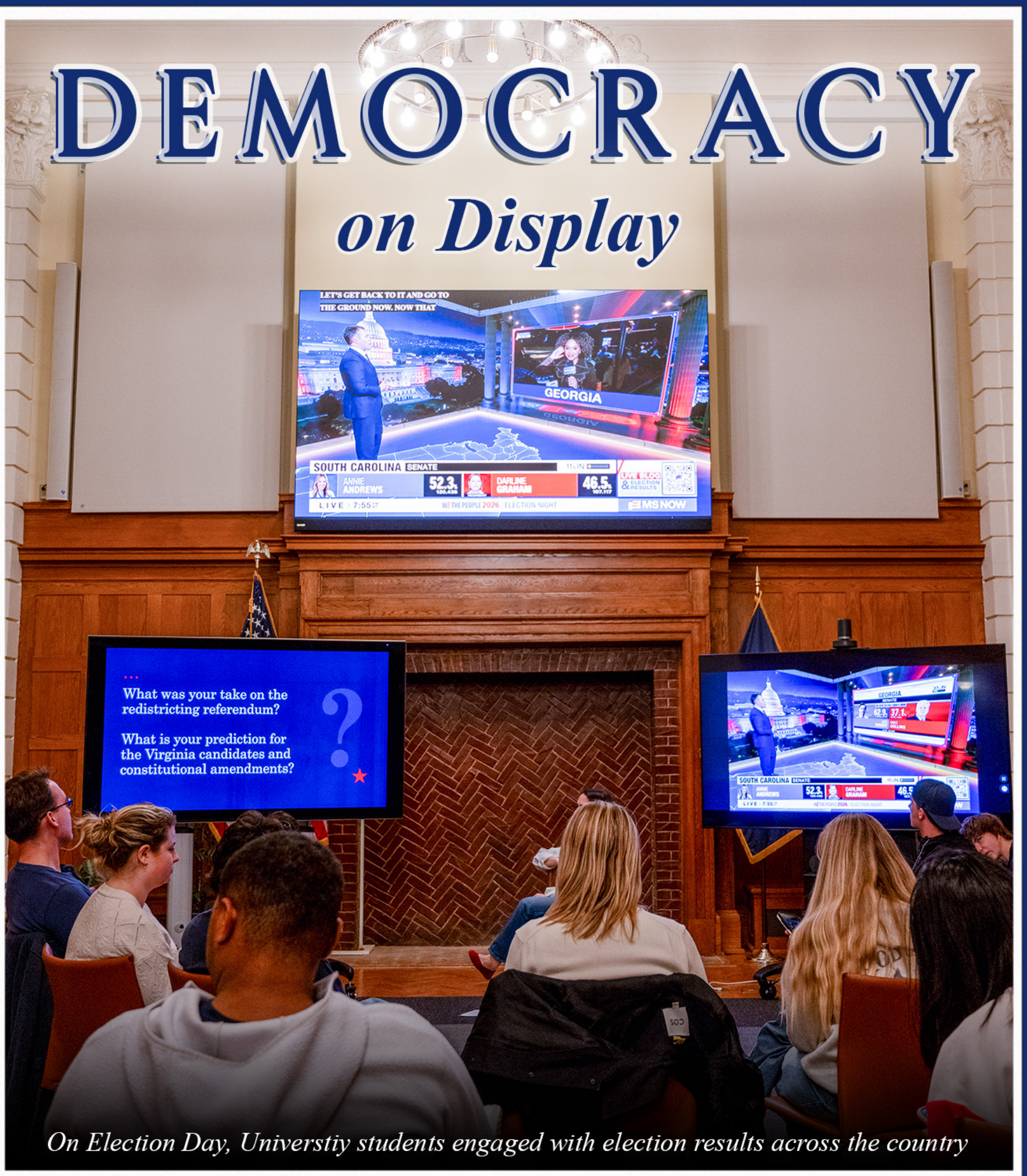
The Cavalier Daily

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MAC DOUCETTE, KAYLA MOORE, SOPHIE SMOOT-CANTY & CAT WHITE | THE CAVALIER DAILY

DEMOCRACY *on Display*



On Election Day, Universtiy students engaged with election results across the country

NEWS

Democrats flip Congress — here's a play-by-play of Election Day

Three of the four polling places The Cavalier Daily followed saw significantly higher voter turnout than in the 2025 gubernatorial election

CD News Staff

Editor's note: The timestamps this article gives for Election Day results reflect publications on The Cavalier Daily's live blog, and not necessarily the exact time an external news source called the results of a vote.

Voters across the Commonwealth reelected Sen. Mark Warner (D) Tuesday for his fourth term in the U.S. Senate. He beat Republican candidate Bert Mizusawa with approximately 60 percent of the votes, and shortly after the Associated Press called his win Tuesday evening, Warner posted on X thanking voters for his reelection.

Also in the Commonwealth, all three ballot questions passed, enshrining rights in the Virginia state constitution to protect reproductive freedom, honor marriage regardless of sex, gender or race and automatically restore voting rights to convicted felons after they are released from incarceration.

The race for Virginia's 5th Congressional District U.S. House of Representatives seat had not yet been called, as of 5:42 p.m. Wednesday. It is a close race between candidate Tom Perriello (D) and incumbent John McGuire (R), as both seek reelection for second terms. Perriello served as the representative in the 5th District under former President Barack Obama's administration from 2009 to 2011 and McGuire currently serves as the representative, hoping to win a second consecutive term.

Both candidates led in the race at various points throughout Tuesday evening, but McGuire stayed steadily ahead of Perriello throughout Wednesday morning, with 98 percent of ballots counted and 50.2 percent of voters in the 5th District in favor of him.

Though the race has yet to be called between Perriello and McGuire, Democrats successfully flipped both the Senate and House Tuesday, gaining full control of Congress.

Here is a play-by-play of Election Day in Charlottesville at the four polling places closest to the University that The Cavalier Daily followed throughout Tuesday. All but the Miller Center saw significantly higher voter turnout compared to the 2025 gubernatorial election.

7:33 a.m. — Surge in Charlottesville, Albemarle early voting boosts Democratic hopes in VA-05

As of Sunday evening, Albemarle County had recorded 28,311 early votes, alongside 10,553 early votes in Charlottesville. Combined, early turnout in these localities is up more than 15,000 compared to the 2022 midterm election and easily outpaces last year's gubernatorial election.

While the district-wide early vote is expected to lean Democratic, Charlottesville and Albemarle County are Democratic strongholds. Early ballots in Albemarle County are expected to break blue by upwards of 50 percentage points. Democrats hope high early turnout in these localities can give Perriello, Democratic candidate and former representative of Virginia's 5th Congressional District, the boost he needs to defeat Republican incumbent John McGuire, who currently leads in district polling.

8:46 a.m. — UDems, CRs push to mobilize student voters in weeks leading up to elections

The University Democrats have been pushing students to vote in the last few weeks by chalking phrases such as "Blue Wave Coming" and "Hoos Vote Blue" on sidewalks throughout Grounds. The organization also created videos and informational social media posts explaining how and where to vote and broke down the amendments being contested this election.

The College Republicans have also made various efforts to promote student voter participation. The club has been canvassing for the McGuire and Mizusawa campaigns and encouraging students to vote "no" on all three proposed amendments these past few weeks, and the group has posted on social media about collectively knocking on hundreds of doors. They have also been holding weekly phone banking events to talk to potential voters and promote Republican candidates.

11:49 a.m. — Same-day voter registration rises at Johnson, Trailblazer polling places compared with 2025 election

621 total voters had cast ballots across four polling locations by approximately 9 a.m. — Johnson Elementary School, Trailblazer Elementary School, the Miller Center and Slaughter Recreation Center — which is about an 18 percent increase from the 526 reported during the 2025 gubernatorial election. Of those 621 total voters at 9 a.m., at least 63 total voters — approximately 10.1 percent — had registered to vote on Election Day.

5:56 p.m. — At Slaughter, student speaks on importance of voting in Virginia

After voting at Slaughter, first-year College student Caroline Wolfe emphasized the importance of voting to determine which parties take over the House and the Senate. Wolfe is an out-of-state student from Illinois and said she thought it was more important to register to vote in Virginia than in her home state.

"It's a very close election, and who takes over the House and Senate is a big deal, considering the executive branch," Wolfe said. "My state doesn't really need my vote, so I thought it would make more sense to vote here."

7:11 p.m. — Perriello speaks to voters at Slaughter

Perriello appeared at Slaughter in the final hours of the election. In an interview with The Cavalier Daily, Perriello spoke about the importance of youth turnout in this election.

"I said before that if young people decide to show up, they are going to decide the outcome of this race and decide the outcome of this whole election around the country. U.Va. students have shown up in record numbers," Perriello said. "Young people have so much at stake. That's why I think we've seen them turn out in huge numbers."

Perriello also said that this election offers a time to return to normalcy and that young people have not grown up in a time in which politics is civil.

"[This election is] our chance to turn the page to a better kind of politics that this generation deserves," Perriello said. "Young people have never really known a time when politics was sane, where politics was focused on solving practical problems. Because people are showing up tonight, there's a chance we're going to get to a better kind of politics."

9:00 p.m. — NBC News calls Question 1 in favor of protecting reproductive freedom

With 60.1 percent of votes counted across the Commonwealth as of 8:50 p.m., NBC News called that Virginia's Ballot Question 1 passed. The question is a constitutional amendment that would "protect the freedom to make personal decisions" about reproductive healthcare decisions, protect healthcare providers from being prosecuted for those decisions and "allow for restrictions on access to abortion during the third trimester of pregnancy, except when the patient's health is at risk or the pregnancy cannot survive."

9:20 p.m. — 1 percent sales tax to support school infrastructure passes in Charlottesville, yet to be called in Albemarle

Voters in 47 localities across the Commonwealth voted Tuesday on whether or not to raise sales taxes by 1 percent to fund new school infrastructure. With 71.78 percent "Yes" votes, the referendum passed in Charlottesville, according to VPAP. Less than half of the localities in the County have been called, and the majority of the localities have rejected the tax.

According to Charlottesville Tomorrow, the tax will not go into effect immediately. Rather, the Charlottesville City Council will need to vote to impose the tax, increasing the sales tax in Charlottesville to 6.3 percent.

9:35 p.m. — NYT calls Question 2, "Yes" vote wins for same-sex marriage amendment

The New York Times called Virginia's Ballot Question 2 at 9:35 p.m. — a constitutional amendment in favor of proposed marriage equality. The passed amendment removes the existing constitutional ban on same-sex marriage and requires all legally recognized marriages to receive equal treatment under state law. With 75 percent of votes reported and 56.3 percent "Yes," the amendment received 1,545,502 votes in favor.

9:57 p.m. — Virginia voters decide in favor of enshrining right to automatic restoration of felony voting rights with 78 percent of votes in, 54.9 percent "Yes"

The New York Times called Virginia's Ballot Question 3, and as of 9:48 p.m., 78 percent of the votes were counted — 54.9 percent of which are "Yes" votes. The question asked voters whether to amend the Virginia state constitution to change how people convicted of felonies regain their voting rights. Under the amendment, voting rights would be automatically restored upon release from incarceration, rather than requiring individual approval from the governor.

Up until now, Virginia was one of three states — along with Kentucky and Iowa — with a state constitution that prohibited the restoration of voting rights to individuals with past felony convictions. However, the Virginia state constitution granted the governor the authority to restore voting rights.

10:05 p.m. — Albemarle passes 1 percent sales tax to fund new school infrastructure

With 53.6 percent "Yes" votes counted as of 10:05 p.m., the referendum on whether or not to raise sales tax by 1 percent to support new school infrastructure projects passed in Albemarle County, according to VPAP.

10:15 p.m. — Cville Dems express excitement for Warner's reelection

In a statement to The Cavalier Daily, chair of Cville Dems Josh Throneburg said the organization is excited to see Sen. Mark Warner's (D) reelection to the U.S. Senate. Warner was elected Tuesday to his fourth consecutive term, and he has been serving in the Senate since 2009.

"Mark Warner has done an exceptional job of representing Virginians for 18 years, and we are excited that he will be doing it for six more," Throneburg said.

10:57 p.m. — Virginia LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus expresses gratitude to voters for passage of Ballot Question 2

In a press release Tuesday evening, Del. Rozia A. Henson Jr. (D-19), Virginia LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus chair, thanked continued efforts from campaigns and voters in the passage of Ballot Question 2, which removed the ban on same-sex marriage, affirmed that all adults have the right to marry regardless of sex, gender or race and affirmed that all marriages are equal under the Virginia state constitution.

"Twenty years ago, Virginia wrote discrimination into its founding document. Tonight, with Question 2, voters wrote it out," Henson wrote in his press release. "To every LGBTQ+ Virginian and especially every young person who wondered if there was a place for them here, tonight's answer is yes."

10:30 a.m. Wednesday — Albemarle County Schools anticipates developing strategic capital construction plan following the passage of 1 percent sales tax increase

In a statement to The Cavalier Daily, Dr. Jason Grant, Albemarle County Public Schools chief communications officer, said that several challenges have arisen for the County's school facilities over the years. Last night, with 53.6 percent "Yes" votes counted, voters in Albemarle County passed the referendum for a 1 percent sales tax raise to support new school infrastructure in the County.

"Accessibility needs, operational costs, modern learning environments and increased operational costs all require a focused and strategic capital construction plan to modernize our schools and meet the needs of today's students as well as the students of tomorrow," Grant said.

At the time of publication, the race has yet to be called between McGuire and Perriello. For a complete look at The Cavalier Daily's Election Day coverage, refer to the live blog at cavalierdaily.com.

What do U.Va. majors earn four years after graduation?

Federal data shows computer engineering graduates earning nearly three times as much as anthropology graduates

Komal Reddymachu | Staff Writer

A University student's choice of major can mean a nearly threefold difference in earnings four years after graduation, according to program-level earnings data from the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard.

