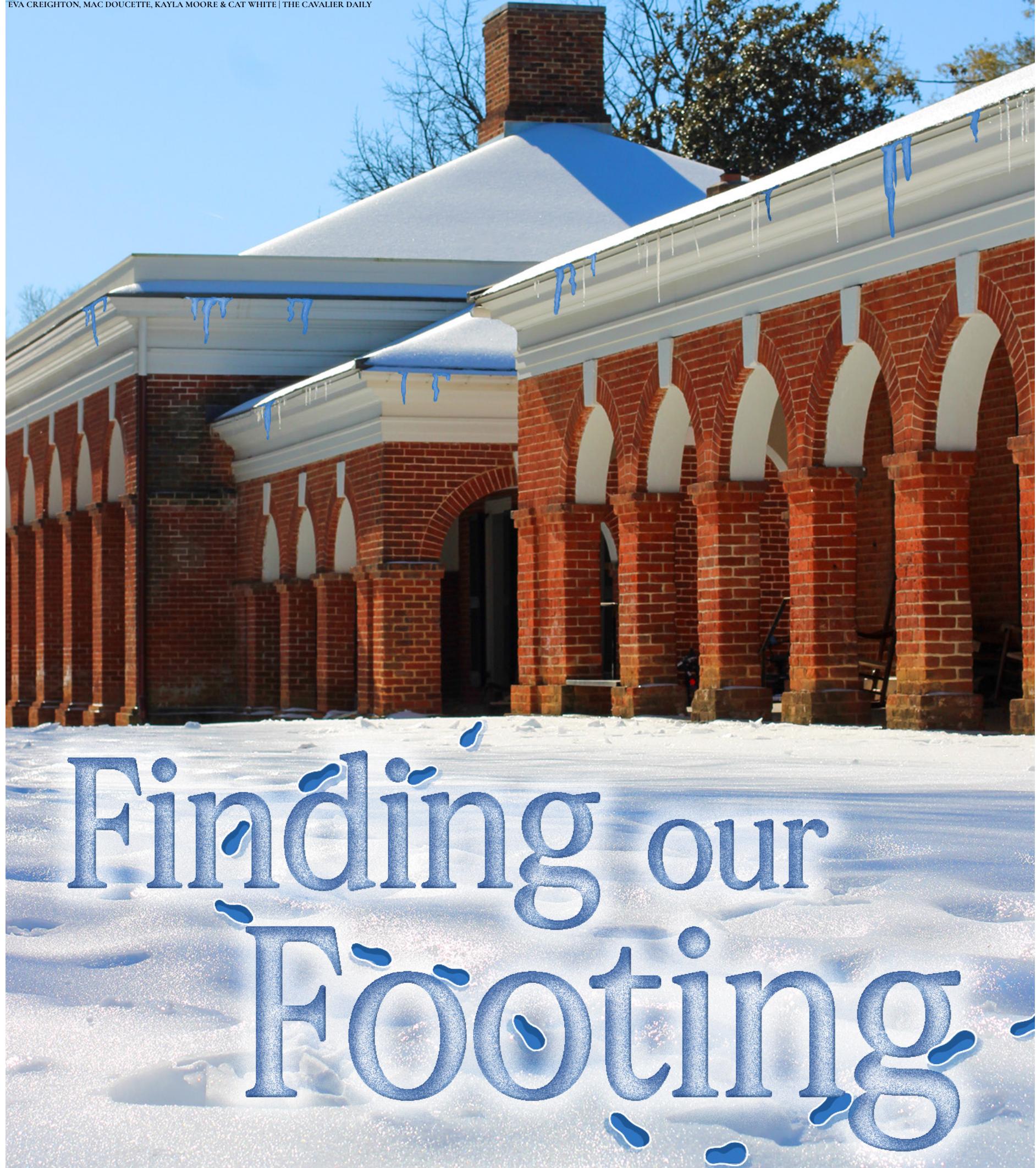


# THE CAVALIER DAILY

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EVA CREIGHTON, MAC DOUCETTE, KAYLA MOORE & CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY



# NEWS

## This week in-brief

CD News Staff

### Breaking down University President Scott Beardsley's contract

University President Scott Beardsley signed an employment agreement Dec. 19, upon his appointment as president by the Board of Visitors that same day. The agreement employs Beardsley through June 20, 2031, although the agreement says the Board can terminate this agreement earlier. Also according to the contract, Beardsley's annualized base salary is \$1.3 million, and he may accrue earned annual merit as well as inflation adjustment increases.

Obtained by The Cavalier Daily through a Freedom of Information Act request, Beardsley's contract explains that the Board can terminate Beardsley's employment at any time for cause — due to significant misconduct, fraudulent actions or misrepresentation of academic credentials — with a 2/3 vote of all Board members. Even without cause, the agreement says the Board may terminate the president's contract with a 2/3 vote, as the president serves "at the pleasure of the Board."

Duties outlined in Beardsley's contract nearly mimic those in former University President Jim Ryan's renewal contract signed March of 2022, and employment renewal details are also similar. Ryan's base salary in 2018 was \$750,000, and his salary in 2024 was \$912,200.

Beardsley's contract outlines that if he is terminated without cause, he is entitled to payments equal to his salary at the time of his termination for 12 months in addition to 12 months of sabbatical leave. Also if terminated without cause, Beardsley may still continue employment through the University on general faculty.

I.21      I.22      I.27

### Flu cases are on the rise in a severe seasonal outbreak

Influenza cases have increased rapidly over the past several months among members of the University and Charlottesville communities as well as across the Commonwealth. According to medical professionals from the University Medical Center, this year's strain of Flu has been spreading earlier and more rapidly than in previous years. Because of the severe nature of this year's flu season, medical professionals are advising students to get vaccinated and are implementing operational changes to slow the spread of flu across the health system.

According to the Flu Tracker on the Student Health and Wellness website, as of Saturday there have been over 40 diagnosed cases of influenza at Student Health and Wellness since the start of the semester.

Dr. Costi Sifri, UVa. Health epidemiologist and infectious disease physician, said that he regards this flu season as being more severe than normal — citing a rapid increase in the number of cases he's seen in both the University and Charlottesville community.

Sifri said he has observed a growing apprehension among patients and community members about receiving vaccinations, in part due to a growing amount of misinformation being shared about vaccinations. Sifri said that he is actively working with patients and the medical community to help educate patients on the benefits of vaccination and the best ways to keep themselves safe.

### Student Council calls for permanent athletic dining after JPJ closure

Student Council met Tuesday for their general body meeting to pass a resolution calling for the permanent establishment of an athletic dining option for student-athletes following the closure of the John Paul Jones athletic dining hall. Representatives also tabled three legislative pieces related to institutional stability during the University's presidential transition, restructuring of the internal affairs committee and amending the bylaws to include the HoosConcerned website.

Student Council members unanimously passed a resolution calling on the University to create a permanent student-athlete dining alternative. The JPJ athletic dining hall permanently closed at the end of the Fall semester, which has impacted meal accessibility for student-athletes. The meal plan provided student-athletes with one dinner swipe per day Sunday through Thursday.

While the athletic department has currently introduced a temporary solution — providing student-athletes with one catered meal per week — Noah Dyer, student-athlete representative and third-year Commerce student, said the temporary measure fails to replace the consistent access previously offered by the JPJ athletic dining hall. Dyer emphasized the importance of passing the resolution to create a student-athlete dining alternative to show formal support for student-athletes at the University.

Dyer plans to meet with Nicole Hall, senior associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students, to discuss permanent solutions on dining alternatives for student-athletes Jan. 28.

### Beardsley steps down as chair of provost search committee

Stephanie Rowley, William R. Kenan Jr. Education prof. and dean of the School of Education and Human Development, took over from University President Scott Beardsley as chair of the University's Executive Vice President and Provost Search Committee during a search committee meeting Thursday. In a statement to The Cavalier Daily, University Spokesperson Bethanie Glover said an additional change to the committee included the removal of Porter Wilkinson, former Vice Rector of the Board of Visitors and former Board representative of the search committee.

Beardsley announced in an email sent to the search committee Jan. 14 that Rowley would be taking over as chair. Additionally, Glover said new Board member Evans Poston took over Wilkinson's position as Board representative and that James Lambert, faculty representative to the Board, has also been added as a member to the EVP and provost search committee.

The University initially launched a nationwide search and formed a search committee Feb. 6, 2025 for the next EVP and provost after former University Provost Ian Baucom announced his resignation in January 2025. Brie Gertler has served as interim EVP and provost since Baucom's departure.

Glover said that the process of selecting the provost involves the search committee and the University Executive Search Group working together to recommend a candidate to the President for consideration. Following their recommendation, the President will propose the preferred finalist to be elected by the Board.

# Faculty commend Spanberger's appointments to Board

Faculty expressed satisfaction at the governor's early approach to University governance and shared hopes for the new Board to engage with community members

Lauren Seeliger and Luca Bailey | News Editor and Senior Writer

Several University faculty expressed approval after Gov. Abigail Spanberger (D) asked five University Board of Visitors members to resign and appointed 10 new Board members Jan. 17. Faculty who spoke with The Cavalier Daily emphasized lost confidence in the Board members who resigned and optimism that the new Board will prioritize better engagement with the University community.

Spanberger's appointments followed months of allegations from groups of faculty that the Board was behaving unfaithfully. Several groups, such as the Faculty Senate and the University's chapter of the American Association of University Professors, have released statements since former University President Jim Ryan's resignation. The groups claimed that the Board allowed the federal government to interfere with University politics and neglected to include faculty input in a rushed presidential search for University President Scott Beardsley, who was appointed Dec. 19.

Media Studies Prof. Siva Vaidyanathan said he was glad to see that the five Board members left office. He argued that they had a history of intentionally damaging the University's reputation and stability.

"The dominant Board members in 2025 consistently acted against the best interests of the University," Vaidyanathan said. "They consistently violated their fiduciary duty to enhance [its] reputation and ... they intentionally did it damage by driving Jim Ryan to resign ... I could not be more thrilled that Gov. Spanberger made it clear that they were not welcome to serve on the Board anymore."

Asst. English Prof. Laura Goldblatt had a similar view, saying she believes the previous Board did not recognize the need for University autonomy from federal overreach.

"From my perspective, it was clear that there were several members on the University's governing Board who did not believe that [the University] should have political autonomy from the federal government," Goldblatt said. "I'm glad to see that the people who were ... responsible for enacting ... damage are no longer on the Board."

The 10 new appointees come from a variety of fields — including law, business, medicine, government and nonprofits, and all are University alumni. Two are also former Board members — Carlos Brown, former Board vice rector, Class of 1996 and Law Class of 1999 alumnus and president of Dominion Energy, and Victoria Harker, chair of the Batten Foundation Advisory Board and Class of



DANIEL FISHER | THE CAVALIER DAILY

The Board of Visitors convened for a meeting Nov. 3, 2025.

1986 alumna.

Jeri Seidman, Faculty Senate chair and associate Commerce professor, said that Brown and Harker may help foster a more stable environment on the Board.

"I appreciated that a number of them had been previous Board of Visitors members," Seidman said. "I think in the current place of chaos, it's good to have people who have had prior experience on the Board."

Both Seidman and Politics Prof. David Leblang also emphasized their appreciation that the 10 appointed members appear to vary in their political perspectives. At least four have donated to Republican candidates or organizations in the past, nine have given to Democratic causes and at least three have given to both.

