government.

"[The legislation is] pretty critical to me because I think what we saw with the last governor, unlike any governor before, [was] all partisan boards and [members] that saw their loyalty to the governor overriding their loyalty to the school and higher education," Deeds said.

HB 1385 and SB 494 also include changes to the University's legal counsel by allowing boards of higher education institutions to hire additional or private legal counsel to "protect the interests of the institution." However, according to Gastañaga, the bill may look very different by the time it is passed and signed off on by Spanberger.

"Between now and April, everybody will be ... suggesting to the governor different amendments," Gastañaga said. "So the bills can change pretty significantly between now and when they come back to the bodies at the reconvene session."

The University has a shared-governance model in which organizations such as the Faculty Senate and Student Council work to advise the University President and Board, and to protect and improve the student rights at the University. Additionally, the Board has both a non-voting student representative and faculty representative.

Gastañaga explained that most boards of institutions — both nonprofit and otherwise — have, generally, three fiduciary responsibilities — a duty of loyalty to the institution, a duty of care and a duty of obedience to the law and

their board's own governing documents. Currently, the legislation regarding governing boards at public higher education institutions in Virginia outlines a duty to the institution, but it does not outline a duty to the people. According to Gastañaga, clarification as to who the Board serves is necessary in situations where there are multiple parties involved.

"[The Board has] two duties. One is first to the institution, and the second is to the people of the Commonwealth," Gastañaga said. "You're acknowledging their corporate entity and state agencies. So they are subject to the control of the General Assembly."

Another provision of HB 1385 and SB 494 would extend governing Board members' terms from four years to six years and require a minimum two-year gap before an individual can be reappointed to the same board.

SB 351

Another bill that is awaiting action by Spanberger is Senate Bill 351, which would limit certain federal immigration enforcement activities in designated "protected areas." SB 351 passed the State Senate Feb. 3 and the House March 4, and it was introduced Jan. 13 by Sen. Saddam Salim (D-37), Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-38), Deeds, former Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-39), Sen. Stella Pekarsky (D-36) and Sen. Mamie Locke (D-23). The bill has been sent to Spanberger to either sign, amend or veto it.

The legislation prohibits "certain federal civil immigration enforcement activities" in locations such as public schools and hospitals — including public universities — without a judicial warrant or subpoena. It also prevents state and local employees from allowing immigration enforcement activities in these spaces without authorization.

Charlottesville City Council has already condemned the actions of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in public spaces such as schools and hospitals, and the Council recently passed a resolution that condemns ICE's actions and states that local officials will not assess federal agents without proper legal authority.

For public colleges and universities, the bill would require institutions to notify students, faculty and staff when immigration enforcement officials are present on campus and adopt policies restricting enforcement officials' access to nonpublic campus areas without a judicial warrant. The bill

additionally restricts immigration enforcement-related activity near polling places and election-related sites and establishes new requirements for conducting civil arrests in courthouses.

"The bill requires that any judicial warrant or judicial order authorizing the civil arrest be reviewed by a designated judicial officer or attorney before a civil arrest pursuant to such warrant or order can be performed," the bill reads. "The bill provides that any person who conducts a civil arrest, or facilitates or assists with the performance of, a civil arrest in violation of the provisions of the bill shall be punished with contempt of court."

HB 1374

Lawmakers are also considering future changes to university governance through House Bill 1374, which was introduced in the House Jan. 20 by Del. Michael Feggans (D-97), Del. Laura Jane Cohen (D-15), Del. Atoosa Reaser (D-27) and Del. Virgil Thornton (D-86).

The legislation would revise the composition of Virginia Military Institute's Board, if reintroduced to the State Senate floor next year. The bill passed the House this session, but it will not become law this year — it must be reintroduced next year.

Under this new legislation, VMI's Board will remain at 17 members, with 16 appointed by the governor and the Adjutant General serving as a nonvoting member. Although the number of members remains the same, HB 1374 reduces the number of alumni allowed on the Board from 12 to eight and increases the number of nonalumni members from four to six, all of whom must be Virginia residents. The bill also requires that at least five members have prior U.S. military experience at a senior rank.

HB 1473

Other bills pertaining to higher education did not progress successfully, including House Bill 1473 — a bill pertaining to free speech — which failed to reach the House floor and did not cross to the State Senate. The bill was introduced Jan. 23 by Del. Charles Schmidt (D-77).

The House Education Committee removed the bill from further consideration in the current session and carried over the bill to the next session. The bill would have placed new limits on how Virginia's public institutions of higher education can regulate free speech, particularly in outdoor

campus spaces. The bill would have required that any restrictions on speech be content-neutral, narrowly tailored and justified by significant public interest, such as preventing substantial disruption to the educational environment.

The legislation would have prohibited schools from requiring prior approval for students to assemble outdoors, restricted "expressive activity" to "designated zones" and banned amplified sound during daytime outdoor assemblies. It also would have prevented institutions from punishing students academically — such as withholding a degree — solely for participating in protests or assemblies.

Currently, University policy allows for protests during official ceremonies in the Academical Village but places "reasonable time, place and manner restrictions" to prevent disruption. Protests are restricted to designated areas, and cannot block movement nor use sound amplification.

Additionally, HB 1473 would have limited how long universities can retain disciplinary records related to participation in assemblies, capping it at one year. Currently, student disciplinary records which reflect a finding of guilt are retained for 20 years. If a school does restrict or deem student speech unlawful, it would have had to submit a report to state lawmakers within 45 days explaining the justification and how the restriction meets the bill's legal standards.

While the bill ultimately failed, first-year College student Katie Watson nonetheless emphasized the importance of having free speech protections for students on Grounds, noting that limited transportation options make it difficult for first-year students to leave Grounds to attend protests.

"I am very pro allowing students to express their opinions through [peaceful assembly]," Watson said. "I think that, especially in a situation where you can't get off of campus necessarily, it's an unfair burden on an individual's First Amendment rights to limit them in some of the ways that universities have historically."

The Virginia General Assembly is scheduled to reconvene April 22 to consider Spanberger's recommendations and vetoes regarding legislation.

SPORTS

Virginia women's swimming: A dynasty redefined

Powered by top-to-bottom depth, the Cavaliers put together the most complete NCAA performance in program history

Aimee Crosbie | Sports Editor

Before a single swimmer touched the wall on the first finals session Wednesday, the broadcast booth had already conceptualized the story of the 2026 NCAA DI Women's Swimming and Diving Championships.

"Virginia doesn't have superstars this year," the commentators said.

The Walsh sisters — the most decorated duo in collegiate history — are gone. The Walsh sisters accounted for 18 combined individual NCAA titles throughout their collegiate careers. Gretchen scored 231 out of a possible 240 individual points and went a perfect 16-for-16 relay titles across her four years. Alex won individual championships in five different events and was part of five straight team titles.

Nobody serious thought their departure would cost Virginia the title — the Cavaliers had been ranked No. 1 in the CSCAA poll all season long and were favored in every projection. But the reasoning went that this would finally become a team race that was a foregone conclusion for the last five years.

It is difficult to overstate how comprehensively the Cavalier women dismantled that narrative. Virginia scored 589 points — the most in program history and the second-highest total by any women's team in the last 20 years — swept all five relays, set an NCAA record in the 400-yard freestyle relay and had 16 of 18 swimmers place in scoring position. The Cavaliers beat second place by 208.5 points, a margin wider than every final gap from the previous five national championships.

"I think there was a lot of commentary about the team without the Walshes and without [Kate Douglass], and can they continue what they're doing?" Coach Todd DeSorbo said. "I don't think [the team] were offended by it, but I think it motivated them significantly."

When Gretchen dove in the pool, as DeSorbo put back in September, "she was going to win — it was a matter of by how much and will she break a record." Without her, many people assumed that the margin would shrink and the dominance would fade.

"[Gretchen] was so larger than life that [she] kind of cast a shadow on a lot of people," DeSorbo said. "She blocked the sun... I think now that the rest of them [have] the sun shining on them... they're able to blossom."

This was not the diminished version of Virginia grinding out a win that many assumed might occur. This was, by nearly every measure, the most dominant championship in the program's history with contributors

across the entire roster.

"For us, we tried to take the approach that it's a blank slate this year, that we haven't won any, we're starting all over," DeSorbo said. "Just start a new streak in a little bit of a different way, you know, where depth really will carry us through."

Consider the 200-yard breaststroke swum Friday. Five Cavaliers — seniors Aimee Canny, Emma Weber and Zoe Skirboll alongside freshman Sophia Umstead and sophomore Leah Hayes — all placed in the top 12. Canny placed second with a 2:03.09, Weber finished eighth and the remaining three scored from their morning swims. Virginia scored 48 points from a single event, the most any team scored in any event all meet.

Or consider the prelim session that preceded it. Fifteen of Virginia's 18 competitors scored points in a single day — 16 did throughout the entire meet. Junior Claire Curzan made an unprecedented prediction at the beginning of the season that all 18 qualifiers had the potential to score — and she came within two.

"I think we have the potential to have all of our NCAA qualifiers score at NAAs, which has never been done before," Curzan said to *The Cavalier Daily* in September.

Even if Virginia had scored zero points across all five relays — erasing 200 from its final total — the Cavaliers still would have won the championship on individual scoring alone. A Virginia swimmer made the championship final in every single event at the meet except for diving, which the University no longer sponsors.

"I was hopeful that somebody would step up," DeSorbo said. "And it's been four, five, six, seven, eight people that have really stepped up from the returning perspective, and... I never would have thought that our first-year class would have performed as well as they have."

One of the most dramatic indicators of this roster's depth came on the opening night of the meet, in the 800-yard freestyle relay. This event was one that has haunted Virginia — after placing fourth in 2024 and second in 2025, it was the lone obstacle preventing them from sweeping all five relays. As swimmers are only able to compete in four relay events, Gretchen was unable to compete on the relay at NAAs, and many credit those finishes to her absence.