The data shows that University graduates who majored in computer engineering earned a median of $148,175 four years after finishing their degrees, nearly three times the $51,811 earned by anthropology graduates.

Of the 40 University bachelor's programs with reported earnings, engineering, computer science and commerce fields took the top five spots, while humanities and arts programs clustered at the bottom.

The Department of Education released updated program-level earnings data in December from schools nationwide, and The New York Times analyzed the data in an Oct. 7 guide comparing earnings by major across institutions. At the University, the gap between the highest- and lowest-earning majors is nearly $100,000 a year.

How was the data collected?

The earnings data on the College Scorecard came from federal tax records covering graduates who received federal financial aid, such as Pell Grants or federal loans, and who were working and not enrolled in further schooling four years after finishing their degrees. Thus, many graduates who attended medical school, law school or a doctoral program are left out, and graduates that did not receive financial aid were also excluded. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in the 2019-2020 academic year, approximately 56 percent of undergraduates nationwide received some form of federal financial aid.

A 2021 U.S. Census Bureau paper found that, across institutions in the sample, an average of 60 percent of bachelor's degree graduates received federal Title IV financial aid.

The figures also come from students who graduated in 2017-18 and 2018-19 academic years, therefore the earnings reflect the job market of several years ago and do not capture more recent changes in evolving fields such as computer science.

The number of graduates included varies widely by program. Computer science had the largest group in the University's data, with 369 graduates, English language and literature had 83 and computer engineering had 30. Programs with 15 or fewer graduates were excluded from the data set to protect privacy, according to the article by The New York Times. Majors such as physics, philosophy and music do not appear in the University's data, while they do appear in datasets of other universities.

Which majors earn the most?

Computer engineering, a program within the Engineering School at the University, led University bachelor's programs in earnings, followed by systems engineering at $144,830. Business and commerce graduates earned $142,113 on average, computer science — a separate program than computer engineering, housed within the College — graduates earned $142,041 and management sciences and quantitative methods bachelors degree-earning students made $139,095.

Second-year College student Aarush Penmetsa is studying computer science, and he said the four-year figure matched what he found when researching majors in high school. Penmetsa said he chose computer science primarily because he enjoyed its problem solving, and the salary played a secondary role in his decision.

"I think 140,000 [for computer science] is kind of what I was familiar with when I was doing my research before picking a major," Penmetsa said. "In choosing the major as a whole, [the salary expectation] was more like a confirmation rather than something that chose the path."

The Department of Education data also shows University computer science graduates earning a median of $98,067 one year after graduating. Penmetsa said internship offers he and his friends also studying computer science have received, scaled to a full year, come to about $100,000 to $110,000. He also said artificial intelligence has made internships and jobs harder to land as some entry-level positions are automated, but it has not changed his career outlook.

Computer Science Department Chair Sandhya Dwarkadas said her advice for students in or considering the major has not changed with the advent of AI and changes in the job market.

"Follow your passion, focus on mastering the foundations of computing and computational thinking, remain a curious and continuous learner to stay at the forefront of our fast-moving field and keep in mind that a job search requires not only disseminating a resume but also human-human connection and follow-up," Dwarkadas said.

Outside computer engineering and commerce, economics was the University's highest-earning program, ranked sixth overall in earnings at $110,773 four years out from graduation. A category the federal data labels "public administration and social service professions" followed at $109,851. After many engineering program graduates, statistics graduates, at $108,532, and mathematics graduates, at $91,236, also ranked among the University's 15 top-earning programs.

Kerem Cosar, economics professor and director of undergraduate studies, said the Economics department now has more than 1,000 declared majors and graduates about 500 students each year. Many go into consulting, finance and policy institutions, he said. Cosar verified that the earnings figure collected by the Department of Education is consistent with what he has heard from students.

"[The earnings figure is] consistent with job market outcomes we hear anecdotally from our students, many of whom receive competitive offers for exciting positions that require analytical skills," Cosar said.

Still, Cosar said students should weigh more than earnings when choosing a major.

"It is one reason to choose a major, but whether it is the most important depends on the person," Cosar said. "We aim to equip our students with general skills that will stand the test of time and help them adapt to changes in technology and labor demand."

Similarly, Spencer Grayson, fourth-year Ph.D. candidate in the English department, also encourages students to weigh life goals and experiences when considering a major.

"I think that salary earning is an extremely important thing to consider when thinking about your major and your future," Grayson said. "But I think it's also important to consider what kind of daily life you want, and also what you want out of your college experience."

Which majors earn the least?

Among the social sciences and of students not currently attending a graduate program, international relations and national security studies graduates earned a median of $82,991, ahead of political science and government at $78,310. History graduates earned a median of $71,187, and sociology graduates earned a median of $68,538. Psychology, one of the largest programs in the data set with 227 graduates counted, had graduates earning a median of $62,794.

The five lowest-earning programs were religious studies at $58,324, ethnic, cultural minority, gender and group studies at $57,646, English at $55,412, fine and studio arts at $54,579 and anthropology at $51,811.

The English department has 228 majors, according to Victoria Baena, director of the department's undergraduate program and assistant English professor, a number that has declined slightly over the past 15 years. On the topic of English majors' career prospects, Baena said she remains optimistic in light of advances in technology.

"This is a program that is built around deep reading, deep writing, human-based writing, analytical reasoning, critical thinking and close reading," Baena said. "Those are skills that are increasingly AI-proof."

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Considering the course format, Baena said most English classes are small seminars — a format that allows faculty to get to know students and helps when students apply for jobs and graduate programs.

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Are four-year post-graduate earnings a valid predictor?

Baena said measuring earnings four years after graduation does not reflect English majors' outcomes, because many of them go on to graduate school. She said more University English majors pursue graduate study than University students as a whole.

Pointing out the flawed data collection method of using only the first four years after graduation for English majors, Baena criticized the federal study for disadvantaging humanities graduates and offering an incomplete picture of a degree's value.

"I think there are a lot of flaws in the study, both because of its larger intention, which is anti-humanities and anti-higher education as a whole, and specifically because looking at salaries four years after graduation just doesn't make sense for U.Va. English majors and English majors generally," Baena said.

Cosar added that it is unclear how much leaving out graduates who went on to further schooling skews the results.

"It depends on the selection into these alternative trajectories," Cosar said. "I don't have any evidence to inform how biased that selection may be."

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"An English major might also go to law school and become a corporate lawyer and make a great deal of money, far more than, say, someone who goes into computer science," Grayson said. "I don't think that a major is necessarily a good indicator of salary earnings, especially when you have something like English, where people go in so many different directions with that major."

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LIFE

The IRC celebrates strengths and marks room for growth

The IRC is home to a strong community. IRC Council has plans to make it stronger still

Astrid Cheng | Staff Writer

Founded in 2001, the International Residential College is one of the University's three residential colleges, designed to increase inclusivity and international engagement on Grounds. As the home of many international, exchange and transfer students, the IRC plays an essential role in helping new students find their footing at the University and bringing international perspectives into the everyday life of its residents.

As part of the global vision of former University President John T. Casteen III, the IRC was one of several institutions designed to further global outreach and bring domestic students closer to an international scene. The makeup of the college itself speaks to this goal. Its main building, Munford House, is named after Mary Munford, the first female member of the University's Board of Visitors and an advocate for women's education and civil rights. Similarly, the Yen House honors the first Chinese and first international student to earn a bachelor's degree from the University.

The IRC, however, is not limited to international students. In fact, only 30 percent of its residents are international. To Philippe Hempel, Prime Minister of IRC Council and fourth-year Architecture student, the balance between international and domestic students is central to the IRC's founding vision as a place of exchange.

"The IRC was never meant to be like this one place where you put all the international students and shut them off from the University," Hempel said. "It was meant to be an 'experiment' — to have that cross-engagement between international students and domestic students."

According to Hempel, the interplay of different cultures can engender spontaneous interactions and lead to residents forming strong friendships. As a transfer student, Hempel discovered the power of spontaneity from his own experience.

"One of my favorite stories is [about] a good friend of mine who [I] became friends [with] after one evening," Hempel said. "I don't even know what I was doing [there], but I got dragged into a Moroccan tea party at 11 p.m. I was like, 'All right, let's do that.' It's like those little moments that really allowed me to find my place at the University as a transfer student."

According to Hempel, the tea party was hosted by Aymane Fikrine, a student of Moroccan descent who graduated in 2026. After a late-night conversation in the IRC about Morocco, tea, immigration, world news and everything in between, Fikrine and Hempel became friends. The spontaneity exemplified by the tea party is echoed by the experiences of other residents, such as Ona Zhao, a second-year College student hailing from Beijing.

"[Once it was] me and one of my friends from Northern Virginia, and another friend who's from Ethiopia," Zhao said. "We were just cooking together, and meanwhile [we were] playing ... Chinese music. And that was so funny, because I remember we were cooking this Moroccan food, [so] it's just a mixture of different cultural elements."

Zhao's friends streamed classic Chinese love songs from the 80s. It brought back nostalgic memories for Zhao, who had previously listened to similar music with her grandparents. The experience made her grateful that the atmosphere of the IRC made it possible for her culture to be appreciated by people from very different backgrounds.

The IRC's interactive atmosphere is, in part, a product of active choice. The application process through Housing and Residence Life allows students to rank their preferences among the three residential colleges. Those who rank the IRC then fill out several short form essay questions, which ask students to elaborate on their interest in living in a diverse community and how they can contribute.

As a result, students who apply to the IRC tend to be curious about other cultures and eager to learn from their neighbors. Annie Eubanks, resident advisor and second-year College student, who is beginning her second year at the IRC, attests that her residence there has been instrumental in reshaping her outlook on difference.

"I think it's helped me become more open-minded in a way that I wouldn't get otherwise," Eubanks said. "Not that you don't learn that generally [at the University], but it's one thing to read and learn about other cultures in a class, and it's another thing to meet someone who has vastly different life experiences from [you] and spend time with them."

Second-year College student Noel Gilchrest, whose half-Ethiopian background led him to the IRC, felt that the curiosity and open-mindedness of his fellow residents creates a nonjudgmental space.

"I decided to reapply because I've found a good community here [at the IRC]," Gilchrest said. "People are respectful. You can share your opinions without having to fear reprimand, or being scrutinized or judged."

Respect for difference is actively promoted by IRC Council, the official student governing body of the residential college. The Council is responsible for allocating funds, overseeing recruitment and representing the interests of residents to the broader University community. Responsibilities are divided among its executive members — exclusively IRC students who are elected by fellow residents each spring — composed of one prime minister and various ministers responsible for finances, records, community operations, external relations, interior affairs and recreation. The Council meets weekly to exchange updates, discuss plans and vote on group decisions that impact the college as a whole.

The Council lays the groundwork for the college's smaller moments of community — such as a specially-designated table where food is shared freely between all residents — as well as recreational activities, notably intramural sports. It also organizes a number of the IRC's keynote annual events, including Hispanic Heritage Month, Lunar New Year and Diwali. For Sneha Uppal, IRC Minister of Records and fourth-year College student, serving on Council is not a sign of superior cultural knowledge, but an opportunity to listen to residents with deeper knowledge and experience of a given tradition.

"We definitely give people space to practice [traditions] how they want to," Uppal said. "A lot of times, we ... [Plan an event] for the whole group culturally, but if you'd like to organize a religious ceremony as well, you can do that and we'll give you the resources to do that as well. ... [We] acknowledge when we don't have all the knowledge."

Despite the strength of its community and its environment of cross-cultural respect, IRC Council has identified areas for improvement. In March, the IRC adopted a new constitution and bylaws, a change driven in part by the limits of its earlier governing documents. These former documents offered little guidance on how events should be run, what each member of Council was responsible for or how to deal with administrative hiccups. Council hopes the new framework will address these gaps.

"In the past, all of the minister roles were very diluted," Hempel said. "It was easy for one minister to kind of do three different ministers' jobs, and there wasn't very much formality. And so now the constitution and the bylaw changes are making [it so] that we have a structured budget [that] we're going to stick to, that we have these specific roles, and that every person is able to do their role fully and optimally."

The new system, however, is not meant to be rigid or bureaucratic. Instead, Council intends it to support greater flexibility and community engagement. To that end, Council is planning a new initiative through which residents can submit a form to petition for an event and then receive funding and assistance from Council to carry it out. These events would be modest in scale, but they would give residents a larger role in shaping the IRC community, and contribute to the spontaneous, down-to-earth atmosphere that made events like Fikrine's Moroccan tea party memorable.

"[It] would be this formal structure that allows for this very vernacular undertaking of initiatives, of resident-led engagement within the community," Hempel said. "The end goal is that we go away from the Council hosting dozens of events top down to the Council supporting dozens of events, led by residents from the bottom up."

According to Hempel, recent policy changes by HRL have also made it necessary for Council to rethink its system. Whereas Council previously operated independently, HRL now imposes new requirements on the residential college, such as budget cuts and new constraints on spending.

"Budget is a big thing," Hempel said. "[We want to make sure] that there isn't going to be over-expenditure or under-expenditure by the end of the year, that every single penny that residents are paying into the IRC is going to be used to the best of our ability for residents."

Navigating these institutional limitations through the Council has helped Hempel discover a new interest in public service.

"My involvement within the IRC and being a public servant to this community has been very meaningful for me," Hempel said. "It has embedded in me a very strong sense of purpose through public service. And from being on Council, I personally found a lot of excitement and interest in navigating bureaucracy and trying to champion for certain changes."

More broadly, the IRC has helped students like Uppal — who is contemplating a career in international law — value the way the IRC has refined her skillset to speak with people from many different walks of life.

"Being in the IRC definitely [is] a really informative experience," Uppal said. "Being able to talk to a lot of different people in global studies, interviewing and working with different people from different communities and trying to talk to them ... really [helped me] develop the skill of being able to engage with people cross-culturally and speak to all different kinds of people."

