

THE CAVALIER DAILY

Vol. 131, Issue 4

Thursday, October 1, 2020

EMMA KLEIN | THE CAVALIER DAILY



NEWS

This week in-brief

CD News Staff

Clemons Library closes for the second time in four days due to low mask compliance

Clemons Library temporarily closed for two hours on Sept. 23 following low levels of mask compliance, marking the second time in four days this measure was taken. According to Elyse Girard, director of communications for the University library system, the level of face mask compliance was 87 percent and then 91 percent following multiple warnings. Despite the bump up in compliance, the library was closed. When Clemons was closed on Sept. 21, compliance was 75 percent. “We almost never have 100 percent compliance, but due to President Ryan’s new policy we really should have 100 percent,” Girard said. The University’s new restrictions, which took effect on Wednesday, require students to wear their masks at all times outside their residence unless they are eating or exercising.

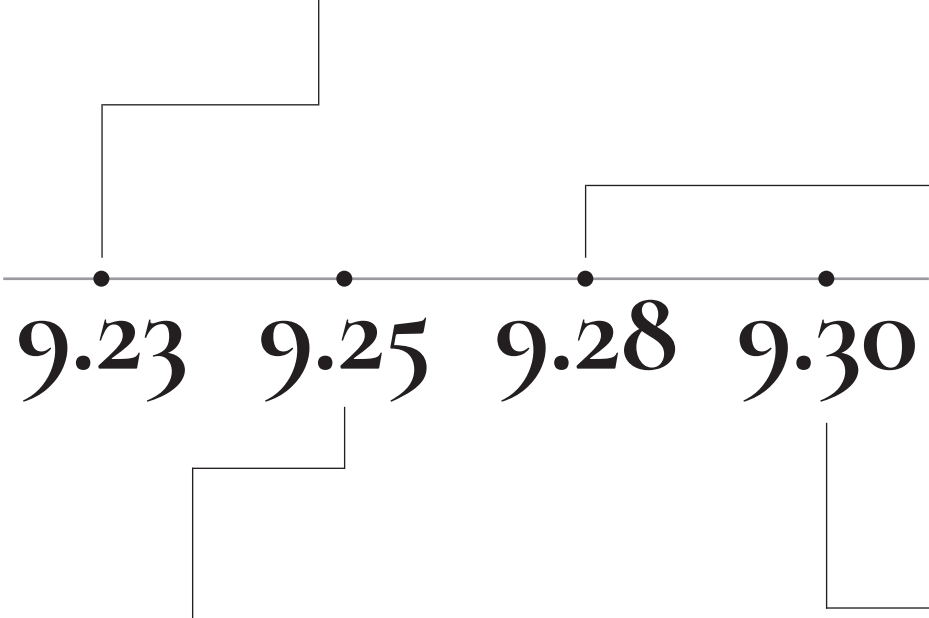


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University policy SEC-045 mandates that students wear masks in indoor spaces except when they are alone and in their private spaces, such as their dorm rooms or apartments.

Attempted burglary reported on 15th Street NW

An attempted burglary was reported to University police at 1:41 p.m. Sept. 28, according to a University-wide email sent by Chief of Police Timothy Longo. The incident occurred at an off-Grounds residence located on the 400 block of 15th Street NW. According to the email, the victim awoke at 3:50 a.m. to find an unknown male inside their residence, who disturbed the victim’s belongings and fled after the victim began yelling. The suspect was described as a 40-to-50 year-old Black male with a slim build and a Southern accent. The incident is the first reported burglary of an off-Grounds student residence this semester. The University Police Department requests that anyone with information related to the incident contact them at 434-924-7166 or Crime Stoppers at 434-977-4000.



U.Va. identifies 16 cases of COVID-19 in Hancock residence hall, will retest Hancock and Balz-Dobie

Residents of the Hancock residence hall were notified Sept. 25 that the University has identified 16 cases of COVID-19 in the building, per an email from Provost Liz Magill and Chief Operating Officer J.J. Davis. According to a separate statement from the University, the cases were identified through a combination of wastewater testing, prevalence testing and testing at Student Health. According to the Sept. 25 email to residents, prevalence testing identified seven of the 16 cases, and 12 students were identified as roommates. 115 students live in the building, meaning 14 percent of residents tested positive. Residents of Hancock partook in additional follow-up testing by the University Sept. 30 in the Student Activities Building. Residents of Balz-Dobie will also receive follow-up testing this week, following the identification of fifteen positive cases in the building. “It is not unusual to do repeat testing when prevalence testing reveals a number of positive cases,” Magill and Davis wrote in the email. At the moment, residents who are not close exposures or roommates of those who have tested positive have not been quarantined, though they have been asked not to visit others’ rooms in Hancock until they receive the results from their Sept. 30 tests, which the University estimates will be available by Oct. 2.

University reports 778 cases of COVID-19, 714 of which are students

Since Aug. 17, the University’s COVID tracker has reported 778 positive cases of coronavirus in the University community — including faculty, staff, students and contracted employees. University students make up 714 of the total positive cases. Sept. 17 marked the highest number of reported cases since Aug. 17, with a total of 59 positive cases in the University community. These numbers are only reflective of students who have tested positive through Student Health & Wellness or the U.Va. Health Clinic. The University COVID tracker dashboard does not include the number of positive student cases that may have been detected with pre-arrival testing. The dashboard also reports 29 percent of the student quarantine rooms to be currently occupied and 5 percent of student isolation rooms to be occupied. These numbers include students who are in post-travel quarantine.

First-years adapt to dorm-wide quarantines

Students in dorms with breakouts are placed in mandatory quarantine for at least 24 hours while they are tested

Ava MacBlane & Raghda Labban | Staff Writers

Wastewater indicators have suggested potential COVID-19 infections in five first-year dormitories — Balz-Dobie, Lefevre, Echols, Kellogg and Hancock — so far, necessitating mandatory quarantines so that residents could comply with the University's testing guidelines.

These dorm shutdowns can last up to 48 hours, depending on how long it takes to test all residents and relocate those with positive tests and close contacts to isolation and quarantine rooms. Once this process is completed, residents receive an "all-clear" message notifying them that they can leave their rooms and that the dorm-wide lockdown is over.

The Balz-Dobie dormitory was the first to be tested Sept. 15. The following day, the 114 residents of Lefevre dormitory were notified they would partake in asymptomatic prevalence testing, and all residents in Echols and Kellogg dormitories were quarantined and tested last Friday. Residents of Hancock were also notified Friday that the University identified 16 total cases in their building.

Testing revealed 15 total cases in Balz-Dobie, three in Lefevre, five in Echols and nine in Kellogg. These numbers do not include the two students in Kellogg and one student in Echols who tested positive during pre-arrival testing. The University clarified in a statement that individuals who tested positive during "pre-arrival testing do not meet the clinical definition of an active case."

When a resident tests positive for COVID-19 or dorm wastewater samples — which are collected every 15 minutes by UVA. Health and pooled over the course of 24 hours for testing — indicate the potential for cases of the virus, dorm residents receive a text notifying them to return to their rooms immediately for testing.

According to Wes Hester, deputy University spokesperson and director of media relations, testing teams then move door-to-door to test students individually. The current tests being used throughout residence halls are nasopharyngeal swabs, which collect samples from deep within the nasal cavity.

Residents are obligated to comply with testing if their dorm goes into quarantine, unless they have a medical reason for not getting tested, such as having tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days.

Students under lockdown that leave their dorm during quarantine without explicit permission

to do so are subject to disciplinary action by the University Judiciary Committee. Consequences may vary in severity depending upon a student's offense, with interim suspension being a more extreme sanction.

After all residents have been tested, students receive a notification close to the time that their test results will be released through their Healthy Hoos Patient Portal. University Student Health and Wellness contacts students with positive tests by phone to inform them of the relocation process to University isolation and quarantine housing.

a message into our group chat, so it's really good for contact tracing."

Joseph Ascoli, a first-year College student and resident of Balz-Dobie, was relocated to a quarantine room in a nearby Holiday Inn after indicating that he had been in close contact with a friend who tested positive for COVID-19. Ascoli said that he was surprised when he initially learned that Balz-Dobie residents would be put under temporary quarantine to undergo testing.

"There was definitely a lot of uncertainty for us students," Ascoli said.

Ascoli said that he believes

since Sept. 19, and will be released on Sept. 30.

Portuese uses the COVIDWISE app, Virginia's contact-tracing app which traces exposure through Bluetooth. Portuese received both a notification from the app and a call from Student Health alerting him that he had been in contact with someone who tested positive.

"I was negative [after testing] ... after a day or two I got a call from a contact tracer [who said] we need you to isolate," Portuese said.

The University did not test Portuese again after he was quarantined.

"[Student Health] at first told

little bit risky, but we [were] all masked and outside," first-year College student Soven Bhagat said.

Hester said that Resident Advisors are notified that their dorm will be tested and quarantined temporarily in advance, so they are aware of the protocol and can provide assistance if needed.

"It's a fast-moving process and the timing varies from dorm to dorm, but RAs hear in advance of their residents," Hester said.

Despite confusion and anxiety that arose from the situation, residents have remained positive and optimistic.

First-year College student Luke Powers, who lives in Balz-Dobie, decided to put on a virtual concert in order to lighten the mood during quarantine. Powers has been playing the guitar for 4 years, and decided to livestream a song over Instagram.

"I thought it would be a good idea to raise the spirits of the dorm," Powers said. "I opened my window and someone had linked a speaker and was playing my livestream so the whole dorm was listening in. It was good to hear people excited about something."

Students have also handled the situation with humor, taking to social media to share their experiences. First-year College student Nickolaus Cabrera posted a video reviewing the breakfast residents were given on social media platform TikTok that has since amassed over 30 thousand views.

"I wanted to highlight the food being given to us and be honest about it ... I honestly didn't expect it to go viral, I was just making it for fun, really," Cabrera said.

While spending time in quarantine may not be included in expectations of the college experience, students have tried to make the best of the situation. Communication and honesty have been key, Cabrera said.

"I think everyone here is being so open about symptoms and recent contacts," Cabrera said. "I would encourage each and every one of us on Grounds to not be ashamed if you think you might have COVID-19. At the end of the day being proactive is what will keep us afloat."

As of Wednesday, there are 778 cases of COVID-19 within the University community, 214 of which are active. Five percent of isolation rooms are occupied, while 29 percent of quarantine rooms are occupied.

"The operational procedure of having us go get the food [felt] a



SOPHIE ROEHSE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

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In Kellogg, residents updated each other about symptoms and positive cases via a group chat.

"When we got our results back, we all immediately texted [the hall group chat] saying we were negative," first-year College student Ezzie Perez said.

Balz-Dobie has a similar group chat, which has been important for residents to stay up-to-date with new information that they don't get directly from the University.