Leblang said the new members appear to be less partisan than the previous Board — which was constituted of members appointed by former Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) and in which all but one member donated overwhelmingly to Republican candidates and campaigns. Leblang said he believes the variety of political beliefs from Spanberger's appointees is a good thing, as an overly partisan Board would cause members to make politically motivated decisions rather than take action in support of the University's greater well-being.

"We need to depoliticize the ap-

pointment of governing boards," Leblang said. "[Politicization of the Board] is not good for the University, and it's not good for our ability to hire really outstanding leaders, because [our future leaders] would likely see themselves as being politically appointed."

Most interviewed faculty members said they thought Spanberger's reshaping of the Board was a sign that she is actively listening to voices within the University, such as from students, faculty and deans who have been critical of its leadership.

Walter Heinecke, immediate past president of the University's chapter of the AAUP and associate professor of Education and Human Development, expressed his belief that a particular coalition of state senators and organizations on Grounds put enough pressure on Board members for Spanberger to eventually request their resignations. Some of these coalitions, according to Heinecke, included the University's chapter of the AAUP, United Campus Workers of Virginia, Student Council and the Faculty Senate.

"I attribute all of [the resignations and appointments] to the work that the leaders in the Senate of the General Assembly have done over the past year, plus ... [that] coalition of faculty, staff and students," Heinecke said. "I think a lot of the credit should

go to the grassroots organizations and work done by those groups."

State senators had also expressed criticism to the Board regarding Beardsley's appointment, including State Sen. Creigh Deeds, D-Charlottesville, Senate President Pro Tempore Louise Lucas, D-Portsmouth and State Sen. Schuyler VanValkenburg, D-Henrico.

Faculty also shared their hopes for what this new Board will accomplish, with most saying they hope the Board will prioritize active engagement with community members in the future.

Seidman said the Faculty Senate called for the new Board to conduct an investigation into the presidential search process for Beardsley in a resolution Jan. 15.

Goldblatt said she hopes the newly constituted Board will be loyal to the institution and critical of Beardsley when necessary.

"[I hope this Board] wants to hear from people beyond just the president," Goldblatt said. "[I hope that it] is asking for testimony from a variety of constituencies ... and is able to answer back."

Asst. Engineering Prof. MC Forelle echoed the hope for the new Board to regain the trust of the University community.

"We want to see real collaboration between the administration and the workers of the University," Forelle

said. "We want to have a voice in how the University functions, and we are hopeful — especially given Governor Spanberger's rhetoric — that the people she appointed will mirror that rhetoric and begin rebuilding the trust between the Board of Visitors and the University community."

Vaidyanathan said that the resignations and appointments would also provide an ideal time for a new presidential search if Beardsley were to resign, as she said that could draw in candidates previously averse to applying.

"[If Beardsley resigned], this new Board [would get] to do what it should have ... done all along, which is conduct a fresh national search for the best possible president," Vaidyanathan said. "They can do that now, because all of these candidates who were scared to apply to a University with a hostile Board and a hostile governor ... would be flocking to be the president."

The 10 appointed Board members are permitted to begin serving immediately, according to Virginia law, but still require confirmation by the General Assembly. A rector and vice rector have not yet been elected by the Board, but a UVa. Today reported Jan. 20 that the Board will schedule a special meeting to elect members to those two roles in the coming days.

# Students reflect on ‘Batten Curve’ and its grading impact

Batten undergraduates describe mixed experiences with the school’s grade normalization policy, citing confusion about its purpose and inconsistency of its use

Brendon Bordwine | Senior Associate

The Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy’s grade normalization policy — commonly referred to by students as the “Batten Curve” — has remained a recurring point of discussion among Batten students. While some students say the curve has not significantly impacted their grades, many students said it is occasionally unclear when and how the curve will be applied, and some worry it might deter underclassmen from applying to the school.

Under the policy, Batten courses are guided by a grade normalization standard that aims for a class-wide mean GPA of approximately 3.5, rather than grading solely on raw scores or percentages.

A policy statement listed on all Batten course syllabi states, “The Frank Batten School has a grade distribution practice, with an emphasis on a well-distributed range of grades. Batten courses aim to have a mean grade that does not exceed a 3.5 grade point average.”

In a statement to The Cavalier Daily, Eileen Chou, associate dean for academic affairs and Public Policy professor at Batten, said the Batten School’s grading practice has remained consistent in its intent since it was introduced on syllabi in 2019, though the school has refined its language over time to improve clarity.

Chou shared with The Cavalier Daily a message that was sent to Batten faculty at the end of the Fall 2025 semester outlining the intent of the school’s grading practice.

“The Batten School has a grade distribution practice to support consistency and ensure that courses are designed as rigorous for the intended student population,” the message stated.

The message further stated that the school’s grade distribution practice is intended as guidance for professors rather than a mandatory curve.

“For all Batten courses, faculty are encouraged to aim for an average course GPA of 3.5 in the design of their courses,” the message stated. “Please note that this is a suggested grade distribution and is not a required curve. Please do not curve grades down simply to meet a grade distribution.”

The message also said that if grades at the end of the semester trend outside of the distribution, then faculty should contact the director of academic operations to discuss.

Chou also noted that administrators have met regularly with Batten student representatives in recent years to better understand

student experiences and answer questions about the grading policy. She added that a faculty committee has convened to examine the grading practice and its implications on student experience.

An analysis conducted by The Cavalier Daily of publicly available GPA data from Batten courses sourced from CourseForum and VA Grades between 2018 and 2024 found that the average GPA during that period was roughly 3.6. While the data does not capture how individual professors applied grade normalization in specific courses, the overall average roughly aligns with the school’s stated target under the policy.

The Cavalier Daily reached out to five faculty members for comment on the policy’s rationale and implementation, but did not receive any responses. The Cavalier Daily also interviewed multiple Batten students about their experiences with the curve, many of which cited confusion about how it operates and skepticism about its purpose and impact.

Faith Windbigler, president of the Batten Undergraduate Council and fourth-year Batten student, said that while many enrolled students ultimately find the curve less damaging than expected, it often looms large for students considering whether to apply to Batten with fears of their GPA dropping.

“As I was thinking about applying to Batten, I talked to a lot of people about my intentions to apply [and] I was immediately met with, ‘Oh, that’s really not a good pre-law major — have you heard about the Batten Curve?’” Windbigler said. “It was really disheartening, because [Batten] was why I came to U.Va.”

Windbigler said those concerns are reflected in student survey data collected last year. According to a 2024 survey of 122 Batten undergraduates conducted by the then-student body president, 74 percent of respondents said they would support removing the “Batten Curve.”

Third-year Batten student Jessica Drennan said she knows of several students who opted against Batten because of worries about maintaining a competitive GPA for postgraduate applications.

Despite this common fear, third-year Batten student Anila Noushin said the curve’s impact on grading is often overstated, especially among underclassmen considering applying to the school.

“I don’t think the ‘Batten Curve’ is something that should sway people or deter people from being in



MAC DOUCETTE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Garrett Hall, photographed Jan. 12.

Batten, because I don’t think it really hurts many people’s grades from my experience,” Noushin said.

Noushin said she first learned about the “Batten Curve” informally, often through peers rather than through official channels or introductory programming and had to seek information independently.

“I remember having to do research myself, and I feel like a lot of people also had this experience,” Noushin said. “A lot of us didn’t really know what it meant.”

Other students echoed that initial confusion. Drennan said the curve was often described in vague terms — such as being “a 3.5 curve” — without much explanation of how it actually functions in practice. She said that while she understood it generally involved grade adjustment, the mechanics were unclear early on.

Windbigler said much of that confusion stems from how the policy is communicated in classes. While the “Batten Curve” appears in syllabi, she said many professors do not explain how — or whether — they intend to apply it.

“What happens in many courses is it’s in the syllabus. It’s not addressed, and you either have to directly talk to the professor about what their specific curving policy is, or find out throughout the semester,” Windbigler said.

Drennan also said that while the curve is referenced as a school-wide policy, its implementation can

vary significantly by course and professor, sometimes making it difficult to track academic standing throughout the semester.

“It’s pretty confusing. You don’t really have a clear picture of what your grade is in the class most of the time, until the very end,” Drennan said.

Despite confusion around grading mechanics, Drennan said she did not feel professors were intentionally trying to penalize students through the policy, and said that so far she has not been upset with how the curve is applied in her courses.

Drennan also said that she recognizes the potential academic value in grading systems that emphasize feedback over uniformly high grades, arguing that constructive criticism can be more beneficial than consistently receiving top marks without reflection.

“It does encourage you to work maybe a little bit harder,” Drennan said. “I think it’s better to get a lower grade on an assignment but have feedback and know how to improve ... than to just always be getting an A and never really question what you’re doing. So I can see definitely the value in it in that way.”

Beyond GPA concerns, Windbigler shared a quote from a student who participated in the 2024 survey regarding the “Batten Curve” who said the curve affects how students approach collaboration in Batten classes.

“In my opinion, the curve

strongly disincentivizes true collaboration between classmates, because helping someone else makes it harder to outperform them,” the quote stated. “This reality feels weird since Batten is full of group projects.”

Windbigler also said the curve can affect how faculty are recognized for their work with students.

“A lot of the best professors at Batten don’t use the curve, and that’s because they really invest so much in their students,” Windbigler said. “They’re meeting with students constantly, having really productive office hours and going out of their way to make sure students are supported.”

Additionally, Noushin noted the curve’s impact on course selection, particularly for electives and special topics courses. She said students often rely on informal guidance from upper-class students for course selection, who may recommend courses where professors do not apply the curve.

Looking forward, Windbigler said she believes Batten is beginning to seriously reconsider how the grading practice affects students.

“I do think there’s new momentum to really thoughtfully think about what this curve is doing to students,” Windbigler said. “[But] at the end of the day, the biggest harm is on student stress.”

# Student survey highlights favoritism in club recruitment

Out-of-state students reported feeling disadvantaged during club recruitment, citing stronger reliance on personal connections

Jayynn Perez | Senior Associate

Out-of-state students at the University reported feeling disproportionately disadvantaged during club recruitment compared to in-state students, according to a survey released to approximately 4,000 second-year students Oct. 8 by Student Council second-year College representative Hayden Matay. The survey aimed to examine perceptions of competitiveness, favoritism and accessibility within student organizations. Out-of-state respondents were far more likely to agree that club involvement depends on personal connections rather than individual qualifications.

The survey was created by Matay, who said that the project was prompted by personal experience and repeated conversations about exclusivity in student organizations. Many clubs on Grounds — especially business clubs — require students to submit applications and go through rounds of interviews, but Matay said the survey results showed that students feel acceptances are often based on prior connections to club members rather than the application they submit.

According to Matay, the survey also highlighted disparities in how students experience involvement in organizations on Grounds. He said that many students left the club recruitment process feeling discouraged and uncertain about their sense of belonging at the University.

"After the excitement of the club fair wears off and interview seasons for those competitive clubs blow over, I think a lot of students are a little bit disappointed, confused and disillusioned with the feeling maybe [they] didn't belong at UVa," Matay said.

Matay created the survey to explore what he saw as two related but distinct issues — a lack of available positions in selective organizations and a broader perception that the University's club culture is excessively competitive and exclusionary.

He explained that this first issue is inherent in the sense that there are too few spots in clubs to accommodate the number of students interested, but beyond that, according to Matay, club culture itself is described as competitive and "toxic."