As the IRC marks its 25th anniversary this year, residents and Council look forward to a new chapter. The new constitution and bylaws are intended to serve as a foundation for the Council's future work, establishing a more structured and durable system that aims to help Council serve residents more effectively. Both Council members and residents have worked to preserve the IRC's strength of community, and the new frameworks and initiatives begun this year will build on it. That strength of community is what leads many residents to return year after year.

"We have a lot of people who are fourth-years, who've lived here their entire time at U.Va.," Eubanks said. "I think there's something really special about having that continuity throughout your entire time here, [about] having a place to really call home."

Your girlfriend is not a pornstar

University students reflect on how pornography consumption has informed their expectations of sex, pleasure and desire

Piper Reese | Life Staffer



BEN SHIELD | THE CAVALIER DAILY

Editor's note: The three University students interviewed asked to remain anonymous to speak freely about their experiences with pornography.

"Am I supposed to be making that much noise?"

For one female fourth-year College student, the apparent pleasure of women in pornography prompted uncertainty about her own sexual experiences.

She is just one voice from a generation for which pornography has increasingly become an informal source of sexual education. And while questions about sex are hardly new, the internet offers free and seemingly unlimited pornography — a resource some University students said they turned to in order to fill gaps in their sexual knowledge. However, several noted that this exposure gave them a host of expectations about intimacy, pleasure and their partners' perceived desires before they even had sexual experiences of their own.

To understand how pornography impacts the broader perceptions of sex, The Cavalier Daily spoke with three students and one associate University professor.

The female fourth-year College student explained how watching porn as a teenager offered an implicit script for how sex was supposed to look, sound and feel. She described pornography as a way to explore what interested her sexually, and said that watching it could be liberating. Still, she noted that it caused her to measure her own encounters against what she saw onscreen.

"A lot of the [time] in pornography, it's staged. The girls [are] making all of this noise, saying how good it feels, they always finish multiple times," the female fourth-year College student said. "So it can make you feel like, 'Oh, am I not doing it right? Am I not good enough?'"

To break down these nuances, Lisa Speidel, associate professor in the Department of Women, Gender & Sexuality and certified sexuality educator, emphasized the importance of candid conversations.

"We see sex everywhere, but we don't know how to talk about it," Speidel said. "So there's a lot of misinformation, and I think a lot of misunderstanding about what porn actually is ... it's ultimately about entertainment, and it's not representative of what real sex may be. Are there components to it that may be educational? Sure. But if we're not having that conversation, I think it ends up being a catalyst to some risk factors."

While conversations about sex — or the lack thereof — can leave questions unanswered, pornography can offer an alternative understanding that can shape an inexperienced individual's perceived understanding of sex. For instance, a third-year male Engineering Student recalled being first exposed to pornography around age 13, when a friend showed him an explicit video during a vacation. According to him, porn offered visual explanations of sexual mechanics that health class did not.

"You're not going to sit in health class and [be told], 'You move like this, and someone will like it.' But then you watch a video, and you're like, 'Oh, so that's how [you] do that?'" the third-year male Engineering student said.

His account illustrates how pornography can offer a visual reference for sexual activity without answering questions about pleasure. The third-year male Engineering student described friends who had watched porn before becoming sexually active, then found their encounters differed from their expectations.

"All of [my friends] have a story of being like, 'Yeah, I went in there thinking it'd be like the video, and then it was absolutely not like that,'" the third-year male Engineering student said.

According to Speidel, using porn as a means to understand intercourse is a part of a broader gap in sex education. When young people have questions but lack the language or support to ask them, she said that they often turn to porn for answers.

Her proposed solution? Advocating for porn literacy — taking the time to critically examine what behaviors sexual media depict, how those depictions are constructed and, crucially, what they leave out.

"I'm not anti-porn. I'm anti not having conversations about it. We need porn literacy like we have media literacy," Speidel said. "We're so terrified of having conversations about sex that we don't have porn literacy, and we don't know how to promote [it]."

At the University, Speidel teaches a course within the Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies department titled "Human Sexualities," in which students study patterns of sexual response and pleasure. She explained how becoming a more considerate sexual partner involves educating oneself and questioning assumptions about how different bodies respond, not merely emulating behaviors observed in pornography.

"They're assuming that, because they're seeing these images, that women want to have someone ejaculate on their face, that they want to be choked, that they want to be dominated," Speidel said. "And these things are happening without communication or consent."

However, Speidel cautioned against attributing harmful sexual behavior to pornography alone, noting how the attitudes people bring to sexual media can be just as consequential as the content itself.

"There's this idea of stereotypical expectations of masculinity, [of what] sex is supposed to be," Speidel said. "If we're not having that discussion, those are all risk factors not necessarily just [for] sexual harm, but for some really not good sexual interactions."

Students' varying accounts of pornography also resist clear delineations between harm and benefit. For instance, the fourth-year female College student recalled how porn provided an outlet of sexual exploration that was otherwise denied to her in her religious upbringing.

"Growing up in a Catholic school system, I wasn't introduced to all of that stuff. So when I found [it], I felt kind of dirty for even thinking sexual thoughts," the fourth-year female College student said. "So I think [porn let me] be able to explore what I might be interested in [sexually]."

The fourth-year female College student also explained how exploring her sexual interests and speaking more openly with friends eventually helped her become more comfortable with her sexuality. Pornography, she said, could give people a way to discover desires they had not previously understood or felt comfortable expressing.

However, this experience is not universally empowering. One fourth-year male College student — who said that he no longer watches porn — recalled experiencing regret after masturbating to it.

"Afterward you're like, 'What the f--k was I thinking?" the fourth-year male College student said. "Why the f--k did I just do that?' I feel like a bad human."

According to Speidel, this shame surrounding sexual exploration via porn is a concern, particularly when young people experience curiosity and attraction while lacking people they can comfortably approach with questions. She argues people should feel comfortable sharing their feelings about what they watch — both physically and in principle.

"It's so harmful to have all the shame that's associated when people do consume [porn]. Or if it's being used to masturbate to, the guilt that people feel after that. There's just so much shame that's associated with exploration, and that's my concern," Speidel said. "We're learning that sex is dirty. Sex is bad."

According to Speidel, conversations about pornography can — and should — be part of that broader openness, moving beyond whether or not a person watches it to what they have come to expect from sex as a result. These discussions do not just allow partners to examine their own use, but also what they have learned from it, what they have come to expect from themselves and others and where those expectations may diverge from genuine preferences.

"Do you want to be a good sexual partner? Most people do. But ... that's going to take practice," Speidel said. "[And] part of practice is educating yourself, learning and not making assumptions, not assuming that every single person's body is the same. Just because you've been with one vagina doesn't mean the next one's going to be the same."

Rewind back to 19th-century Charlottesville at Timberlake's

This longstanding pharmacy and lunch counter strives to provide customers with reliable service, delicious food and cherished memories

Carolina Mangum | Life Staffer

Stepping inside the front door of Timberlake's Drug Store, decades seem to meld together.

An old-fashioned soda fountain, homemade sandwiches and hand-spun milkshakes give patrons a glimpse into Charlottesville from another era.

Less than two miles from Grounds on the Downtown Mall, Timberlake's has been a Charlottesville institution since it was established in 1890. The store's mission is to provide a level of hospitality and care that customers will not receive through a chain store, striving to make customers feel at home in and out of the emporium.

Timberlake's also staffs a full-time drug-delivery person and offers free prescription drop-off within a range. Additionally, at the lunch counter, menu staples such as the chicken, egg and tuna salads are freshly made every morning, guaranteeing quality and consistency for newcomers and longtime regulars alike.

In 1977, Timberlake's owner John Plantz purchased the store from previous owners, which he described as a massive gamble as many independent, mom-and-pop style businesses were struggling to survive. After eight years of working at a chain pharmacy, John Plantz decided he wanted something of his own.

"It was a scary decision," John Plantz said. "I didn't know if I had it in me to do it. I didn't know if I was smart enough."

Despite these initial fears, John Plantz believes the choice turned out to be a good one. 80-year-old John Plantz retired from full-time work as a pharmacist and manager at Timberlake's eight years ago, and said he still works every Saturday to keep in touch with regular customers and talk to patrons about the business. He also returns to spend time with his family — John Plantz and his wife's passion for pharmaceutical work was inherited by two of their sons, Paul Plantz, who owns Parkway Pharmacy in Crozet, and David Plantz, who took over as the primary pharmacist at Timberlake's.

Like John Plantz's son, many customers of Timberlake's have grown up with the business, shopping and eating at the store throughout their childhood and into adulthood, some later returning with their families. For instance, Ford Chapman, fourth-year College student and Charlottesville native, said that he frequented Timberlake's with his father and grandfather as a child, and now brings his friends to enjoy that same experience as an adult.

"The old-timey feel really helps … Having the store out front is also really cool and you grab what you need on your way out," Chapman said.

When John Plantz walked through the doors at 322 E Main St. nearly every day for a half a century, he said that he did so alongside four other employees who served at the store with him throughout his entire career. According to John Plantz, these close relationships among the staff are key to what makes Timberlake's feel like more than just another business to grab a toothbrush or a soda from.

"Customers are regular and come and go, but those employees [don't]. You know every mood they ever were in when they came to work," John Plantz said. "Every husband they were mad at and every child. You knew all about their families. It wasn't at all like working in a big company. People knew about each other."

Echoing this sentiment, Melinda Ratcliffe, an employee who has been working behind the lunch counter for nearly two years, worked at the Melting Pot on the Downtown Mall prior to working at Timberlake's. She said that it was this exact sense of community that inspired her to make the jump from a chain institution to a local one.

"[At Timberlake's,] you're not a number. You're a name," Ratcliffe said. "Even if we're not family, people ask us all the time, 'Are you a family?' No, but we are. [John Plantz] knows he can call us for just about anything and we'll come and help him. He gets to hear every part about my life, the good, the bad, the ugly."

Ratcliffe, who works the store six days a week, prioritizes maintaining this sense of care and personalization for her customers, similar to what Hancher provided decades ago.

"My favorite part about working here is I get to learn something about every single person that comes to the store," Ratcliffe said. "I make it a point to [get to know customers]. I'm really good at remembering orders and people are really appreciative of that."

According to John Plantz, Timberlakes', former regulars, employees or other notable Charlottesville residents are often honored by having their favorite sandwich named after them once they pass away. Some of these eponymous subs include the Mr. Glaser, named after Lewis Glaser who manufactured quill pens that were used at Monticello, and the Mr. Gitchell, named after Charlottesville photographer Frank Gitchell.

Though Timberlake's prides itself in maintaining its traditional values and honoring the past, Ratcliffe is pushing for the business to make some changes, hoping to modernize and draw in a new and younger audience. She recently revived the Timberlake's Facebook page and set up a DoorDash account, though she said that the DoorDash account does not receive many orders.

As John Plantz describes his takeaways and what he has learned from owning Timberlake's for nearly 50 years, tears begin to well in his eyes. Though the feel of Timberlake's may leave customers feeling though they are frozen in time, John Plantz has poured countless hours, days and years of work into maintaining the store exactly how it is and keeping its doors open for years to come.

"[Timberlake's] is a rare bird," John Plantz said. "[Customers'] jaws just drop when they walk in the door because there's no other place like it. I like to be here to tell them about the history."

THE CAVALIER DAILY

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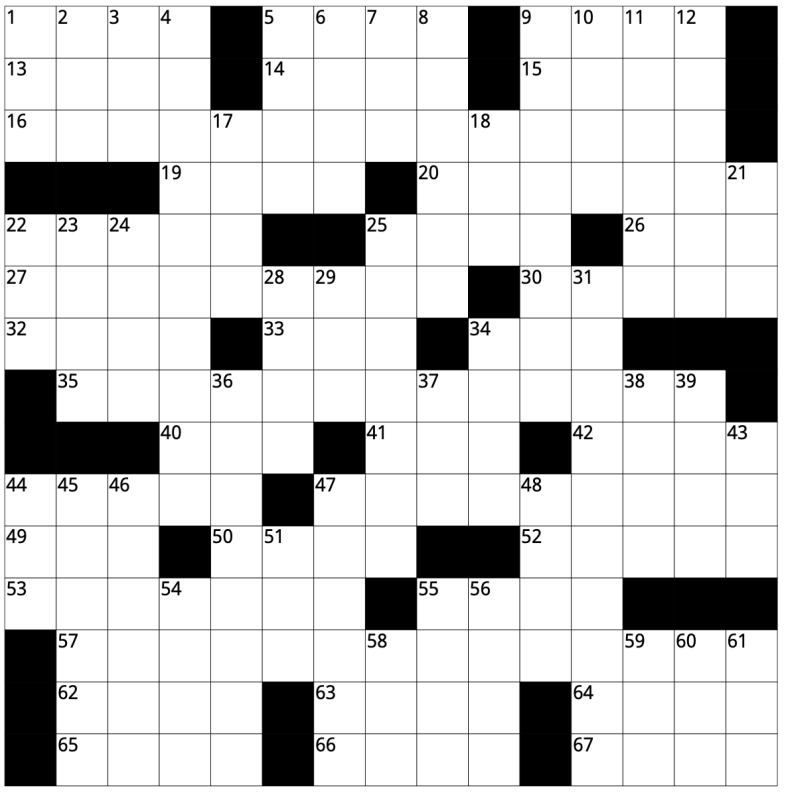
PUZZLE

Ty Lolak and Ali Hunter | **Puzzlists**

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

ACROSS
1 AI content, to some
5 It goes with circumstance
9 French Open surface
13 Fuzzy fruit
14 Kyrgyzstan mountain range
15 Evaluate a professor
16 Ellis' seminal satire of yuppie culture
19 Follow
20 Perfect example
22 What you just read
25 Coup target
26 Election night graphic
27 Folksy music genre played at Gingko Bookshop
30 Simone Biles' partner Jonathan
32 Religious subgroup
33 "Bears & Scares" org.
34 "Uh ... hello?"
35 Comforting sleep posture
40 13th Spanish letter
41 "Butter" group
42 Thanksgiving race
44 Latissimus _____ (back muscle)
47 Photographer's request ... or a hint to the start of 16-, 27-, 35- and 57-Across
49 Where one may roam at U.Va.?
50 Org. for economics working papers
52 Coy compliment response
53 Bird in a tuxedo
55 Start of culture?
57 Multipurpose pocket tool
62 Goalie's success
63 Nonbinary pronoun
64 "Choosin' Texas" singer Langley
65 Some votes in the 47-Down
66 Billions of years
67 Speak drunkenly