But this year, Virginia found itself back at the top of the podium for the



AIMEE CROSBIE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

"Going into the year, there was a lot of discourse about 'Virginia is good, but can they continue to be this dominant?'" Curzan said.

first time since 2023. Canny, freshman Madi Mintenko and sophomore Bailey Hartman all swam solidly, but by the time sophomore Anna Moesch dove in for the anchor, Michigan, Cal, Texas and Indiana were all ahead. Moesch turned in 1:13.99 at the 150-yard mark and powered home to finish her leg in a 1:39.03 — the fastest split in the event's history. She took the Cavaliers from fifth place to first in a single 200-yard leg, and Virginia set a new meet record of 6:45.21.

"I think it just shows how much depth we have as a team," Moesch said. "And it shows how many people, with the absence of [the Walshes], were able to step up to the plate and wanted to step up to the plate for their team."

Of course, as any meet has, there were headliners. Curzan swept the backstroke events for the second consecutive year, setting meet and pool records in the 100-yard backstroke with a 48.24 — the second-fastest performance in history, trailing only Walsh's NCAA record. The next closest finisher, Michigan's Bella Sims, touched more than a second behind.

Saturday, Curzan went on to clock a 1:46.10 in the 200-yard backstroke after a gutsy start, positioning herself body lengths in front of the rest of the field. Her final time was just one hundredth of a second from her own American record.

Moesch nabbed her first individual NCAA title in the 200-yard freestyle

in 1:39.23, a time bettered in history only by Missy Franklin's 1:39.10 from 2015. She went on to place second in the 100-yard freestyle and eighth in the 50-yard, earning First Team All-American honors in all of her individual events.

Sara Curtis, a highly-touted recruit and Italian Olympian, lived up to her billing. The explosive freshman placed second in the 50-yard freestyle behind senior U.S. Olympian Torri Huske of Stanford, in the fastest time ever recorded by a freshman — faster than Gretchen went at the same point in her collegiate career.

"Gretchen actually said to me at one point early in the fall, [Sara] is going to break my record," DeSorbo said.

Curtis also contributed to four relay golds — the final being the 400-yard freestyle relay that clocked 3:05.26 to break the NCAA record, one that had been set three years earlier by Kate Douglass, Alex Walsh, Maxine Parker and Gretchen Walsh.

The momentum built from the top end of the roster was contagious. Junior captain Tess Howley swam a grueling double on Saturday morning — qualifying in third for the 200-yard butterfly final and then, minutes later, touching 10th in the 200-yard backstroke with a personal best. DeSorbo erupted poolside, face red and veins popping after Howley's performance.

"Going into the year, there was a lot of discourse about 'Virginia is

good, but can they continue to be this dominant?'" Curzan said. "And I think this year, by and above, we've exceeded everyone's expectations, including our own. The Walshes are awesome. They're the best duo in NCAA history... to be able to think that this team collectively can achieve even more than that, I think it's really, really special."

DeSorbo arrived in 2017 to a program that had finished eighth at NAAs the season prior. Nine seasons later, it has won six consecutive national championships — the most ever in women's swimming, and a feat accomplished by only five other women's programs in the history of the NCAA.

According to DeSorbo, associate head coach Tyler Fenwick pulled him aside before the trophy ceremony on Saturday night.

"Who would have thought," Fenwick said, "in 2017 in August that we'd be sitting here winning our sixth title in a row?"

The answer, it turns out, was there all along. Not in the 'superstars' — though Virginia had those — but in the 18 women who collectively outperformed even the most dominant individuals the sport had ever seen.

They did it without the Walshes. They did it without a diving program. They did it without superstars.

Or, more precisely, they did it with 18 of them.

The view from the shoreline

My experience reclaiming the female voice in sports, from the ringing of a bell to the press box

Eleanor Lynch | Senior Writer

I am a quitter. Or at least that is what I told myself when I hung up my headset after only two months of coxing on the Virginia men's rowing team.

I arrived at the University convinced my identity was tied to the boat — after committing so much time to the sport as a rower in high school, I thought that my value was measured in splits and stroke rates.

And that is why, after I was told that 5-foot-3 was too short to row for the women's team, I spent the summer before my first year excited to explore the elusive coxswain position on the men's crew. Yet the feeling of commanding eight men through the cool mist of a 6 a.m. practice was different than being a rower — a difference I was not sure I felt comfortable in.

But while I had been so sure over the summer that I needed to continue rowing, the fire started to putter out.

When I walked away after burnout I thought I was losing my connection to the water. In reality, I was finding my way to

the shoreline, ready to tell the story instead of just shouting it.

I had never stepped away from a commitment before. I was raised to never make a promise unless I was going to honor it, and to my eighteen-year-old self, “honoring a commitment” meant staying until the end, no matter what. Stepping away felt like a betrayal of my upbringing.

Beyond my family's values, in sports culture, walking away is the ultimate sin. At Virginia men's rowing, that sin is made literal through a tradition that feels like a funeral. Signaling my choice to leave meant that I had to ring a bell in front of the entire team to signify that I was aware I was cutting off my chance to ever be in that room again.

I stood in front of over 20 men and reached for the bellrope, the moment feeling less like a departure and more like a public shaming. I rang that bell — the performance of failure designed to make you second-guess your own decision, and for a while, it worked. I walked out feeling like I was admitting I did not have

what it took to keep up in their world, even if the real reason was that I knew there was more, somewhere, to explore. Still, without the boat, I felt adrift.

In the months that followed, I struggled to fit my passion for competitive sports into a new identity that did not involve active competition. I realized that being a woman who is deeply, technically passionate about sports can be a lonely exercise in existing in two worlds at once. My friends see a game as a vibrant backdrop for social life, a reason to celebrate, a Saturday spent in the sun — moments I also love, as I match my dress to my cowboy boots. But my brain is running a parallel track — while we're laughing in the stands, I am subconsciously memorizing roster changes and analyzing plays.

I was someone who loved the technicality of the game, but I no longer had a seat to justify my passion. It was this specific displacement, this need to find people who spoke that language of competition, that led me to apply to The Cavalier Daily's sports

desk in my second semester at the University.

I felt like an imposter again, walking into a sports desk that, much like the boat, felt like another boy's club I had not yet earned the right to join. But my editors gave me a chance and taught me that the most important thing you can bring to a newsroom is not an encyclopedia of statistics, it is a love for the grind.

I realized that we all have to play to our strengths — and mine was not knowing every historical football matchup, but knowing exactly what it feels like to have your stomach churn as a volunteer holds your boat at the start.

I spent my first semester on the desk learning how to translate that pressure into words, from the softball beat to field hockey — sports where women's speed and physicality are the primary ingredients. As I became captivated by games that had been entirely foreign to me, I discovered that I could be completely immersed in and knowledgeable about sports beyond just the

one I grew up with.

It was not until I got comfortable in my position that I felt compelled to return to the river. I re-started the rowing beat for the desk, but I felt like a spy, like I had snuck into the press box with a forged pass, just waiting for someone to realize I was just the girl who could not make it in the boat. But as I sat there, notebook in hand, and calculated which ACC crews were going to give Virginia a tough time, I realized that my “failure” was actually my greatest asset. Yes, I was a spectator, but I was also a translator who knew the secret language of the sport — the technicality of the catch, the physics of the drive and the mental toll of the athletes.

I may have stepped out of competing in the boat, but that does not mean I lost my voice when I rang that bell. I just changed the way I use it, traded my oar and a seat in the stern for a pen and a seat in the press box — and I am so glad to be the one telling stories now.

Virginia's final-act trio is resurrecting the program to glory

Paris Clark, Romi Levy and Caitlin Weimar have refused to let the curtains fall on the Cavaliers' historic Sweet 16 run

Sofie Keppler | Senior Associate

There is a specific kind of desperation that belongs to those who can see the end.

Every game thus far in the NCAA Tournament has demanded everything from the Cavaliers and more. In Iowa City, Iowa, that intensity was tangible. It was in the roar of over 14,000 fans, the physical exhaustion of three games in five days and the suffocating weight of each possession.

But only on the edge of the cliff does the sheer will to survive propel you to higher ground.

For senior guard Paris Clark, graduate guard Romi Levy and graduate forward Caitlin Weimar — a trio of departing Cavaliers — each tournament matchup has left them perched at the precipice of elimination, staring down the finality of their careers. Yet in every crucial moment, they have found a way to leap, claw and push Virginia beyond its limits.

Through the fourth-quarter runs and grueling overtime duels balanced on a knife's edge — from the 82-73 overtime thriller against seven-seed Georgia March 21 to the double-overtime win against two-seed Iowa March 23, these women, in the last chapter of their collegiate careers, are absorbing

body blows and chasing down loose balls to ensure the foundation they leave behind is built on something stronger than hope.

This historic postseason run — propelling 10-seed Virginia to its first Sweet 16 appearance in 26 years — has been a masterclass in urgency. For Weimar, that urgency is rooted in resilience and focus. Against the Hawkeyes, as momentum tilted in Virginia's favor, Weimar rose for a towering block over senior forward Hannah Stuelke that underscored the Cavaliers' command down the stretch.

In the First Four matchup March 19, she anchored the offense in the post when senior forward Tabitha Amanze fell into foul trouble by setting tough screens, securing rebounds to extend possessions and carving out space for her teammates to score. Weimar has quietly dictated the flow of the last three games, keeping Virginia balanced and in control.

“Just having the experience that I have, I know that the game has runs, and I know I just have to take what comes to me and do everything and control the controllables,” Weimar said pregame against Georgia, March 20. “So I think as long as I know I'm

doing that, it helps me just stay focused on doing what I can for the team and doing what I can to help us get the wins.”

While Weimar has provided stability in the post, Levy has stretched the margins of the games themselves. From launching a miracle banked-in three-pointer to keep the Cavaliers alive in the first round to logging 44 minutes of disciplined defense that kept Iowa to 17 percent from deep, Levy has operated in the spaces most players shrivel amidst fatigue, effort and defensive pressure — and outright owned them. The iron woman of the exterior and the embodiment of Virginia's endurance and versatility, Levy has worn the game like a mantle, imposing her will on every possession and daring anyone to match her intensity.

“I'm just out there because I'm playing hard because I love [the team],” Levy said. “It's my last year. I came here for a reason. I love my teammates, so I'm playing out there for them. I know I'm there for the energy. I'm there to do the little things, and I love my role.”