Matay said he wanted to understand whether individual student perceptions align as a student body and identify where the most significant frustrations were concentrated.

The survey was structured to distinguish between general perceptions of club culture and students' firsthand experiences, with questions ranging from respondents' views on inclusivity to whether they had personally witnessed favoritism

during their club recruitment process. It received 286 responses and Matay emphasized that although the survey was self-selecting, it nonetheless revealed notable trends within club culture at the University.

According to the results, 60 percent of respondents held leadership roles in student organizations, and nearly 45 percent had participated in recruiting new members. About 70 percent of respondents were in-state students, while 30 percent were out-of-state — mirroring the University's enrollment demographics.

Matay said that one of the most significant findings was a divide between in-state and out-of-state students. Out-of-state respondents were far more likely to agree with the statement that "club involvement at UVa is more about who you know than what you bring to the table." According to Matay, the gap suggests that students who enter the University without established social networks may feel disadvantaged during club recruitment.

Matay said respondents also cited perceived racial and socioeconomic disparities within selective organizations, particularly in business-oriented clubs and Greek life, where respondents pointed to executive board connections and social networks as barriers to access.

Further, the survey repeatedly reported concerns regarding potential honor violations, including students sharing interview questions and applicants receiving preferential treatment due to personal connections in the clubs. Students also frequently identified commerce and consulting organizations as more competitive compared to other student organizations. However, Matay even noted volunteer organizations can be incredibly competitive as well, according to survey results.

While many respondents described feeling excluded by the club recruitment process, an anonymous respondent wrote that competitive recruitment reflects the realities of professional networking.

"It's about networking, which spoiler alert is how you get a job anywhere in the country," the respondent wrote. "You don't have to know someone to be able to network into a club. I think club recruitment should stay as it is."

Another anonymous respondent wrote that they had considered transferring from the University due to difficulties getting involved.

Other responses said that the competitive culture discouraged people from applying to clubs altogether.

Paige Ramsey, president of Profit with Purpose and second-year College student, discussed with The



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The office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, photographed Jan. 19.

Cavalier Daily her personal experience joining finance and consulting clubs. Ramsey is an in-state student, and she said she sought opportunities to develop client relationships and analytical skills through Profit with Purpose — a consulting club she described as a smaller, intentionally tight-knit club of around 50 members.

Ramsey completed a business administration internship prior to college, which she said helped her better understand the structure of interviews and the expectations placed on applications. She added that while technical knowledge from internships can provide a foundation and participating in interviews can help build skills, neither ensures acceptance into consulting clubs. According to Ramsey, the competitiveness of consulting clubs is a reflection of the business world.

"I think candidly the answer is yes [that recruitment is competitive]. There's many students drawn to pre-commerce or [economics] majors at UVa. ... It's similar to business-related jobs in the future — they're very competitive," Ramsey said.

Ramsey pointed to Profit with Purpose's application data between the fall and spring semesters as evidence of both demand and selectivity. During the fall recruitment cycle, the organization received 95 applications, conducted 49 interviews and accepted 27 students — a 28.4 percent acceptance rate — with

23 students ultimately joining as new members.

During the spring recruitment cycle, Profit with Purpose received 39 applications, interviewed 29 candidates and accepted 21 students, resulting in a higher acceptance rate of 53.8 percent despite a significantly smaller applicant pool, reflecting a contrast in semester interest.

Ramsey encouraged students to approach recruitment by understanding each club's mission statement and determining how their own skills or experiences align. She also advised students to showcase skills like working with a team through collaborative activities such as sports or summer jobs.

Anna Bartlett, research analyst for Smart Woman Securities and second-year College student, described her experience with The Cavalier Daily navigating commerce clubs as a student without a traditional business background. Bartlett is an out-of-state student, and she said she initially entered the University intending to pursue medicine but shifted toward finance after seeking a faster-paced, applied academic path.

She said that SWS differs from other highly competitive clubs as it is structured to support newcomers, providing a beginner-friendly environment that makes the organization feel more welcoming for women entering a male-dominated field.

"I think this is one of the only clubs that is only women, which I

think really does push me," Bartlett said. "Banking is such a male-dominated industry that it can be intimidating. I was able to fully be myself and ask questions that I would be too scared to ask in a room full of men who had already been doing this for forever."

Matay shared the survey's findings with Student Council and Student Affairs administrators in the fall. While administrators expressed interest in the issue, they noted that institutional action would require more comprehensive data from additional surveys.

Moving forward, Matay said he plans to continue discussions with representatives from the Honor Committee and the University Judiciary Committee to explore potential reforms. Despite these challenges, Matay said he remains committed to pursuing incremental change, acknowledging that club culture reflects an internal student issue that must be addressed by students.

"This is a problem that is driven by students and needs to be solved by students," Matay said. "The problems that we're feeling are mirrored in the real world, and it's our job to start fixing them now."

# LIFE

## Plan B without a price

Student Council and Student Health & Wellness launch free Plan B pilot program for students

Ingrid Gay | Life Editor

To many students, the Student Health & Wellness pharmacy is the go-to locale for inexpensive over-the-counter medications and prescriptions to pick up between classes. Now, there is a new benefit. As of Jan. 21, Student Council has launched a pilot program offering free generic Plan B to all students at SHW Pharmacy.

Formally announced in October, Student Council is covering the cost of one dosage of generic Plan B, an oral form of emergency contraception, for all students this semester. Also known as the “morning after pill,” Plan B is an over-the-counter form of emergency contraception specific to prevention of pregnancy after unprotected sex. The active drug within this medication and its generic counterparts is levonorgestrel — a synthetic progestin hormone similar to progesterone. Levonorgestrel regulates the menstrual cycle to minimize the chance of pregnancy by potentially 90 percent.

The program is spear-headed by Student Council’s Safety and Wellness agency. Led by co-chairs, fourth-year College student Shivangi Singh and third-year College student Rea Pillai, the Safety and Wellness agency is a group responsible for advocacy and access initiatives in healthcare. Similar to the agency’s free STI screenings, introduced as a pilot program in Fall 2023, the Plan B initiative maintains a focus on reproductive healthcare for students. According to the co-chairs, the Plan B initiative came to fruition after a semester’s worth of collaboration between the Student Council and medical personnel at SHW.

The primary goal of the Plan B initiative is to increase the access and availability of emergency contraception to students on Grounds. By eliminating the cost, Plan B will be less stressful to acquire for students in need of emergency contraception. Working alongside Student Council in these efforts is Chief Medical Officer Dr. Meredith Hayden and Danielle D’Andrea, Director for Marketing and Communications at SHW.

“The goal is to increase access to emergency contraception by eliminating cost barriers,” D’Andrea said in an email to The Cavalier Daily. “For some students, even a lower-cost option can be

difficult to afford, so offering a free alternative ensures they can access timely care when they need it most.”

This cost barrier can be a driving factor behind students choosing to forgo contraceptive action. Prior to the pilot program, SHW sold emergency contraception for \$9.26. Other locations close to Grounds, such as CVS on University Ave., sell Plan B and similar alternatives that cost between \$34.99 and \$59.99 before taxes. At Harris Teeter, the closest grocery store for many students at the University, Plan B costs \$49.99 pre-tax.

Cost is not the only barrier to efficiently purchasing Plan B. The medication is often placed in a lockbox at local pharmacies, which can create unwanted additional interactions at the counter during what is regarded for many to be a personal purchase, according to a third-year College student who asked to remain anonymous to speak freely about their experience purchasing Plan B.

During their experience purchasing Plan B — outside of this pilot program — the student found that the supply was placed inside a lockbox, requiring additional procedures and interactions in the check-out process to get access. To them, the high price not only hurt their wallet, but brought substantially more attention to their personal purchase.

“I feel like it shouldn’t be so expensive that it needs to be locked up,” the student said. “I remember feeling embarrassed, edging toward [being] ashamed ... I do remember just thinking ... [emergency contraception] should be more accessible. It shouldn’t be this much of a fuss.”

Another aspect to the Council’s pilot program is its added protection of anonymity, saving students from having their name tied to a purchase of Plan B. With typical credit card transactions, biographical information and data about the customer are made available to sellers. This pilot program eliminates that risk for those in need of emergency contraception, as no credit card is required for acquisition.

“Even when you are paying for [Plan B] with your credit card, it’s not anonymous,” Singh said. “It’s going into a system. But with this, you can just get it. There’s nothing [tracked] and there’s no measures.”



SHANE WAN | THE CAVALIER DAILY

The primary goal of the Plan B initiative is to increase the access and availability of emergency contraception to students on Grounds.

Not only is there no digital pay trail, but the SHW does not ask for any information, not even a name, at the checkout counter when a student comes to get an emergency contraceptive. Throughout the entire process, Student Council and SHW hope to ensure students feel as comfortable as possible when getting Plan B when it is necessary.

“A lot of students don’t want to deal with the bureaucratic measures,” Pillai said. “So just being a little bit more anonymized when it comes to accessing those resources can be really helpful, especially if there’s any prevalent stigma that may exist when it comes ... to emergency contraception.”

To ensure each user is properly informed, each Plan B distributed from SHW will come with a comprehensive pamphlet on contraceptive counseling, long-acting contraceptive options and other reproductive health resources. With more information given to students, D’Andrea believes that this will empower them to make the right choices for their own bodies.

“We consistently find that access to clear, accurate information empowers students,” D’Andrea said. “When students understand how emergency contraception

works, when to use it, and what their broader contraceptive options are, they feel more confident making choices that align with their own health goals.”

While there are comprehensive new measures surrounding the initiative, according to the anonymous student, there are still areas in which SHW and Student Council can improve the initiative. However, the student said they appreciate the effort made to ensure accessibility when students need to acquire emergency contraception.

“Student Health & Wellness doesn’t have self-checkout, so there is still a fact that you have to interact with someone, which for some people might be nerve racking,” the student said. “However ... I do think it’s better than having to go to the grocery store and ask someone to unlock it. It’s a lot more accessible, which I think should be the goal.”

Despite the high level of access and support this initiative provides for students, it remains unclear whether the Plan B initiative will continue long-term. Being a pilot program, the free Plan B is not confirmed to continue in future semesters. At this stage, Student Council has only approved and set aside \$5,000 for the ini-

tiative, covering over 800 doses, according to the co-chairs. Singh and Pillai noted that future funding for the program is contingent on students taking advantage of the service.

“When it comes to Plan B, we’re just trying to garner the interest [students have],” Pillai said. “If we see that the funds are being used, then we hope to make it a consistent program, so that students feel supported throughout the academic years.”

According to the co-chairs, the program has created a positive change by helping Plan B access be more broadly accepted as a form of healthcare. To them, this change matters regardless of whether this program continues. Thanks to the attention and support for this program, they hope that more students in need of reproductive healthcare will be able to access these resources.

“I think a part of the reason why we’ve had so much support is because there’s been a need for [emergency contraception] consistently,” Pillai said. “People have paid attention to that, and now that there’s a way to gain access to this healthcare resource.”

# A Southwestern, snow-day spin on Potatoes Au Gratin

This elevated comfort food is the perfect way to get you through the freezing weather

Malone Morschower | Staff Writer

There's no better way to warm up after spending a day sledding on Mad Bowl than eating a hot, hearty meal. One of my favorite snow-day dishes to make is this Southwestern twist on Potatoes Au Gratin, a wintry French classic. My mom taught me how to make this recipe, and I have countless memories of this incredible dish warming both my heart and my stomach. I truly hope it can do the same for you during "Snowmageddon."