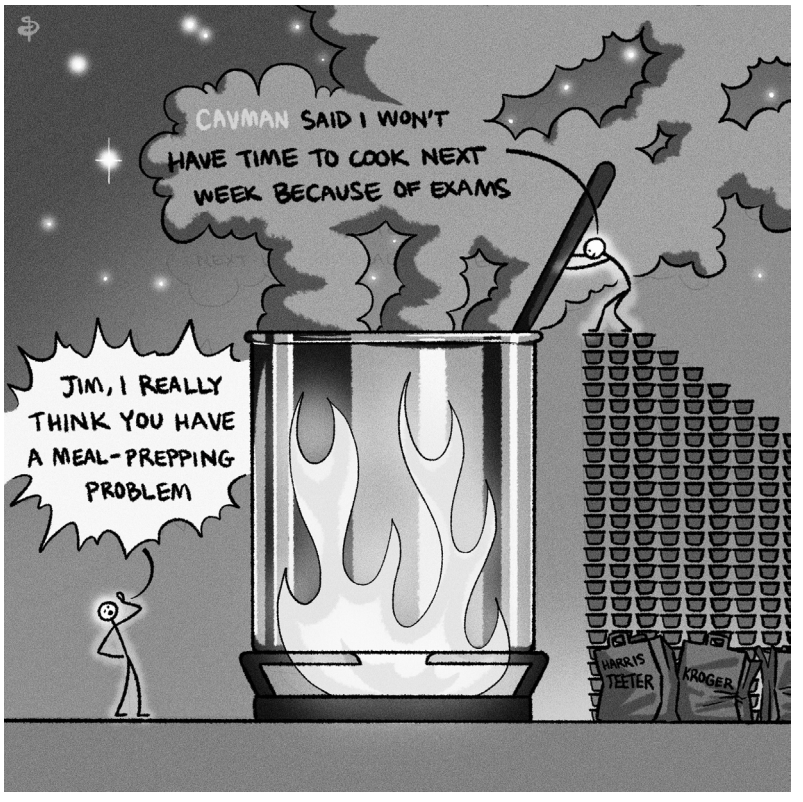
DOWN
1 Sublime genre
2 MATH 1310 calculation
3 Be in debt
4 Spins, like a ballerina
5 Treadmill setting
6 Body wash brand
7 Spider or Bat follower
8 CHEM lab equipment
9 Get some emotional release
10 Milk: prefix
11 Like most COVID-19 tests
12 With Warder, official title for a Tower of London Beefeater
17 "____ to differ"
18 Relaxation destination
21 Assortments of four singles, perhaps?
22 Ones worked during crunch time?
23 Musical staff symbol
24 Downtown Mall pasta spot
25 Colombian drug lord Pablo
28 Regulation
29 Doorlist or Yik Yak
31 Charcuterie board pairings
34 It can be herniated
36 3.7s
37 Pig pen
38 Wash. neighbor
43 Peg found at Birdwood
44 Bank acct. addition
45 "Marty Supreme" actress A'zion
46 Fashion club with annual showcases
47 New workplace for James Talarico, come January
48 Start of a Christmas carol
51 Muscles worked with curls, casually
54 Donate
55 "Preach!"
56 North Grounds and the AFC, for two
58 Letter between pi and sigma
59 Afflicted with 60-Down
60 With Hoo, sickness that spreads around U.Va. in the fall
61 Common piercing location



CARTOON

Food frenzy

Sophia Lee | **Cartoonist**



My secret identity is ... sweaters

Addison Boomer | **Cartoonist**



NEWS

A look at the University's history with sexual assault

After Rolling Stone's "A Rape on Campus" article, faculty, librarians and students documented the University's sexual assault history in "Take Back the Archive"

Grace Little | News Editor

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

The Cornell Seven case has reinvigorated scrutiny of universities' procedures and histories with sexual violence.

Sexual assault awareness and prevention seeps into many crevices of college life. Take a college tour at virtually any university, and the student tour guide will mention safety lights and emergency phones riddled throughout campus grounds. Legally speaking, the Clery Act mandates universities track and report sexual assault instances, and anyone can search these published statistics.

At the University specifically, students are reminded of resources on their side when it comes to sexual assault — The Maxine Platzer Lynn Women's Center, Student Health and Wellness' Violence Prevention and Advocacy, Counseling and Psychological Services, TimelyCare and the Sexual Assault Resource Agency in Charlottesville, among others. More informally, students often advise each other to always walk home with a friend and request loved ones to send a text confirming they have returned home safely.

Prevention and treatment resources are flush, at least on paper, but the University did not offer these resources at its founding. How did the University's past with sexual assault shape its current policies and institutions?

Just over a decade ago, a student named "Jackie" retold the story of being gang raped in a fraternity house in a Rolling Stone article that was later discredited. Nonetheless, the article stirred a University-wide debate on the climate around sexual assault on Grounds. In reaction, a group of University faculty, students, librarians and archivists took it upon themselves to compile a comprehensive digital archive of the University's history of rape and sexual violence titled "Take Back the Archive." The repository includes nearly 2,000 items, including student leader interviews, Cavalier Daily articles, University scholar journal articles on sexual violence and documentation of University policy changes.

Lisa Goff, founder and principal historian for the archive and associate professor of English and American Studies, spoke on the origins of the archive. Goff said that following the Rolling Stone incident, the University community largely believed the allegations, even though the article was later retracted and the story deemed unverifiable. Goff noted that the ease of believing the incident spoke on the larger culture of sexual assault at the University — a culture that had gone without word for some time. From the incident and the ensuing protests, Goff said there was an upsurge of questions from the University community asking how the incident could happen, and how the community did not know sexual assault remained an issue on Grounds.

"What I kept hearing was … 'We didn't know this was such a problem. We didn't know this had been happening all along,'" Goff said. "I thought, 'that's just unacceptable [at] a University with our resources.' So if there's something we might do, so that it's harder in the future to say we didn't know, then maybe there [could] be … a digital humanities archiving project."

In collaboration with the Scholars' Lab at the University, Goff gathered money and hired interns over the next few years, but after the Rolling Stone story was found unverifiable, she assumed the project would fall apart. However, she found the opposite — interest in compiling the archive was not diminished by the retraction.

According to Goff, the project initially aimed to invite student survivors to tell their stories, but a change in University policy mandated faculty reporting and precluded the anonymous storytelling format. Under the new policy, most faculty and staff would be classified as "responsible employees," and they were required to notify the University's Title IX coordinator when students disclosed possible sexual misconduct.

Instead, the project shifted to conducting interviews on sexual assault with student leaders, collecting Cavalier Daily articles and University administrative responses, digitizing Iris Magazine pieces — a Women's Center publication — and more. Commenting on the interview portion, Goff said student leaders faced "enormous pressure" to respond to the student outcry, and "did astonishing service" in the aftermath of the Rolling Stone article.

Goff said student interns also drove the intersectionality focus of the project, pushing the collection to cross-reference LGBTQ+ issues and racial issues. Goff said the website touches on all of these overlapping identities to acknowledge sexual assault as an intersectional issue, even if the project did not delve more thoroughly into each of these issues.

More broadly, Goff spoke to the abundance of information in this project — she said the group accomplished a feasible amount of digitizing, but the opportunity to collect sexual assault-related materials at the University is "endless."

Here is a nonexhaustive look at the University's history with sexual assault, largely compiled by the Take Back the Archive resource, including incidents sparking policy change, scandals provoking outcries within the student body and governance actions to quell unrest on Grounds.

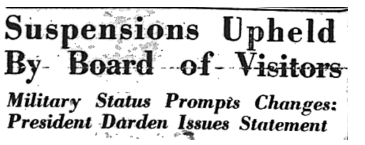
1954 — East Lawn "sex scandal"

The timeline of incidents in the 20th century begins with an April 3, 1954 sexual assault of a 19-year-old female guest in the 14 East Lawn room. At the time, the undergraduate class of the University was all-male — full undergraduate admission for women began in 1970.

In May, newspaper stories reported the "sex scandal," and Board of Visitors meeting minutes referred to the rape as "the East Lawn incident" — neither labeled the event as a gang rape. Board meeting minutes are sparse on the details of the incident, but according to the timeline given by the then-director of Student Affairs, 24-year-old William Walker arrived in the Lawn room with his 19-year-old date from a Saturday event past midnight with others — ultimately amounting to 12 men — for a "disreputable party." The woman did not arrive home until Sunday, "beaten and brutalized," then-University President Colgate W. Darden said in the days following.

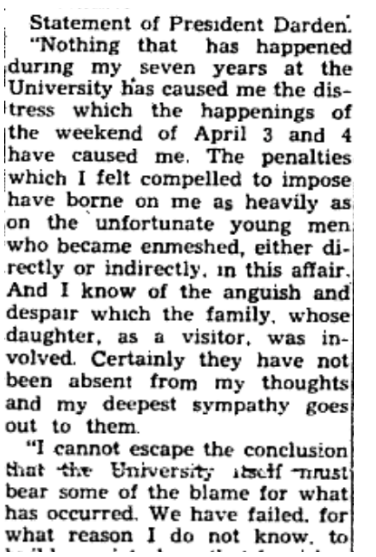
Resultingly, two to four students faced expulsion — sources vary — and at least eight others were given suspensions. Reactions erupted from the all-male student body in Cavalier Daily letters to the editor, arguing the students had been misled into confession or been punished too harshly, and many said they felt the administration was too-strictly infringing upon their freedom.

The men's appeals were rejected, and in a statement to The Cavalier Daily following this decision, Darden spoke of the distress the incident brought to the University and his leadership.


Suspensions Upheld By Board of Visitors

Military Status Prompts Changes: President Darden Issues Statement

"The penalties which I felt compelled to impose have borne on me as heavily as on the unfortunate young men who became enmeshed, either directly or indirectly, in this affair," Darden wrote. "I know of the anguish and despair which the family, whose daughter, as a visitor, was involved … I cannot escape the conclusion that the University itself must bear some of the blame for what has occurred."


Statement of President Darden:

"Nothing that has happened during my seven years at the University has caused me the distress which the happenings of the weekend of April 3 and 4 have caused me. The penalties which I felt compelled to impose have borne on me as heavily as on the unfortunate young men who became enmeshed, either directly or indirectly, in this affair. And I know of the anguish and despair which the family, whose daughter, as a visitor, was involved. Certainly they have not been absent from my thoughts and my deepest sympathy goes out to them.

"I cannot escape the conclusion that the University itself must bear some of the blame for what has occurred. We have failed, for what reason I do not know, to

Months later in November 1954, Student Council and Darden created a special mechanism for processing University sexual assault cases. As reported in The Cavalier Daily, disciplinary authority would lie in the hands of students on the newly founded University Judiciary Committee.

"After negotiations that have lasted in semi-privacy since the beginning of the session, Darden has returned to the students the powers that he revoked last summer … The agreement will also broaden the powers of the present Student Council to an unprecedented degree," the Nov. 5 Cavalier Daily article reads.

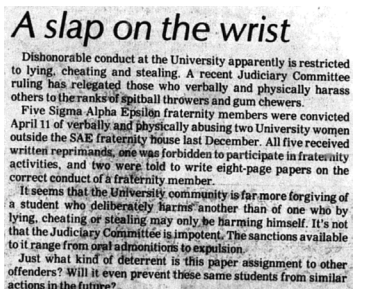
1975 — Two female students raped, renewed student demands

With the arrival of women to the University's undergraduate classes came the emergence of the Committee on Human Sexuality in 1971 to "compensate for prior inadequate sex education." Further, the Committee planned a safety seminar for women to discuss rape prevention and legal action.

In response to two female student rapes in early fall 1975, students requested artificial lighting between the Chapel and University Avenue, as well as the alleys running east-west to the Lawn.

1979 — Armed sexual assault of female student, essays given as assault punishments

In 1979, The Cavalier Daily published a letter to the editor — titled 'A slap on the wrist' — condemning the weak penalties men face as repercussions for assault cases such as essays and temporary suspensions from fraternity activities.


A slap on the wrist

Dishonorable conduct at the University apparently is restricted to lying, cheating and stealing. A recent Judiciary Committee ruling has relegated those who verbally and physically harass others to the ranks of spitball throwers and gum chewers.

Five Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity members were convicted April 11 of verbally and physically abusing two University women outside the SAE fraternity house last December. All five received written reprimands, one was forbidden to participate in fraternity activities, and two were told to write eight-page papers on the correct conduct of a fraternity member.

It seems that the University community is far more forgiving of a student who deliberately harms another than of one who by lying, cheating or stealing may only be harming himself. It's not that the Judiciary Committee is impotent. The sanctions available to it range from oral admonitions to expulsion.

Just what kind of deterrent is this paper assignment to other offenders? Will it even prevent these same students from similar actions in the future?

1984 — A gang rape buried, resurfaced in 2005

Though this case would become more relevant as it reemerged in the early 2000s, in 1984, first-year student Liz Seccuro — then 17 years old — was raped at the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity house. Seccuro said in a 2005 police report that she was drugged and multiple men assaulted her, and she reported the incident to the University. In response, a dean strongly discouraged reporting the incident to the Charlottesville police, and the University did not effectively pursue the case, she claimed in a 2011 article by The Guardian.

Securro received a letter from her attacker over two decades after the rape.