"We don't want to stigmatize getting a positive result," first-year College student Reed Williams said. "Whenever anyone hears news about [their test] they send

students are playing an important role in preventing the spread of the virus within first-year residence halls.

"I think for the most part, students have been following guidelines to the best of their ability," Ascoli said.

He also said that he thinks the University's response has been efficient — while in quarantine at the Holiday Inn, Ascoli said that he received periodic check-in emails and texts from the University.

Spencer Portuese, a first-year Engineering student in Balz-Dobie, has been in quarantine in the Home2 Suites hotel off-Grounds

me I should get tested again ... then they told me to get retested only if I show symptoms," Portuese said.

The CDC recommends that close contacts of people infected with COVID-19 quarantine for 14 days after contact, even if they test negative for the virus throughout that period.

During quarantine, residents of Echols and Kellogg received meals from the dining halls, which were delivered to dorm lounges. Balz-Dobie residents were instructed to pick up their meals at an outdoor tent.

Professors restructure midterm examinations

Time zone differences and poor Internet access are just the start of the difficulties posed by remote learning

Sierra Martin | Staff Writer



RILEY WALSH | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Just 27 percent of courses this semester have an in-person component, and online exams pose challenges for students and professors alike.

With the majority of courses online this semester, professors who teach remote classes plan to adjust midterm exams and implement plagiarism-detection software to deter students from cheating.

Just 27 percent of courses this semester have an in-person component, and online exams pose challenges for students and professors alike — international time zone differences, poor Internet access and academic integrity are among concerns.

Despite the unique semester, some professors have chosen not to change midterm examinations. First-year College student Amber Trinh said that she doesn't think one of her professors is adjusting midterm exams enough to consider students' unique circumstances this semester.

Trinh, whose classes are all virtual, said she prefers paper tests and "skips over things" on online exams that she would normally notice on paper.

"Unlike some of my other professors, [my professor] made it very clear that there is no curve,

absolutely no makeups at a later time, and no extension for the time limit," Trinh said.

Biology Professor Barry Condrón, who teaches Introduction to Neurobiology remotely to 250 students, said he decided to make all his exams open-note to reduce the stress students are facing due to the pandemic and online classes. To accommodate those who live in different time zones, students will have a 24 hour time period to take their midterm exams.

Despite obstacles to remote instruction, Condrón said that he has grown to appreciate the benefits of Zoom office hours and open-note exams.

"I am beginning to see some advantages to this option and might in fact keep this approach in the future," Condrón said. "I am thinking of ways of formulating questions such that they test synthesis and not simply a query for a fact in the notes."

Wes Hester, deputy University spokesperson and director of media relations, said that the University has not advised faculty to change their exam for-

mats, though many professors are choosing to do so.

"[Faculty] have the autonomy to manage their courses so as to enhance learning with an eye towards fairness and compassion for students' individual circumstances," Hester said. "Many faculty have changed their pedagogical approach this semester for a variety of reasons; this includes but is not limited to their exams."

At the beginning of their time at the University, students complete an honor module and sign the Honor Code pledging not to lie, cheat, or steal — even with the shift to online exams, faculty remain hopeful that students will maintain their integrity.

Condrón said that he trusts that most students won't cheat and doesn't want to impose harsh measures on students. He noted that "most digital information eventually becomes public," so students who cheat are likely to be discovered.

Some professors plan to use software to ensure students are adhering to the Honor Code. Economics Prof. Kenneth Elzinga

said his 1300 students will use Proctorio, an online software that uses test-takers' webcams to ensure they aren't cheating.

Elzinga's midterm exams — which usually require students to draw on graphs and answer short answer questions — will now be solely composed of writing-based short answer questions. Since students will be taking midterms online, they won't be able to draw on paper graphs.

Both Elzinga and Condrón indicated that online exams will also be more work for graduate teaching assistants.

"The administering of the exam and the burden upon Teaching Assistants in grading the exam is much greater this semester than ever before," Elzinga said. "My TAs cannot meet together as readily to discuss grading."

McIntire Associate Prof. Sherri Moore teaches two sections of Commercial Law I and one section of Commercial Law II online, each with hundreds of students. Moore's midterm exams consist of two multiple-choice

tests, just as they were before the pandemic — however, students are now permitted to use their notes, and the questions will be more challenging.

Moore said that she transitioned to open-note exams because students "can't really cheat if [they] use notes."

Moore graduated from the College in 1985 and, like Condrón and Elzinga, said that she believes most students will continue to abide by the Honor Code.

"My feeling is if you've got to cheat on this exam, then you're just cheating yourself," Moore said. "I was at U.Va., and we took the Honor system seriously, and I think that a lot of students still do."

Students who commit academic fraud are reported to the Honor Committee, which then investigates and hears individual cases. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic and University restrictions on in-person gatherings, the Honor Committee will operate virtually this semester.

Ryan Keane, a fourth year Batten student and chair of the Honor Committee, said online hearings require more of an "intentional effort" to ensure everything runs smoothly. The Honor Committee has yet to hold a hearing this semester, but Keane said it's easier to check up on investigated students and reporters in-person — to ensure they understand the hearing process — than online.

Recently, the Honor Committee has been working with professors who noticed that their exam questions have been posted on the homework help website Chegg. In a meeting Sunday, the Honor Committee decided that if a professor has evidence that their exam questions are online, two committee investigators will be assigned to help identify the student.

"I think there still are a lot of professors who have regular exams and are relying on the Honor Code," Keane said. "Some are making exams open note, but a lot of professors have open note exams to begin with."

Due to confidentiality, Keane said he was unable to disclose the number of cases currently in the Honor System. Although a lack of supervision can make cheating easier with online midterms, Keane said the committee will have to wait and see if Honor violations increase this semester.

University Judiciary Committee shifts online

New virtual process uses Zoom and Microsoft Teams to handle cases in the event an accused student elects not to attend trial in-person

Luke Stone | Staff Writer

New COVID-19 pandemic-related guidelines forced the University Judiciary Committee to adjust its operations earlier this summer. For that reason, fourth-year Batten student Gabby Cox, who chairs the Judiciary Committee, said the line of communication between the Office of the Dean of Students and the UJC has been constant.

“We were both dealing with a similar problem of trying to figure out how to adjudicate cases that may come through,” Cox said. “They are and always have been a great resource for us. You can’t really adjudicate the legislation created by the administration without having constant communication within these processes.”

Since students and faculty returned to Grounds for partial in-person instruction earlier this month, the UJC and ODOS have begun fielding cases of student non-compliance with COVID-19 related regulations. The details of those cases are confidential, but Dean of Students Allen Groves said in an email to The Cavalier Daily that all issued suspensions have been interim.

The reporting process for cases of COVID-19 noncompliance is the same as it would be for standard disciplinary cases. Reporters submit complaints through either the UJC website, Just Report It or SafeGrounds. All three systems require reporters to sign in with their University computing ID through NetBadge or at least leave their contact information if they’re not affiliated with the University.

After a complaint is filed, the Committee reviews the incident and decides whether it has jurisdiction over the case. If it does, the accused student is assigned a case number, a trial date, a location and a UJC Counselor. In addition, accused parties must meet with a UJC Investigator to share their version of the incident. At trial, students can plead not guilty to move the hearing into a Trial for Guilt or plead guilty and move the hearing into a Trial for Sanction.

To handle a caseload described as “higher at this point in the semester” than it has been in others, the Committee has changed its operations to conduct the entire process virtually when necessary. If students do not



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want to appear at a trial in-person, they have the option of appearing in a somewhat modified Zoom room that both restricts who can enter and does not monitor private chats between participants. Much like the typical audio recordings that the UJC keeps of proceedings for its records, virtual trials will also be recorded and saved for archival purposes. Paperwork has migrated to a virtual platform as well, as all case information is stored securely on Microsoft Teams, where the UJC can control exactly who has access to view certain documents.

While the organization is ready to handle more cases on all fronts, Cox said that she hopes students can continue to pull their own weight in upholding University guidelines on their own by holding each other accountable.

“I understand that students may be uncomfortable confronting others, but it’s really useful if they see another student not masking, or if they see a group of 16 students on

The Lawn, to walk up to them and ask them to [put a mask on] or [break into smaller groups],” Cox said. “I’ve seen quite a bit of that and it’s been pretty civil conversation.”

The University updated its COVID-19 guidelines Sept. 22 to further restrict in-person gatherings to no greater than five people, prohibit travel to and from Charlottesville and mandate mask-wearing whenever not in one’s bedroom or while exercising outside or in accordance with guidelines at an IM-Rec facility.

Such informal interactions may work for isolated or unintentional incidents, but the UJC stands by its position in earlier reporting from The Cavalier Daily that “the level of severity in a reported case will determine if a response is necessary.” However, that level of severity can vary depending on the broader context of a situation. Less serious cases of noncompliance may result in a conversation with ODOS while more serious or repetitive offenses

can result in UJC Investigation and Trial that could culminate in interim suspension.

“You can not be wearing your mask around one time, and that can be considered infrequent. But if you consistently have that behavior, that’s when you’re putting others at risk, and that’s when it becomes a more major problem,” Cox said. “[On the other hand], you could not do something frequently and really spur a major event that is reckless to the health and safety of other students.”

While Dean Groves has stated that the “most serious and flagrant violations” are those that violate the school’s restrictions on large gatherings, the UJC believes that all COVID-19 related regulations are important because refusal to wear masks, socially distance and adhere to gathering size limits all constitute violations of the University of Virginia Standards of Student Conduct, specifically standards two, six, 10, and 12, which stipulate that stu-

dents should not engage in “conduct which intentionally or recklessly endangers the health or safety” of others, violate “University policies or regulations,” violate “Federal, State, or local law,” or fail to “comply with directions of University officials.”

Although an additional 200 students have tested positive for COVID-19 since Sunday, Sept. 20, Cox felt during an interview on Monday, Sept. 21, that the University’s reopening has been about as successful as one could have reasonably hoped for.

“There was a lot of hard work over the summer by student groups and administration of making COVID policies more of a social norm,” Cox said. “That doesn’t always work, so you have to have punitive processes in place to deal with situations that aren’t complied with. If you look at UVA. as an institution compared to other institutions in Virginia, we seem to be having a generally good response to what’s going on.”



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LIFE

Students reflect on how grading policies should change

A look back on online learning experiences with Zoom fatigue both this semester and last spring

Maryann Xue | Features Writer

For most students, life consists entirely of sitting in front of a laptop for classes, clubs, interviews and social events. As most everyday activities continue to be conducted online and schoolwork becomes synonymous with homework, many students have contracted a new condition — Zoom fatigue. Beyond a lack of motivation to attend and participate in classes online — a classic symptom of Zoom fatigue — students have been facing a multitude of other issues with online learning that have affected their ability to learn effectively, including Internet problems, family issues and problems with mental health. With the variety of outside concerns, coupled with academics, many students have started to consider whether the University's current grading policy — standard letter grades — should change.