Whether you are a potato fanatic, comfort-food lover or just foodie in general, these Potatoes au Gratin will knock your socks off. This classic French side consists of layers of thinly-sliced potatoes, which are baked in a creamy cheese sauce. The Southwestern spin comes from the addition of poblano peppers and Mexican cheese, elevating this traditional dish into something much more memorable. The peppers add a subtle heat and smokiness that makes the dish feel

special enough for a holiday table, but also relaxed enough for a snow-day dinner.

My mom's innovative cooking style is what inspired her to put a spin on this French classic. She doesn't stick to a recipe or plan, so, as you can imagine, it was difficult to get her to copy this recipe down on paper for me. Nevertheless, I succeeded, and I am excited to share it with you all just in time for more chilly winter days ahead.

**Prep Time:** 30 minutes

**Cook Time:** Approx. 85 minutes

**Yields:** About 15 servings

#### Ingredients:

- 2 poblano peppers
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 5 garlic cloves
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tablespoon Kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon ground black pepper
- 2 shallots
- 1 tablespoon thyme leaves
- 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups heavy cream

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup Mexican cheese
- 4 pounds russet potatoes
- 3 ounces gruyère
- 1 ounce Parmesan

#### Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil.
2. Place the two whole poblanos on the tray and drizzle each one with olive oil. Bake for 15 minutes.
3. Once cooled, slice the poblanos into small discs, around  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch each, and set aside.
4. Adjust the oven temperature to 325 degrees. Rub half a garlic clove around the baking dish for flavor. Then, spread two tablespoons of room-temperature butter on the bottom and sides of the pan with a baking brush. Set aside.
5. To make the cream mixture, add the heavy whipping cream, diced shallots, thyme, Kosher salt, ground pepper and the rest of the garlic cloves — once minced — to a saucepan. Simmer on low heat for 15 minutes, or until shallots and garlic are soft.
6. Fold the roasted poblano discs and Mexican cheese into the cream mixture and set aside.
7. Using a mandoline, sharp chef's knife or food processor with a slicing disk, slice the russet potatoes into discs about  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thick.
8. Place the thinly-sliced potatoes flatly on the bottom of the pan. When the bottom is covered, begin a new layer on top, creating around eight layers or until there are no more potatoes left.
9. Pour the cream mixture on top of the potatoes and cover the dish with aluminum foil. Then, bake the potatoes for 60 to 70 minutes, or until the potatoes are fork-tender.
10. Pull the potatoes out, re-

move the foil and sprinkle the gruyère and Parmesan cheeses on top. Then, put the dish back in the oven on the highest rack, and broil for five to 10 minutes, or until the cheese on top is melted and bubbly with some parts slightly brown.

While best served right out of the oven, these potatoes can also be refrigerated and enjoyed the next day. To reheat, bake for 10 minutes at 350 degrees.

What was once a side to a fancy cut of meat has become much more flexible. The Southwestern spin expands the dish's versatility, making it a natural companion to everything from a classic steak dinner to a casual cheeseburger — or even a way to elevate your weekly meal prep. So, grab your tool of choice and start slicing — I promise you do not want to wait any longer to try these.

# Returning students find their place at the University

How those outside the typical 18-22 undergraduate age range navigate life at the University

Patteson Branch | Staff Writer

If asked to describe an undergraduate student here on Grounds, most people would give a description representative of someone between the ages of 18 and 22. And though only 0.3 percent of the University's undergraduate population is over the age of 25, there is no age cap for attending the University. Despite this disparity, non-traditionally aged students bring unique experiences and insight to the student body, garnered from their adult lives prior to coming to the University.

Whether arriving at the University after serving in the military or transferring after several gap years, the following non-traditionally aged students work through the cycle of homework, studying and exams similar to their freshly-adult counterparts.

Fourth-year College student Edgar Hercila is 49 years old and pursuing a double major in Global Studies and English. Prior to his time on Grounds, he had a career of military service. A son of a Mexican immigrant, Hercila described a sense of gratitude toward the United States — a feeling that initially shaped his decision to serve in the military.

"I'm a first-generation American, so the idea of America as a privilege is very real to me. I had this feeling of expressing gratitude in life, [for] being an American was through service,"

Hercila said. "I knew very well where I came from. I know how I got here. I know where my life would have been had my dad decided not to come from Mexico to the U.S."

Hercila shared that after deployment, he struggled to transition from military to civilian life. During this time, Hercila said what kept him moving forward was his optimism with each passing day.

"I was immediately deployed out of training, and I was gone for a good while. When I came back ... [everything] that was going to be, ended up not being," Hercila said. "The house, the business, the fiancée, the child that was going to be and ended up not being and everything else, it was no more. I essentially [was] what you would describe as a homeless veteran ... that was my life, and I had to basically come to terms with this is my existence and start all over again."

Hercila then found new opportunities and veteran support. Thanks to the Posse Veterans Scholars program, a scholarship that enables accepted veterans to attend top universities, Hercila secured a place at the University. That opportunity, in combination with the GI Bill, have financially supported him during his time on Grounds.

Hercila's path to Grounds is just

one instance of a student who attended the University after military service. Similarly, Taylor Tremaine, a 31-year-old third-year College student, has both military service and time at community college on her resume prior to her arrival on Grounds. Like Hercila, the GI Bill has supported her journey as a University student — although the harsh pace of its courses was a transition.

"Being in the Navy made me want to seek out higher education, and since I had the opportunity with the GI Bill, I started off doing community college," Tremaine said. "But [classes at the University] have been brutal. I had a 4.0 for my two years in community college, and now I'm here wondering if I'm even going to be able to pass my classes."

In addition to difficulties adjusting to the University's academic rigor, Tremaine said that at times, it is challenging to connect with peers for group projects because others may perceive her as an outsider due to her age.

"I feel like everybody's scared when I tell them that I'm 31, because at first, they think I'm one of them, and then I say [my age], and then I feel like I'm the weird old person in the room — which can make group projects feel intimidating because I already feel like I'm

the odd one out," Tremaine said.

Resonating with Tremaine's feelings of isolation, Hercila said being a non-traditionally-aged undergraduate student can often come with a deep sense of loneliness.

"It's tough to integrate into the UVa. community. It's a young university, as you know, the population is very young, so the people that you would normally engage with [aren't] there," Hercila said. "I've been here for two and a half years, and this is one of the loneliest times I've had in my life."

Aside from military service, there are many other reasons students may return to the University to further their academic pursuits. For example, Kendall Moss is a 26-year-old fourth-year College student who has dedicated much of her young adult life to education. Since graduating high school early in 2017, she has studied at the Otis College of Art and Design in California and Piedmont Virginia Community College before attending the University. During her time in California, Moss said she became dissatisfied with her program and experience.

"At my art and design school, I really enjoyed what I was learning," Moss said. "But I found that I was fundamentally missing out on the university experience. [My mom] had been so

passionate about her experiences at a big university that was really the classic American university experience ... I kind of became dissatisfied with the experience I was having."

When Moss is not studying, she enjoys spending time with her sorority, Chi Omega. Despite the age difference between her and the other members of her pledge class, she said that most members have been welcoming.

"There's definitely a distinction there between me and my [pledge class]," Moss said. "I've had such a good experience in Greek life beyond what I expected. But there are also definitely times where I can feel that I have something different about me than maybe my closest peers."

Regardless of their unconventional educational paths, all three students have established a home within the University community. However, Hercila, Tremaine and Moss hope age will be less stigmatized among undergraduates at the University. While they constitute only a small portion of the undergraduate population, they bring an array of perspectives and rich experiences to Grounds.

"As far as experiences go, people can be kind of strange about [my age], which is funny, because in reality, we don't have that much [that is] different," Moss said.

# SPORTS

## Vivian Yang plays for her team, growth and ... elephants?

From a rain-soaked visit to a breakout fall, the transfer from Pepperdine is establishing herself as a real force in both singles and doubles

Thomas Baxter | Senior Associate

still came.

Opening the fall season with a pair of top-50 singles wins, Yang went 11-1 in singles and 7-2 in doubles to start the season. She earned qualification for the singles bracket of the NCAA Individual Championships at the Atlantic Regional, qualifying for the doubles bracket late at the Conference Masters.

But while other players took a week or two to train and rehab in preparation for the national tournament, Yang flew to Poland to represent New Zealand at the Billie Jean King Cup — a major international team tournament in women's tennis.

"I really just stayed present, and I didn't actually care that much about results," Yang said. "The Billie Jean King Cup was a really last-minute thing that came along. And I was like, 'this is such a good opportunity in my career' ... It's pretty crazy, being in a stadium with like 3,000 people cheering against you."

Arriving at the NCAA Championships tired, having barely had the chance to sleep in her quick-turnaround trip from Poland to Florida, Yang's first opponent was Spanish senior Carolina Gomez Alonso, representing Arkansas. After taking the first set 6-1, disaster struck when Yang rolled her ankle, struggling to move as well for the remainder of the match.

Knocked out of the singles bracket, Yang was still slated to play in the doubles one that started the following day, but was not sure if her body would let that happen.

"I was not going to step on the court," Yang said. "I couldn't do it, I was in so much pain ... I was on crutches when I got off the court and I [could] not even walk."

She still opted to warm up, if only to see what she was capable of and find out if there was a way she could give her partner, graduate student Melodie Collard, a shot in the tournament. Fortunately, Yang had a few weapons that did not require much movement — a strong lefty serve and a decent backhand she could hit off one foot — and that was enough.

"We just problem-solved," Yang said. "With what I had, I could lob, I could serve, I could hit the ball really hard without moving. And then we won."

Yang and Collard, hobbled by the former's injury, won their first match before falling in the second round in straight sets to the ultimate champions — junior Gabriella Broadfoot and freshman Victoria Osuigwe from NC State. The experience, though marking the end of the fall season, was re-



AHNA HAMPTON | THE CAVALIER DAILY

lative of the more challenging and competitive environment that had motivated Yang to come to Virginia, and what had driven her to such a successful first semester as a Cavalier.

The fall, despite strong on-court results and improvement, did not come without setbacks off of the court. After coming from a small, idyllic school in Pepperdine, where the balance between tennis and academics came more easily, Yang had to adjust to a more demanding workload. It took a lot of conviction for her to keep tennis and growth front and center, and though the academic adjustment was a challenge, Yang continued to remind herself that a key reason she chose Virginia was in order to get out of her comfort zone and push herself to higher levels.

According to Yang, there is no singular motivation that drives her to pursue tennis at such lengths. She wants to pursue professional tennis after her college career, and certainly has some of the tools to make that work. And while some might pursue tennis professionally for fame, economic success or any number of other reasons, Yang has her own added goal, one that she attributes to receiving a pair of elephant plushies at a young age.

Yang aims to leverage her professional career to build a big enough platform to start a foundation for protecting elephants, which she could promote and support using her resources. Given the high-level tennis tools she has honed over the past six months, her planned elephant-protect-

tion foundation is definitely a possibility. For now, though, her focus remains on improving and being a part of the Virginia program.