"In October 1984. I can scarcely begin to understand the degree to which, in your eyes, my behaviour has affected you in its wake. Still, I stand prepared to hear from you about just how, and in what ways you've been affected; and to begin to set right the wrong I've done, in any way you see fit. Most sincerely yours, Will Beebe," the letter reads.

At the time of the rape, Seccuro was unable to secure a rape kit at the University Medical Center. The then-dean of students, who expressed doubt that the sex was nonconsensual, deterred Seccuro from reporting the incident to Charlottesville Police, falsely asserting the fraternity house did not fall under Charlottesville Police's jurisdiction. Her report to the University Police never materialized into a case.

In 2005, after Beebe connected with Seccuro, she called Charlottesville Police Chief Timothy Longo and ultimately pressed charges. Beebe was arrested Jan. 4, 2006 for felony rape, nearly 22 years after the incident in the fraternity house, and it came to light in the trial that Seccuro had actually been the victim of a gang rape. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison, of which he served less than six months.

Also in 1984, Charlottesville residents and the University collaborated to form a 45-person rape task force. A Cavalier Daily article discussed a change that year in sexual assault litigation in which a woman may press

Also in 1984, Charlottesville residents and the University collaborated to form a 45-person rape task force. A Cavalier Daily article discussed a change that year in sexual assault litigation in which a woman may press charges without the requirement of demonstrating that she "reasonably resisted assault."

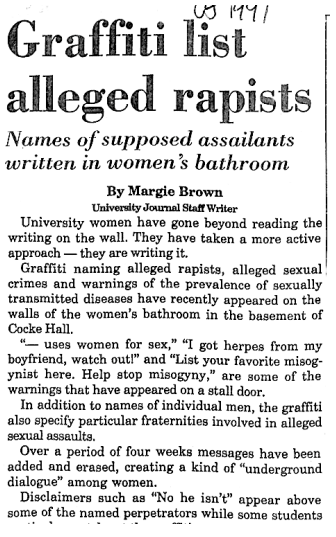
1987 — A revised University Standard of Conduct now includes "sexual assault"

The May 29, 1987 Board meeting minutes mark the first mention of "sexual assault" in the University's Standards of Conduct. Standard 1 — physical assault — was revised to include sexual assault in the definition of violations that result in punishment of students who break policy.

Standard 1 was revised from a violation that includes "physical abuse of any person on University-owned or regulated property or at University-sponsored functions, or conduct which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any such persons" to additionally include "the physical or sexual assault of any University student, faculty member or employee at the local residence of any student, faculty member or employee within the city of Charlottesville or Albemarle County."

As speculative proof that official University mechanisms were proving insufficient, in 1991, The University Journal reported on graffiti lining the walls of the women's bathroom in Cocke Hall of the names of "alleged rapists" and "alleged sexual crimes." When formal reporting mechanisms failed students, they could turn to a "guerilla network" of sorts, as Goff described the graffiti.

"University women have gone beyond reading the writing on the wall. They have taken a more active approach — they are writing it," the 1991 article reads. "'— uses women for sex.' 'I got herpes from my boyfriend, watch out,' and 'List your favorite misogynist here. Help stop misogyny,' are some of the warnings that have appeared on a stall door."



UJ Mon 5/27/91

Graffiti list alleged rapists

Names of supposed assailants written in women's bathroom

By Margie Brown
University Journal Staff Writer

University women have gone beyond reading the writing on the wall. They have taken a more active approach — they are writing it.

Graffiti naming alleged rapists, alleged sexual crimes and warnings of the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases have recently appeared on the walls of the women's bathroom in the basement of Cocke Hall.

"— uses women for sex," "I got herpes from my boyfriend, watch out!" and "List your favorite misogynist here. Help stop misogyny," are some of the warnings that have appeared on a stall door.

In addition to names of individual men, the graffiti also specify particular fraternities involved in alleged sexual assaults.

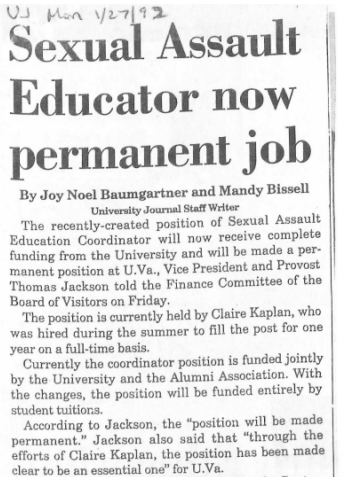
Over a period of four weeks messages have been added and erased, creating a kind of "underground dialogue" among women.

Disclaimers such as "No he isn't" appear above some of the named perpetrators while some students

1991-92 — Sexual Assault Educator becomes permanent role, Pi Lambda Phi fraternity assault

1992 saw Claire Kaplan move from temporary to permanent sexual assault educator at the University after student efforts to cement the role.

"'I grew up in a social action-oriented family,'" Kaplan said to The Cavalier Daily in an Aug. 29, 1992 article. "'[I] came to the movement [against sexual assault] as a feminist.'"



UJ Mon 1/27/92

Sexual Assault Educator now permanent job

By Joy Noel Baumgartner and Mandy Bissell
University Journal Staff Writer

The recently-created position of Sexual Assault Education Coordinator will now receive complete funding from the University and will be made a permanent position at U.Va., Vice President and Provost Thomas Jackson told the Finance Committee of the Board of Visitors on Friday.

The position is currently held by Claire Kaplan, who was hired during the summer to fill the post for one year on a full-time basis.

Currently the coordinator position is funded jointly by the University and the Alumni Association. With the changes, the position will be funded entirely by student tuitions.

According to Jackson, the "position will be made permanent." Jackson also said that "through the efforts of Claire Kaplan, the position has been made clear to be an essential one" for U.Va.

Just the year prior, a group of 200 University faculty members and students participated in a six-day sexual assault awareness vigil on the steps of the Rotunda.

"Each of the vigil's 134 hours symbolizes one University student who was sexually assaulted during the 1988-1989 school year," an April 22 Cavalier Daily article reads. "The groundwork has been laid, but it's time for the administration to understand the wide support that students have."

As Goff described, enraged sentiment over sexual assault at the University comes in waves, considering most students cycle through the University every four years. In the wake of the 1992 sexual assault of a second-year female student at Pi Lambda Phi, faculty members spoke out against fraternities, then-University President John Casteen considered increased police patrol and Kaplan spoke on the rising number of sexual assault reports, along with the countless other incidents that went unreported.

"Inter-Fraternity Council President Graham Pierce said IFC is conducting an inquiry into the [Pi Lambda Phi] matter and will meet Thursday to decide what measures it can take to prevent similar occurrences," a Sept. 8, 1992 Cavalier Daily article reads. "The assailant pinned [the victim] down and tried to choke her. The woman was later treated for severe facial injuries with many cuts, abrasions and bruises on her head, neck and face."

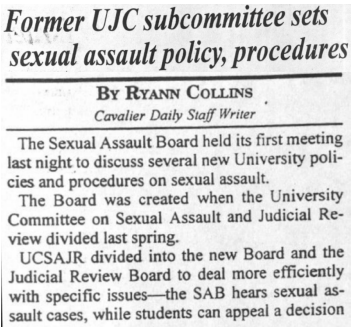
The Board also discussed goals for the University by the year 2000, including crime and sexual assault mitigation.

In April 1992, representatives from the University also attended the first statewide conference on campus sexual assault, according to a Cavalier Daily article.

"We concentrated on presenting how students view alcohol abuse and sexual assault," then-fouth-year College student and conference attendee Brooke Leckey said to The Cavalier Daily. "We hope by educating students on the negative aspects of alcohol and sexual abuse, they will be able to make their own decisions regarding these subjects."

Six years later, a new UJC subcommittee formed to hear student sexual assault cases.

"Victims need to know that they are really going to be cared for from the start," then-Sexual Assault Board Member Jay Shaylor said to The Cavalier Daily in a 1998 article. "[There is an] extreme case of apathy in the student population concerning activism."



Former UJC subcommittee sets sexual assault policy, procedures

By Ryann Collins
Cavalier Daily Staff Writer

The Sexual Assault Board held its first meeting last night to discuss several new University policies and procedures on sexual assault.

The Board was created when the University Committee on Sexual Assault and Judicial Review divided last spring.

UCSAJR divided into the new Board and the Judicial Review Board to deal more efficiently with specific issues—the SAB hears sexual assault cases, while students can appeal a decision

2001 — University opens Women's Center for Emergency Care, provides specialized services for survivors

At the University Medical Center, the University opened its Women's Center for Emergency Care to provide emergency medical care to victims of sexual assault.

2004-05 — Overhaul of University sexual-assault policy by University President John Casteen

The University's Sexual Assault Education Office administered a survey in 2003 of the student body, and a forum in the wake of a rape the same year discussed how no student found guilty of rape in the last five years had faced suspension or expulsion.

In November 2004, then-President John Casteen issued a statement on the University's sexual assault policy. In the statement, he considered mandatory expulsion for offenders, and in the following year, the University revised its sexual assault policy to increase confidentiality for victims and consider more severe penalties for perpetrators.

2011 — U.S. Education Department opens compliance review into University's handling of sexual violence

Following the April 4, 2011 Dear Colleague Letter — in which the Office for Civil Rights clarified universities' obligations to prevent and respond to sexual violence under Title IX — the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights opened a compliance review June 30, 2011 to evaluate the University's handling of sexual harassment and sexual assault policies under Title IX.

In July, the University adopted a new "Policy and Procedures for Cases of Student Sexual Misconduct," making revisions throughout the ensuing years. Four years later in 2015, the OCR and the University reached a resolution agreement after finding that earlier University policy failed to promptly and reasonably resolve sexual assault hearings.

To comply with the agreement's requirements, the University had to conduct a retrospective review of sexual misconduct complaints between 2011-14, develop an electronic tracking system for logging incoming reports to perform annual reviews, submit annual compliance reports for federal monitoring and implement Title IX training for University employees.

2014 — Rolling Stone publishes 'A Rape on Campus,' outcry on Grounds

The Rolling Stone published a story of a purported gang rape, "A Rape on Campus," at the University against victim "Jackie" Nov. 19, 2014. Later redacted in April of 2015, the story unspooled Jackie's telling of a rape at Phi Kappa Psi occurring in 2012 that was posited as part of an initiation ritual.

In reaction, students vandalized the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity house by spray painting messages such as "U.Va. Center for Rape Studies" and breaking windows. Then-University President Teresa Sullivan suspended all fraternities.

"We want our students to feel comfortable coming forward with information when there are problems in the community and cooperating with local law enforcement and the student disciplinary process," Sullivan said in a Nov. 19, 2014 email to the University community. "We also want them to feel empowered to take action and to lead efforts to make our Grounds and our community a better place to live and learn."

A few days after the publication, hundreds participated in a march organized by University faculty, and students asked the University to tighten sexual assault policy and punishments. Students and Contracted Independent Organizations held numerous demonstrations, including a "Slut Walk" — a march meant to protest victim-blaming and raise awareness about sexual violence.

"The wrongs described in Rolling Stone are appalling and have caused all of us to reexamine our responsibility to this community. Rape is an abhorrent crime that has no place in the world, let alone on the campuses," Sullivan wrote in a Nov. 22, 2014 email. "We know … that we are better than we have been described, and that we have a responsibility to live our tradition of honor every day."

In addition to administrative action, student leaders held a press conference later in November to discuss sexual assault prevention.

"We recognize that sexual violence is a problem in our fraternities and we recognize that we as students can be catalysts for the solution," Tommy Reid, then-IFC president and fourth-year College student said. "Addressing this issue requires individual and collective commitment to institutional and cultural change across the country, in our University, in our fraternities — but most importantly in ourselves."

The Board held a special meeting on the release of the Rolling Stone article, and renewed awareness gave rise to new sexual assault awareness initiatives, including the establishment of a University chapter of Not on Our Grounds and amended sexual assault University policy. In January, the University also released a sexual assault climate survey, and the Women's Center introduced a Gender Violence and Social Change Outreach Coordinator. An Ad Hoc Group on University Climate and Culture also held its second meeting Dec. 22, 2014 to improve student safety.

"The [Ad Hoc Group] was glad to hear about the quick action the administration is taking to improve safety all over Grounds as well as working with local law enforcement to make the Corner and other areas where students live and congregate safer, too," Committee member Allison DiNardo said in a Dec. 26, 2014 Cavalier Daily article.

In the months following the story's publication, journalists investigated the Rolling Stone article's claims, finding discrepancies, exaggerations and, ultimately, invalidations of Jackie's story.

Friends of Jackie spoke to a Cavalier Daily reporter, stating they were quoted in the Rolling Stone article despite never being interviewed.

"I don't think it was a particularly accurate portrayal," a friend said in a November 2016 Cavalier Daily article. "I definitely would not have written off someone who had just been sexually assaulted. I would say the quotes were pretty much just made up."

Later in the spring of 2015, the University adopted a revised misconduct policy — the interim Policy on Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence — which described reporting options, prohibited conduct and outlined disciplinary action up to and including termination or expulsion.

2015 and 2024 — Campus survey finds sexual misconduct remains prevalent

The Take Back the Archive's administrative timeline ends in 2015. Since then, the University's "Campus Climate Survey" reported in September 2015 that 23.8 percent of female undergraduates said they had experienced sexual assault or misconduct since entering the University, and over two-thirds of students reported that they did not believe the University would take necessary action against an offender if an assault were reported.

In ensuing years, the University and Charlottesville Police responded to sexual assault reports on and off Grounds, debates continued over Title IX proceedings and students criticized inadequate University responses.

Most recently in 2024, a campus survey on sexual misconduct experiences and perceptions found 24.2 percent of undergraduate female respondents reported nonconsensual sexual contact since enrolling, and 12.6 percent of students said they were very or extremely knowledgeable about what happens after an assault report is made. 66.5 percent of students said they believed "officials are very or extremely likely to take a report seriously," and 56.4 percent said "officials are very or extremely likely to conduct a fair investigation."