Student Council launched a survey Aug. 28 seeking to gauge students' grading preferences this semester. As of Sept. 2, 93.6 percent of 2011 respondents — 99.6 percent who were undergraduates and 0.4 percent who were fifth years — reported facing between two to 13 barriers in learning due to the pandemic.

The survey, which remains open until Oct. 11, was released by Student Council as a way for students to share their preferences for the best grading policy based on their experiences with online learning in the spring and fall semesters. The 14 barriers to learning predefined in the survey included difficulty learning over Zoom, loneliness, time-zone differences, family relationships, mental health, financial insecurity and more. 2.8 percent of respondents indicated encountering no barriers while 3.1 percent indicated encountering all 14.

Of the 14 listed barriers to learning, "hard to focus off-Grounds," "difficulty learning over Zoom" and "loneliness" were the three most frequently chosen.

Based on the survey's responses, Student Council concluded that an extension of the spring semester's grading policy — which registered classes as credit/general credit/no credit but allowed students to opt-in to letter grades — would be the most equitable grading option, eventually passing a resolution in support of its adoption. Addi-

tionally, the Presidential Senate — a student body composed of the Student Council president, class presidents and undergraduate school presidents — released a statement in support of continuing the University's spring 2020 grading policy this semester. The statement also added that students should be allowed to wait until after their final to decide whether they want to take the class as credit/no credit or with a letter grade.

"Taking that credit/no credit option, I don't believe it means that students are going to be trying less," said Sophia Liao, Second Year Council president and second-year College student. "I think it's just a recognition of what we have to go through."

With midterm season coming up and mandatory dorm-wide COVID-19 testing leading to dorm lockdowns, Liao believes that having this level of mental stress has greatly impacted many people's abilities to learn effectively. Those who chose to stay home and not come to Grounds have also been losing social connections and feeling isolated. Personally, she has also experienced Zoom fatigue and the feeling of not being motivated enough to learn.

Liao acknowledged, however, that students are not the only ones struggling with online learning.

"There's an impact not only to us and our learning but also to professors' abilities to be able to fully teach us the things they need to teach us," Liao said.

The Young Democratic Socialists at U.Va. began a petition Tuesday to demand that the fall semester be credit/no credit.

"There's a myth that our grades are what make us an elite university, but in reality they are means-testing to disproportionately hurt those with learning disabilities and less access to resources," the petition stated. "Even for the best student, online classes fundamentally alter the learning experience."

As of Wednesday, the petition has collected over 450 signatures.

Many students and organizations have also signed an open letter to the deans, Provost Liz Magill, President Jim Ryan and the University community demanding that the University adopt a default credit/general

credit/no credit grading system with opt-in letter grades.

"This is an unprecedented time with unimaginable challenges placed on faculty, staff and students alike, but we must rise to meet this moment with empathy and moral courage," the letter stated. "In the midst of an ever-changing global pandemic, our response must dynamically reflect the need for compassion and care."

As of Wednesday evening, nearly 750 students have signed the letter.

Fourth-year Education student Nia Augustine believes that the University should extend its spring grading policy. As a pre-med student, certain classes need to have letter grades in order to satisfy medical school requirements. However, the current political, social and economic climate has placed a lot of pressure on students and made it difficult to perform well.

"Looking at the inaccessibility of resources for specific communities of students, what if they can't submit [an] assignment on time because they have to drive 30 minutes to the nearest Internet station or they don't have printers or they don't have ink?" Augustine said. "All these different factors can really take a toll on people's mental health and I think the added pressure of having to get a grade on something would push people to do things that they would later on regret and put their academic work at jeopardy as well as their integrity."

Despite being more than half a year into the pandemic, Augustine does not think that things have been getting better. People are no longer receiving the unemployment benefits they had in March and resources are depleting, but COVID-19 is not going anywhere.

"We're not in normal times and I don't feel like we should be grading people normally," Augustine said. "The University needs to have some compassion and empathy and realize that we're all going through [a lot]."

Second-year College student Zhiwen Xu agrees that the spring semester grading option should be continued and also wishes that the curve be lowered for classes, whether that be through a lower grading scale, changing the for-

mat of tests or professors being easier in general when grading.

Xu especially believes that professors should be more flexible about turning assignments in late. For her organic chemistry exam, she needed to scan her work and upload it online, and while she was able to do so, she worried about students who didn't have smartphones. She knows people who only have flip phones that can't take pictures, which becomes a big problem when it is a necessary component of an assignment.

"Last time I had a class [where] the professor wanted us to take our own photo for our art project, and [my friend] had to borrow other people's phones because she didn't have a camera or smartphone," Xu said. "She asked me to help her take a picture because she couldn't."

Personally, Xu has already experienced two instances of Internet problems. The day before her biology exam, the Internet was unstable for two hours and she had difficulty getting her work done and turning in her assignments. Then Monday, due to thunderstorms in her region, the power went out in her house for five minutes and she lost Internet connection. Beyond Internet problems, she also said that life during COVID-19 is vastly different because of the heightened need to be conscious of yourself and your surroundings in order to avoid spreading the virus.

"Before, you're at school, you're just focused on your grade, but now you have to get food, and at the same time try not to give [the virus] to your roommate, for example," Xu said. "You always have to think."

Other students believe that, despite the potential problems surrounding online learning, the grading policy should remain as is and reflect the amount of learning and work that students devote to their classes.

"This semester is not a sudden transition and uprooting of students from Grounds to take online classes," second-year College student Haile Mokrzycki said. "Granted, there are still extraordinary circumstances for some students, but for most, it is not suddenly being sprung on these people like it was last semester. U.Va. has resources and funding that can benefit these students

who are still facing dire circumstances because of the pandemic."

Mokrzycki struggled with online learning during the spring semester and was anxious about her grades because she had difficulty learning how to separate work from personal time. Despite these setbacks, she was able to learn from her shortcomings, following her father's advice to "adapt, improvise [and] overcome." While the spring semester left many students feeling stressed and overwhelmed, she believes that faculty and students have learned from the spring, and there can now be a return to the letter grading system in order to keep the grading field even.

However, Mokrzycki emphasized the importance of recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic is not over and that the University should continue to work with students to provide the resources needed for attaining educational success.

"No student should have to struggle through this semester alone, and by pointing a student to the right resources and guidance, they can still be successful no matter what," Mokrzycki said.

Deputy University spokesperson Wes Hester told The Cavalier Daily at the beginning of September that the University "has returned to its traditional letter grading system for the 2020-21 academic year" and that the credit/no credit grading framework was only instituted in the spring due to the "unexpected and rapid move to online instruction mid-semester." The faculty senate will be having a meeting to discuss Student Council's credit/no credit policy proposal Oct. 6.

Some have criticized the credit/no credit system because it might make students less willing to put effort into their schoolwork, but according to Augustine, a credit/no credit option will not affect students' abilities and desires to work hard.

"People are still going to take the work seriously," Augustine said. "It's U.Va. It's still a grade to us, [even if] it's not really a grade."

Cooking for comfort

Reflections and ideas on how to use cooking as a means of comfort during this time

Isabel Salken | Food Columnist

It has been a hard year — that is no secret. At the beginning, many people — including myself — sought a new skill to master while they finally “had the time.” For some it was baking sourdough breads, and for others, it was filling their days with classes or studying for big tests like the MCAT or LSAT. Or maybe you just binged “The Office” repeatedly — because that is a skill, too.

I — and I would guess plenty of others — found plenty of solace from these new and strange undertakings. They helped occupy our minds and keep us busy. But then they lost their touch and started to get a little old.

Maybe they started to wear you down in another way. Maybe you are like me and found out about the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s passing and a less than ideal test score at the same time and now you just don’t feel like doing any of it anymore. That is okay too — six months into the pandemic, the prospect of something new sometimes just isn’t enough.

With everything going on, I’ve transitioned to searching for ways to make life feel a little easier. I’ve found most of my comfort recently in routine things like waking up and going for a run, making easy and nutritious meals and ending the day with dessert and “Westworld” — yes, I have watched every other series possible before resorting to this one, but it’s actually great.

All that to say, even when you’re not up for cooking, there is still pleasure in finding what is comfortable for you to eat. Because food is fuel, and everyone needs to eat.

I would understand if what is comfortable to you looks like cereal for dinner tonight — a power move if I ever saw on — or it could be finding a staple side that you pair with a source of protein. For instance, I love baking whole Japanese sweet potatoes, and I eat them most nights of the week paired with chicken, salmon or beans. It’s a simple pleasure, really.

Perhaps, with the weather transitioning and humid evenings turning soft with a slight bite hanging in the air, the ideal comfort meal is drifting towards soups, simple curries or even pastas. The good news is that these aren’t hard to make, and all three choices will warm you up just the same.

There are many no-recipe recipes that work well in these cases, too. You could make a box of Annie’s mac and cheese. White cheddar shells amped up with some



ISABEL SALKEN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

I have found most of my comfort recently in routine things like making easy and nutritious meals.

broccoli for extra fiber, potassium, calcium and vitamins — great to keep your body getting the nutrients it needs to function and ward off sicknesses. Banza, a pasta brand known for pasta made from chickpeas, also sells a plant-based mac and cheese, if that’s your thing.

For a bit of an adventure, and perhaps some more effort despite everything said above, my favorite no-recipe recipe of late has been soy-ginger turkey meatballs. It’s a simple mix.

Ingredients for meatballs

1-2 lbs of ground turkey
Chopped scallions
1 egg
Chopped cilantro
A couple tablespoons of sesame oil
A couple tablespoons of low sodium soy sauce

Ingredients for Sauce

½ cup water
½ cup light brown sugar
½ cup low sodium soy sauce
½ cup Mirin — rice wine, typically found in the international aisles of grocery stores
Grated ginger to taste

Instructions

1. Mix ingredients for meatballs in bowl then form into balls
2. Bake in the oven at 400 degrees for 15-17 minutes
3. Meanwhile, simmer ingredients for sauce together over low heat on stove
4. Remove meatballs from oven once completely cooked and transfer into sauce
5. Simmer the meatballs and sauce together for 10-20 minutes
6. Serve

I usually eat my meatballs with a bowl with rice or sweet potato and complete with a simple vegetable on the side.

Sometimes there is comfort in following a recipe, in working to fulfill an end or prepare a meal you can freeze for weeks to come. The New York Times recently did a whole week dedicated to “the Big Lasagna,” a recipe I’ve been keen to try as the weather grows cooler.

Now I can’t end this comfort food column without mentioning some ideas for dessert. A great no-recipe recipe is honestly just eating some ice cream. I do that quite often these days. If you’re looking for an easy, healthy thrill, you could make these simple double chocolate chip cookies I wrote about a couple years ago — very subtle plug, I know.