And then there is Paris Clark.

Every memorable March needs its spark plug, and Clark has come in

guns blazing. Clark has glided on the court, playing with a decisiveness that dissolves uncertainty and pairing defiant on-ball defense with shotmaking heroics that arrive right when Virginia needs them most.

When the Cavaliers trailed by nine in the fourth quarter against the Hawkeyes, it was Clark who collapsed that deficit herself. Scoring eight straight points on back-to-back three-pointers and a jumper in the paint, she flipped the energy of the arena and dragged her teammates into the comeback with her. In moments where hesitation could have been season-ending, Clark provided the pulse.

“I mean, what we saw out of her, that was a huge moment for Paris,” Coach Amaka Agugua-Hamilton said. “But you need your seniors to step up ... they don't want this to be over.”

These three players — with no eligibility remaining — have unearthed an extra level of strength, determination and grit that has lifted the Cavaliers to glory. Throughout this three-game stretch, Clark, Levy and Weimar have accounted for nearly 44 percent of the Cavaliers' scoring output, logging a hefty 33.6 minutes per game across taxing 40, 45 and 50-minute

marathons.

That shared bond has sparked intensity into a collective refusal to surrender. They are playing for the jersey, for each other and for the simple, yet desperate goal of sharing one more game on the hardwood together.

“We just got to keep fighting for tomorrow,” Agugua-Hamilton said. “Fight for one more day. One more opportunity. One more opportunity to create memories together. One more opportunity to practice. One more opportunity to play. One more opportunity for our seniors.”

This is not a postseason measured only by the Cavaliers' bracket-busting upsets — it is a run defined by a team that continues to find ways to extend the narrative. From the opening tip to the final buzzer, Virginia's journey to the Sweet 16 has been powered by the will of three players who, with each pulse-pounding game, have delayed the inevitable. They have shown what it means to lead with heart — and to fight for a program that they did not just save, but transform.

Because of them, Virginia women's basketball is, at long last, gloriously alive.

PUZZLE

Shreyas Agnihotri | Puzzle Editor

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

ACROSS

- 1 Welsh dog breed
- 6 Hockey highlight
- 10 "Oops! ... ____ It Again"
- 14 Double Stuf cookies
- 15 Prefix meaning "eight"
- 16 Jersey number for Ted Williams
- 17 Innovative 1960 jazz album which introduced "Coltrane changes"
- 19 This, in Tijuana
- 20 Septum's place
- 21 CHO posting
- 22 Increased
- 23 Loungewear brand whose last letter stands for 7-Down
- 24 Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, for instance
- 27 "Challengers" sport
- 29 Word after an Oxford comma
- 30 Golf ball position
- 31 German industrial city
- 32 Night pilots?
- 34 West Point school, for short
- 35 They're right on the

- U.S. map?
- 38 War vet's affliction, for short
- 41 A pop
- 42 Italian transport seen in "Luca"
- 46 Furious feeling
- 47 Wood that flavors bourbon
- 48 Swim meet event
- 49 Grave wrongdoing
- 53 Charlottesville-to-Fredericksburg dir.
- 54 Kind of engineering degree offered at UVa.
- 55 It's not free of charge?
- 56 Kendrick of "Pitch Perfect"
- 57 Elevator pioneer
- 58 Inaugural baseball event in late March, where one can find the starts of 17-Across, 24-Across, 35-Across and 49-Across
- 61 Overwhelming favorite, slangily
- 62 Cozy
- 63 Name which phonetically reads as

- 46-Across and 53-Across combined
- 64 Bauxite and others
- 65 Judges of fairness?
- 66 Baltimore and Boston, for two

DOWN

- 1 Word with a shared root
- 2 Black-and-orange birds
- 3 "13 _____ Why"
- 4 Out of the park
- 5 Suffix with real or surreal
- 6 John who was once known as the Teflon Don
- 7 Southern, for one
- 8 Professional org. for 27-Across
- 9 ___ Angeles Dodgers
- 10 Clueless
- 11 Clears up, like rumors
- 12 Qualification for Jennifer Wagner Davis's stint as UVa. president
- 13 Scrolls were found near its shore
- 18 Stitches up
- 22 Alternative to EUR

- and JPY
- 24 One of four on a fork
- 25 Mohamed who is captain of Egypt's national soccer team
- 26 UVa. course prefix for student-led classes
- 28 Trivia lover, maybe
- 32 Pitcher Hideo Nomo's birthplace
- 33 NYC Freedom Tower locale
- 34 Like hand-me-downs
- 36 Ian H. Solomon, to Batten
- 37 Tied up
- 38 Woodwind featured on "The Stars and Stripes Forever"
- 39 Benedict Arnold, for one
- 40 Point starter in 27-Across
- 43 Slim
- 44 Ticket to the World Series
- 45 Pirates' yeses
- 47 Major Venezuelan export

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64					65				66				

- 48 5x5 crossword Robinson"
- 50 Some data storage devices
- 51 Stay awake in bed
- 52 "Centerfield" and "Mrs. 2025
- 56 Soil-related prefix
- 58 NCAA Football National Champion of 2025
- 59 Future sorority sister, for short
- 60 Frostiness

THE CAVALIER DAILY

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A LOOK INTO WOMEN'S MONTH

CD Staff Writers

Women's Center celebrates Class of 1974 women and the Center's graduating students

The Maxine Platzer Lynn Women's Center hosted "A Celebration of Legacy and Light" Thursday evening at the Graduate Hotel to honor its 21 graduating student interns and workers, as well as recipients of the 2024 Distinguished Alumna Award and the inaugural winner of the Spirit of 1974 Award. The event also celebrated the first women to graduate from a coed class at the University in the Class of 1974, with three female members of the class in attendance.

Celebrating its 37th year on Grounds this year, the Maxine Platzer Lynn Women's Center focuses its work on social justice issues that affect students, faculty, staff and residents of Charlottesville.



MAC DOUCETTE | THE CAVALIER DAILY



COURTESY XIQUINHOSILVA VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

'Women of the Bible: Nameless Women' highlights untold female stories in scripture

During the season of Lent, St. Paul's Memorial Church is giving students and the greater Charlottesville community the space to engage in reflection and conversation about some of life's biggest questions. Every weekday at 8 a.m., St. Paul's — located at 1701 University Ave. — offers a traditional morning prayer service in the chapel followed by a Bible study. Friday mornings, that Bible study is uniquely focused on some of the Bible's unnamed female figures.

From the court to the press box

Leaving college tennis was one of the hardest decisions I have ever made. When you spend your entire childhood training for a sport, it becomes part of your identity. For years, my daily routine and friendships revolved around tennis, and transitioning away from competition meant redefining what the sport meant in my life.

Playing competitively for most of my life and eventually at the collegiate level has shaped the way I cover the sport. When I watch matches, I notice both the technical and small details that might otherwise go unnoticed. I better understand the mental challenges that occur during matches, whether a strategy like serving and volleying is effective or if a forehand was hit cleanly. If you see me at a match, I am often on the edge of my seat, feeling every point alongside the players.



ASMA SANALLAH | THE CAVALIER DAILY

GALLERY: Women's History Month

Around Grounds, women are leaving their mark across disciplines. Whether it be in the swimming pool, in the classroom or on a podium, women at the University are creating a lasting impact this Women's History Month.



BENVIN LOZADA | THE CAVALIER DAILY



COURTESY VIRGINIA ATHLETICS

Charlotte Pastel, the anchor in a rising Virginia squash dynasty

In a sport that can feel like a lonely struggle between two people in the box, Charlotte Pastel has pursued collective growth, finishing her debut season with a 14-6 record — the most wins on the team. These impressive metrics are not the only part of Pastel that stands out.

Pastel's true value to the Cavaliers is her refusal to let her position isolate her. She credits her captains — Minnis and senior Nina Hashmi — for fostering a culture where the team focuses on putting their best foot forward without the fear of failing when they do so.

Women Entrepreneurship at U.Va. empowers the next generation of female leaders

WE at U.Va. is part of the global organization Women Entrepreneurship, which empowers women to develop entrepreneurial and leadership skills through mentorship and community. On Grounds, the organization creates spaces where women can connect with other members, accomplished role models and begin to envision themselves in positions of leadership.

Established in 2024, the University's chapter of WE brings its mission to life by hosting keynote speaker events, professor-led seminars and networking panels.



COURTESY SOFIA LOMBARD

Women's rugby All-Star Tournament gives Virginia much-deserved time in the spotlight

The Virginia women's club rugby team has been around for over 50 years, and the Division I-AA team has built upon their foundations to perform extremely well in recent fall seasons. The Cavaliers have consistently progressed to the quarter finals and semi finals of the Women's National Collegiate Rugby Championships.

But when this success is compared to the general recognition that women's rugby receives in the U.S., Virginia is, oddly, overlooked. The collegiate women's rugby scene is focused mainly in the Midwest, and many of these teams are Division I — they receive more funding from their universities and can recruit players from across the nation. Division I-AA teams, on the other hand, remain a level below — as highly-competitive club teams — but still require the same level of devotion, funding and number of team players as Division I teams.



COURTESY VIRGINIA WOMEN'S RUGBY



COURTESY CHLOE ANDERSON

Chloe Anderson is making swimming accessible, one lesson at a time

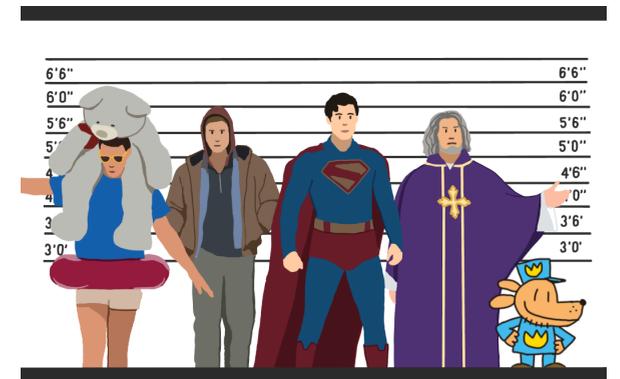
The pool at the University's Aquatic and Fitness Center is the place to be, whether it is to watch the six-time national championship-winning team or relax in the hot tub with peers. But something less well-known about the aquatics program is that they offer free student swim lessons through a program called Hoo's Swimming, created and run by Chloe Anderson.