After spending her winter break treating injuries and visiting a friend at Princeton, Yang has started the spring season 3-1 in singles and 6-0 in doubles with Collard. She has maintained much of her fall momentum and is now cementing herself as a bona fide star on one of college tennis' best teams. She continues to find community in Charlottesville, including at Westminster Presbyterian Church — where she met a woman who hosted her on multiple holidays when she

could not get back to New Zealand — and in her team. For Yang, the coming spring season is just as much about her support system as anything that takes place on the court.

"Winning is important, but I think, to me, what is most important is cultivating yourself as an individual person, and being a better version of yourself than when [you] begin that process," Yang said. "If I look back in May, and I [can] say I've grown as a person, and if I have had more experience under my belt, and [have enjoyed] the season with the girls, to me that would be a really successful semester."

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# JPJ dining hall now defunct for Virginia student-athletes

For the first time in two decades, Virginia lacks a dedicated student-athlete dining facility

Aimee Crosbie and Lauren Seeliger | Sports Editor and News Editor

The University's John Paul Jones Arena housed a dedicated dining facility for student-athletes on the second floor of the arena, which shut down at the end of the Fall 2025 semester. Virginia Athletics attributed the shutdown of the JPJ dining hall to cost-saving efforts, though student-athletes have said this loss leaves a lack of food options and deprives the athletes of a community-building space.

The 7,900 square-foot dining hall opened in 2006 as part of JPJ to provide all student-athletes with a nutritious and convenient dining experience in proximity to their practice facilities. It was located one floor above the academic-athletic center, which has since relocated to the new Olympic Sports Center and Hardie Football Operations Center. During the academic year, JPJ dining hall served dinner five nights a week — Sunday through Thursday.

Although JPJ dining only offered a dinner service, for many student-athletes, the weeknight dinners also provided time to unwind as a team, build friendships and create a community across sports. Large narrow tables spanning the width of the room allowed teams to sit together in big groups and also mingle with members of other teams. Student-athletes often described the dining hall as a social hub each weeknight.

Many teams made it a routine to eat dinner together at JPJ after practice, which helped build camaraderie across class years. Ella Bathurst, former women's swimmer and Class of 2025 alumna, underscored the importance of these shared meals.

"One of my favorite things about JPJ was that regardless of what day of the week it was, if we had had practice or not, you could show up to JPJ and find someone to sit with, whether they were on your team or another team," Bathurst said. "It just really made you feel closer as an athletic department as a whole, which was really so special."

Kate Kelly, former rower and Class of 2024 and McIntire Class of 2025 alumna, said the JPJ dining hall provided the rowing team, one of the largest athletic teams, with a space to bond.

"I think that the social component will be harder to find for larger teams [without the JPJ dining hall]," Kelly said. "Especially, [with] rowing being such a large team, I think it was hard to actually have the chance to get to speak with everybody and really get to know everybody on the team [except at



BENVIN LOZADA | THE CAVALIER DAILY

John Paul Jones arena, photographed May 23, 2025.

the dining hall]."

The closure also impacts day-to-day convenience for student-athletes. JPJ is located nearby many training facilities, such as Disharoon Park, making it easy for student-athletes to migrate from practice to dinner seamlessly. Now, student-athletes may have to trek to dining halls that are farther away from practice facilities and have more limited hours. According to Bathurst, the nature of the food offered also made a difference.

"Compared to other dining halls, the food was much better at JPJ," Bathurst said. "You always knew that you were going to be able to get the nutrition that you needed to perform well the next day."

Virginia Athletics administrators cited financial and operational factors as the official reason for closing the JPJ dining hall. In a statement to The Cavalier Daily, associate athletic director for communications Erich Bacher explained that the decision was driven by unsustainable costs of operating the additional dining facility.

"In conjunction with the University, Athletics has made the decision to close the JPJ Dining Hall due to ongoing cost savings efforts," Bacher said. "Athletics administration has worked collaboratively with our head coaches, members

of the Student-Athlete Advisory [Committee] (SAAC) and the sports nutrition department to provide alternative solutions to ensure our student-athletes receive the nutritional support needed to compete at a championship level."

Kyle Montaperto, president of the SAAC and fourth-year Education student, echoed Bacher's reasoning during the Jan. 20 Student Council general body meeting. Montaperto said that because the ACC opted in to the House v. National Collegiate Athletic Association settlement, schools are now able to provide up to \$20.5 million in direct payments to athletes in the form of revenue sharing starting in the 2025-26 academic year. Virginia committed to distributing the maximum amount.

During the Student Council meeting, Montaperto said that the culmination of these settlement costs imposed on the University was largely the reason the school could not afford to keep the JPJ dining hall open, which he said was approximately a \$1.2 million operation annually.

While athletes like Bathurst and Kelly appreciated the dining hall at JPJ, for others, the facility simply was not necessary. Since football and both men's and women's basketball programs have their own separate dining areas and facilities, JPJ dining was primarily

serving Olympic sports athletes.

In the Student Council meeting Jan. 20, Noah Dyer, a student-athlete representative and third-year Commerce student, said that the athletic department has introduced a temporary solution — providing student-athletes with one catered meal per week. However, Dyer added that this measure fails to replace the consistency and convenience offered by the JPJ dining hall.

A resolution proposed to the Council by both Dyer and Montaperto called for the University to establish a permanent athletic dining option within an existing dining hall, such as Newcomb Dining Hall, to accommodate a dedicated student-athlete dining station. The proposal was unanimously passed, and next, Dyer and Montaperto plan to meet with Nicole Hall, senior associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students, to discuss potential permanent solutions regarding athletic dining Jan. 28.

The University's decision to close its athletic dining hall may impact recruiting efforts — particularly in Olympic sports — in the era of the transfer portal as well as NIL and revenue-sharing. When Carla Williams arrived as Athletic Director in 2017, one of her focuses was upgrading Virginia Athletics facilities, because recruits notice

when a school lacks amenities that others boast. Student-athletes such as Kelly mentioned this as a potential future concern.

"I do think that a big pull for some student-athletes is having that access to dining that's going to be consistent ... every time," Kelly said. "I can see a lot of the Olympic sports having a little bit of a harder time, just because I know that gave Virginia just a bit of a leg up in terms of what they're recruiting or what they could offer to recruits."

Former student-athletes expect that the dining hall will be missed. Kate Morris, former women's swimmer and Class of 2025 alumna, said that she feels "really, really disappointed" that upcoming student-athletes will not experience the dining hall.

"One of my other favorite memories was being a first-year, and all of us would go to JPJ on Sundays," Morris said. "I have vivid memories of the entire first-year class being at JPJ for probably almost three hours, like the entire time it was open ... we had nothing better to do besides hang out, and that was such a great atmosphere and environment to bring us together and bring us closer."

# MOLL: Amongst portal additions, watch for hidden gems

Three 2025 Cavaliers prove that impactful transfers can come from anywhere

Theo Moll | Senior Columnist

Just over a month ago, Virginia football stood victorious in Jacksonville, Fla. With a school-record 11th win in tow, that Saturday night marked a program high point — as the Cavalier Marching Band played off this historic football team, that final rendition of “The Good Old Song” signified a victory for Coach Tony Elliott and company. But it also meant something much less certain. With that song, the Cavaliers declared their participation in college football’s annual game of musical chairs — the transfer portal. With their respective entries, hundreds of college football players had already begun to circle a sea of empty roster spots.

The transfer portal is no stranger to any collegiate athletics fan — and it should be even more familiar to a follower of Virginia football’s 2025 campaign. The Cavaliers welcomed more than 30 transfers last offseason, overhauling a roster that had delivered yet another underwhelming, below-.500 season. The result of that transfer-heavy approach? Look no further than Virginia’s 11-win campaign.

Such success in Charlottesville set high expectations for the 2026 offseason — perhaps it paved the way for the

rollercoaster-esque portal experience that would ensue. Through December and early January, graduate defensive end Mitchell Melton and graduate safety Devin Neal declared for the NFL draft. Graduate quarterback Chandler Morris was denied a plea for an additional year of eligibility. Senior receiver Trell Harris and junior cornerback Emmanuel Karnley departed Charlottesville, also via the transfer portal. The Cavaliers had unconcealable holes across the depth chart.

Enter Virginia’s 28 incoming transfers — 13 of which came from other Power Four institutions. Among them are a former SEC starting quarterback, a difference-making linebacker from Baylor and an All-Big Ten Honorable Mention defensive back. Those newcomers — graduate student Beau Pribula, senior Matthew Fobbs-White and senior Brandy Hillman — will all make a difference this season. Virginia football certainly places confidence in these bigger names. But despite that faith, the program learned a valuable lesson in 2025 — sometimes the portal additions that receive the least attention make the biggest impact.

Graduate running back J'Mari Taylor is a perfect case study. Taylor

transferred to Charlottesville after four years at NC Central. There, the rusher shined. Taylor’s 1,800-plus ground yards with the program placed him amongst the top 10 career rushers in school history. Over 1,100 of those yards came in his final season with the Eagles, earning the running back the No. 4 slot on NC Central’s single-season leaderboard for the same statistic.

The only problem? Taylor’s impeccable production came at the FCS level. Recruiting site On3 ranked the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference product at No. 20 on the Cavaliers’ long list of incoming transfers.

Just one year later, Taylor had become the epitome of stability within a reigned Virginia offense — he was the only player to receive First-Team All-ACC honors for his regular-season conference champion Cavaliers. As of 2024, Virginia had been without a 1,000-yard rusher for six consecutive years. 2025 ended that streak as Taylor and his 1,062 ground yards enshrined their place in Virginia history.

But maybe the Cavaliers’ bellcow rusher constitutes an exception, rather than a rule.

Enter junior defensive back Jason Prevard — a transfer last season from

Morgan State. On3 ranked Prevard just two places below Taylor, at No. 22 on Virginia’s incoming transfer rankings. Despite making the All-MEAC second team in 2024 — coincidentally, Taylor made the All-MEAC first team the same year — Prevard’s FCS production was similarly underplayed.

Twelve games later, the defensive back had cemented himself as a stalwart within an eventually dominant secondary. The Cavaliers’ most exhilarating victory of the season — a double-overtime thriller against then-No. 8 Florida State — likely would not have gone Virginia’s way without Prevard’s two interceptions. Prevard’s All-ACC Honorable Mention further underscores his crucial role within the Cavalier secondary.

If the MEAC compatriots are not evidence enough, Virginia can turn to yet another unlikely producer in graduate defensive end Daniel Rickert. Rickert transferred to Charlottesville from Tennessee Tech — another FCS program. Despite an extensive resume that included a 2024 All-Ohio Valley Conference first team selection, a shared conference sack title and two forced fumbles, On3 did not bother formulating a transfer grade for Rick-

ert.

Continuing the pattern, though, the defensive end made the most of his 2025 campaign. Rickert led Virginia in both sacks and quarterback hits. On one of those sacks, Rickert even poked the ball free — but a Duke offensive lineman recovered the fumble before the strip sack could yield Cavalier results. Still, despite his under-the-radar transfer commitment, Rickert served as a force on the Virginia defensive line.

With the portal chaos largely having wound down, Virginia will soon have the chance to showcase its talent-evaluation abilities. Highly touted transfer additions often make significant contributions. Morris, Karnley and Melton were all impactful — Pribula, Fobbs-White and Hillman will be, too. But for each of those three, there is also a Taylor, a Prevard and a Rickert.

It is unknown exactly which of the Cavaliers’ many additions will turn out to be those hidden gems. But come September, the Cavalier faithful will learn their names.