For a more complete list featuring nearly 2,000 documents, images, artifacts, articles and survivor stories on the University's history with sexual assault, visit Take Back the Archive.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

‘Safe for the Whole Family’ speaks ‘truth to power’

Director Jason Ikeler and producer Whitney Fern reflect on the documentary’s personal significance surrounding the Contemporary Christian Music industry

Zoe McFarland | **Staff Writer**

The Contemporary Christian Music industry, a genre of popular music that incorporates Christian themes and messages across styles ranging from pop and rock to gospel, experienced a surge in popularity throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, transforming into a billion-dollar enterprise. Despite its increasing popularity, however, the industry’s wholesome facade came to reveal a darker underbelly colored by the unjust treatment of the artists fueling its success.

The documentary “Safe for the Whole Family: How to Make a Christian Superstar” — featured in the 39th annual Virginia Film Festival as a part of both their “LGBTQIA+” and “Music on Film” series — explores how the industry demanded more from its stars than just music. Artists were expected to uphold strict evangelical ideals on and off stage, and those who fell short of these expectations were pushed out of the industry and silenced.

Director Jason Ikeler and Whitney Fern, a producer of the film and Class of 2011 alumna, spoke to the creation of the documentary and the significance of telling such a story in a film format. For Ikeler, the documentary was as much an opportunity to revisit his own upbringing as it is an examination of the music industry. Growing up in a conservative evangelical household in Michigan, he was homeschooled until middle school and was permitted to listen exclusively to Christian music. As a closeted gay child, he said he understood firsthand the pressures of conforming to the religious environment around him.

Having once viewed the Christian music industry as a world in which his own identity would not be accepted, Ikeler found it especially meaningful to reconnect with the artists of his childhood and discover that they, too, had struggled to reconcile their identities with the expectations of their religious communities.

“I think as a gay kid in that environment, I didn’t really look back at the Christian music I grew up on,” Ikeler said. “So to see these artists that were on the same journey and willing to share their story was really cool and exciting.”

The documentary focuses on the stories and careers of three musicians who faced challenges and adversity at various stages of the music industry. Among them is Nikki Leonti, a rising Christian pop star whose record label dropped her after she became pregnant as a teenager. Michael Passons, a member of the vocal group Avalon, similarly found himself ostracized from the industry after being outed as gay. Singer-songwriter Jennifer Knapp chose to step away from her career rather than promote the conservative religious agenda expected of Christian musicians.

According to Ikeler, the idea for the documentary emerged in January 2023, when he was working at Hearst Magazines, overseeing video production for publications including “Cosmopolitan,” “Elle” and “Harper’s Bazaar.” Amidst a broader cultural reconsideration of the treatment of early-2000s celebrities like Britney Spears and Lindsay Lohan, Ikeler said he wondered why Christian musicians had not received a similar reassessment.

Ikeler recalled a conversation he had with Fern before the documentary came to fruition, during which he said he expressed his desire to tell the stories of Christian music artists who faced the same pressures as mainstream musicians, compounded by the expectations of the church and evangelical culture. Shortly thereafter, he said he began reaching out to former Christian music stars through Instagram, inviting them to participate in the project.

For Fern, the documentary also offered an opportunity to encourage audiences to recognize their own experiences in those of the artists.

“I hope people watch this and see parts of themselves in these artists because we all have a story,” Fern said. “We all go through different things that maybe [redirect] our life, or we make choices and we want to be authentic to who we are.”

Fern’s own upbringing offered another perspective on the culture that the documentary explores. Raised Methodist in a small Virginia town, she said she became involved in evangelical circles through friends and Christian summer camps. She recalled performing dances to contemporary Christian songs, including Avalon’s “Testify to Love” from Passons’ tenure with the band.

As she grew older, however, Fern said she began questioning the religious expectations she had been subjected to, particularly those associated with purity culture — which advocates for sexual abstinence before marriage alongside other expectations of modesty for women. Moving to Los Angeles later prompted her to reconsider those inherited expectations and distinguish her personal convictions from the beliefs she had grown up surrounded by.

Fern also reflected on how her time at the University expanded her understanding of the world beyond the community in which she grew up. She noted that during an independent study she pursued in the McIntire School of Commerce, Fern was able to work with a local television news station, an experience that helped develop her interest in storytelling. Fern said that experience was only the first step towards exploring a larger, more expansive world of storytelling and storytellers in various forms.



COURTESY VIRGINIA FILM FESTIVAL

For both the filmmakers and the featured artists alike, “Safe for the Whole Family” offers a seemingly cathartic opportunity to revisit a complicated chapter in Christian music history.

This process of personal discovery parallels a central theme of the documentary, which examines how musicians were expected to embody a carefully cultivated version of Christian morality, often at the expense of their individuality. Despite these experiences, Ikeler emphasized that his intention was never to produce a wholesale condemnation of Christianity. Instead, he said he wanted to create an environment in which the artists could recount their experience without fear of having their stories sensationalized.

“It’s important to speak truth to power, but also not in a way where we’re attacking religion or Christianity,” Ikeler said.

Fern similarly described the emotional difficulty of confronting the disparity between the industry’s professed religious values and its treatment of individual artists.

“These were Christian people helping or showcasing other Christian music, and yet there’s still this part of it where people aren’t seen or people aren’t heard or they’re not accepted for who they are,” Fern said. “I think that’s the antithesis, at least for me, of what Christianity should be.”

One of the documentary’s most resonant moments came during a concert filmed in Nashville, Tenn., where the featured artists convened to perform and reflect on their experiences. Fern spoke to the sense of connection she observed among the artists during the reunion, describing how meaningful it was to watch artists with similar experiences find solidarity in one another’s company.

“Just getting to sit there and see how all of those artists within the industry together could bond over that and be able to talk about that and kind of feel some sense of community and also maybe relief,” Fern said. “You’ve been through this, so I see you and you see me.”

Ikeler echoed this sentiment, explaining that many of the artists had endured their experiences in isolation, without the platforms that social media now provides for sharing personal stories.

“If you were exiled from that industry, you were exiled from the press, you were exiled from the labels, and so they didn’t really even get a chance to talk to each other at the time,’” Ikeler said. “And so I think just being able to share it publicly and then also look around and be like, ‘Oh, this is happening to you, you and you’ has been a cool experience for all of them.”

Ikeler said that “healing” is a word frequently invoked by the featured artists when describing the experience of sharing their stories.

For Passons in particular, the documentary has coincided with a renewed musical career. After years away from performing, he re-recorded his former group’s hit “Testify to Love” alongside country artists Ty Herndon and Melissa Greene, marking a meaningful return to the music industry.

Ikeler lamented the derailment of a career for an artist of Passons’ talent, but expressed excitement at seeing him regain momentum in the industry, recalling a moment in production when Passons retrieved a dusty keyboard from his closet to play for the filmmakers.

For both the filmmakers and the featured artists alike, “Safe for the Whole Family” offers a seemingly cathartic opportunity to revisit a complicated chapter in Christian music history, bringing renewed attention to the personal experiences of the people that have too often been overshadowed by the industry. The filmmakers are currently exploring options for distribution of “Safe for the Whole Family” to expand the film’s message to more audiences.

The Fralin traces Jefferson's legacy through his voyage to France

The multimedia exhibition studies how Jefferson's "Grand Tour" shaped 250 years of revolutionary flair and flaws

Legare Sowder | **Staff Writer**

From his cultivation of a nascent United States to his establishment of the University, Thomas Jefferson cemented himself a founding father in many respects, a legacy resonant throughout Virginia's history. That being said, on the heels of the country's 250th anniversary of independence, the Fralin Museum of Art is inviting gallery-goers to get a glimpse of Jefferson's relationships, travels and influence through a contemporary lens.

"Collection and Translation: Thomas Jefferson in Southern France" presents Jefferson through the lesser-known details of his Grand Tour of France. In the 18th century, it was common practice for aristocratic young men to embark on a tour that spanned France and Italy, gleaning inspiration from their respective cultural experiences. Thus, through a melange of prints, plaques, maps and models, this exhibition encapsulates three categories of Jefferson's extensively-documented cultural observations of southwestern France — architecture, plants and labor.

The first piece presented in a tour of the exhibition is a replica of a French commemorative plaque erected in Jefferson's honor. When paired with a print across the room, Jean Henry Alexandre Pernet's vibrant aquatint print of the burning Bastille — the inciting riot for the 1789 French Revolution — Jefferson's revolutionary impact worldwide becomes apparent. By befriending Marquis de LaFayette, Jefferson was able to shape the drafting of France's 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and even witnessed the storming of the Bastille. This rendered him an iconic figure in France, hence their recognition of his sojourns. Considering the current protest movement sweeping through France, these works offer visitors a particularly relevant and riveting opportunity to trace the origins and implications of Jefferson's revolutionary career.

Elisabeth Rivard, Barringer-Lindner curatorial fellow and graduate Arts & Sciences student, co-curated this exhibition as a natural continuation of previous Jefferson-focused galleries. Specifically, Rivard said it was the National Gallery of Art's 1976 "Eye of Thomas Jefferson" catalog, a commemoration of his artistic and intellectual prowess for the United States' 200th anniversary of independence, that partially guided her selections.

"I looked really deeply into that catalog, and part of this exhibition is in some ways a response," Rivard said. "Just think of the title, 'The Eye of [Thomas] Jefferson,' [of] him seeing and observing and writing things down."

As a component of this response, "Thomas Jefferson in Southern France" adds nuance to Jefferson's perceptions, dissecting the underlying historical context that may have framed his biases. M. Jordan Love, exhibit co-curator and Carol R. Angle academic curator at the Fralin, said she was particularly drawn to the noticeable gaps in Jefferson's record-keeping. A scholar of medieval French arts and architecture, Love said she was astounded by Jefferson's omission of the Papal Palace and the city of Carcassonne, two major — and, in her mind, unavoidable — architectural masterpieces.

"It's kind of asking the question, 'Why does he talk about this and not this?'" Love said. "It's a little weird that somebody who is so prolific in documenting where they're going and what they are seeing says nothing … that felt like conscious avoidance to me."

Love referenced aspects of Jefferson's personal lineage as potential motives for this exclusion.

Jefferson espoused a deep admiration for Roman architecture and classical literature, and his Anglo-Saxon Protestant roots inspired an indifference toward Catholicism. Therefore, much of Jefferson's takeaways from his journey intimate a deference for Roman and Protestant iconography — one Love said was intertwined with the United States' burgeoning national identity.

"I just wanted to show that his feelings were typical of the time," Love said. "How are we shaped by our time, just like how he was shaped by his time?"

One piece in particular, literally central to the exhibition, embodies how southern France shaped Jefferson's contributions to American architecture. In stark, white plaster, a model replica of the Virginia State Capitol building sits behind a plexiglass box, commanding the attention of the room. Jefferson himself designed the actual structure located in Richmond, modeling it after the Maison Carré in Nîmes, France in an image evocative of the rise of democracy.

"[The Maison Carré] symbolized the rule of law and all the things that the Revolutionary War had kind of fought for," Rivard said. "The Virginia State Capitol is perhaps the most visible artifact of this exchange that he participated in between Southern France and the United States."

On display until Jan. 3, "Thomas Jefferson in Southern France" offers visitors a lens to see Jefferson through the guise of his personal life. In doing so, Love said the museum hopes to preserve a richer record of the United States' struggle for independence.

"We know him as one of the founding fathers and one of the first presidents. But these are aspects of his life as a human being that give us a fuller picture of who he was," Love said. "It's good for us to kind of dissect that and … consume it as individuals and as a culture 250 years later."

Public Service Pathways reimagines art and service

The academic program's Public Arts Pathway showcases the influence of art in civic life

Victor-Jenay Cortijo Lopez | **Staff Writer**

Since its founding in the fall of 2022, the University's Public Service Pathways program has helped students develop a civic identity and explore how their academic interests can contribute to their communities through classes, self-reflection and service. The program offers seven pathways that explore different forms of public service, including the Public Arts Pathway, which encourages students to consider how music, dance, theater, visual art and other creative disciplines can foster dialogue, strengthen communities and contribute to a flourishing democracy.

Dreama Montrief Johnson, director of Public Service Pathways and Class of 2008 and 2012 alumna, said the program emerged from conversations with faculty, staff and students about gaps in the University's approach to civic engagement.

"The gap was wayfinding … the ability to have some intentional opportunities for self-reflection on what we now call a public service mindset, and … the challenges that students go through, especially over their four years, of 'How does public service fit into what I do post-graduation?'" Johnson said.

According to Johnson, the program's seven pathways grew out of a University-wide investigation into areas where the University had academic expertise but students lacked clear opportunities to explore their interests in public service. The pathways — including Education, Global Sustainability and Public Arts, among others — serve as advising and wayfinding resources, helping students connect their academic pursuits with their civic identities.

Students interested in exploring the program can begin during their first or second year by fulfilling requirements across its service-oriented checklist, and taking UNST 1410, "Democracy and Public Service." The course brings students into conversation with professors and community leaders who work in public service, exposing them to its many forms and roles in strengthening democracy.

The Public Arts Pathway later guides students to uncover how their creative interests intersect with these ideas of community engagement and democratic participation. It unifies students who view arts and culture as tools for navigating shared challenges and creating change through an interdisciplinary, flexible curriculum.

Over the course of the program, students participate in lectures and workshops, complete a service-related course, volunteer in the community and submit written reflections on their experiences. As they progress through each year, students build on these activities through continued service, professional development and pathway-specific opportunities. Upon completing the program, students receive a distinction on their academic transcript recognizing them as Public Service Scholars.

Additionally, the Pathways Student Advisory Council — a 16-member group that helps guide and implement the program — helps spread service opportunities to students, alongside Pathways' regular newsletter highlighting events and activities. A recent event was held on the Lawn Oct. 20, where the Public Arts Pathway invited students to an evening of pumpkin-painting.