Anderson, a fourth-year Education student, is the founder and current leader of the program. Her time in the pool began when her family signed her up for lessons at six months old so she could get early experience learning to swim safely. Neither of her parents could swim as kids, so they wanted to make sure their daughter did not experience the same fate.

Hoo's Watching: On months of women's history and years of men

Last Women's History Month provoked discussion of Drew Hancock's "Companion," a lens through which to view men's wrongdoings in the female exploitation subgenre of horror. Such dialogue felt, briefly, like the start of a broader commitment to women in cinema — one that might even survive into April — but what followed instead was a year remarkably unified in its focus, because 2025 was a year for the man.

It would be easy to dismiss this parade of men as coincidence, a cosmic joke in retribution for the disaster of "Ella McCay." But cinema has long treated masculinity not as a gendered category, but as a narrative standard. A nominal man is not a representation of an individual figure so much as a stand-in for personhood itself. A woman, on the other hand, is always a woman.



KAITLIN LUU | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Dance for the love of dance — University Dance Club at U.Va.

On this episode of On Record, we sit down with Ava Wolsborn, University Dance Club vice president and third-year College student. Wolsborn discusses the importance of inclusivity, accessibility and sisterhood within the club. Additionally, she highlights UDC's upcoming showcase in April.

UDC is the largest student self-governed dance group at the University, and — while it is not restricted to only females — all members happen to identify as female. UDC strives to create a community for its members to, as noted in its mission statement, dance for the love of dance, and has dedicated itself to promoting a passion for the art and sport of dance in all of its members.



COURTESY TAYLOR ROOMSBURG



SHANE WAN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

EDITORIAL: U.Va.'s reproductive health care efforts meet a critical moment

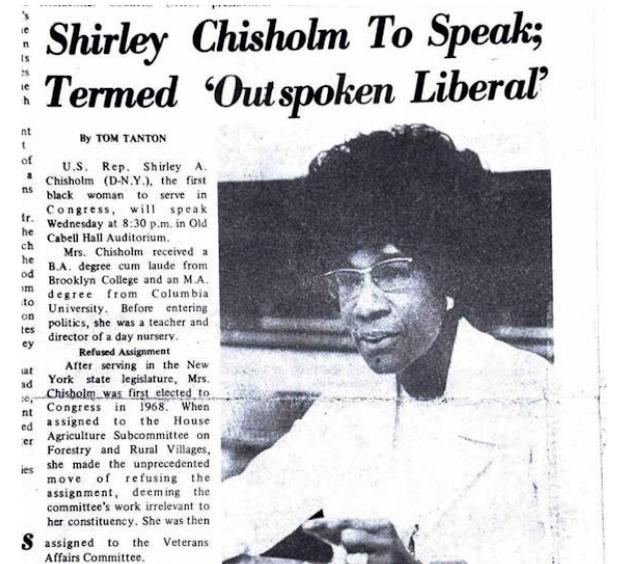
Recently, the Student Council Safety and Wellness agency launched a pilot program offering free Plan B to students, following its other reproductive health initiatives like the spring 2025 free STI testing program. Reproductive health importantly spans from contraception, to sexual health and preventive testing, to abortion care and maternal health. And, similar to the previous program's success with students, this project shows immense promise for the meaningful removal of barriers to access — barriers which both the Student Council and the U.Va. Health system recognize in supporting reproductive health in the Commonwealth, against all national attacks on contraceptive and abortion access. In light of continuing national and regional efforts to restrict reproductive rights of women, Student Council and U.Va. Health must continue to collaborate on ensuring safe and reliable access to reproductive health care.

From the Archives: Women's History Month

March 26, 1973

"Shirley Chisholm To Speak; Termed 'Outspoken Liberal'"

The first Black woman in Congress, Shirley Chisholm (D-N.Y.), planned to speak at Old Cabell Hall Auditorium. Congresswoman Chisholm faced numerous adversities in her career, including poor committee assignments, criticism of her liberal views and the negative role gender played in her presidential campaign. An emblematic character of advancement for Black women, Rep. Chisholm co-established the National Women's Political Caucus and redefined womanhood in American politics.



LIFE

The women of 1974 are 'Here to Stay'

Gail Gerry, Class of '74 alumna, reflects on the legacy and stories of the women who co-educate the University in her book "Here to Stay"

Minal Qazi | Staff Writer

Gail Gerry arrived at the University in 1970 as part of the first undergraduate coeducational class. Entering as the result of a divisive decision, the presence of women was not universally celebrated. Some male students refused to sit beside them in class, and many believed the University had made a huge mistake by letting a co-educational class of women in at all. This reaction and treatment sparked a fire in many of the women, and left several feeling as if they had something to prove.

More than 50 years later, Gerry is revisiting and unpacking those early years in her book "Here to Stay: The Story of the Class of Women Who Co-educate the University of Virginia," which documents the experiences of her and the hundreds of other women who entered the University as part of the first coeducational class.

According to Gerry, a defining part of these women's experiences was their grit and determination to succeed despite the challenges they faced, a theme that is highlighted throughout "Here to Stay." Amid today's changes to diversity, equity and inclusion efforts at the University, Gerry emphasized that her book serves as a reminder that the University's progress has been undeniably driven by students who were once told they did not belong.

The idea for the book emerged when Gerry began searching for a narrative of the women in the University's first coeducational class, and realized that none existed. Curious about how such a significant moment in the University's history had gone largely untold, she began sifting through archives and speaking with former classmates to piece together the story herself.

"I know my story, but what is the story of the 367 women that entered in September 1970?" Gerry said. "I started searching and looking for a book, and nothing had been written. There have been a couple of dissertations. There have been some chapters and books on co-education, but no book that charted the journey of the females here at UVa."

While much of the existing work on coeducation centers on the institutional side, Gerry set out to focus on the stories of these women — from navigating exclusion and belittling to the incredible friendships and sense of community that carried them through.

According to Gerry, when that class of women made their way onto Grounds in 1970, they arrived knowing they would face hostility. As she

discovered while doing research for her book, resistance to admitting women had been very openly expressed by some alumni.

"When I was in the archives reading particular alumni letters about why they didn't think UVa should go co-ed, they talked a lot about [how] women would only want to come to find a husband," Gerry said. "There were lots of other things that were even more derogatory."

Inside classrooms, women found themselves forging their way through spaces that had been built with male students in mind. In every room, the language around them reinforced the idea that women did not belong, with classroom honor code plaques referring to "a Virginia gentlemen." Gerry even recalled being told by older faculty members to just keep a low profile.

"We were told, just sit in the back. Keep your head down," Gerry said.

Gerry recalled that some male peers openly belittled the women, describing their presence at the University as an "experiment" and suggesting that if coeducation failed, the University could simply go back to the way it was before.

Others tried to place guilt on the women for choosing to attend at all, suggesting that they were taking the place of a male soldier who was actively serving in Vietnam — a claim Gerry said was far from true. Comments like these created a high-stakes environment where many of the women felt they had to work even harder to be taken seriously.

Rather than fostering a sense of competition among the women, this pressure to achieve instead strengthened their sense of solidarity and determination to succeed.

"I felt a whole lot more collaboration and cooperation and support from my fellow female students," Gerry said. "We all wanted to do well. We wanted to prove that we belonged."

Despite feeling outnumbered by the thousands of men on Grounds, Gerry reflected fondly on the sense of camaraderie she found within her fellow women and how they leaned on each other for support and sisterhood during those times.

"The friendships [I made] are very long-lasting and very, very deep," Gerry said. "Another female friend helped me with this book."

While sisterhood was strong, female mentorship was often harder to come by, as few departments had female faculty members. Luckily, the same year Gerry began, so did Mavis Hetherington, Professor Emerita of psychology, who would become an



More than 50 years later, Gerry is revisiting and unpacking those early years in her book "Here to Stay: The Story of the Class of Women Who Co-educate the University of Virginia," which documents the experiences of her and the hundreds of other women who entered the University

influential mentor for many of the women at the time. Still, role models like Hetherington were scarce.

"The only female professors I had were language teachers ... Mavis Hetherington came in with us in psychology, and she took a lot of us under her wing," Gerry said. "She just died at 96. I had had the privilege of talking to her a couple years ago, and she was a really strong woman and really a role model, but there weren't enough of them for us to really find someone that would take us under the wing and help us ensure our path."

While Gerry said that many of the conversations she had with former classmates while writing "Here to Stay" brought back joyful memories of friendship and community, she also said that revisiting the past meant confronting more difficult and painful memories.

As Gerry spoke with friends and classmates, some women shared experiences of harassment and sexual assault.

"I was familiar with some of [accounts of sexual assault] from experiences of my friends and others that talk to me, but it disturbed me," Gerry said. "And it continues to disturb me, that women in particular have to navigate that as well as everything else they're working through."

The accounts were difficult to re-

visit, but Gerry said that including those stories was necessary to fully and honestly represent what these pioneering women at the University experienced.

Broadly, Gerry also said that she was struck by how much appreciation many former classmates still hold for the University and the experiences they had.

"Many of us felt that our journey pretty much prepared us for whatever we were going to encounter in our lives beyond [Grounds]," Gerry said. "We were all going to be in situations where we're uncomfortable, or we may not feel we belong."

She noted that many of the women from that first class later went on to law school, medical school and other graduate programs. Their achievements truly exemplify the resilience of a group determined to prove they belonged. Seeing what her classmates went on to accomplish, Gerry said, gives her a deep sense of pride.

Gerry also offered advice for women entering fields or spaces that can still feel male dominated. Drawing on anecdotes from women she interviewed for "Here to Stay," she emphasized the importance of confidence and constantly persisting.