Cake, however, is one of the most fulfilling desserts to make because of the grand appearance of

the final product — if you’re up for it. Specifically, this chocolate cake from the New York Times is a great place to start and tastes incredible. It’s pretty hard to mess up too. There are no layers or any big decorations. Just make sure you spray your pan so it doesn’t stick. And if you’re hesitant — contrary to popular opinion — no occasion is necessary for cake. I like to think of it as an act of self-appreciation.

Whatever it is that feels comfortable to you, I hope you choose to nourish yourself with it. Eat it every day of the week, if you like. There’s comfort to be found in the monotony of cooking, but I believe that what is comfortable looks different for everyone. Why not take a moment to find what it looks like for you?

Trying to make the most of in-person classes

The long walk for only one class can feel crazy, but I'm learning to enjoy the little things

Aaron Doss | Life Columnist



ANGELA CHEN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

A lot has changed since the last time I sat in a lecture hall. As annoying and difficult as the transition to Zoom University has been for a lot of people, I'd actually gotten quite comfortable with the rhythm of my new normal.

Fifteen minutes before my first class, I would roll out of bed, hop in the shower and make it onto Zoom with only a couple seconds to spare. I'd cram all my readings in between classes and finish just in time for the next one to start. I usually even had enough time to cook all three meals for myself — a feat that I'd never been able to manage before.

Sure, going 100 percent online was by no means perfect, but I was pretty good at it. So when

some classes opted to return to in-person a couple weeks ago, I was skeptical about how well I'd be able to adapt.

The night before my first in-person class, I stayed up later than usual making sure I got a headstart on my work, knowing that I'd have to adjust my schedule to account for travel. I left an hour before my class even started, just to make sure I wouldn't run into any issues. I made the arduous journey from way back behind the Corner to the Chemistry Building. Sweaty and masked up, I sat six feet apart from my nearest classmate and waited for the professor to start.

When it was finally time to hit the ground running, it quickly became clear that the transition back to in-person hybrid classes

would be just as full of headaches and speed bumps as the transition to online learning. It took my professor nearly 15 minutes to set up his computer so that the Zoom kids could be on the same page as everyone else. I gave those struggles some grace though, as I figured we were just working out some inevitable first-day kinks.

But the thing is, those problems didn't go away as easily as I thought. At the beginning of every class for the past two weeks, there's been massive issues making sure everyone was seeing and hearing the same thing regardless of location. To make matters worse, I haven't been able to stay ahead of my work. Instead of an hour before class time, I start tearing out the door with only 25 minutes to go, and

I am consistently on my phone scrolling through readings all the way there while sweat builds up underneath my mask.

With all of the complications that returning to in-person class brought, and the fact that I was putting myself at a greater risk to catch and spread COVID-19, I couldn't help but feel like it was all a big misuse of my time. All of the time I spend walking could be spent reading or working instead, and knowing that has made me a little bit bitter.

What's the point? Why are we doing in person what could be done so much more efficiently online? Why are we exposing ourselves to a deadly disease when we really don't have to?

As I walked to class today though, I stuffed my phone in my

pocket and decided that those readings will just have to wait until later. The weather was that perfect September blend of summer and fall — the sun baked down on me while a soft breeze cooled me off. I allowed myself to just walk and enjoy myself, and I resolved to start looking on the bright side of things.

The truth is, I was getting claustrophobic trapped inside my four blue walls. The desk chair that I've been glued to in my bedroom has been killing my back. My only window faces north, so I hardly get any natural light in my life. The ceiling fan has only two modes — worthlessly slow or spinning so fast that it's about to fall off the ceiling — so the air in my room always feels stale.

And honestly, that whole efficiently crammed schedule that I had built for myself probably wasn't as healthy as I made it out to be. I am constantly in a rush and mentally out of breath. I could definitely find a way to organize my time better, but quarantining allows me to be last-minute and lethargic.

COVID-19 has put me in an odd sort of rut, and I don't even recognize it as one because I've gotten so used to my new comfort zone. My in-person class is helping me fix that. It's giving me fresh air, sunlight and exercise, and it's making me organize my time more efficiently and healthily.

Social distancing can make us lonely and put us in bad places mentally that we don't even know how to identify. My professor is trying to support us by giving us the most normal college experience as possible, and I must commend him and all other professors for trying their best to make it all work. While I don't agree with the University resuming in-person classes in the middle of a pandemic, this one class or professor certainly is not to blame.

So I'm going to start enjoying the little time I have outside before it gets too cold and I'll most likely turn to my pessimism again. I'll be patient with my professors who are trying to make the most out of these times just like the rest of us. Life as of late has been completely crazy, but it's the little moments that I must choose to make the most of, as I try with all of my might to always find the bright side of things.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

‘Schitt’s Creek’ and ‘Watchmen’ reign at the 2020 Emmys

The ceremony resulted in a big night for Canada’s favorite show and two HBO hits

Joseph Riley | Senior Writer

As bizarre as the 2020 Emmy Awards would seem to somebody who suddenly arrived at our present coronavirus-laced moment from — for example, this time last year — many of the award winners were anything but surprising. Yes, “Schitt’s Creek” winning all four acting awards was an unprecedented achievement, and at least one of those awards likely should’ve gone to a member of “The Good Place”’s ensemble, but the sweep was in keeping with the Emmy tradition of giving big send-offs to shows in their final season. Otherwise, the awards were doled out basically as expected — with two notable exceptions. The first, Zendaya’s well-deserved Best Actress in a Drama win for “Euphoria,” came over such names as Jennifer Aniston, Olivia Colman and Laura Linney and cemented her as the youngest actress to ever win the award. The other surprise was a downright miscarriage of justice — “Rick and Morty” winning Best Animated Series over “BoJack Horseman” — particularly since this was “BoJack”’s last chance at an Emmy.

Besides “Schitt’s Creek,” the big winners on Sunday were two prototypical HBO prestige dramas, “Succession” and “Watchmen,” each of which was a worthy juggernaut. “Succession” won Outstanding Drama Series, as well as the awards for Outstanding Direction and Writing among drama

series. An individual award went to Jeremy Strong for Lead Actor, and one of Matthew MacFayden, Kieran Culkin and Nicolas Braun likely would have won for Supporting Actor had they not all split the vote. “Watchmen” was victorious in the Outstanding Limited Series and Outstanding Writing categories, and Regina King and Yahya Abdul-Mateen II took home individual acting awards for the series. The success of those two series proved beyond a doubt that HBO will continue its reign as prestige TV’s premiere destination beyond the “Game of Thrones” era.

As for the ceremony itself, it was surprisingly well-produced, if not the most comically-inspired awards show. Jimmy Kimmel’s milquetoast comedic stylings were expectedly underwhelming, and without an audience many of the jokes and bits fell flat, such as a remarkably awkward Kimmel-Anthony Anderson duet in which Anderson forced Kimmel to applaud the number of Black nominees and chant “Black Lives Matter.” With no live audience to gauge his reaction, it was impossible to know whether Kimmel’s obvious discomfort was legitimate or a staged part of the bit. In fact, one of the best parts of the show came at the very beginning, where Kimmel appeared to be talking to and interacting with an audience, only to reveal halfway

through his monologue that the audience footage was edited in. If they had kept the same format throughout the show, the comedic segments would have gone much more smoothly.

Another standout bit came during the presentation of the Outstanding Variety Talk Series award, in which David Letterman appeared before the camera to deliver jokes that he supposedly found in the tuxedo he wore to the 1986 Emmys. Even in his advanced age, Letterman’s snark and deadpan style shone through his voluminous beard as he made outdated references to Angela Landsbury and baseball players doing cocaine. The cherry on top of Letterman’s performance was the announcement of Last Week Tonight’s victory in the category, the fifth straight win for John Oliver’s brilliant look at current affairs.

Overall, the 2020 Emmy Awards went about as well as could be expected. The awards largely went to deserving winners, everything went smoothly from a technical standpoint and for the most part, the hacky jokes would’ve been just as hacky in front of an audience. Much like this year’s Democratic and Republican National Conventions, the ceremony proved that COVID is no obstacle for any event that has millions of dollars in production costs to throw at the problem.



EMMA HITCHCOCK | THE CAVALIER DAILY

A&E Book Club: Three books to read this month

Three novels to distract you from midterms this Halloween season

Lauren Whitlock | Staff Writer

Right in the middle of the semester, a good book is just the distraction a lot of students need to get away from the monotony of textbook readings and endless Zoom classes. This October, Arts & Entertainment brings you a selection of three enthralling reads with mysterious or magical themes to help you enjoy the spooky season.

“An Ember in the Ashes” by Sabaa Tahir

In Sabaa Tahir’s 2015 debut novel, Ancient Rome meets “The Hunger Games” meets “Game of Thrones.” Winner of the People’s Choice Award for Favorite Fantasy of 2015, “An Ember in the Ashes” is set in the fantasy world of the Martial Empire and follows protagonists Laia and Elias as

they fight against a tyrannical regime. Laia is a Scholar who becomes a rebel spy after her brother is arrested for treason. Elias is at the top of his class at the Empire’s military academy, but secretly wants no part of it. Both take turns narrating this genre-bending tale full of expert world-building, political intrigue, mysterious supernatural occurrences and love triangles. Whether you’re looking for a bit of magic this Halloween or you just want a worthy protagonist to dress up as, “An Ember in the Ashes” has you covered. And if you love this book, there are two more that follow it and a fourth and final book in the tetralogy coming out this December.

“I Am Watching You” by Teresa Driscoll

For a slightly creepier vibe this Halloween, try Teresa Driscoll’s 2017 psychological thriller “I Am Watching You.” Mother Ella Longfield wonders if she should alert someone when she overhears two young men just out of prison flirting with two teenage girls but decides against it, only to discover the next morning that one of the girls — Anna — has gone missing. Fast forward to one year later, Anna is still missing and Ella is still racked with guilt and has begun to receive threatening letters. This book alternates between several different perspectives related to the missing girl, each of them hiding their own secrets, plus the extra-tense anonymous perspective of

Ella’s stalker. A fast-paced thriller full of suspense and enough creepiness to spice up your October, “I Am Watching You” is a fun read that is perfect for procrastinating on midterm studying.

“Ninth House” by Leigh Bardugo

If you can’t decide between the fantasy novel or the creepy mystery novel, then go for a bit of both with “Ninth House,” Leigh Bardugo’s scary good — pun intended — dark adult fantasy novel. One of NPR’s best books of 2019, “Ninth House” centers around college freshman Galaxy “Alex” Stern, a homicide survivor mysteriously offered a full ride to Yale University on the condition that she investigate its secret societies, only to discover that they are far more sinister

than they seem. “Ninth House” is skillfully written with vivid description, a suspenseful plot that unfolds through three different timelines and an engrossing mixture of reality and fantasy. This novel can get pretty dark at times, with a fair amount of violence and a protagonist whose past and present are both riddled with trauma. However, if you can manage the darkness, and you’re interested in magic, mystery, corruption, occult occurrences and a dash of horror this spooky season, then “Ninth House” might just be for you. Stephen King praised it as “the best fantasy novel [he’s] read in years, because it’s about real people. Bardugo’s imaginative reach is brilliant, and this story — full of shocks and twists — is impossible to put down.”