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

### The story of the University’s Chapel bell-ringer and organist

Barbara Moore plays the organ for the University Chapel and University Baptist Church, along with fulfilling the responsibility of ringing the Chapel bell

Claire Seigler | Staff Writer

The University’s longest-playing organist has spent almost six decades filling both the University Chapel and University Baptist Church with music. Barbara Moore has played the piano since she was six years old, and began taking organ lessons when she was 14. Now, she teaches as a professor in the music department, serves as the Chapel’s organist coordinator and is responsible for ringing the Chapel bell, a role that has placed her at the center of some of the University’s most meaningful moments.

Most days, an audio recording of the Chapel bell rings across Grounds every hour, on the hour. But on certain special occasions, such as honoring the life of a person that has passed away, the automated bell is turned off for the day so the only chimes heard are played by Moore to honor that person and bring gravity and significance to the day.

Moore, along with the Chapel’s seven other approved organists, plays for events such as weddings, ceremonies and musical performances held in

the Chapel. She has performed at over 400 weddings in the Chapel and over 700 in total, with her first one being in the Chapel when she was just 16 years old. She reflected on how the organ’s versatility continues to draw her to the instrument.

“The organ is fun and it’s beautiful, and it’s called the ‘king of instruments’ for a reason,” Moore said. “It creates so many beautiful sounds from a whisper to glorious [music], even at the Chapel, where the organ is relatively small, but it’ll fill that room.”

Moore’s years of expertise have positioned her as a valuable teacher for musicians in the Charlottesville community interested in learning the craft of organ-playing. She instructs students in private lessons when her schedule allows, but Moore said she

will only teach already skilled pianists to play the organ because the instrument is so technically demanding. In addition to reading multiple staves of music, organists must coordinate their hands and feet simultaneously, a challenge that does not suit beginner

piano players.

In addition to her role as organist coordinator and instructor, Moore plays an instrument called a carillon — an enormous device made up of bells, batons and pedals — to ring the Chapel bell for ceremonies of remembrance observed by the University community. Although Moore is not a carillonneur by profession, the instrument’s similarities to an organ allow her to easily adapt to the instrument when she plays.

The carillon’s console is similar to the keyboard on an organ, but it is much smaller. An organ typically has two keyboards with 61 keys each and a pedalboard organists play with their feet with 32 notes. In contrast, the carillon does not have a pedalboard and only has 23 keys.

“[The console] looks like a toy piano, it’s a tiny one,” Moore said. “But you have enough keys to ring, and this [carillon] is complicated, so there’s all sorts of choices about the bells you ring.”

According to Moore, one of her

most frequent requests is to toll the Chapel bell in remembrance of a member of the Seven Society — one of the University’s secret societies — who has passed away. The Seven Society donated the original carillon to the University in 1957 for the purpose of honoring its members. When she is asked to fulfill this request, she receives a call from an anonymous contact that a member of the Sevens has died, and they schedule a time with Moore for the bell to be rung. The bell is rung in sets of seven tolls seven times, all seven seconds apart. Then, the “Good Old Song” is played on the carillon.

After a date for the bell-ringing is scheduled, the member’s family is invited to the ceremony to hear the tolling. Given that membership in the society is kept secret until death, the ringing of the Chapel bells marks the formal announcement of a person’s membership in the Sevens. Moore keeps a record of former Sevens members she has rung the bell for, which is kept in the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library.

Moore also tolls the bells each year on Nov. 13 in honor of D’Sean Perry, Lavel Davis Jr. and Devin Chandler in remembrance of the fatal on-Grounds shooting in 2022 that took the lives of these three former students. She plays “Amazing Grace,” followed by three chimes for each of the three young men.

“It’s such an honor,” Moore said. “It’s worth it to me to go up and do it .... It’s very moving .... The football team comes, the families come, Coach [Tony] Elliott comes and they sit and pray. Some of them are weeping.”

Though much of Moore’s work happens out of sight, the sound of the organ and the Chapel bell carries far beyond the walls where she plays. For many on Grounds, the music marks moments of celebration, reflection and loss. Through decades of service, Moore has helped shape the soundscape of the University, leaving a lasting imprint on its most meaningful moments.

# How HoosFits is refashioning UVa.'s club scene

The student-run fashion club celebrates and recognizes diverse student outfits around Grounds

Sofia Hahn | Staff Writer

While the University's club scene prides itself on a variety of offerings, it can often feel dominated by exclusive pre-professional organizations flocked to by students looking for extra lines on their resume. Simply getting into these clubs may require a certain stilted image, stifling authenticity. HoosFits, a fashion-oriented club of student photographers, videographers and graphic designers that took shape in September 2024, encourages the opposite.

The student group celebrates student fashion on Grounds, looking deeper into the unspoken expressions of individuality within one's day-to-day outfit. They are most known for their Instagram slideshows that portray impeccably dressed students, showcasing a range of styles as a microcosm for the student body's fashion. The handful featured on the page weekly are approached impromptu by the club's photographers who pick out peers sporting experimental, thoroughly accessorized and carefully curated outfits.

The group originated over a dinnertime conversation about a "fit check" — a short video recorded to show off a well put-together outfit. Justin Zhang, HoosFits President, co-founder and second-year College student explained what bore the idea.

"Another co-founder, Edmund ... was posting some fit check that he had on his personal story. I was like, 'Dude, do you want to do this for a UVa. account?'" Zhang said. "We just made the account [at] the dinner table."

The popularity of their Instagram page, now with over 1,600 followers, has made a photo in their slideshows an exciting badge of honor for the effortfully well-dressed. Its most recent gallery put a spotlight on nine students staying fashionably warm, some clad in glossy Dr. Martens boots and some in trucker hats, with teal-tinted full-body portraits taken from the Corner and the Amphitheatre.

Many arrive at the University flustered by the pressures of daily fashion, from former boarding school pupils with enforced uniforms to those intimidated by the common Southern 'preppy' motif. Additionally, as a smaller college town, Charlottesville may not necessarily provide exposure to a modern avant-garde fashion scene that undergrads can get involved with, both in terms of exploring their own tastes or professional avenues.

HoosFits is vital in filling in that gap in opportunity, providing a model for self-experimentation



HANIA RAZA | THE CAVALIER DAILY

in fashion choices. While venturing into new corners of a wardrobe can be a daunting task for many, the club and the students it celebrates serve to inspire that kind of dabbling in various styles.

Vice President of HoosFits and fourth-year College student Noel Sierra Hernandez said that when such experimentation is recognized and appreciated by the club's fashion enthusiasts, students become more willing to dress authentically in the first place.

"Since starting the page, a lot more people have been, I guess, willing to put themselves out there and dress up," Sierra Hernandez said. "We go up to people a lot of times ... and they'll be like, 'Oh, you guys are HoosFits. I've been wanting to be featured.'"

Zhang and Sierra Hernandez hope to capture and reward artistry and in fashion among the student body as a whole, which incites a celebration of diversity on Grounds. The two themselves have their own diverse fashion senses. Sierra Hernandez often dons heavy-duty workwear, which he considers abundant in his wardrobe due to his extracurricular tree service business. Zhang personally explores a range of clothing genres, but has an inclination for baggy denim and outdoorsy pieces.

Still, Zhang said that an important aspect of arranging their social media posts is acknowledging the

scope and variety of fashion seen on Grounds beyond their own tastes.

"We try to be as diversified as possible, because the point of the account and the club was to capture what UVa students are wearing, not just, you know, a specific genre that we're looking for," Zhang said.

Sierra Hernandez echoed this idea, emphasizing that any outfit can be aesthetically worthy of praise, regardless of the brands it is composed of.

"It's not really based on if they're wearing designer clothing or anything like that. It's just whether we think they look cool," Sierra Hernandez said. "[We don't] favor specific brands that we think that would exclude a lot of what UVa. people wear."

Hope for an inviting space also led the organization to develop relationships with other student-founded University arts clubs, such as the music club IndieHeads, the arts magazine VMag and fashion organization Runway. While addressing different niches, these other organizations carry the same mission as HoosFits — allowing students to be confident in their authentic self via the arts. Zhang explained that this shared goal is what leads to crossovers between the groups.

"We want to, together, sort of make sure that whoever is interested in fashion, they have a way to express themselves, through either us

or Runway or whatever covers their interest," Zhang said.

HoosFits' photographers occasionally document outfits at other clubs' events to form "lookbooks," preserving the intricately assembled regalia of a voguish night. In the fall, HoosFits paired with IndieHeads to host their own event — a party celebrating unconventional outfits, where attendees had to wear what they "couldn't wear anywhere else." Partygoers sported outdated One Direction merchandise, ties over their t-shirts, pirate-esque eye patches and anything else perceived too strange for class.

"It was just such a great feeling knowing that everybody was able to express themselves as much as they did there. It was a little different from, I think, your standard party," Sierra Hernandez said.

Beyond its dedication to the broader University community and fashion scene, HoosFits points its members to a range of opportunities for their own personal development. The club hosts weekly events where members can indulge in their fashion interests and develop creative skills in photography and graphic design. Zhang and Sierra Hernandez recently introduced a project where each member could produce their own Instagram post for the account on any topic with complete creative liberty.

Day to day, club members scour Grounds for snazzy students to

take pictures of, with a handful of repeating sites — like those hosting events put on by other creative student groups, or the School of Architecture — known for being fashionable. Though fun, this endeavor can pose its own unique personal challenges. After locating a student dashing enough to photograph, spontaneously approaching them on a crowded campus requires some poise — and risks rejection.

Overshadowing that awkward prospect is HoosFits' overall sense of acceptance, providing an inclusive space for every type of fashion connoisseur. Long-term, Zhang and Sierra Hernandez hope that the platform carries these ideals forward as it continues to quickly grow.

"We started literally just [as] friends who had interest in fashion ... We got to, upscale our members ... but that's where we're hoping our club's going. A lot of people who share interests, who are not afraid of being judged," Zhang said.

Applications are open for the organization's creative team, in videography and photography that highlights the University's panoramic fashion tastes. Nonetheless, anybody on Grounds, regardless of club affiliation, can further HoosFits' mission simply by proudly dressing as their true self.

# Virginia Film Festival elevates cinema in Year Round program

Between annual October festivals, VAFF offers a diverse selection of films at the Violet Crown theater

Alena Touve | Staff Writer



KAYLA MOORE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

On Feb. 3, the program will continue with "Immutable" at the Violet Crown and ensuing films will be announced throughout the year

Local cinephiles know that every October, Charlottesville's Virginia Film Festival offers five days of riveting cinematic programming, from exclusive looks at upcoming releases to throwback screenings. However, they may be unaware that VAFF's program continues well past its annual main event.

From January to August, VAFF's Year Round program showcases films that are not a part of the festival's official lineup, but still offer valuable artistic and social contributions. Summer releases, documentaries and foreign films are presented — each only once in the evening — throughout the eight months in the Violet Crown theater on the Downtown Mall. Free previews of A24's newest films are also screened, with "Materialists," "Eddington" and "The Legend of Ochi" exciting crowds in 2025.

Last year's eight-month program featured 13 films in total across a variety of formats and genres. Charlottesville director Chris Farina's documentary titled "A Bridge to Life" about an organization helping men dealing with life-threatening addiction issues was featured, as was Argentine surrealist film "Kill the Jockey" about a self-destructive horse racer.

VAFF Artistic Director Ilya Tovbis spoke to the importance of having a continuous program beyond the festival's isolated week in October.