She recalled one woman profiled in the book, Barbara Savage, who later became Professor Emerita of

By God, I Think They're Here To Stay

By Steve Grimwood
Cavalier Daily Staff Writer

The women are here. Nearly 450 young lovelies have moved into the previously male sanctuary (or monastery) of Alderman Road. Maupin and Webb are now completely female, while Lyle and Watson are half and half.

Everyone has been waiting for the momentous occasion, and now it has come to pass. But have things really changed? What have the women done to alter life at the University? So far, not too much. But what will women eventually do to the University?

Relatively few changes have occurred over the summer. Ironing boards and full length mirrors have been added. New laundry facilities are planned. Then there was the plumbing.

Apprehension Is Present On Both Sides Of The Coeducation Issue

For Our Liberated Women 'Personhood Is Our Right'

by Charlottesville Women's Liberation

Several months ago a group of women from the Charlottesville area began meeting to examine and re-evaluate the circumstances

The results are stilling for both men and women: men are forced to assume the entire burden of supporting a family; white women, if they are permitted to work at all,

For those who have never been in a suite of the new dorms, the bathrooms contain one urinal. Without the urinal, facilities left are adequate to meet the needs of ten women. But what to do with the one urinal? Rumor has it that housing decided to leave the urinals, but added a bouquet of flowers to each one. This solved the problem neatly, but one wonders if the Housing Office considers the women to be a passing phase, their demise necessitating only the removal of the bouquet.

Combined Treatment

If Housing has its doubts about the staying power of the women, the Office for Student Affairs does not. They greeted the newcomers with a program of "equal and combined treatment," meaning that administratively, the women will be treated as same as the men. Student Affairs has acquired a new Associate Dean, female, but the new policy says that she will confer with male students as well as female. This will be the case, theoretically, with the other deans.

All of this has come to pass over the short summer. What will happen during the long year?

The first and foremost change is that there will actually be girls around. Not a lot of girls, but a good sight more than has ever been seen around here before, with the possible exception of a big weekend. There will be girls eating lunch with you, girls walking down the street, up the street, on the grass,

standing on the corner, girls sitting on the wall at the Corner, girls alone at the movies, girls in your chem lab, your history class, your seminar. No longer will lingering looks be few and far between, no longer will you hear so many dirty jokes in class, no longer will you scream into your pillow at night after seeing one too many a pair of hairy legs.

The female presence is present. How will it change the attitudes of the males? Will coat and tie make a comeback, or will dress continue its casual trend? Will manners or language improve? Will half the University be constantly on the make? Time and tribulations will tell the tale, but undoubtedly there are changes coming.

And The Corner?

Some venerable institutions are due for a change. How is wonderful old Menorial gym going to adjust? There are doubtless some athletically inclined women here, but will they be satisfied with tennis?

How is the Corner going to react? Lloyd's sells a fine line of undergarments, but will the women be forced to hitch to Barack's Road for wearing apparel? Maybe the time for Elliot and Joe to split has finally come.

Some superb male chauvinists on the grounds have likened our situation to that of the South, namely forced (sexual) integration under the directive of a court order. But no matter what your opinion may be, remember the words of Elmer O. Jaffe, principal of Colum-

DANIEL FISHER | THE CAVALIER DAILY

U.Va.'s WLDP emphasizes female-forward mentorship

Participating female students learn the ropes of leadership tailored to their unique experiences

Adair Reid | Staff Writer

From extracurricular executive boards to classrooms to athletic competitions, female students have a visible and persistent drive all over the University — making it difficult to imagine that undergraduate admission did not become coeducational until 1970. But the ease with which many female students seem to preside over parts of the University community has not been without hard-wrought lessons in leadership, which for them, can take a different shape from their male peers.

The Women's Leadership Development Program equips female students with the tools, mentorship and confidence to navigate leadership challenges. According to the Student Affairs website, the program was created in the spring of 1991 after Felicia Kantor, Student Council vice president and fourth-year student, faced sexism, both working in a law office as an intern, and during her campaign for a Student Council position as vice president.

She approached Shamim Sisson, the assistant dean of students in the Office of the Dean of Students at the time, with her concerns. Together, they created WLDP, constructing

programming to help uplift confident female leaders.

Students apply for the program in the fall semester, and if accepted, begin attending sessions in the spring. These sessions embody a “pay-it-forward” mentality, with its current co-chairs and session leaders being former participants who understand the impact of WLDP and seek to bring more female undergraduates into the program.

Each session has a different theme and is led by a different session leader, with topics spanning from professional resilience, the importance of diverse perspectives, mental health and wellness and even professional programs like LinkedIn workshops.

Caroline Li, WLDP co-chair and fourth-year Commerce student, first became involved in the program during her first year. As an aspiring Commerce student, Li knew very few female students who could provide advice on their journey into the McIntire School of Commerce, and joined the program to get this additional guidance.

“I wanted more mentorship. Just because you go in, especially in [McIntire], you kind of don't know how

college works, or what you should be doing,” Li said. “A lot of it was trying to seek out older girls who've been through a similar path.”

Joey Chan, fellow co-chair and fourth-year Batten student, expressed similar motivations for getting involved — helping female underclassmen make sense of the plethora of resources and potential decisions for majors or commitments. Chan emphasized how WLDP highlights resources for female students, who might otherwise never hear of them amid the thousands of offerings the University has.

“Obviously there's flyers around all the time and ads and Instagram posts, but they can be really overwhelming, and if you sign up for this program, it's a great way for you to be intentionally aware of these resources,” Chan said.

One of those underclassmen was third-year Batten student Camille Marshall, whose mother and University alumna Laura Marshall had been roommates with Kantor. Her personal connection and skills she has gained have kept her involved.

Camille Marshall highlighted how WLDP corrected some discrepancies she noticed in other leadership pro-

grams at the University when it came to female representation, one of her main motivations for becoming involved.

“I had some experience in past leadership programs or clubs, and I did find them helpful, but I noticed it's a lot of male guest speakers,” Marshall said. “A lot of the way that they [were] teaching leadership skills I found to be unrealistic for my position in the world.”

As a session leader, Camille Marshall is able to shape how session topics are taught, working with others to clarify what can be broad subject matters, like professional resilience.

“Me and the other session leader had a lot of discretion in how we wanted to execute and how we wanted to define professional resilience and activities or discussions about it,” Camille Marshall said.

Camille Marshall also elaborated on what she has gained from the program, noting how WLDP accounts for differences between traditional female and male leadership styles.

“In a program like [the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy], where there are a lot of people with strong opinions ... [there is] a lot

of interacting with people who have a lot of different leadership styles,” Camille Marshall said.

Although Camille Marshall and Li applied their experience in WLDP to being students in the Batten and Commerce schools, Li emphasized that the program benefits wide ranges of female students, accommodating for all kinds of majors and career goals.

“This program attracts people who are more into policy or more discussion-based [clubs], but we have a mixture,” Li said. “There's a lot of [STEM students] as well.”

By connecting female students across different programs with both each other and other women in the workforce, WLDP seeks to help its participants envision themselves in all kinds of leadership roles, over a half century after the University's undergraduate admissions became coeducational.

“It is empowering to both meet and hear from women who are great leaders ... and have found success in their fields,” Marshall said. “There's something to be said for meeting other students who are similarly ambitious and who really uplift and support each other.”

My IUD and me

Hot take — it's not as scary as TikTok portrays it to be

Madigan Wirkus | Staff Writer

I have been an intrauterine device warrior since June 2024. A year and a half in, I can confidently say that it has been one of the few good decisions I have made while in college. Since getting my Liletta IUD, however, I have found myself transforming into a living, breathing Reddit board for my friends and peers to consult, constantly being asked everything from “Is it worth it?” to “Does it really work?”

I'm here now to set the record straight. In my experience, yes, it is worth it. No, it was not as bad a process as portrayed by social media. And yes, it most definitely works.

For those unfamiliar, the IUD is a form of birth control. It is a small, T-shaped device that is inserted directly into a woman's uterus as a constant and long-lasting contraceptive. There are two types of IUDs — hormonal and copper. IUDs are praised for their low maintenance requirements, effectiveness of up to 99 percent, low impact on fertility post-removal and, depending on the type, lifespans of between

three and 10 years.

There are a slew of reasons for women to opt for the IUD as opposed to other methods like the pill, Nexplanon, condoms or even the pull-and-pray method. For me, the decision was relatively easy. First off, I had been with my long-term boyfriend for a year at the time of my insertion, and was in the market for something with slightly higher effectiveness rates than the pill, which requires ingestion at the same time each day for maximum effectiveness. I was sick of worrying myself every month prior to getting my cycle, knowing I had missed taking a pill — or five.

The second factor was that the pill was wreaking havoc on my body — exacerbating existing mental health challenges and causing near-daily nausea. I had been on and off the pill since freshman year of high school for various reasons, and each time, it left me feeling worse than I had begun.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I had long struggled with debilitating menstrual pain

that was legitimately causing me to take a backseat in my life. This final factor is what truly caused me to take the leap with a hormonal IUD.

In my time acting as a human IUD Reddit board, I am most commonly sharing my experience with the insertion process. The IUD is infamous for its uncomfortable insertion that offers few pain management options — a take I disagree with, but a conversation to be had at another time.

This portrayal of the IUD process largely emerges from documentation posted to social media platforms such as Instagram Reels and TikTok. These videos often showcase women screaming, fainting and begging for the process to stop while getting their IUDs inserted, ultimately deterring others from exploring this reliable contraception option.

While I am in no position to deny the experiences of these women, my insertion was nothing like this. It was most definitely uncomfortable, but nothing

beyond that. Most importantly, from the time I laid in the chair to the process being done, it was no more than three minutes.

For my girls with period cramps, it was nothing more than a couple of very strong cramps at insertion and some cramping for the next 12 hours. After going through this process, I found myself wishing that we were able to highlight the plenty of positive experiences rather than always turning them into scenes straight from a horror movie.

While having holistic conversations about the IUD is important for people of all child-bearing ages, I find that it especially impacts college-aged women. This is a unique time of life where many women are engaging in consistent sexual experimentation. They need an option that offers protection without constant maintenance or relying on a phone alarm to take a pill at exactly the same time every day. With busy schedules, irregular routines, study abroad opportunities and maintaining all sorts of relationships, the IUD

accommodates it all.