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Eleven years ago, on October 17th, Morgan Harrington, a 20-year-old Virginia Tech student, disappeared from John Paul Jones Arena, having travelled to Charlottesville to attend a Metallica concert with friends. After months of searching, her remains were discovered in a rural area 8 miles outside of Charlottesville.

On this anniversary of Morgan's disappearance, take a moment to remember this bright, talented young woman – a devoted daughter, sister, and friend who is greatly missed by those who had the pleasure of knowing her to this day.

Please also take a moment to consider how we can take care of our friends and loved ones here in our University community and beyond. In most situations of sexual harm - sexual assault, abuse, and harassment, there are bystanders along the way who notice that something isn't right. This could be a degrading remark someone makes to their partner, body language that indicates someone feels unsafe, or noticing someone who seems to have been separated from their friends. The Hoos Got Your Back program at the University of Virginia exists to train students, faculty, and staff to learn ways they can realistically and safely intervene when they notice a situation that makes them worried about the potential for harm. Learn more about Hoos Got Your Back and how to intervene here: <https://hoosgotyourback.virginia.edu/>

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BackNo one has to do everything,
but everyone has to do something.

OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

The University's closed-door decisions do not benefit us

The student body deserves to be promptly informed about the University's COVID-19 decisions and updated policies

Last Tuesday, President Jim Ryan shared a video on social media in which he detailed several changes to the University's COVID-19 policy. It was not until two days later, however, that students were notified of the changes via email. The new restrictions most notably limit student gatherings to five people and request students to not travel to and from Charlottesville for the next two weeks, likely in response to several outbreaks in at least five on-Grounds residential halls since reopening dorms. This announcement came the week before the deadline for a student to withdraw from the University and still receive any reimbursement for tuition and fees.

The University has continuously promised us clear and regular communication regarding COVID-19 policy and changes to it. Yet, the most recent policy changes went into effect Sept. 23 at 9 a.m. — about 24 hours before the University decided to notify all

community members via email. Further, just days after the guidelines went into effect, the University welcomed the Duke football team, as well as the families of the players of both teams, to Charlottesville for the first home game of the season. It seems rather hypocritical that the University would impose a five-person limit on all gatherings for nearly everyone except its athletics department and most lucrative team — which made \$106 million in the 2017-2018 season. The University has made its position clear — money over lives.

If the new guidelines tell us anything, it is that being on Grounds is a threat to public health. Despite climbing cases and increased restrictions, the University is still inviting students back to Grounds — notifying students who opted to remain home this semester that they can still reverse their decision until Sept. 30. It makes absolutely no sense to further restrict students already here while continu-

ing to invite more back.

The University has neglected to cancel in-person classes and athletic events despite the proven risks they pose to our community. With at least 720 positive cases of COVID-19 in the University community since mid-August, it's clear that bringing students back to Grounds has been an active threat to public health for students and Charlottesville. The outbreaks on Grounds have halted any potential for students to have the "college experience" that the administration deemed so valuable in its decision to bring students back during a pandemic.

It was obvious from the very beginning that this semester would be unlike any other in U.Va. history. We knew these outbreaks were coming, yet the University carried on. It was disingenuous for administration to pretend otherwise, and it is nothing short of overtly dangerous for them to keep up the facade. The college experience they are trying so desperately to

preserve is gone.

It is only a matter of time before University community members begin to face complications from COVID-19, many of which will result in more serious illness or long-term disability. If and when a community member dies from COVID-19 or its resulting complications, the University will be forced to ask itself if the financial motivations behind bringing students back to Grounds were worth the loss of lives.

In an interview with The Cavalier Daily, Ryan stated that the University is not focused on the number of positive COVID-19 cases but rather a combination of factors including hospital and quarantine housing capacity. This alone demonstrates the administration's dangerous optimism when lives are at stake and their clear lack of planning or preparation for what is to come. While Ryan may not have a target number of cases or deaths to warrant a shutdown, it is clear when

enough is enough. The University should not let it get that bad.

The bottom line is that the University is making closed-door decisions without informing students in a timely or consistent manner. Students and employees of the University have a right to know how decisions are being made that will directly affect their livelihood and ability to sustain themselves. The University needs to be transparent with all of its planning and protocol should we continue to see a rise in cases. Hopefully — next time — they will at least have the common courtesy to send an email beforehand.

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THE CAVALIER DAILY

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The University must protect free expression

Even when controversial and offensive, the University must not punish student speech

Recently, controversy emerged over a sign on one lawn resident's door criticizing the University. Calls for the sign's removal due to its criticism of the University, as well as an instance of profanity on it abounded online, but the University announced they would not remove the sign or punish the student in question. This important commitment to students' first amendment rights sets a clear precedent for protection of future student speech. Still, the University must continue to protect all forms of first amendment-protected student speech, even when that speech is considered objectively offensive and harmful by the student body.

For example, as Black Lives Matter protests sweep the nation, calls for social, racial and economic justice have been met with intense, often highly offensive, backlash. These statements come in a variety of forms, but for college students, they often appear as social media posts or video recordings. While disgust with these statements is warranted, calls for the individuals responsible for or depicted in them to be punished by their Universities is not. While many of these statements are unambiguously hateful and offensive, a desire to seek social justice and

eliminate hate should not — and in fact cannot — come at the expense of eliminating free expression. As offensive videos and social media posts from students' surface, the University must protect their students' rights to free speech — no matter how controversial.

The first amendment does not exist to protect reasonable opinions — it exists to protect the unreasonable, the

as awful as hateful statements can be, they are ultimately protected by the first amendment, and for good reason. Ultimately, free expression cuts both ways — and if we are to uphold the values of a free and liberal society, it requires protecting the speech rights of those with whom we deeply disagree. Further, social standards and attitudes change dramatically over time. While it may sound like a good idea to ban

tolerant. This isn't to discount the real harm the language of racism, sexism or homophobia — among many others — can cause. In fact, I very strongly believe that this kind of speech makes our world worse — particularly for those targeted by it. However, I also believe that forcibly silencing protected speech is also harmful, and in fact in some ways more harmful due to the irreparable damage it does to the fabric

and fundamental disagreement with hatred. Someone may lose friends, opportunities or their non-government job for their statements. While viewpoint discrimination is illegal in public forums, outside of that, political or social belief is not a protected class, nor does a commitment to free expression require silence in the face of hate. In fact, it requires a commitment to vocal opposition to hatred — just not an attempt at legal recourse for the hateful speaker.

As a public university, UVa. is required to follow the constitution. While the University historically has a solid track-record of protecting free speech — for example achieving a green light rating from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education — it must not forget that commitment in light of an increasingly powerful social movement. Refusing to punish students who make racist statements is not the same thing as protecting racism. Rather, it is protecting free expression — and in order for free expression to be truly free, it must include offensive speech.

EMMA CAMP is an Opinion Columnist for *The Cavalier Daily*. She can be reached at opinion@cavalierdaily.com.

“The first amendment does not exist to protect reasonable opinions — it exists to protect the unreasonable, the offensive and the unpopular.”

offensive and the unpopular. When there is an instance of speech that is clearly hateful, the solution is not to silence it, but to use our own free expression to radically disagree. As a public university, UVa. is required to uphold this principle and protect student speech, even when hateful.

In fact, the first amendment is clear about the protected status of so-called 'hate speech' — the label most often given to offensive speech in order to justify its elimination. Hate speech is not a legal category — and

racial epithets, deliberate misgendering or white-nationalist catchphrases, one can easily envision a world in which the mechanisms to ban hate speech could be misused to target the language of social justice movements and silence dissent.

Further, free expression has intrinsic value. If we want to live in a world in which freedom of belief and thought is protected, that requires both protecting the beliefs and thoughts of historically marginalized groups and the expression of the in-

of a democratic society. True democracy requires free expression. In fact, this free expression gives the clearest recourse to hateful speech.

When we find a statement that we find deeply offensive, the solution is to use our own freedom of expression to show opposition to the message, not to seek legal punishment for the speaker. Silencing those with whom we disagree is not the appropriate way to achieve the goals of social progressivism. Rather, we must use our own protected speech to express anger, outrage

Reform the Lawn selection process

A hybrid application and lottery system will resolve issues of disproportionate representation and equalize the playing field for all students

Living on the Lawn during your fourth year is widely recognized as one of the highest honors at the University. The Office of the Dean of Students — which administers the selections process — proclaims that it “recognizes students for unselfish service to the University and Charlottesville/ Albemarle County communities, and achievement in their respective fields of activity and academics.” To live on the Lawn, students must submit an application to the 60-person Lawn Selection Committee, which then ranks all the applicants. The 47 top-ranked applicants are then selected as residents.

Ideally, such a system would provide an equal playing field for all applicants. The incumbent system is well-intentioned in its efforts to do this — the selection committee is composed solely of students, and a wide variety of student organizations — from student self-governance institutions to multicultural groups — are represented. However, the current process — specifically its use of the ranking system — does not adequately provide an equal opportunity to all applicants. It specifically disadvantages transfer students, student workers

and first-generation and low-income students. The Lawn selection process must be reformed to randomize the final selection of Lawn residents and ensure an equal playing field for all students.

While ODOS encourages all students to apply, regardless of their academic or extracurricular background, the process is wildly self-selecting. The culture of the

While ranking applicants based on the supposed quality of their service to the community seems reasonable on paper, in practice it disadvantages students who have shorter — not necessarily weaker — resumes or who worked as student employees. Privileged students who had the means to engage in extracurricular activities will often times be overvalued, while students

unfortunate or unlucky at best, and it is implicit bias in action at worst.

The University can alleviate these issues with the Lawn selection process by reforming the system and adopting a hybrid approach — with students submitting some initial form in order to be entered into a randomized lottery system, and with final decisions left to chance. As opposed to the ranking system,

Getting paid for work does not negate its importance to the functioning of our community. Selection committee members would not be asked to rank whether a student working the circulation desk in Clemons Library is more deserving than a student adjudicating Honor offenses. Both are equally essential to the functioning of the University — one supporting our academic integrity, and the other strengthening our system of student self-governance — and thus both deserve equal chances to live on the Lawn.

Reforming an already difficult-to-construct selection system is no easy task. The University must ensure an equal playing field for all students, a diverse applicant pool and a Lawn cohort which more adequately reflects the University community.

“The Lawn selection process must be reformed to randomize the final selection of Lawn residents and ensure an equal playing field for all students.”