"Our mission is not to show great films and have great conversations for a five day period," Tovbis said. "Our mission is really to use cinema ... to have important discussions of the day, and to do that as much as possible, engage our community throughout the year."

In 2026, the program began with "Magellan," a Portuguese-language historical drama by Filipino director Lav Diaz that follows Ferdinand Magellan, the explorer who led the first expedition to circumnavigate the Earth by ocean. In February, "Immutable," a documentary about students in the Washington Urban Debate League, will take center stage. The next films in the 2026 program have yet to be announced.

The Year Round lineup is determined by a variety of factors — a primary one being a film's release date. The October program provides showings of films ready to be screened but awaiting their official release, meaning its selections can only be from a specific time window. Films with schedules falling outside of that interval can find the opportunity to reach

moviegoers through a screening in the Year Round program.

Mainstream popularity can also affect a film's placement, as the steep competition within VAFF's five-day program can occasionally push large studio Oscar contenders ahead of smaller independent films such as "Immutable," making the Year Round program an opportunity for smaller films to find their audience. In this regard, films featured outside of October may cater more directly to cinematic and narrative niches that may have been buried within the dozens of films presented in less than a week at VAFF.

Artistic niches, whether in content or style, are certainly rewarded in the Year Round program, as Tovbis said there have been many instances of moviegoers driving more than an hour to see specific films inaccessible elsewhere. For the January screening of "Magellan," he recalled a woman who drove 90 minutes into Charlottesville to see the film, as it was not on-screen at other venues.

"That always warms my heart a little bit, because we are bringing content and bringing films that would otherwise not be shown in our community," Tovbis said.

Some of the most entertaining Year Round showings, exclusive to the program, have been paired screenings that combine new releases with older films. In 2025, Celine Song's "Materialists" was shown a week after Billy Wilder's "The Apartment," released more than six decades prior in 1960, as Song said Wilder's film served as inspiration for her romantic dramedy. Ari Aster's "Eddington" was paired with Clint Eastwood's 1992 film "Unforgiven," bringing two thought-provoking Westerns together.

Tovbis said these pairings can help bridge generational gaps, especially in the case of "Materialists" and "The Apartment," as they materialize the artistic dialogue occurring between works.

"As with art, or really any conversation, it doesn't start and end when the movie starts and ends," Tovbis said. "Any artist is always referring to art that's come in generations before ... And so it was a good opportunity to say, 'Hey, we think people might still find interest in this.'"

The festival's routine programming also grapples with socio-political movements, using both documentary and fiction films. While these themes are common in October's main event, the Year

Round program allows for a deeper exploration of such topics, as the more open selection window allows the curation team to assess how cultural issues are reflected or represented in their available films, and thus build a program that speaks to them in real time.

"We're responsive to what's out there," Tovbis said. "We have the luxury of sitting back and saying, 'Okay, what is current? What are people talking about?' And that's one of the really exciting parts for me ... ongoing contemporary conversation from artists and film."

VAFF's Year Round program expands the artistic diversity present in their five-day showcase in October across almost eight months of cinematic programming, elevating unique stories and creating special experiences for all those who attend.

On Feb. 3, the program will continue with "Immutable" at the Violet Crown and ensuing films will be announced throughout the year. Those interested in Year Round screenings should visit the VAFF website and sign up for their email list, or simply purchase tickets for individual events.

# PUZZLE

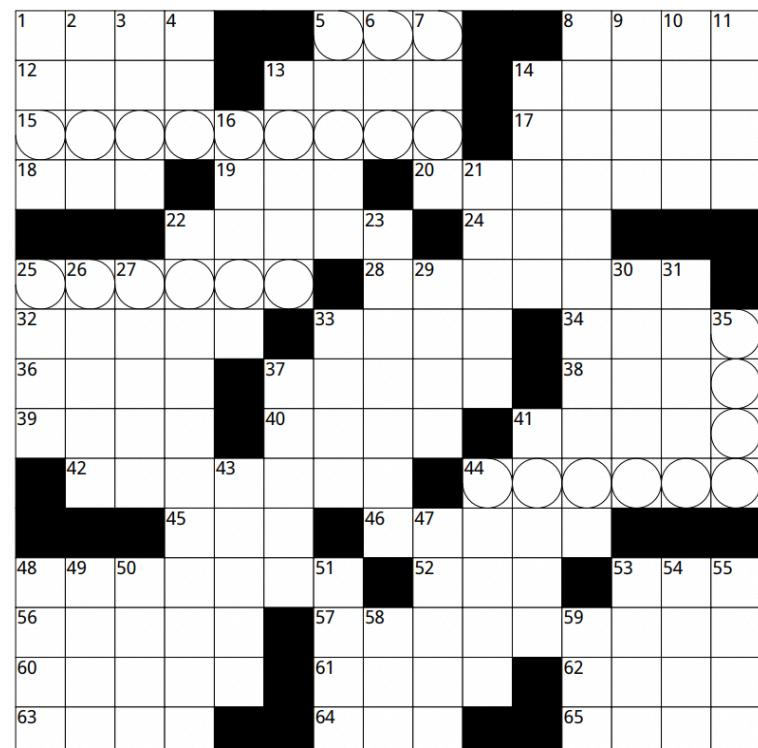
Joe Stern | Puzzlist

Answers are available on the digital version of this puzzle which is published at [www.cavalierdaily.com](http://www.cavalierdaily.com).**ACROSS**

- 1 ID scan noise  
 5 "The Catcher in the \_\_\_"  
 8 Split between a decision  
 12 Crusader stronghold or land measurement  
 13 "a-boo" preцder  
 14 How many houses are on "The Quad"  
 15 "Charlie and the \_\_\_ Factory  
 17 More large  
 18 Santa's laughs  
 19 \_\_\_ Bowl, site of the annual "Ginger Run"  
 20 "House of the Dragon," vis-à-vis "Game of Thrones"  
 22 Eliud Kipchoge's country  
 24 "So what?"  
 25 "A Clockwork \_\_\_"  
 28 Namesake of failed Civil War charge  
 32 Setting for "The Taming of the Shrew"  
 33 Church recess  
 34 Machinist Goldberg  
 36 Comedian André  
 37 Christianity symbol

**38** Toilet issue**39** Cousin of the onion**40** "A Streetcar Named Desire" director Kazan**41** Grasp on to**42** Arbitrated**44** "The \_\_\_ of Wrath"**45** Longoria of "Desperate Housewives"**46** Get ready for a drive?**48** Sweaty, like some pre-med students**52** "Losing My Religion"**53** Cleverness**56** Reacted to a bad referee call**57** Step-by-step guides**59** of sorts... or a hint to the missing words in the circled clues**60** Green growth**61** Elizabeth \_\_\_ Stanton**62** 42,775 miles squared for Virginia**63** What English majors do for homework**64** Data letters**65** Behind**DOWN**

- 1 German composer who had 20 children  
 2 THIS CLUE this clue  
 3 Love for the Greeks?  
 4 Chest muscle  
 5 "\_\_\_ or not, here I come!"  
 6 Thus far  
 7 Just makes, with "out"  
 8 Storm noise  
 9 Colloquial name for notably hard CHEM class  
 10 There's a Great Barrier one  
 11 Opposite of nothing, say  
 13 757, eg.  
 14 Tank preцder  
 16 "I am the Alpha and the \_\_\_"  
 21 Walks back and forth  
 22 Someone who might have their hand in their mouth, say  
 23 Name to a position, like the governor to the Board of Visitors

**25** German automobile manufacturer**26** Red, to pink**27** Grenoble goodbye**29** Actress Rae**30** Dutch flower**31** Steak type**33** Singer Guthrie**35** "Green \_\_\_ and Ham"**37** Lebanese tree**41** Cookie residue**43** Dodge**44** DC Comics or Marvel fans, maybe**47** Wear down**48** Ski lift**49** Odysseus, for Matt Damon**50** Downward dog activity**51** Three-fourths of M?**53** Donned**54** Furniture giant**55** Nicholas or Alexander**58** Porridge ingredient**59** Rower's lever

## THE CAVALIER DAILY

### THE CAVALIER DAILY

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# OPINION

## LEAD EDITORIAL

### UVa. must steady the ship against tidal waves of uncertainty

*With Gov. Spanberger's overstepping transformation of the Board of Visitors, the University's guiding principle must be stability over politics*

The University community began last semester clouded by uncertainty, with an interim University president, interim provost, interim CEO of UVa. Health and an illegitimate Board of Visitors. This semester has traded the instability of Board vacancies for the entrenchment of politicization at the University. Recently, Gov. Abigail Spanberger unprecedently pressured five members of the Board of Visitors to step down — including former Rector Rachel Sheridan and former Vice Rector Porter Wilkinson — and appointed 10 new members.

In some ways, Spanberger fulfilled pleas from the University community to fill Board vacancies. However, this anticipated moment of internal stability failed to materialize, and was instead spoiled by political maneuvering from the Spanberger administration — ousting five members and appointing 10, rather than simply filling five vacancies, does not stabilize the University's governance. Indeed, this University requires a steady, legitimate Board to navigate difficulties ahead.

But to inspire a productive future, the community must acknowledge the flaws of this Board transformation in order to hold future governors accountable to the deleterious forces of political overreach.

Since July of last year, our Board has dealt with unfathomable turmoil intensified by political interests, from negotiations with the Department of Justice to the forced removal of former University President Jim Ryan. Specifically, regarding the operation of the Board, political dissension with the Virginia General Assembly led to the rejection of five of former Gov. Glenn Youngkin's Board appointees. Operating with only 12 members over the past months, several stakeholders disputed the Board's legitimacy and compliance with Virginia law. Despite the spectrum of perspectives about this tumultuous period, many in the University community held a common hope — stability manifested through the filling of vacancies on the Board.

Although Spanberger called for depoliticization, her recent actions

have undermined this promise. The pressured removal of five members of the Board divided the University community along partisan lines once more. In effect, this demand led to precisely the partisan animosity this Editorial Board hoped Spanberger's election would prevent. Of course, it is Spanberger's responsibility to fill the vacancies on the Board, and appointing 10 new individuals will give the Board the statutorily-required amount of members for the first time since last summer. But this responsibility does not provide her with a mandate to manufacture a Board majority largely aligned with her own political interests.

Of course, former Rector Sheridan and former Vice Rector Wilkinson have a well-documented history of alleged misconduct, and it would be foolish to turn a blind eye to those details in the wake of their resignations. Yet, it must also be noted that these requested resignations were done strategically. By pressuring the resignation of five Board members, Spanberger

gained the ability to unilaterally appoint her own majority of members and further her own perspective for higher education. Although it is the responsibility of Spanberger to fill vacancies, it should not be within her remit to make seismic political changes to University governance.

Looking forward to the Board's unending list of University affairs to manage, one of the most pressing issues facing the new Board is the election of a rector and vice rector. These officials lead the Board's Executive Committee, which acts in place of the full Board between its quarterly meetings and is vested with all the powers of the full Board. From determining salaries to fixing the cost of tuition for students, the Executive Committee makes crucial University decisions, all under the watchful eye of the rector. To its credit, the Board has suggested that a Special Committee meeting will be held soon to elect these members. As the new members take office, the Board must work to restore trust within the University community and

prioritize our University's mission over political differences.