With my IUD, I know that I am prioritizing my reproductive health as well as my day-to-day peace of mind. My menstrual cycles have become more manageable, I am not tied down to a pill alarm and, most significantly, I have not found myself expending unnecessary amounts of worry into my sexual safety.

Of course, contraception is a very individualized experience, but this is all to say that the IUD cannot be ruled out based on select social media representations. It is important to consult experts, such as those at U.Va. Health — which offers insertion procedures — and providers back at home to know what is the best option for you. Still, my hope is that sharing a first-hand experience can help bring the IUD conversation back down to Earth.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Laura Vik showcases craft in exhibit 'A Study in Texture'

Vik reflects on her journey and creative process as a potter, as well as her relationship with the materials themselves

Alice Oakey | Staff Writer

For almost 20 years, local potter Laura Vik has been creating ceramics — and her latest exhibit “A Study in Texture” is now on display at the C’ville Arts Cooperative Gallery on the Downtown Mall. Her works include hand thrown vases, bowls and cups as well as ornate olive oil containers and other pieces that express her creative personality and artistic style.

Vik typically creates her work by throwing her pieces on a pottery wheel, and said she especially enjoys using texture to draw the viewer to her work. Most of her works are matte with natural colors, and she said she prefers creating texture by carving it directly into the clay, rather than using a patterned stamp to make an impression on the surface. This technique distinguishes her artwork by experimenting with the apparent age of the piece, giving each work a worn, vintage composition.

“I like to have a little bit of tension going on in a piece,” Vik said. “It’s not smooth, it’s not perfect ... I like things that look a little worn, that don’t look brand new, even though they are new.”

Before becoming an established ceramic artist, Vik’s first exposure to pottery was on her father’s wheel as a child. While she said she never created anything particularly complicated, years later she said she found herself disappointed upon learning that he had given away his kiln. After losing access to the kiln, her husband gifted her with ceramics classes at Piedmont Virginia Community College, and she has been making ceramics ever since, with works appearing in local art shows dating back to 2011.

Some of Vik’s pottery at C’ville Arts is inspired by designs she developed in one of her first classes at PVCC where she carved three small notches into a bowl thrown on the wheel. At the advice of one of her teachers, Vik keeps a notebook of all of the pieces she has created, so she will often revisit those old works to see if she can make them again. Only this time, she looks upon her older designs with more years of experience, fully realizing her original artistic visions. On display at the exhibit, there are a number of large, wide bowls that Vik said she attempted years ago — and recently revisited

with more success.

In her exhibit, located at the front of the gallery, Vik said she wanted to emphasize texture because of the way it can help a viewer form a connection to the piece.

“I’ve always been drawn to texture, whether it’s changing the shape of an object or adding a visual or physical texture,” Vik said. “I really feel like it pulls me — and whoever the viewer is — into the piece.”

The pieces — including a naturally-textured bowl with branches stemming from its base and a squat, three-sided brown and white vase — feature a variety of earthy colors, more typical ceramic shaped bowls, as well as unique, irregularly shaped pieces. There are pieces on display that look as if the clay was stitched together, with different colored and textured sections with small clay rods appearing similar to cross stitching or sewing.

Vik spoke about one of her favorite pieces in the exhibit — a large deep green vase, with a rectangle cut out and clay rods over the hole at the top of the vase. Vik said the juxtaposition of the smooth, painted clay

that was thrown on the wheel and the detailed intricacies of carved rectangles and dark, molded rods creates a unique visual effect.

“I kind of think of [the vase] as the natural and unnatural world getting connected,” Vik said. “I just like a little bit of tension.”

Vik said that many of her favorite pieces from throughout her career are those in which the clay is almost stitched together, creating a cohesive piece of art through the combination of several smaller components. Vik said she sees these new pieces as her moving from the material to the natural world.

“Moving on to this more natural, more earthy texture, as opposed to texture that was more material and more put together is exciting to me right now,” Vik said. “I want to poke holes. I want things to break a little bit, you know? I like that part.”

Vik elaborated on the fact that, at its core, ceramic art is both deeply personal and creatively challenging. On Vik’s website, she explains that her favorite part in the creation process is when the clay is leather-hard. At this point, the clay has been

sculpted, is still just a bit moist and a warm brown. However, it has not been fired yet, making them easily breakable and unfinished.

As an artist, Vik said that a significant part of her job is to transform a creative idea into a tangible work. From her journey as a potter, she said the most important thing she has learned is to follow through on her ideas to the end.

“As you start building a piece ... there’s a point where you feel like this looks really good. This wasn’t what I was expecting, but it’s not your idea yet,” Vik said. “The temptation is to stop where you are because you like what you see, and you have to push through to the end.”

Vik’s exhibit at C’ville Arts is a demonstration of thoughtful, technically advanced artistry and mastery of ceramics. In the style of her artwork itself, the exhibit weaves its way into the local community and arts scene, enhancing the work of local potters. She has a table at C’ville Arts year round, and her work is available to view on her Instagram and on her website.

Virginia Festival of the Book highlights women’s literature

Nearly 150 authors appeared in downtown Charlottesville for the annual literary celebration

Claire Seigler | Staff Writer

Virginia’s Center for the Book’s 32nd annual Festival of the Book was held March 19 through 22, bringing authors, special guests and readers to venues across downtown Charlottesville for a series of events. This year’s theme was “Revolutions” to honor the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The wide-ranging lineup of talks also celebrated Women’s History Month by featuring several events that spotlighted women’s experiences.

Each year, the festival roots itself in a broad mission to “promote books, reading, literacy and literary culture.” Kalela Williams, author and director of the Virginia Center of the Book, reflected on how the slate of productions is a culmination of that mission.

“We bring in authors whose work resonates with Virginians, because we know that ... Virginia is such a varied state,” Williams said. “We’re bringing people to the festival to celebrate our walks of life, and to celebrate our readership, to celebrate readers, to celebrate even people who don’t consider themselves readers.”

More than 20,000 people come to Charlottesville to attend the annual festival — with mostly free events —

each year. Nearly 150 authors made appearances across its programming last weekend at book talks, workshops and exhibitions. The featured authors represented a wide range of genres, including nonfiction, poetry, children’s literature and mystery.

March 20 at noon, “Boldness and Burden: Women Through Time” took place at New Dominion Bookshop on the Downtown Mall, where authors Elizabeth Becker, Sharon Kurtzman and Stacia Pelletier discussed their recently released novels. Their three works of fiction feature women navigating the burdens of family obligations. When asked about balancing strength and vulnerability in writing strong female main characters, Becker — author of “The Moonlight Healers” — emphasized the importance of honesty in portraying their experiences.

“It’s only going to be honest if [the female characters are] vulnerable,” Becker said. “I don’t think that it compromises their strength to show their weaknesses and show they’re struggling. That’s one of the strengths of women, that we have that ability to be a little more open about our struggles and emotions.”

Expanding on Becker’s point about

character vulnerability, Kurtzman and Pelletier also emphasized its importance in shaping authentic characters. They discussed how the women in their novels navigate expectations placed on them by family while working to assert their own sense of agency. The two authors agreed that this tension is central to writing characters who feel honest and fully realized.

One attendee at “Boldness and Burden” asked the authors about how they found the discipline to write full-length literary projects. Their answers underscored the realities of balancing creative work with other responsibilities, with Becker and Kurtzman sharing that much of their writing took place in the car while waiting in school pick-up lines and during soccer practices for their children. The moment highlighted the panel’s broader celebration of women’s voices, both on the page in their literature and behind the page in their personal lives.

This candid conversation prompted audience members to reflect on the significance of complex female characters in literature. Virginia Palencia, another attendee of the “Boldness and Burden” panel, noted how the discussion resonated with her own experi-

ences and reinforced the importance of telling stories that capture both the challenges and strengths of women’s lives.

“I think female protagonists are especially important,” Palencia said. “I really like to hear the process of writing, but definitely, that’s a draw for me, especially now politically.”

New Dominion Bookshop also hosted folk and bluegrass musician Alice Gerrard to discuss her recent memoir, “Custom Made Woman: A Life in Traditional Music,” March 20 at 2 p.m. Gerrard spoke with Katy Clune, Virginia state folklorist and moderator of the event, about her book, which documented a musical career spanning five decades. Gerrard shared experiences from her college days in the 1950s to the present, reflecting on her artistic evolution and the challenges and opportunities she encountered as a woman in the folk music scene.

One of the festival’s largest events was “Claire McCardell: Author Talk and Historic Fashion Demo,” held at the ornate Paramount Theater downtown March 21 at 6:30 p.m. At the ticketed presentation, Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson discussed her critically-acclaimed biography that tells the story

of Claire McCardell, a fashion designer who made clothes for women beginning to work non-domestic jobs in the 1930s and 1940s.

This discussion was accompanied by a demonstration of historical fashion by Marcy Linton, associate professor of costume technology and manager of the University drama department’s historical clothing collection. The presentation offered attendees a visual sense of how McCardell’s work transformed everyday dress, as Linton explained the functional aspects of McCardell’s work. By centering a revolutionary figure who reshaped how women dressed in their daily lives, the event was a testament to women’s contributions across industries in history.

Across panels, readings and conversations, this year’s Festival of the Book highlighted the diversity of literary voices and the enduring importance of women’s stories. In a weekend centered on “Revolutions,” these discussions reflected both personal and cultural shifts, underscoring the role of literature in shaping how those stories are told and remembered.

Komal Reddy machu contributed to reporting in this article.

'Pep Banned' documentary preserves spirit of U.Va.'s pep band

The film captures a community that endured controversy and left a lasting legacy

Victor-Jenay Cortijo Lopez | Staff Writer

Before the Cavalier Marching Band became the face of school spirit on Grounds, the Virginia Pep Band entertained fans, students and alumni for 30 years until it was banned from University events in 2003. The documentary "Pep Banned" — directed by Class of 1982 alumnus Chris Farina and former Media Studies professor Bill Reifenberger and executive produced by Class of 1983 alumnus Ron Culberson — revisits the band's rise and abrupt removal. March 28, the film will play at the Paramount Theater, bringing the now-defunct group's music back to Charlottesville through this documentary.