University has constructed a stereotype for Lawn residents — a specific type of person, if you will — and prospective applicants are often deterred from applying because they think they don't fit who or what the Selection Committee is looking for. Their GPA is too low, they aren't as involved as some of their peers or they participated in non-traditional forms of student engagement. The current selection process reinforces this — the act of ranking students inherently and arbitrarily values some students over others.

who had to work student jobs will nearly always be undervalued. Students who transferred their second or third year will be looked down upon as lesser-quality students.

Ranking students based on their achievements inevitably results in social bias. The requisite “unselfish service” students are expected to perform can be done by anyone and in any way. It is not exclusive to students in the upper echelons of student-self governance institutions or enrolled in the so-called elite major programs. The ranking system is

a hybrid system ensures that Lawn residents will still be actively engaged in the community while also eliminating the implicit biases against transfer students, student workers and first-generation and low-income students. Removing the ranking system removes many arbitrary personal biases and ensures the Lawn is accessible to all students — regardless of when they started their journey at the University or whether or not they checked the boxes on the metaphorical Lawn checklist.

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HUMOR

Making new friends as a first year in the time of COVID-19

Life as a first year is tough enough. Making new friends is part of the challenge. Throw in the possibility that any non-online new friend could be the source of serious life-threatening illness and any new interactions become even more fraught with peril. Do not fret, my yet-to-be new friends, I have successfully navigated these treacherous waters and I have five new friends — I think — it may be only one or two actually, but I don't think the honor code applies to exaggerating numbers in this context — and I am here to share some strategies to guide you in finding new friends.

1. While going about your daily activities, under no circumstance should you acknowledge the presence of anyone else who might be around you unless you already know that person. Not in the hallways, not on the lawn and critically never in the dining halls. Ignoring everybody will make you seem mysterious and

cool so that everyone is bound to come over and want to talk to you.

2. Do your utmost to make all facial expressions only with your mouth and only when wearing a mask. No frowns or raised eyebrows or eyes that glisten. This is CRUCIAL. Some argue this does not work because others cannot react to your nuanced or not nuanced responses to them. That's the point. Keep your facial expressions to yourself. Don't let potential new friends get an advantage by letting them see the real you — they may not like what they see. Keeping your new friends in the dark about how you are reacting reinforces your efforts from the preceding paragraph and you remain an enigma everybody is dying to figure out.

3. Ask all potential new friends what their favorite place is to eat on Grounds. If they say Observatory Hill, end the conversation — you don't want to be friends with them.

If they are creative and unique and say Castle or Newcomb continue the conversation — they have potential in the “new friends” category. IF THEY SAY RUNK, RUN, AND I MEAN RUN AS FAR AND AS FAST AS YOU CAN. They most likely live in the wasteland that is Gooch-Dillard and nobody is worth the seemingly endless walk to that faraway land.

4. This is a big one. If there is someone you think is cool in your Zoom class, you need to use this beautifully-crafted opener — “I have no friends and am socially awkward so please be my friend.” This never fails. It lets this person know your priorities right away, most definitely evokes sympathy and if they are from one of the many cultural backgrounds driven by guilt — like I am — they will have to talk to you. Also, a very important part of this step is to send the message in a public chat. That will not only demonstrate

your self-confidence, it will also let your professor know that you could not care less about how rocks are formed.

5. Next up, one of the best places to make new friends is in dorm showers. I am not talking about showering together, but rather showering separately while enduring a similar painful experience. It is said that nothing unites like a common enemy. In this case that enemy is a cramped, fungus-infected space, shooting cold water at you while you are completely exposed physically. The person in the nearby shower stall feels the same way as you do — what the f—k am I doing here? There is no better time to make a new friend because you both are pissed-off and willing to let down your guards. Scream at the cold water if you need to, and the other person may join in the chorus, and soon you are friends, if only for the moment. While you and your potential new friend have

your guards down, this may be the opportune time to convince them that you are not actually some weird person who spends time writing a humor column in your dorm room by yourself.

6. Finally, if all else fails there is one person who must be your friend. Just walk out of your room and down the hall. Knock obnoxiously loudly on the RA's door. They can't ignore you, and they can't ditch you or pretend you are not there. It is their job to be your friend. BOOM! Instant new friend. You're welcome.

It's time to stop reading and go make some friends. Good luck my potential new friends and I will understand if none of you want to hang with me.

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CARTOON

‘Survivor: U.Va. Edition’

Ruma Jadhav | Cartoonist



PUZZLES

WEEKLY CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Aaron Rose | Puzzle Master

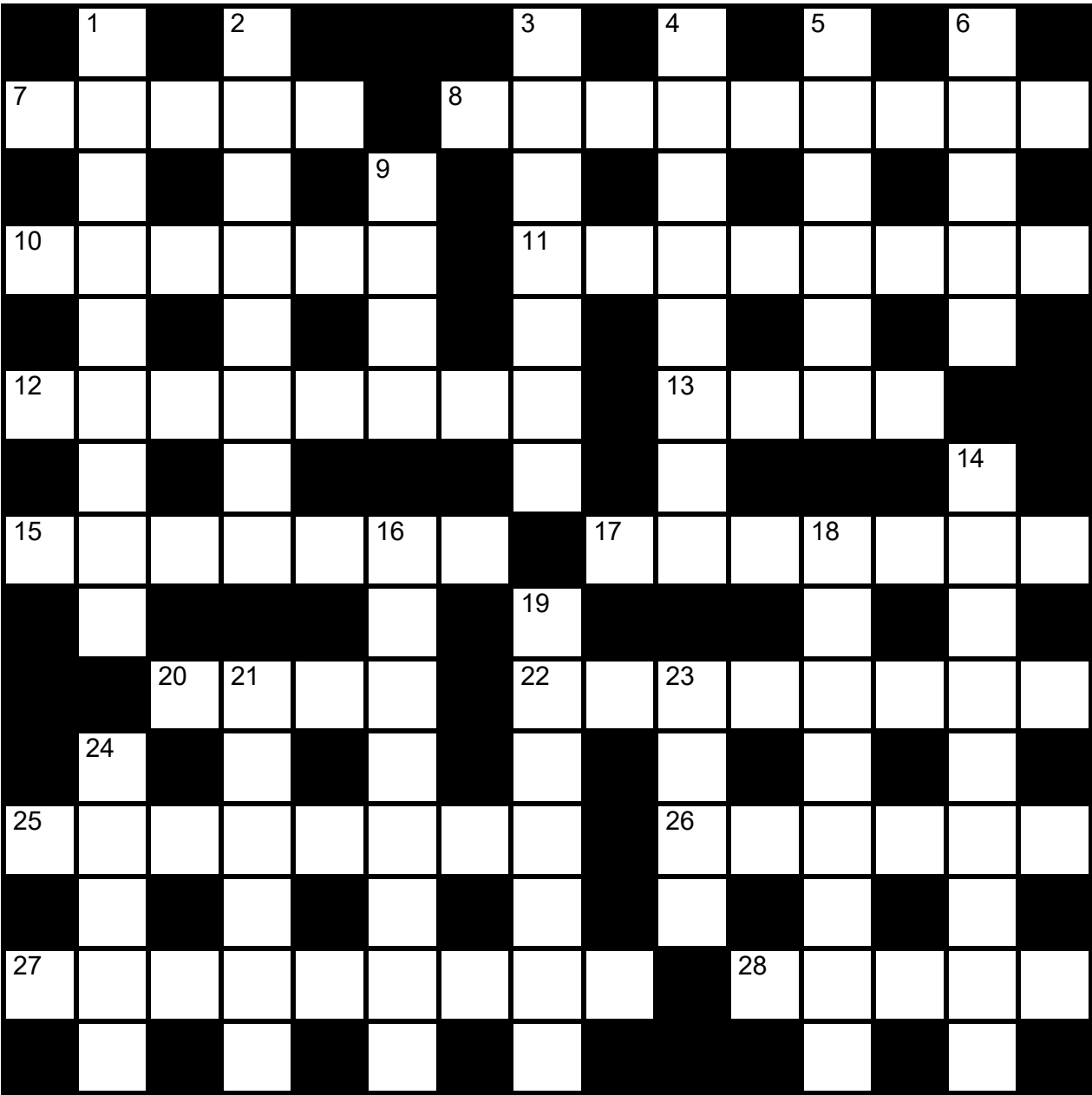
* THE SOLUTION TO THIS PUZZLE CAN BE FOUND IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Across

7. Word that can describe a burning object or, metaphorically, a person's passions.
8. To imitate a past event or action; typically used in reference to modern people recreating a historical event. (past tense)
10. A photo taken of yourself by yourself; might be good content for an Instagram post.
11. An app that allows you to send files too large to send over a regular email.
12. In order to start a vehicle, you must turn your key inside the -----.
13. As opposed to far.
15. Every fall, tourists flock to the forests of New England to see color-changing leaves known collectively as -----.
17. Massachusetts peninsula known for its beaches and lighthouses; Provincetown is located at its tip. (Two words)
20. A main type of blood vessel that literally gets to the heart of the matter; not an artery nor a capillary.
22. A tall pillar with a light at the top, typically stationed at street corners to help people see at night.
25. A barbecue staple made with meat cut from the belly of a pig.
26. Generally, a break; in elementary school, probably your favorite part of the day.
27. If you attend the Kentucky Derby, you'll probably see this type of minty cocktail being enjoyed by spectators. (Two words)
28. Massachusetts town infamous for its 17th-century witch trials; now a tourist destination (especially in October).

Down

1. Even though the fire was out, the dying embers let out an ----- that provided a dim source of light. / Also, a Taylor Swift song.
2. Illicit art, or a type of art in itself.
3. Home state of Ben & Jerry's, President Calvin Coolidge, and Senator Bernie Sanders.
4. A sign or symbol usually denoting an achievement or rank.
5. National park located in Maine; known for its dramatic seaside cliffs.
6. A yellow citrus fruit that life may serve you, as the saying goes.
9. Legendary monster; also, a cup brand.
14. To be controlled by a demon or other supernatural force.
16. As opposed to frugal, miserly.
18. Outstanding, even better than usual.
19. A dog may have this fall out of its mouth if it has enough saliva.
21. A series of printed mistakes.
23. Word used to signify something meager or of little importance.
24. Spare the rod, ----- the child.



* SOLUTION FROM SEPT. 17 ISSUE



SPORTS

VAF continues to play a critical role during the pandemic

The Virginia Athletics Foundation's 2020 Annual Fund had accumulated \$16.5 million in total pledges as of the end of August

Vignesh Mulay | Sports Editor

Operating a high-level college athletics department isn't cheap. According to Virginia Athletics' most recent annual financial report filed to the NCAA, the department's operating expenses totaled \$112.6 million during the 2018-2019 reporting year. To cover these costs, Virginia relies in part on contributions, which added up to \$26.9 million in fiscal year 2019 and is the department's largest revenue stream.