Class of 2026 alumna Maggie Polistina helped develop the Public Arts Pathway as a member of the Pathways Student Advisory Council during her third and fourth year while the program was still taking shape. She pointed out the Council's cooperation with staff and faculty as a highlight of the process.

Polistina said the Pathway's interdisciplinary nature makes it particularly valuable for students by connecting fields such as history, business, STEM and sustainability with artistic expression. Bringing these disciplines together, she said, encourages students to see creativity as a way to engage with broader social issues.

Polistina added that the Public Arts Pathway challenges conventional ideas about public service by highlighting contributions that may be less immediately visible. While teaching and legal advocacy have clear connections to service, she said art can also make meaningful contributions to the public.

"Some service [is] more about sustained action, whereas art a lot of times is more about producing new ideas and seeing how those ideas can bring people together," Polistina said. "That is the service that it's creating and amplifying."

Johnson said artistic expression is not limited to those who identify as artists, pointing to communication and writing as examples of creative practices that can empower others. This connection between creativity and communication reflects the democratic importance of self-expression, as she said she views the ability to understand and express oneself as both an artistic privilege and a civic responsibility.

As Public Service Pathways continues to make an impact on Grounds, Johnson said she hopes students will carry the skills and connections they gain into their lives beyond the University, applying their interests and talents to the communities they serve.

"In 10 years from now, all of those previous Public Arts Pathway students are out in the world, showing up in the ways, using the skills and the talents and the connections that they developed here," Johnson said.

SPORTS

Five takeaways from Virginia baseball's fall ball scrimmages

Several fall exhibitions have revealed insights about what the 2027 Cavalier squad will look like

Ryan Weiner | Sports Editor

After losing in the Hattiesburg Regional in 2026, Virginia baseball underwent plenty of changes. Five players were drafted into the MLB while many more graduated or transferred out of the program. Filling their places is a first-year class of 13 alongside a slew of transfers from schools across the country.

The first chance to see this new Cavalier squad under second-year Coach Chris Pollard came in a series of fall ball exhibitions. Whether it be the four scrimmages against other programs or the intrasquads of the Fall World Series, there have been plenty of opportunities to see how the new squad gels. Additionally, these games serve as insights into what the 2027 lineup and rotation might look like.

Now that the fall season is over, here are five takeaways from Virginia's preseason battles.

1. Several first-years are ready to play on day one

One perk of fall ball scrimmages is that the first-year class gets plenty of chances to adjust to college pitching. Sometimes it takes a while, other times the first-years shine. The 2026 class has not disappointed thus far.

First-year infielder Will Yow has been on a tear this fall, launching extra-base hits in multiple scrimmages. Most notably, Yow had two home runs in the Oct. 7 intrasquad, one of which went a whopping 450 feet. Another first-year who shined offensively was infielder Colton Guillot, who sent a pitch from fifth-year Robbie Lee 395 feet over the left-field wall in game one of the Fall World Series.

On the defensive side, first-year pitcher Pierce Quinn filled up the strike zone consistently during his Sept. 19 outing against Gardner-Webb. His fastball lacked top-of-the-scale juice — sitting around 92 miles per hour — but his wipeout curveball made up for it and contributed to a 40 percent whiff rate.

It is not uncommon for one or two first-years to contend for lineup spots. However, what the Cavaliers have is far more than that — far scarier for opponents. Whether it be Yow, Guillot, Quinn or one of the other 10 first-years, Virginia has a full new crop of players ready to make a statement in the spring.

2. Most spots in the weekend rotation are up for grabs

Third-year Henry Zatkowski is the ace of the rotation, no questions asked. Zatkowski was the Friday night starter for the majority of the season in 2026 and has shown no signs of slowing down after spending part of summer with the U.S. Collegiate National Team.

After that, the weekend rotation gets tricky. Second-year John Paone is a favorite to land one of the spots after becoming one of Pollard's favorites by the end of the season and getting to start a game in the ACC Tournament. But fellow second-years like Christian Lucarelli and Noah Yoder as well as third-year Max Stammel also threw over 15 innings in 2026 and are looking for a step up in production this season.

Of course, with his fall production, Quinn is not to be overlooked as a surprise contender for a starting role in 2027. Neither are some of the Cavaliers' transfers. Third-year Joey Giordano arrived in Charlottesville after winning Atlantic 10 Pitcher of the Year at Richmond and posting a 11-0 record in 2026. Third-year Serigne Sarré was also an All-Conference pitcher in 2026 at Mount St. Mary's, giving him a strong case to start for Virginia in 2027. Pollard will have his hands full trying to figure out his Saturday and Sunday starters for 2027.

3. The Cavaliers are still missing a bona fide star

In the past, Virginia has had at least one player nearly every year who was a top two to three round prospect. AJ Gracia and Eric Becker in 2026. Becker and Henry Godbout in 2025. Griff O'Ferrall, Ethan Anderson, Becker and Godbout in 2024. In fact, the 2019 MLB Draft was the last time a Cavalier did not get drafted in the first three rounds.

It is not quite clear who the elite draft prospect — if any exists — is on the 2027 roster. Virginia had no players listed on D1 Baseball's Top 50 position player or pitcher prospects for 2027.

Now, this is not necessarily a detriment to the team. After all, the vast distribution of contributions in the exhibitions have shown that Virginia does not need a top prospect to be successful. In the first game of the Fall World Series, four different players hit home runs — displaying the depth of the squad.

Of course, players still have plenty of time to break out and become the next Cavalier star. Sarré was listed as the 27th-best pitching transfer of the offseason, while fifth-year infielder Michael Elko was ranked as the 48th-best position player transfer. Additionally, the home run-filled fall ball performances of fourth-year Antonio Perrotta make him an intriguing prospect to watch. But for now, the headliner in Charlottesville is to be determined.



COURTESY VIRGINIA ATHLETICS

The Cavaliers poured on runs in their exhibitions, displaying offensive prowess throughout the lineup.

4. The bullpen is much deeper than in the past

Virginia has not had an elite bullpen in a long time. The final year of the Coach Brian O'Connor era saw the bullpen consistently lose hold of games, serving as a catalyst for an underwhelming season. The first year of Pollard's tenure saw the unit improve in depth, but they still lacked the elite closing arms needed to slam the door on the nation's best teams.

Fortunately for the Cavaliers, the effect of having so many starting-caliber pitchers in 2027 is that some of them inevitably will move to the bullpen — giving the unit a much-needed makeover. So far this improved bullpen has been near-flawless in fall exhibitions. Through 13 innings against Virginia Tech, the pitching staff held the Hokies to a .235 batting average and struck out 25 percent of batters. Against Georgetown, they held the Hoyas to a .140 average. Both games saw an average exit velocity of only 85 miles per hour — meaning opponents are simply not putting barrel to ball against this bullpen.

While the spring will be a more true test, the fall has shown that Pollard and company are not messing around when it comes to their defense.

5. The infield is absolutely loaded with talent

Despite losing both starting middle infielders — Becker and Joe Tiroly — to the MLB, the Cavaliers have almost entirely reloaded on talent.

Fourth-year Sam Harris and Perrotta will again compete for the starting first baseman role — both will likely receive time at the spot and designated hitter. Fourth-year catcher Jake Weatherspoon will likely remain the starter behind the dish.

But for the other three positions, several candidates have risen to the opportunity. Fourth-year Noah Murray has the inside track to keep his starting spot at third base, but a logjam of great options in the middle infield positions may give him competition at the hot corner.

With Becker and Tiroly gone, a pair of transfers in Elko and third-year Reid Howard were brought in to be veteran options at those positions. But they will not be Pollard's only considerations. Howard had multiple home runs throughout the fall exhibitions, proving he can compete at — or above — the level of his new teammates after transferring from Western Kentucky.

Yow's early success in fall ball has put him in the starting conversation, while second-year RJ Holmes will also have a chance to start after thriving in Becker's absence during the Hattiesburg Regional last season. During fall ball this season, he hit a triple and a home run in the Sept. 11 intrasquad. First-year Bryant James, second-year Bryce Neely and Guillot will also be in the mix to start in the infield, giving Pollard hard choices to make on the lineup card.

The Cavaliers kick off their 2027 campaign Feb. 20 at the Shriners Children's College Showdown with matchups against TCU, Arizona and Texas. While these exhibitions have revealed some information about the new squad, fans will have to wait until the new year to see if these insights are proven true.

MCNIFF: The problem with Virginia's offense is the playcalling

Offensive coordinator Des Kitchings is the common denominator of the Cavaliers' struggles

Ben McNiff | **Senior Writer**

In Oct. 27 media availability before last weekend's Wake Forest matchup, Coach Tony Elliott defended offensive coordinator Des Kitchings amidst an abysmal season for the offense.

"There's nobody out there in the building working their ass off [more] than Coach Kitchings," Elliott said.

Kitchings has a lot to be working on. Virginia ranks 79th in strength of resume, the fourth-lowest in their conference. Despite the lack of fierce competition, the Cavaliers are fourth-worst in the ACC in yards per game. They are also sixth-worst in the ACC and 78th in the country in offensive efficiency.

Fifth-year quarterback Beau Pribula is an easy target when discussing the offense. The transfer from Missouri has only cleared 200 passing yards twice this season and is averaging only 6.26 yards per attempt on a 58 percent completion rate across his last five games. However, when the Cavaliers have had trouble scoring during Elliott's tenure, Kitchings, not the players on the field, has been the common denominator.

A survey of Kitchings' history as offensive coordinator reveals last season as an aberration, a blip of success on a flat line of mediocrity. Across 13 seasons between Vanderbilt, NC State and Virginia, Kitchings-coached offenses have finished outside the top 100 in both points and yards three times and within the top 70 just once, in 2025.

Chandler Morris is the only passer who has succeeded with Kitchings. Anthony Colandrea has become a dynamic quarterback without him, winning Mountain West Offensive Player of the Year last season with Nevada at Las Vegas after playing his way to a benching in his final year with Virginia. Going further back, Brennan Armstrong — holder of multiple program records — struggled mightily in his lone season with Kitchings following a career-best year under Robert Anae.

This season, the Cavaliers' struggles are unit-wide, not just at quarterback. Virginia has allowed 28 sacks thus far, good for first in the ACC and fifth in the nation. One culprit could be the departure of former offensive line coach Terry Heffernan, who accepted a job as offensive coordinator at Stanford. Even so, the personnel on the front is essentially the same as last season, with three out of five starters returning and seventh-year right tackle Monroe Mills returning from injury — if anything, the talent on the line has improved.

The offensive line is not responsible for every sack — Pribula has had plenty of issues managing the pressure. But it is not exclusively a quarterback awareness problem. Virginia is on pace to nearly triple their sacks allowed from last year.

However, the blame ought not to be transferred to Pribula's supporting cast either. The offensive line is full of proven, familiar talent. Additionally, Elliott brought in plenty of high-quality transfers at the skill positions.

Though the skill positions, especially receivers such as third-year Kameron Courtney and fourth-year Rico Flores Jr., have been hampered by injuries, the problem still lies in the playcalling. Kitchings has shown earlier this season he knows how to utilize players' strengths up and down the depth chart, which makes his left turn in procedure and their recent struggles all the more puzzling.

After Week Zero, it appeared Kitchings had continued to build off of the success the offense had last year — the design and execution of the Cavalier offense in their victory over NC State feels entirely alien to the sluggish attack which has since emerged. A preseason injury to Flores led Virginia's offense to rely heavily on a rotation of running backs and Pribula's legs. Kitchings employed a healthy amount of 12 personnel to bolster a self-sustaining run game, only attempting 11 passes.

The results of the adjusted gameplan — 413 total yards and a 34-8 win — speak for themselves, especially when compared with the performance of their run game in their most recent defeat against Wake Forest Oct. 31.

Virginia's running back room, similar to last season, possesses both versatility and depth. Headlined by fourth-year Jekail Middlebrook, the unit boasts four players with at least 25 carries averaging over four yards per attempt. Against No. 14 Wake Forest, with Middlebrook out with an MCL sprain, the group collectively averaged less than one yard per carry.

The reasons why the 51-7 loss is notable are too many to count, but one play stands out as remarkable in its haplessness. Down 17-0 towards the end of the first half, the Cavaliers found themselves at fourth-and-goal on the six-yard line. For this pivotal play, Kitchings dialed up a direct snap to the running back out of shotgun.

After the snap, the line failed to hold back the tide of the fierce Demon Deacon front and Davis was promptly stuffed. For the first time in recent memory, the direct snap — Kitchings' most reliable play for goal-to-go or fourth-and-short situations — failed. It was a failed play, in a failed game, in the midst of a failed season.

Elliott does not appear to be considering changes of any kind. When there is a change, though, the first place he ought to look is in the coordinators' box, not under center. Even if Kitchings remains in his current position, he should be stripped of playcalling duties if he cannot adjust his process over the upcoming bye week.

How Virginia returned all its players and set itself up for success

In an almost unheard of feat, Coach Ryan Odom brought back all eight of his players with remaining eligibility for his second season

Michael Liebermann | **Senior Associate**

Many of them had spent months preparing for this. Now the night had come. In a boxing ring shoehorned into an amphitheater, fraternity brothers, two at a time, ducked under the ropes and slogged through matches to the excitement of a raucous crowd.

This was The Fight Against Suicide at Ting Pavilion back in April. As light blared from a massive screen, the action breaked for a special guest, Ryan Odom.

He seemed to be having a good time at the event.

If he was, he had good reason.

"I'll tell you what," Odom said. "There are a lot of programs right now that are running around chasing players in the portal. We got all of our guys coming back."

It was April 16, 10 days after the national championship game, and the nine players standing in front of the ring had all announced their return to the program. Not one of them entered the transfer portal, an exceedingly rare feat that has positioned Virginia to enter the year ranked No. 9 and build on a 30-win season.

Virginia tipped off Tuesday against Drexel, in a soft start to a loaded non-conference slate. But some of the biggest steps toward a successful season happened months ago.