The Virginia Pep Band, founded in 1974, was a fully student-run organization that performed at football games and other athletic events. The band was known for its scramble-style performances — a deliberately unstructured, freeform marching style built around humor — and routines that would poke fun at opposing schools, politics and campus culture. This style often sparked controversy, particularly with opposing schools.

Culberson, former member of the pep band, recalled a halftime joke about Liberty University that drew backlash from former Liberty University president Jerry Falwell after the band quipped that Liberty did not discriminate against minorities as there were "no minorities there to discriminate against."

"That's the kind of stuff that would happen. I think there was a little bit of rebelliousness in us," Culberson said. "We kind of saw that as a badge of honor. If they felt they needed to complain, we probably made a good point. But it was all cloaked in the idea of just making people laugh ... We weren't setting out to offend anybody."

This freeform, comedic marching style defined the band for decades, but its satirical routines increasingly drew scrutiny. Tensions over the band's performances came to a head in 2002 following the Continental Tire Bowl halftime performance. During the performance, pep band members acted out a skit parodying the television show, "The Bachelor," in which a male University student chooses between two female contestants. One was from the University, while the other was an exaggerated caricature of a West Virginia University student.

Following the performance, former West Virginia Gov. Bob

Wise demanded that former University President John T. Casteen apologize for the band's antics. Although the band had faced the possibility of disbandment for years, University administrators abruptly banned it after this final controversy, much to the surprise of many members.

"The way it happened, the way that they got rid of [the band], was a total surprise," Culberson said. "One day, the band arrived to get some instruments out of the locker, and the locks had been changed ... There [was] always this cloud hanging over them, that they may get disbanded."

While the band's humor often caused conflict, Culberson said that its eventual shutdown left members disappointed. According to Culberson, even though many of the band's most controversial antics were approved by the University, the group dissolved in 2003 in favor of a more official marching band.

"One of the biggest disappointments ... was that we were completely student-governed, but then U.Va. decided they didn't want that," Culberson said. "The interesting thing is every time the band got in trouble, the joke that they used had been approved ... That was always the band's intention as we did what we were told, but we still got in trouble."

However, looking back on the history of the band, the outcome may have been inevitable. The band had faced close calls before, but as the controversies piled up, Culberson said, the fit no longer worked.

"There was a growing sense that [the University] could actually get rid of [the band] ... The football team had gotten much better, and I think there was a sense from the [athletic] department that we were a liability and they weren't willing to take on that liability anymore ... It may be that times had changed so much that it was not a good fit anymore."

In the years following the ban, the idea for the documentary emerged during a 2014 friendly reunion between Dan McKeon, former pep band member and Class of 1984 alumnus, and Culberson. As they shared their favorite pep band stories, McKeon's wife, Kit, said that the story would make for a great documentary. The film ultimately became a way to preserve the band's story and the sense of community it created.

Around the same time that the idea for the documentary began to form, the pep band prepared



COURTESY VIRGINIA PEP BAND ARCHIVES VIA RON CULBERSON

"Pep Banned" had its world premiere at the Virginia Film Festival Oct. 26, and is set to return at the Paramount Theater Saturday. The screening offers a chance to reconnect with a piece of University history that gives a glimpse into a family defined by humor, connection and resilience.

to donate its archival materials to Edgar Shannon Library, formerly Alderman Library. Culberson sought permission to use them for the documentary project.

"My wife and I scanned 6,500 documents, letters and photographs, and we took pictures of things we couldn't scan," Culberson said. "In the last four or five years, we've really been working hard on getting [the project] completed."

The film's use of photographs and archival footage was especially important, as much of the band's history has yet to be widely documented online. The film does more than recount history — it celebrates the lifelong community and spirit that defined the band, preserving its legacy long after its final performance. Through interviews with pep band alumni, the documentary traces the group's evolution across decades. In doing so, the film captures a lasting message about community, showing how the band gave those who felt out of place a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves.

"There's a sense of community that people felt as part of the band," Culberson said. "[The pep band] was my place ... I really thrived there, and I think a lot of people did. ... I think it's about finding your place and being able to express yourself in the way that works for you. ... One of the les-

sons I think is the importance of finding your people."

Ultimately, the filmmaking effort reflects the film's deeper purpose — not to revisit controversy, but to preserve a community that shaped generations of students.

"Pep Banned" screened at the Virginia Film Festival Oct. 26, and is set to return to the Paramount Theater March 28. The screening offers a chance to reconnect with a piece of University history that gives a glimpse into a found family, one defined by humor, connection and resilience. In doing so, the film preserves the story of the pep band, allowing new gen-

erations to experience its irreverent, communal and unforgettable spirit that continues to resonate long after the final note.

"My hope is that this preserves [the band's] story because it's been 25 years or so since they've existed," Culberson said. "And so a lot of people don't know them and haven't experienced it. So my hope is at least the movie will live on, and people will get to experience the story."

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OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL: The presidential search review should bring clarity

The Board's decision to authorize a review of the presidential search process is a welcome sign for transparency, but a cursory and theatrical audit will do little to curb distrust

On March 5, the newly constituted Board of Visitors convened for its inaugural meeting, marking a pivotal moment in a turbulent period for the University's governance. On the heels of an ousted president and a paused search for a new provost, the Board faces mounting pressure from stakeholders to reestablish stability and institutional credibility. Against this uncertainty, one of the more consequential actions taken during the session was the authorization of the Audit, Compliance and Risk Committee to undertake a comprehensive review of the presidential search process that culminated in University President Scott Beardsley's appointment.

This decision carries significant implications for the Board's direction and for public confidence in the Board's governance. It signals a willingness to scrutinize the legitimacy of a process that has drawn skepticism from multiple constituencies. The secretive process a few months ago will now, hopefully, receive a proper and thorough second look. If conducted

properly with sufficient independence and depth, such a review has the potential not only to clarify lingering questions about procedural fairness, but also to serve as a critical step toward setting a more transparent course for the University's leadership moving forward.

The Audit Committee must also be clear about the objective of the review process, a detail that is so far ambiguous. If the Audit Committee uncovers evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the search committee, the remedy for such a finding appears to be toothless. The Audit Committee is unlikely to reach a conclusion that will seek to reverse the Board's public position, as recommending that President Beardsley be ousted would be farcical. With this in mind, the Audit Committee should stress that this is a review in the name of transparency, not a full relitigation of the search process.

With a full relitigation of the presidential search process being both impractical and counterproductive, the more constructive aim of any

review should be prospective rather than retrospective. The circumstances surrounding Beardsley's appointment — defined by an eleventh-hour timeline and a largely closed deliberative structure — invited a torrent of questions from across the University community and beyond. While many of these concerns were grounded in substantive issues of governance and transparency, others reflected natural skepticism that often arises when key decisions are shielded from the public eye.

Accordingly, future search committees would be advised to adopt a more deliberately transparent approach that actively incorporates input from relevant stakeholders at meaningful junctures in the process. This does not necessitate sacrificing confidentiality where it is warranted — particularly in the early stages of candidate evaluation — but it does require a clear commitment to openness. Conducting this review thoroughly and transparently, therefore, would dispel some public concerns which were brought to light in the

proceedings of the last year.

When the Audit Committee conducts its review, it should prioritize addressing many unresolved concerns. Questions remain about Beardsley's prior connection to Isaacson, Miller, the firm that spearheaded the search. A thorough review should make clear that candidate transparency is a fundamental precondition to a thorough search process. In addition to this, questions about the technical proceedings of his appointment — an appointment accomplished Dec. 19 while students and faculty were mostly off Grounds, and brokered by a legally illegitimate Board of Visitors — remain thoroughly unanswered.

Compounding this, the presidential search was not the only controversial leadership change confronting the University in 2025. The concurrent provost search — marked most notably by former Vice Rector Porter Wilkinson's unilateral decision to effectively torpedo a leading candidate — was recently paused, yielding no candidate to replace Interim Provost Brie Gertler. In light of the Board's

thoughtful commitment to internal evaluation, the provost search, once completed, will likely also warrant a comprehensive and independent review.

The University must move decisively to restore confidence in its leadership selection processes and by extension its leadership. A careful and independent review offers a critical opportunity to identify procedural shortcomings and to reaffirm principles of accountability and transparency. The objective should not be to dwell on past missteps, but to ensure that future leadership transitions are conducted with a level of rigor and openness that inspires confidence rather than disenchantment.

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NERO: Support women's experiences at U.Va.

As a University with a uniquely late coeducational history, more must be done to improve women's opportunities and experiences

Each March, celebrations take place across the country in recognition of Women's History Month. At the University, however, the month of March should serve as a reminder of the fact that more can still be done to invest in women's success. Before 1970, women at the University could only study under certain programs like education, nursing and law. The first co-educational class did not arrive at the University until 1970. Given how delayed the University implemented co-education compared to other schools, the responsibility to continually look for improvements in uplifting women's history and supporting women's success is particularly important.

There are a number of ways that the University could continue to embrace Women's History Month and support women's issues beyond March, from highlighting legacies of women integral to the University's history to providing tangible resources to support women's experiences. It is important that the University embrace its unique history. The University advertises its reputation for being a place where women succeed in historically male-dominated fields. This reputation should be celebrated, but only alongside continued efforts to tell women's stories and further their positive experiences.

The School of Nursing serves as a strong example of how individual schools can highlight their own history through historical work, spotlighting women's stories that could have otherwise been overlooked. For instance, about 150 Black women and some men earned nursing licenses through the U.Va.-Burley High School program in the 1950s and 1960s before coeducation. While these students ex-

perienced segregated education before coeducation.

Beyond remembering the history of women at the University, March reminds us that more action can be taken by uplifting existing institutions that support women. The Maxine Platzer Lynn Women's Center is a prime example of a resource hub that the University and donors should continue to invest in, serving as a blueprint for how women within the

women's history. Thus, their support is both targeted and inclusive, and provides an example for other University schools and organizations.