A significant portion of these contributions are funds raised by the Virginia Athletics Foundation. With the goal of supporting "a preeminent intercollegiate athletics program at the University of Virginia," the VAF is a vital source of funding for the athletics department.

The VAF's primary responsibility is managing and growing the Annual Fund, which financially supports Virginia Athletics in a number of ways. Over the course of 2019, the VAF raised over \$18 million for its Annual Fund. In 2020, the VAF's fundraising goal is \$20 million, and as of the end of last month, the total sits at \$16.5 million, or 82.5 percent of the goal.

"Our donors have been very supportive so far this year, and we hope to have a strong finish over the next three months," VAF Executive Director Dirk Katstra said.

Specifically, the Annual Fund pays for the majority of Virginia's grant-in-aid costs, which consist of the 316.6 athletic scholarships Virginia distributes to student-athletes across its 25 NCAA-sanctioned sports.

"The largest annual expense [that the VAF supports] is the scholarship bill," Katstra said. "This year that expense is projected to be \$21 million. Eighty percent of that expense is funded by our annual fund and the other 20 percent is funded by endowed scholarships that donors have established."

In addition to scholarships, the Annual Fund supports a portion of the operational budgets of Virginia's Olympic sports — including recruiting, travel and equipment costs — as well as a portion of the academic affairs budget, which includes expenses related to tutoring, mentorship and other support services.

The Annual Fund includes "gifts made by U.Va. fans in-



COURTESY VIRGINIA ATHLETICS

Beyond funding athletic scholarships and facility renovations, the VAF also enables Virginia Athletics to enhance the game day environment for fans.

cluding alumni, student-athlete alumni, friends and businesses" according to the VAF's website. In 2019 particularly, over 11,000 donors contributed to the Annual Fund with University alumni contributing the most.

"The majority of our donors are U.Va. alumni — approximately two-thirds of our donor base are alumni," Katstra said. "We do have good support from student athlete alumni with over 2,300 former athletes making a contribution in 2019."

To incentivize contributions, VAF donors receive various benefits depending on their giving level. The more an individual donates, the greater the value of the benefits provided to them. For example, donors may receive priority season tickets and reserved parking spaces for football, men's basketball and women's basketball games if their donation amount is large enough.

"Approximately half of our donor base are season ticket holders as well," Katstra said. "The other half make contributions but do not access season ticket or parking benefits. Almost 60 percent of the annual fund is generated by donors contributing \$6,200 or more."

Beyond the Annual Fund, the

VAF raises funds in other forms as well, including endowments for designated purposes and gift commitments to support the Virginia Athletics Master Plan.

Similar to many other fundraising organizations across the United States, the VAF has been affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic crisis. The VAF staff has been working remotely for nearly seven months, conducting business by phone, email or Zoom. While Katstra says that the staff has adjusted well to the unique circumstances, he admits that the VAF prefers to meet with donors in person and that interacting with them virtually isn't as effective.

In terms of the VAF's 2020 outlook, Katstra noted that, "compared to this time last year, [they have] had a decline in number of donors and a slight decline in actual contributions made so far this year."

"During the last recession of 2008 to 2010, we experienced a decline of approximately 20 percent in the annual fund, and it didn't stabilize and begin to grow again until 2011 and 2012," Katstra said. "So far, we have not seen a decline that steep."

Katstra added that the VAF

will not realize the full impact of the pandemic and recession until the end of 2020 when their fundraising year is complete.

Through thick and thin, the VAF depends on thousands of supporters who are passionate and enthusiastic about Virginia Athletics. Many of these donors are individuals and families whose desire to donate is driven by their connection to the University and their love for Virginia sports.

Class of 2006 alumnus Mike Ihrig became a VAF member shortly after he graduated. While he joined with the goal of helping Virginia Athletics, he also appreciates the additional perks he receives for his donations.

"I became a member to support the entire athletic department," Ihrig said. "I enjoy watching all of our teams be successful on and off the field or court. It also doesn't hurt that I receive first access to postseason events — i.e. the 2019 Final Four."

Similar to Ihrig, Class of 1993 alumna Stephanie Willett-Smith and her husband, Mike Smith, also became VAF donors soon after they both graduated from the University. In their eyes, Virginia's "student athletes give so much of themselves to the teams

and the fans that it is important to continue to donate and support their efforts through VAF."

In particular, Willett-Smith noted that the VAF provides student-athletes with athletic scholarships as well as various other support services that otherwise wouldn't be available. She further mentioned that the University is already a challenging academic environment as is, and student-athletes have the additional responsibility of performing at a high level in their respective sports.

"VAF helps [student-athletes] balance these demands and ensures they are provided with critical services that allow them to excel both in the classroom and on the field," Willett-Smith said.

Looking ahead, the VAF's role will only increase in importance as the operating costs of the Virginia athletics department continue to rise. In the last 15 years, the scholarship bill has grown over 100 percent. More broadly, Virginia Athletics' total operating expenses have also increased year after year. Total expenses for 2018-2019 were almost \$6 million more than the year before, and over \$12 million more than 2016-2017.

Given that Virginia Athletics operates at a deficit — 2018-2019 expenses exceeded revenues by \$2.4 million — the VAF's ability to raise funds is essential to the financial sustainability of the athletics department.

Despite the challenges Virginia Athletics will face both in the present and the future, the department will be always able to count on a number of dedicated fans to continue supporting the teams and players they adore. Ihrig, Willett-Smith and her family along with many others have forged strong emotional ties with Virginia — ties that won't be broken anytime soon.

"We have always enjoyed college sports, more so than the professional leagues and have really enjoyed bringing our family to U.Va. sporting events over the years," Willett-Smith said. "As a family, we have made some of our greatest memories at U.Va. sporting events."

How Virginia can maximize Keytaon Thompson's talent

Making the most of the backup quarterback

Connor Lothrop | Sports Columnist



COURTESY VIRGINIA ATHLETICS

Junior quarterback Keytaon Thompson was an electric runner at Mississippi State, but often struggled to throw the ball against solid defenses.

Virginia football opened its season with a resounding 38-20 victory over Duke, relying on a balanced offense and several turnovers to defeat the Blue Devils (0-3, 0-3 ACC). Sophomore quarterback Brennan Armstrong led the way with a rushing score and two touchdown passes to freshman wide receiver Lavel Davis Jr. Junior running back Wayne Taulapapa topped 100 total yards and added two more touchdowns on the ground.

On the surface, it looks like the Virginia offense put up solid numbers — five touchdowns, 382 total yards and 25 first downs. However, when adjusted for context, those numbers become less impressive. The Cavaliers averaged an uninspiring average 5.36 yards per play, punted seven times and were held scoreless in the first and third quarters. Armstrong also threw a pair of ugly interceptions, including one where he rolled out to his left and lobbed the ball to a wide-open defender.

Duke's defense is not one of the better units Virginia will see this year. Top 25 teams like Clemson, Miami and North Carolina all await. Coach Bronco Mendenhall and offensive coordinator Robert Anae will need to get creative with how they deploy the offense going for-

ward. The key to unlocking that creativity may be an unlikely player — junior backup quarterback Keytaon Thompson.

Thompson is a graduate transfer who played three seasons at Mississippi State before coming to Charlottesville in the spring. Thompson was recruited out of New Orleans as the No. 7 dual-threat quarterback in the country in 2017 and showed great promise as a runner in college. As a passer, he's struggled with accuracy. His career completion rate is just 47.2 percent and he's often been unable to find receivers against solid coverage.

Over the summer, Thompson failed to beat out Armstrong for the starting quarterback job. Mendenhall chose the returning Armstrong due to his years of experience with the playbook and strong rapport with the receivers in an offseason warped by the coronavirus. Armstrong also plays a bit more like former starter Bryce Perkins with his powerful running and good decisions.

Before Virginia's season kicked off, Mendenhall subtly signaled that he may still use Thompson in games, even if it's not as the starting quarterback. Against Duke, inside the opposing 20-yard line, Thompson

lined up as a wide receiver several times but didn't touch the ball. He threw one pass, but it was on a trick play. Once the Cavaliers locked up the win and the reserves took the field, Thompson wasn't among them. Instead, junior quarterback Lindell Stone finished the game.

This isn't to say Thompson won't or shouldn't be used in this offense. Virginia has plenty of tough games on their schedule. If the offense is going to continue to be inconsistent, they'll need some creativity to open up space and move the ball. A talented athlete like Thompson can provide that. Here's how Mendenhall and Anae can use Thompson outside of the normal quarterback position.

Put him in the backfield with Armstrong

Thompson is a strong runner. At Mississippi, he averaged nearly seven yards per carry. He was often successful on designed runs up the middle or outside the tackles. Standing at 6-foot-4 and 215 pounds, he's big enough to take hits from patrolling linebackers and safeties and fast enough to work around them.

Last year's Baltimore Ravens are a good model as the team had some moderate success on plays where

their two mobile quarterbacks — Lamar Jackson and Robert Griffin III — and running back Mark Ingram lined up together in the backfield. This setup was nicknamed the "Heisman package" because all three players won the Heisman Trophy in college. This gave them the ability to pass or run with any of the three players via handoff, direct snap or option pitch. If the defense keyed on the run, then Baltimore could make a quick throw with either passer, using the other as a decoy.

Mendenhall could replicate this concept and create his own "Heisman package" with the threat of a pass from two quarterbacks or a rush from Thompson, Armstrong or Taulapapa. This could be effective near the goal line, where any of the three could power into the endzone or to help the offense move the ball. Mendenhall could also keep things simple and just let Thompson run a direct snap on occasion.

Let him throw

Mendenhall and Anae did let Thompson throw one pass on Saturday — it was just doomed to fail. Leading Duke in the middle of the fourth quarter, Mendenhall called for Thompson to motion into the backfield and throw a long pass

down the sideline into heavy coverage for an improbable pass-catcher — Armstrong. Virginia was lucky the ball wasn't intercepted.

While it wasn't executed perfectly against the Blue Devils, this idea has the potential to work for the Cavaliers. Just look at how the New Orleans Saints use Taysom Hill, hybrid quarterback and former Mendenhall protege. The Saints often line Hill up in a shotgun formation and use motion and play action concepts to spring receivers open for his big arm. This change of pace leads to many big plays week after week.

Thompson has plenty of arm strength and the velocity he puts on his passes is NFL-ready. But arm strength can only take him so far with his accuracy concerns. If Mendenhall and Anae can run two to three plays per game where they give Thompson a simple downfield option and tell him to sling it to receivers like the physical Davis or speedy junior Billy Kemp IV, Virginia could really catch some defenses off guard.