In light of these concerns of stability, it is incumbent upon Spanberger to recognize the error of her ways by pressuring the resignation of these five members, and for the Board to progress with a focus on institutional autonomy and collaboration with incoming leadership and the University community. To that end, a governor who fulfills necessary duties in filling vacancies — and who leaves the complicated disputes of this institution's future to the stakeholders within it — will tread a path towards stability.

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### CARON: Do not blame universities for gun violence

*While universities try to heal after tragedy, the government projects their inability to protect its people*

The Brown University shooting Dec. 13 marked the 391st mass shooting of 2025 according to the Gun Violence Archive. Brown also joined the long list of schools and universities plagued by gun violence in 2025, including the Oct. 25 shooting at Lincoln University and the April 17 shooting at Florida State University. 2025 was also the seventh year in a row that experienced more violent shootings than days in a year, a fact that demonstrates both the rise of school-related shootings and the disturbing increase in gun violence generally.

The U.S. Department of Education placed Brown under investigation Dec. 22 for violating the Clery Act due to the supposed failure of their security system during the tragedy. The Clery Act requires colleges receiving federal funding to report campus and local crime statistics and security policies. While universities should implement ample security procedures, the federal government placing the blame on safety infrastructure distracts from their failure to create policy that protects students from gun violence.

While accountability when safety systems fail is necessary, these investigations portray gun violence at universities as a procedural misstep rather

than a failure on the part of the federal government. A patchwork of state and federal law places an undue burden on universities and localities, requiring them to contrive their own solutions to gun violence rather than rely on a federally-mandated answer.

This approach has not effectively reduced gun violence, despite pushes from senators, lawmakers and grass-root activists for further legislation.

The nuances in state law perpetuate the interstate flow of firearms — even states with stricter regulations will experience violence due to the weak laws of their neighbors. Indeed, research from the National Library of Medicine suggests that the rise in gun violence may be related to the lack of national coherency in firearm regulations, rather than safety protocol violations.

not change the fact that both private and public universities are required to adhere to the Clery Act if they offer federal financial aid to their students — a criterion that encompasses over 5,500 postsecondary institutions as of 2025. But even while colleges and universities are bound to federal law, they are also held to the standards imposed by local regulation, granting universities little control over the

readers, despite the system's success in helping locate the Brown shooter. These controversies highlight how universities and local jurisdictions have to create their own patchwork of systems that balance privacy and safety, comply with federal law and prevent security breaches. This causes these entities to take on a daunting amount of responsibility for the larger structural issue that perpetuates tragedy.

Though it is important to ensure that schools are complying with safety protocol, the issue of gun violence is still prevalent and cannot be reconciled solely by a school's own campus safety regulations in addition to local, state and federal law. Colleges and universities will never be able to hold the same power or responsibility as lawmakers, and it is time legislators consider how they might solve the problem rather than rely on the victims of it.

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**When individual schools are made responsible for implementing idiosyncratic safeguards, the blame heaped on these same schools becomes even more unjust.**

Although Congress recently passed legislation extending funding for states that enforced red flag laws, mental health programs and crisis intervention services, the act was limited because states could opt out of this, making the impact uneven. This further shifted responsibility to the states, deferring national responsibility to protect students and citizens alike, even though rising gun deaths reveal that state autonomy on these issues does not address the problem of school gun violence.

This correlation between gun deaths and inconsistent state policy necessitates national legislators developing federal legislation managing the interstate flow of firearms. These conclusions point to the lack of structural coherency in reporting public and private gun sales, perpetuating this gun violence and further revealing how the responsibility lies in federal hands instead of the university communities that have faced tragedy.

Specific protocols may vary slightly according to university, but it does

minimum standards set by their state government. They must impose their own regulations for preventing gun violence. When individual schools are made responsible for implementing safeguards, the blame heaped on these same schools becomes even more unjust.

Even still, local government decisions can impact broader safety systems. Recently, Charlottesville voted to discontinue its contract with Flock Safety due to concerns about the features of its automatic license plate

# TAYLOR: What downtowns can learn from Charlottesville

*Charlottesville's pedestrian mall offers a blueprint for how cities can rebuild community, health and local economies by prioritizing people over cars*

Strolling through Charlottesville's Downtown Mall, one thing you will not find is any cars. On July 3, 1976, with the help of architect Lawrence Halprin, Charlottesville converted its East Main Street into the Downtown Mall. Crucially, Halprin took the uncommon step to block the district off from cars and create a pedestrian-only space. In doing so, he constructed a downtown that not only saved businesses by establishing a walkable space for customers, but also revitalized the city — a move many cities can learn from.

In the 1970s, Charlottesville's central core was struggling. Many of the businesses downtown were losing customers to the Barracks Road Shopping Center. With the growth of the suburbs and the emergence of federal policies like the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, the U.S. was shifting to becoming a car-centric country. This made the journey downtown for a fresh pair of pants or a haircut no longer economically feasible. The Charlottesville City Council understood this and decided that parts of Main Street would be blocked off as the paved road was converted into a brick walkway.

To accomplish this, they hired Halprin, a landscape architect. Drawing inspiration from Copenhagen, he

designed the area with free pedestrian flow and communal gathering space. To this day, Halprin's architecture supports the maintenance of the Downtown Mall as the city's economic, social and cultural hub. Thus, other cities would be wise to learn the many benefits of a walkable downtown, including increased pedestrian safety, citizen health and economic growth.

from the National Library of Medicine show a strong connection between automobile-centered communities and reduced physical activity. In contrast, pedestrian-friendly designs increase the physical activity of residents in their daily routines, contributing to lower obesity rates. Relatedly, due to Charlottesville's walkable layout, the City has received a high walk score of 84 out of 100. Although difficult

small businesses — the possibility of customers stumbling in and finding a product they like. Absent are the name brands of Barnes & Noble or McDonald's, and in its place are vibrant local cafes and shops which continue to prosper under Charlottesville's innovative design. The implementation of Charlottesville's walkable infrastructure has allowed these small businesses to survive against chains found at Barr-

structure to help stimulate local economic activity and raise government revenue.

While taking steps to build pedestrian infrastructure may seem like a daunting task for these major cities, relatively small measures can make a significant difference. Upgrades like adding sidewalks, instituting curb ramps and blocking off downtown roads can help to deliver the major benefits of pedestrian infrastructure for cities across America.

In a world increasingly isolated and fast-paced, pedestrian infrastructure in Charlottesville stands as a bulwark with health, social and economic benefits. The rest of the U.S. must take a lesson from the page of Charlottesville and begin to build out walkable downtown areas in their own respective cities.

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**The implementation of Charlottesville's walkable infrastructure has allowed these small businesses to survive against chains found at Barracks and online shopping.**

Perhaps the most underappreciated advantage of walkable cities is their ability to promote community engagement. A study from the American Enterprise Institute further shows a link between access to amenities like cafes, parks and public squares — all staples of a walkable city — and higher levels of trust between residents. More than three quarters of high-amenity urbanites and suburbanites trust their neighbors a fair amount, compared to around 60 percent of those living in low-amenity cities and suburbs.

These social benefits extend to the health of citizens as well. Studies

to determine exact causality, the City enjoys a significantly higher life expectancy than the national average.

These benefits reach beyond just the social sphere — there are profound economic advantages as well. Walkable downtowns have been shown to help small businesses, with research conducted by Korean urban planning scholars indicating that pedestrian-friendly designs positively impact local restaurants and shops by increasing foot traffic, sales and property values. In a world dominated by the ease of online shopping, walkable downtowns supply a key advantage to

racks and online shopping.

As a result of these attractive markets, which highlight local culture as opposed to consumerist venues, property values in walkable cities are often higher. By favoring the pedestrian in infrastructure decisions, officials can raise property values without the need for costly road infrastructure projects like highways or interstates. Higher property values increase tax revenue for local projects and programs while attracting more regional investment. Enormous, sprawling American cities like Memphis, Tenn., or Atlanta could take steps to improve pedestrian infra-

## HUMOR

### INVESTIGATION: Paul Mahoney won't move from office

*Authorities conducted forced removal of the former interim president*

After a tumultuous 2025, the new year brings new schedules, new faces and new friends for purchase through spring sorority recruitment. It also brings a new president and Finance Guy Final Boss, Scott Beardsley.

Beardsley was handpicked by the Board of Visitors from an extensive lineup of eager entrepreneurs, despite concern over the general hastiness of the search process. Beardsley assumed the role of University president Jan. 1. The transfer of power happened swiftly, capped with a heartfelt — and hopefully human — email to the student body.

Insights from University officials and student passersby suggest that the move-out and move-in processes at Carr's Hill were a heftier endeavor than previously realized. Sources say that former interim president Paul Mahoney just wouldn't leave.

Recently resigned Board member Paul Manning was the first to check in on the transfer-of-resi-

dency. Manning cited a close personal connection with Mahoney, noting their similarities — namely age, whiteness and the name Paul. At approximately 2 p.m. Jan. 2, Manning drove to Carr's Hill to see whether Mahoney's U-Haul moving truck was filled up yet.

"We thought Mahoney was moving extra slowly, or possibly having another... emotional episode about Beardsley coming in. So I approached Carr's Hill, then rang the doorbell. No one answered. I realized then that the door was unlocked," Manning said. "So I stepped inside and was instantly taken aback by the clutter. There were crumpled pages ripped from magazines. There were three banana peels on the table. But no Paul."

According to the also-resigned Rector Rachel Sheridan, a handful of Board members and willing members of the University wrestling team forged an extraction team to, firstly, locate Mahoney, and, subsequently, facilitate the

transition of power. Sheridan, constituting one of these "brave soldiers" in the hours following Beardsley's inauguration, described a harrowing image.

"We'd thought we had checked every crevice of the house, until we heard faint snoring in the master bedroom. It was there we found him curled up, not atop, but beneath, his queen-sized bed. Beside him was a small laptop playing the Crave original series 'Heated Rivalry,' episode six."

Harry C. Hunk, second-year College student and wrestling team member, recalled the "horrors" of the long and tumultuous hour following the discovery of Mahoney.

"They called us into the room, saying they'd found him. I guess the guy was confused or something, but he just wouldn't get up." Hunk shook his head woefully. "I had to pry his cold, trembling hands from the bedframe," Hunk said.

Anonymous students report-

ed footage of Mahoney's removal filmed outside Carr's Hill via the online platform Yik Yak. Photos circulated depicting a stretcher being wheeled from the house and a firetruck parked outside.

Board members were asked for further details, but declined to comment.

Mahoney was later contacted for comment on this fiasco. He responded in a brief email, and CC'd Beardsley. It read, "merp."

"I really don't blame him at all," Sheridan remarked. She blotted her face with a handkerchief. "Of course he didn't want to leave. These changes are just happening so fast. I'm deeply concerned for ... the future of this University."

Manning corroborated her statement. "These yuppie folks, the darn students and new administration, want radical change for the sake of change. Abigail Spanberger doesn't value tradition, and she doesn't care about Virginia."

It should be noted that Sheri-

dan and Manning were key advocates in expediting the presidential search process.

Beardsley claims he is unbothered by the incident. "I feel bad for him. I mean the guy's a total squid. I think he's lonely. He still comes by all the time. Probably just wants to pet the dog."

Beardsley was asked to elaborate. He shrugged and was totally nonchalant. "I mean, sometimes, he sneaks back in when he's having a bad day. I wake up and he's just standing in the corner, watching me. But usually, I just toss him an upper decky and a cold one and send him on his way."

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## CARTOON

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### Too Much To Unpack

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