Beyond the events in celebration of women's history during March, there are still tangible improvements the University can make to support women's wellbeing — starting with free menstrual products. Student Council recently announced a pilot

variety of locations, recognizing how access to these products is essential to health and wellness. In effect, providing menstrual products in dorms is feasible and necessary. Providing free menstrual products to students in dorms is one straightforward means by which the University can embrace the spirit of Women's History Month beyond March.

The University already makes efforts to honor Women's History Month, but it is important to continually remind ourselves why this month is necessary in the first place. Further, March should encourage institutions, such as the University, to tie celebration with action in areas where improvements can be made. The fact that women have only been fully integrated into coeducation at the University for roughly half a century is a hard but necessary truth to grapple with, and Women's History Month poses a unique opportunity for the University to further its newfound reputation as a place where women thrive.

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“Women's History Month poses a unique opportunity for the University to further its newfound reputation as a place where women thrive.”

perienced segregated education and were not initially given recognition as alumni, Nursing has made efforts to give the nurses in this program recognition through initiatives such as displays that show the program's graduating classes. Yet, Nursing was not the only segment of the University to have female participation before the shift to coeducation — more than 30,000 women took classes at the University before 1970. The celebration of the specific history and stories of women in Nursing is a model that every school at the University should mimic to highlight the contributions of women

University and in the greater Charlottesville community can be supported. The Women's Center boasts a wide range of programs and resources, all while keeping resources open to individuals of all gender identities. The Women's Center has also been a leader in recognizing Women's History Month at the University, particularly since its 2022 launch of a tradition of collaboration with various offices and student organizations every March. This cross-University collaboration has introduced students and the wider community to the center's resources and has improved education on

program where students in dorms can request free products through their resident advisor. Efforts like these are progress in the right direction of uplifting women's experiences, but reveal a larger problem — students are experiencing a residential gap that could be addressed at an institutional level. While Student Council has introduced an effective program which is sure to garner student engagement, it demonstrates a gap in University provisions of women's health resources which must be amended. For instance, the U.Va. Health system offers free period products to employees at a

CLIPPINGER: Bridge the political ambition gap for women

A lifetime of socialization contributes to a seemingly immovable discrepancy in political ambition between men and women — but our education system can help bridge this gap

Many American colleges did not admit women on a relatively equal basis until the 1960s — indeed, the University did not have its first fully coeducated class until 1970 after facing intense legal pressure. However, by 1982, women made up over 50 percent of university students nationally, and today, they make up an even greater majority of undergraduate, doctoral and professional degree recipients. In politics, they have made considerable strides across the country, with Virginia electing University alumna Gov. Abigail Spanberger, its first female governor, last November. There is much to celebrate, but for all of women's progress, one statistic has been relatively static — political ambition.

Jennifer Lawless, professor of politics and public policy, alongside Richard L. Fox, professor of political science at Loyola Marymount University, has researched the origins of the gap in desire to seek political office between genders. Though women are more likely to vote, Lawless and Fox note that women report lower interest and confidence in their ability to run for office. These discrepancies are likely a product of socialization and stigma about female leadership. That is, the gender gap in political office is not because women do not win elections — it is because they are less likely

to consider running. This gap begins in childhood, but problematically widens.

Education is among the most influential factors in political socialization, alongside family and friends — academic ecosystems undoubtedly play a role in career ambitions. While changes in education are unlikely to completely correct this discrepancy altogether, it is feasible they could be-

women's history could help normalize female potential in social change long before careers are considered — they too may be presidents, senators, activists and congresspeople. Patricia Schroeder, Colorado's first female representative in Congress, remarked that more women would run for office if they learned their history. Representation can be transformative, as history shows women not merely as observers

participation in competitive spaces remains uneven. According to Lawless and Fox, educational environments that encourage girls to actively compete — from debate to student government to athletics — can increase comfort with high-stakes competition. These qualities create the efficacy necessary for political ambition.

To further build this efficacy, young women must be given mean-

ingful experiences that make political involvement feel accessible earlier. The creation of women's leadership organizations and workshops to hone skills necessary for holding political office is crucial. Programs like Virginia Girls State, which provide female environments to learn how state and federal governments operate, are essential yet incomplete. Expanding access to such programs, introducing similar opportunities at earlier stages and embedding civic leadership development more fully into school environments would help transform abstract interest into sustained ambition. Access alone

is not enough, but without it, ambition rarely has the chance to take root. Far from innate, the gap in political ambition is the result of socialization at home, school, among friends and via media. And women's involvement in politics matters beyond egalitarian concerns — their presence is linked to lasting peace agreements, emphasis on social programs and lessened corruption. Their presence is crucial for a thriving representative democracy.

There is hope for change. Virginia's gubernatorial election was historic, with Spanberger being both the first female governor of Virginia and one of just 53 in American history. We are increasingly finding role models in the present, too. But correcting the gap will be complex, and it will likely be a while before the effects of our efforts are felt. Education is, and has always been, a crucial investment in advancing equity. If Virginia is serious about equity, it should work on cultivating girls' ambition in perhaps the most transformative location it has to offer — the classroom.

“There is much to celebrate, but for all of women's progress, one statistic has been relatively static — that of political ambition.”

gin to address its origins. Indeed, Virginia's education system should work towards bridging this gap by amplifying women's history, encouraging early participation in activities that support political ambition and expanding opportunities for women's and girls' leadership.

While local efforts have been made to implement more women into history curricula, men are still disproportionately represented. Exposure to women in political roles is, therefore, limited, and young girls often lack role models who challenge notions of politics as a man's realm. Attention to

of political and social life, but as actors in it, and our curricula must reflect that.

But representation alone is insufficient. Classrooms must address bias in risk-taking and engagement to tackle discrepancies in political interest. Research indicates that girls are more risk-averse, not because of innate ability, but because of greater perceived consequences. Boys are rewarded for risk, while girls are conditioned to avoid the danger of public failure, leading to a confidence gap in political efficacy. Education can reinforce or disrupt this pattern. In Virginia,

ingful experiences that make political involvement feel accessible earlier. The creation of women's leadership organizations and workshops to hone skills necessary for holding political office is crucial. Programs like Virginia Girls State, which provide female environments to learn how state and federal governments operate, are essential yet incomplete. Expanding access to such programs, introducing similar opportunities at earlier stages and embedding civic leadership development more fully into school environments would help transform abstract interest into sustained ambition. Access alone

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HUMOR

DATA ANALYSIS: Common questions students ask ChatGPT

A recent data analysis reveals shocking insights about students' relationships with chatbots

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

This week, a data analysis of ChatGPT usage patterns among students on Grounds uncovered startling trends in the most frequently inputted prompts. Although the University has numerous outlets of support such as advisors, professors, therapists and medical professionals, ChatGPT has become the most consulted source for struggling students.

University statistics Prof. Claude Gemini claimed that the findings raise serious questions about the competency of University students. In light of these troubling findings, here are the five most frequently asked ChatGPT prompts circulating on Grounds.

1. “Hey, can you make this essay sound like a human wrote it?” “I SAID like a human”

Statistics show that after around 23 revisions, three intentional typos, an inspirational quote and a run-on sentence at the end, students generally put ChatGPT away and are ready to turn their essay in. However, facul-

ty sources across the 12 schools confirmed multiple students often forget to remove the following parting line in their essays — “If you'd like, I can also suggest revisions to improve flow, strengthen engagement and better align your essay with assignment expectations.” When later questioned by their professor, students tend to feign confusion, explaining they thought the line served as a “strong academic transition” and “left the reader on their toes.”

2. “My buddy said I would have to fight and win against four raccoons, but I think I could only handle three, tips??”

Data showed a surprising uptick of inputs relating to hypothetical combat scenarios involving wildlife, eggshells and miscellaneous substances. Many students have coached their chatbots to “read the room” and deliver more context-aware advice. Ultra-personalized chatbots are trained for serious situations such as this. “Step One: Crack open a Busch Light to get in the right mindset. Step Two: shotgun

a second Busch Light to intimidate the competition — establish yourself as the alpha. Step Three: Say, ‘If you're not a brother or with a brother get out!’ This tactic has historically been effective against opponents.”

3. “If she requested me on LinkedIn, does that mean she's down bad for me?”

Research demonstrates that ChatGPT will simply indulge your delusions — it has done so for thousands of delusional class crush scenarios. “If she viewed your profile twice, she is clearly hard-launching the relationship,” it will say. Data demonstrates, however, that LinkedIn veterans receive a more technical response, such as, “Recommended next steps include monitoring profile views, strategically liking one or two of her recent updates and possibly initiating a low-risk engagement such as messaging her, ‘Thanks for connecting — always great to expand the network.’” However, data also shows that shortly after questioning ChatGPT about your romantic standing, you may end up seeking

advice for “how to get over her.” As it turns out, you really were just one of her 500+ LinkedIn connections.

4. “If I don't have an internship this summer, am I cooked?”

Many University students seek internships over the summer, especially after learning their classmate who says he's “failing” the class happens to be working for Apple. However, data demonstrates that rather than increasing their job searching efforts, many sulking students feel that all they need is some falsified reassurance that they are indeed not “unemployed” this summer, but rather a “nontrepreneur.” While parents may suggest networking, ChatGPT will always remind you, “Your path isn't behind schedule — it's just taking the scenic route.” Yeah, that's nice and all, but how do I explain that on my resume?

5. “What time should I go to the AFC so I can actually use a machine?”

After arriving at the crack of dawn, students usually discover every treadmill, bench press and squat machine

is taken. Statistics show that across hundreds of ChatGPT prompts, a common theme is that the only machines available were the “Hamstring Harvester 3000” and the “Torso Terminator.” After asking ChatGPT what to do, it usually suggested going at a better “non-peak” time where it would be less crowded. The chatbot also recommended substitute workout plans such as streaking the lawn in broad daylight, running suicides in Shannon Library or chasing the bus because TransLoc lied ... again. However, some students feel the environment of AFC is enough of a workout for them. “If I wear gym clothes AND headphones to the AFC, will anyone notice I only went for the hot tub?” “Unrelated question: what is “too close” in the hot tub?”

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