Use him as a distraction

Much of Hill's value to New Orleans is not his actual touches on offense — it's the threat of his touches. His mere presence on the field, combined with his versatility, makes defenses uncomfortable. They have to be ready for him to do almost anything on any play. That level of discomfort is a big advantage for the offense. The Saints have won over 75 percent of games since Hill's debut, partly because he adds an extra dimension to their offense despite playing just a quarter of their snaps.

Mendenhall should be able to emulate how the Saints use Hill with Thompson. Just having him on the field should concern defenses. Utilizing fakes, play-action and read options — where the quarterback decides whether to hand off the ball or run himself based on the defense — would force opposing defensive coordinators to account for Thompson whether he's catching, passing or running.

There are many ways for the Virginia coaching staff to involve Keytaon Thompson in this offense, even if Armstrong is the team's starting quarterback. Putting the ball in his hands, in any manner, can throw the defense off balance and give the edge to the Cavaliers. Even threatening to give him the ball can help the Cavaliers' offense. Virginia is going to play a lot of elite defenses this year that are capable of shutting down its offense, but with a little Keytaon and a lot of creativity, the Cavaliers can do some damage.

HEALTH & SCIENCE

Quantum computing assists study of genetic diseases

Professor Stephen Bekiranov developed an algorithm that involves quantum computations to study genetic diseases more efficiently

Anirudh Krishnan | Staff Writer

With the human genome consisting of over 6.4 billion base pairs, quantum computing may prove to be an efficient way to process genetic data. Stephan Bekiranov, computational biologist and associate professor, has developed an algorithm that utilizes a quantum computer in order to study genetic diseases. This algorithm was designed to introduce efficiencies in the computations by reducing the number of calculations performed in an operation. This breakthrough opens up possibilities for researchers in the medical and genetics field to crunch data in a more faster and efficient manner, paving the way for more medical breakthroughs to be made.

Genetic diseases arise when there are variations in DNA sequences when compared to normal sequences. According to Wei-Min Chen, associate professor of public health sciences and genetics expert, genetic disorders can be caused by mutations in one or multiple genes or by damage to chromosomes, which can occur due to errors in cell division or exposure to toxic substances such as alcohol or drugs. Additionally, a person may be missing a chromosome or have an extra one.

The millions of structural units that make up DNA are called nucleotides. Ultimately, it is imperative that scientists study and identify the nucleotide differences in DNA in order to develop ways to treat genetic diseases. However, genetic data is vast, so computations are essential for analyzing it.

“Computer algorithms can be more computationally efficient than before,” Chen said. “The genetic data are still growing exponentially, and even better computing technology is still needed.”

Like Chen, Bekiranov recognizes the need for faster mass computing technology as exponentially growing genetic data has led to millions of nucleotide differences.

“Just imagine datasets where you have billions of nucleotide variations across billions of people,” Bekiranov said. “If you can develop algorithms that are able to do computations over a vast data space, like a quantum computer, in principle you could introduce efficiencies in the com-



ANGELA CHEN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

putation.”

As opposed to classical computing, where information is processed through bits — ones or zeros — quantum computers analyze information through qubits, the basic unit of quantum information.

Let us imagine a scenario where we have to process 2 bits. There are 4 possible states that can exist for it: 00, 01, 10 and 11. A classical computer would have to go through each possibility. However, using a quantum computer, all four states would be considered synchronously by using laws of probability, where each state has an equal probability of occurring.

This is the key behind the efficiency in Bekiranov’s algorithm. Since genetic information is vast and often on the scale of billions of bits, the time taken to process data by his algorithm is exponentially reduced.

While a conventional computer would have to perform three billion operations on a computation of genetic data, this

algorithm would only take 32 operations in a quantum computer, thus leading to an exponential gain in processing time.

Bekiranov has a doctorate in theoretical physics and has studied quantum mechanics, but 20 years ago, he transitioned into computational biology, which has now been his focus of study. He has been working on this project in quantum computing for one year.

“As part of a collaboration with a colleague, we were working on the kind of the variations in the copy number of genomic segments,” Bekiranov said. “Turns out, you can have little bits of your genome kind of lost. Or you can actually have even extra copies in your cells.”

His colleague Mike McConnell, assistant professor in the department of biochemistry and molecular genetics, once inquired about the applications of quantum mechanics in their project. After approaching the National Institute of Health about the applications of quan-

um computing in biomedical and neuroscience research, Bekiranov’s team attended a series of workshops in order to gain

funding for their research. With the help of his colleague, Kunal Kathuria, postdoctoral research associate and scientist at Siebner Institute of Brain Development, Bekiranov was then able to develop the algorithm that could work on genomic data.

Even with the field of quantum computing still in its budding stage, Bekiranov’s and Kathuria’s work in developing this algorithm is an example of how breakthrough technology can be used to effectuate the research in the genetic and medical fields.

Bekiranov sees a broad future for the applications of quantum computing in biomedical research. From chemistry concepts such as density function theory, to biomolecule research in drug design, there are numerous applications that prove the important role of quantum computing in ongoing research today.

As for now, the powers of a quantum computer can be focused on furthering scientific findings.

“We have tons and tons of large data sets in biomedical research now, and the ability to do computations efficiently is where quantum computing fits in with genetics,” Bekiranov said.



CHECK OUT OUR LATEST EPISODE, “LOCKED IN”

U.Va. doctors promote STEM for underrepresented youth

Through STEM kits and an educational picture book about the pandemic, University doctors are fighting systemic racial barriers during COVID-19

Erica Szymanski | Staff Writer

University doctors have been hard at work on projects aimed at fighting underlying systemic barriers — both in education and resource access — that contribute to the lack of diversity seen in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

In one project, Assoc. Prof. of anesthesiology Ebony Jade Hilton and Leigh-Ann Webb, assistant professor of emergency medicine, co-authored the book “We’re going to be O.K.” to teach children how to stay safe during the pandemic while simultaneously promoting representation in STEM. Additionally, University pediatric gastroenterologist Sana Syed is working alongside Charlottesville City Schools to distribute STEM kits to over 1,500 elementary-aged children who otherwise have no access to STEM supplies at home.

The systemic barriers which these projects aim to fight coincide with diversity statistics from the University Health System, which reveal the severity of underrepresentation within STEM fields. According to Syed, the national average of faculty members from underrepresented minorities in the field of medicine is 7.19 percent while only 5.27 percent of the University’s School of Medicine are from underrepresented minorities, according to data from the University’s Diversity Dashboard from September 2020 — which was released early to The Cavalier Daily by Syed. This marginalization at the University faculty level reflects an urgent call-to-action to close this gap for future generations.

In the short span of 10 days, Hilton and Webb wrote “We’re going to be O.K.” for the COVID-19 Children’s eBook Competition hosted by Emory Global Health Institute. The colorful children’s book was illustrated by Ashleigh Corrin Webb, 2020 Ezra Jack Keats award-winning illustrator and Webb’s sister-in-law.

The story aims to educate young children about the pandemic through the eyes of a Black boy named Parker. Like many real-life students, Parker’s daily routine changes when the pandemic strikes and his science class presentation moves online. In the book, it is implied that both of Parker’s parents are doctors, so Parker learns about the science behind the pandemic from his mother, who also shares tips on keeping himself and others around him safe. Activity pages in the back of the book encourage children to journal about their feelings with an “I get to” section to help children focus on everything they still have the opportunity to do, despite what the pandemic has taken



COURTESY SANA SYED

University health care providers have teamed up with Charlottesville City Schools to deliver STEM kits to 1,500 kindergarten through fourth-grade students.

away.

The book received an honorable mention in the Emory competition and is available in English, Spanish, and soon, Arabic. All versions of the book, which was designed to be shared with youth, can be found under the resources tab on the website for GOODSTOCK Consulting, LLC, Hilton’s consulting business.

Hilton and Webb are not the only University faculty raising awareness for the lack of diversity in the STEM fields. Syed also recognized the importance of educating children in the STEM field from an early age, which is why she has devoted her spare time to fundraising for STEM boxes.

According to the initiative’s GoFundMe page, the STEM kits — which are meant to provide science resources to young people of color so they can engage in STEM studies— include basic supplies, such as a thermometer, measuring tape, scissors, Scotch tape and measuring cups.

Even though Syed’s STEM box fundraiser has exceeded its goal of \$30,000 for kit assembly, there is an ongoing need for additional funds to expand the initiative, and as a result, it is still accepting donations. The

next phase of the project will take the form of an after school mentoring program that meets in person, yet socially distanced for an hour each week.

Syed’s involvement with STEM kits is a direct response to the fear that the pandemic will further deter the STEM education of children from underrepresented groups, who may not have access to basic scientific materials in their own households.

Similar to Syed’s aim to increase STEM interest, Hilton and Webb’s “We’re going to be O.K.” also fosters a love of STEM. Hilton noted that the best way to peak a child’s interest in STEM is to introduce them to these concepts early on in life.

“It is as simple as exposure, which is again why in the beginning of the book, there was no hesitation in my mind to say that we are not going to call this virus anything but what its scientific name is,” Hilton said. “Exposing kids early on to the scientific methods, that’s the way you engage people to go into STEM.”

According to Hilton, a systemic barrier to educating underserved communities today is a ripple effect from the previous generation. Hilton herself is the daughter of a

single mother who never graduated from high school, who was in the third grade when schools were integrated and faced protesting parents and shotguns simply to enter her school building.

“That was throughout her elementary school, and how does that influence trust and feeling safe in school?” Hilton said when discussing her mother’s experience. “The fact that Black people actually finished school and some even went to college, I think is a testimony to a strength that I don’t know I have.”

Hilton explained that this is the crux of why people of color are not represented in STEM fields. If systemic barriers prevented underrepresented parents from finishing their own education, they may not be equipped to pass knowledge on to their own children as they never had the chance to acquire it. Therefore, Hilton said she has been brainstorming community engagement projects that would simultaneously teach STEM and life navigation skills to children and their parents.

“We can’t say, ‘Hey, parents show them!’ unless we teach the parents, too ... so they can fuel each other and support each other and the parents can understand how they can sup-

port their children,” Hilton said.

Despite the challenges that her mother faces in school, she exposed a young Hilton to science, allowing her to fall in love with it. This is why Hilton understands the importance of exposing pre-K kids to basic mathematics and science early on in life.

“Every child has that potential to be great,” Hilton said. “It’s just that we pick and choose which children to allow that greatness to flourish early on in life. If we’re waiting until someone is in high school or college... we missed out on the most vulnerable and the most influential times in life.”

Both the STEM kits and the children’s book serve as reminders that to close the racial gaps seen in STEM education, initiatives must begin today within our own communities.

“Everybody talks about running a marathon and not overstretching yourself, but at this point it’s a sprint,” Syed said. “If we are not agile and we don’t move things around, get things done, this whole generation of kids will get left behind, and it will disproportionately affect underrepresented minorities.”



**It's an
all-of-us
thing.**



**Wear a mask.
Wash your hands.
Maintain distance.**



FOR ALL OF US