In March, after Virginia crushed Miami 84-62 in the semifinals of the ACC Tournament, Chance Mallory's dad came up to Thijs De Ridder with a message.

"Hey Thijs," Mallory's dad said, as De Ridder remembers. "Run it back another year with my son."

If that was only a small factor it represented the vibe in and around the team.

"That was basically the story," De Ridder said Friday, at Virginia's media day. "Just hyped me up to come back."

Mallory's presence was a kind of gravity. The St. Anne's-Belfield product, a Charlottesville native, is royalty around here — De Ridder calls him the "King of Charlottesville."

Mallory was the first to sign, De Ridder said, then the rest followed. In a swift triple announcement April 6, the day of the national championship game, Mallory, De Ridder and Johann Grünloh announced their returns. Ten days later, Odom stood on the stage at The Fight Against Suicide and stirred up the crowd.

After Odom's pronouncement that the whole team was returning, he paused. The crowd filled the space, chanting — "Hoos! Hoos! Hoos!" and after a second, Odom and the players joined in.

How did Virginia pull this off?

Odom has readily acknowledged that all the players could have made more money by entering the portal, and De Ridder, shrugging his shoulders, confirmed that at media day Friday.

To the players, though, the decision was simple.

"It's not all about the money for me," De Ridder said Friday. "I feel very comfortable here with this coaching staff, and I think they can help me in the best way. And if you're happy, why leave? You know?"

Odom's son Owen, a second-year walk-on had a first hand view of the process from two perspectives — as the coach's son and as a roommate of the "King of Charlottesville."

He finds the equation to be relatively simple.

"Last season we were so connected, and we saw what we did in year one, and we were just imagining what was possible with the second year under our belt," Owen Odom said. "So I think that was the reasoning behind all of our guys staying."

Odom had success with retention at his previous coaching stops too. Before Virginia, he spent two years at VCU, and before that two years at Utah State. Mid-major schools like those two suffer the most from the transfer portal as wealthier teams court the best of the mid-majors. Odom, though, held onto most of his.

He has kept the same philosophy throughout.

"The biggest thing was the individuals have to feel like they can achieve their individual goals at the place that they're at," Odom said at ACC Tipoff. "They have to enjoy the experience and enjoy the school and the community."

Making that happen is work that comes on a day-to-day basis.

"You're convincing them every day with how you treat them," Odom said. "How do you make them feel? And our staff does a great job with that. I have amazing assistant coaches that pour into these guys every single day so they feel loved."

The effect of the success is that Virginia starts the season with a leg up. Though its newcomers will prove instrumental — Virginia nabbed 24-year-old Nolan Adekunle from Germany and fifth-year Kalu Anya from St. Louis, and recruited 7-foot-1, 248-pound first-year Favour Ibe — bringing back a core puts Virginia further along in its process.

The returners, Odom has said, acclimate the new guys to the culture rather than starting from scratch. Bringing back knowledge of the system means the team can move to advanced concepts sooner.

"Certainly way more advanced than we were a year ago at this time, especially defensively," Odom said.

That gives Virginia the space to chase its goals. When Virginia lost last season in the NCAA Tournament, the players were heartbroken. Odom said he has never seen a sadder locker room.

There is another loss the 10 guys coming back remember quite well. One that has been driving the team all summer and will continue doing so as the season progresses.

"Getting some revenge on Duke," Owen Odom said.

OPINION

LEAD EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL: The wrong way to bet on students' futures

Kalshi's introduction of betting on university admissions rates is a disgrace to students and will further deepen distrust in universities

In this fall season of constant sporting events, groans are not just directed at the misfortune of one's team losing, but at one's bet going awry. Americans wagered over $40 billion on sports over the first quarter of the year on Kalshi, a leading prediction markets platform. And now, Kalshi is perversely increasing its options for betting from sports and current events to a new and noxious arena — wagering on the personal fortunes, or misfortunes, of young Americans applying to college.

Kalshi announced recently that it would introduce "event contracts" at 22 educational institutions. In non-corporatized language, you and all other adult Americans will now be able to bet on whether a university's admissions rate is less than, greater than or in between designated percentages. Not only is this avenue of betting on students' futures loathsome and immoral, but the opportunity will also contribute to the concerning trend of distrust towards the country's universities. Far from their educative purpose, universities are increasingly becoming a gamified arena through decreasing admissions rates and the growing admissions counseling industry, among other factors. It is unacceptable that Kalshi will profit from this development and detestable that any member of our society partakes in its offering.

In justifying their offering, Kalshi claims that "college admission rates matter economically because they sit at the point where education, labor markets and household finances meet." Notice who is not explicitly mentioned here — the prospective student, whose future in their collegiate and post-graduate opportunities becomes trivialized with a couple of clicks of a button to score a few bucks. This omission is as purposeful as it is perverse, for what firm would admit that they are treating the well-being of students in an admissions cycle as equivalent to a stat line in a college football game?

Examining other student-related Kalshi initiatives only further exposes their intentions. Kalshi has frequently paid college influencers and sponsored student groups to promote their applications to other students, viewing these students as an opportunity to grow demand because they spend money recklessly. Clearly, Kalshi's view on what matters economically is that students' livelihoods are the forces of supply and demand. Even that phrase from their announcement, "event contracts," seems designed to abstract from the humanness of students, instead characterizing them as an economic metric of entertainment. With this in mind, the reality behind betting on the admissions rates of prospective students becomes clear — it is an audacious attempt to make students' lives into a twisted, commodified game.

The issues with Kalshi's new gambling opportunity do not end with its obtrusive stench of immorality, but threaten to degrade already declining trust in our educational institutions. As has been widely noted, confidence in higher education has fallen 21 percent over 12 years, with many universities commissioning committees to determine remedial steps. The ability to bet on admissions rates will further corrode this trust in institutions. While those in the university admissions and financial aid offices will not be allowed to bet on their own school's admissions rates, it is conceivable that they could coordinate with officers at other universities to cross-invest. Moreover, the insider information they possess might be shared across administrators within an institution. Even if all regulations in the prediction market were honestly followed, the frequent reporting of broken rules on gambling platforms like Kalshi would lead many to suspect impropriety at the hands of universities. This speculation that university employees may be acting in an unprofessional way will only perpetuate the crisis of confidence facing universities.

There is no easy fix to the overall environment of distrust in universities — however, there are surefire ways to worsen it. Kalshi's new gambling opportunity around admissions is the exemplification of behavior harmful to this present environment. Attempting to restrict the introduction of, and reduce participation in, Kalshi's offering to bet on admissions rates is therefore a pragmatic policy for higher education. But not participating in these tasteless prediction markets is also a moral imperative — an opportunity to reaffirm the real value of students as learners rather than commodities. As C.S. Lewis once said, "education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil." Rejecting the wagering on college admissions is an important first step to prioritizing trust in higher education over the financial offerings of prediction markets.

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

OWENS: U.Va. should rethink the letter grade

The University of Michigan put on hold a plan to give incoming freshmen a semester without letter grades. Where they hesitated, the University and its ideals can succeed

After announcing a pilot program that would eliminate first-semester letter grades for incoming students in its College of Literature, Science and the Arts, the University of Michigan paused its new grading initiative indefinitely this fall. The initiative was intended to encourage intellectual exploration while simultaneously regulating the student mental health crisis by hiding first-semester letter grades from GPAs. The decision to pause the grading initiative, however, came after worries about academic rigor surfaced. This educational conflict raises a question that universities should be willing to confront — if the purpose of college is to learn, why are we so reluctant to reconsider how learning is measured?

Our University should take up that question where the University of Michigan's effort has stalled. Instead of treating letter grades as some unquestionable feature of higher education, the University should pilot an alternative grading system similar to the University of Michigan's proposal for the Class of 2031, prioritizing meaningful learning over academic performance metrics. The University is uniquely suited to lead this shift. By grounding this pilot program in our system of student self-governance, we ensure that students take rigorous ownership of this academic transition. Additionally, the absence of traditional letter grades revives the Jeffersonian pursuit of broad intellectual curiosity without the threat of a permanent transcript scar, allowing students across Grounds to explore challenging disciplines.

> **"Therefore, traditional letter grades are not meaningful nor precise and often function as illusions of objectivity in an academic system that is blatantly subjective."**

Letter grades offer an incomplete picture of what students actually know. Research found that differences in grading generosity between college courses can undermine GPA as a measure of comparative student performance. Student reviews on TheCourseForum offer a glimpse of this problem. In ASTR 1280, "The Origins of Almost Everything," one student called the class the "Easiest A I've ever gotten at U.Va." Meanwhile, 80.6 percent of students in ASTR 1230, "Introduction to Astronomical Observation," reported earning a sub-A grade in the course. Accounts like these illustrate how dramatically the standards behind a letter grade can differ and how frames vary in meaning across classrooms, which can cause their apparent precision to be misleading. Therefore, traditional letter grades are neither meaningful nor precise and often function as illusions of objectivity in an academic system that is blatantly subjective.

Traditional letter grades can also make students prioritize performance in place of understanding. When every exam and assignment carries consequences for a GPA, students have reason to play it safe and avoid academic risk-taking. An unfamiliar subject — or potential learning opportunity — becomes a threat to their academic standing, rather than an opportunity to explore. Research on alternative grading suggests that this trade-off deserves attention. For instance, researchers studying three sociology courses found that alternative grading was associated with decreased student stress and anxiety and increased self-reported learning compared with traditional letter grading.

Students should be able to freely share notes and work through challenging assignments together. This, in any manner, is unlikely when academic achievement is framed primarily through individual grades, meaning that collaboration will take a back seat to competition. But the University does not need to start from scratch, as the University's Center for Teaching Excellence documents specifications for grading in courses across Grounds, including a first-year seminar called "Falling From Infinity." These existing models offer a foundation for piloting alternative grading and prioritizing demonstrated mastery over traditional letter grades.

There are, however, valid objections to alternative grading systems. While critics may argue that Credit/No Credit grading makes it harder for employers or graduate schools to distinguish high-performing students, there are available alternatives. The University could establish clear learning standards and supplement transcripts with instructor evaluations that better demonstrate students' abilities. Although the University already offers a Credit/No Credit option, its restrictions limit its usefulness for students fulfilling major and general education requirements, as most departments believe a traditional letter grade is necessary.

The University of Michigan's decision to pause its grading reform initiative should galvanize universities like ours to confront a question that I believe many students ask themselves — if college is meant to cultivate true curiosity and intellectual growth, why do we remain so committed to measuring those qualities through traditional letter grades? More importantly, why do we ask students to spend four years proving they can think the way a grading system rewards?

LANDON OWENS *is a viewpoint writer who writes about academics for The Cavalier Daily. He can be reached at opinion@cavalierdaily.com.*

COHEN: The trust problem for universities is cost, not culture

The American public has not given up on what college offers, only on what it costs

Just 31 percent of Americans now say a college education is "very important," a record low according to a Gallup, Inc. Poll released Oct. 1. In 2013, 70 percent did.

That decline has become a political talking point. On Aug. 3, Education Secretary Linda McMahon sent university presidents and governing boards across the nation a letter asking them to reflect on falling public confidence and publicly recommit to academic excellence.

She is right that the confidence slide is real. Confidence in higher education has fallen from 57 percent in 2015 to 38 percent today, according to Gallup, Inc. And the decline shows up in every major demographic group Gallup, Inc. tracks. A loss of faith that reaches every corner of the country points to a concern every corner of the country shares, and the evidence suggests that concern is less about what colleges teach. Rather, it is about whether families can still afford what they charge.

The University of Pennsylvania's student newspaper, The Daily Pennsylvanian, recently responded to McMahon's call with an editorial arguing that many of the letter's suggestions are "poorly veiled attempts at fulfilling the president's political agenda." There is truth to that argument — McMahon's letter urges universities to "prioritize American students and faculty" and to reject foreign "gifts with problematic conditions." Both are long-standing administration targets that, as the editorial notes, are absent from public opinion research on why Americans distrust college. And an administration that recently cut federal loans for low-paying degrees is in an awkward position to lecture universities about affordability.

> **"And an administration that recently cut federal loans for low-paying degrees is in an awkward position to lecture universities about affordability."**

But calling out Washington's hypocrisy does not answer the harder question — why has the public soured on college in the first place, and how can this be mitigated?

This is why, even though The Daily Pennsylvanian makes a defensible point, the argument should not stop with outsourcing responsibility to the government. The Daily Pennsylvanian takes aim at McMahon's motives, when the bigger problem is her diagnosis. Her letter blames universities for having "drifted" from their principles, which implies the public is turning away over ideology. The data tells a different story. Gallup, Inc.'s measure of colleges' importance rose from 36 percent in 1978 to 64 percent by 1985 and stayed high for decades. It peaked at 70 percent in 2013, then fell to 51 percent by 2019, years before the campus protests and admissions fights that dominated the undertones of McMahon's letter. Whatever turned Americans against college started long before the controversies she blames.

That problem is price. Even after adjusting for inflation, the average published tuition and fees at a public four-year college have roughly doubled since 1995, and in a recent Lumina Foundation-Gallup survey, just 12 percent of Americans said a four-year college education is affordable. Look closer, and Americans have not given up on the degree. They have given up on the institutions selling it. In a Lumina-Gallup State of Higher Education study, 73 percent of adults without a degree and 69 percent of graduates said earning one is at least as important as it was 20 years ago, and most parents still want their children to go to college. People still want what universities offer. They just no longer trust that it is worth what universities charge.

That is why McMahon's remedy falls flat. Her letter does ask universities to address costs, but it buries that request in a list alongside foreign funding, campus protests and intellectual pluralism, issues that have become political talking points. This drowns out and diminishes the perceived importance of the one demand that speaks to why Americans are actually losing faith.

For a public university that depends on state legislatures — and legislators fund what voters value — this matters. The University has done an excellent job at showing what addressing that looks like. Virginia families earning under $100,000 pay nothing for tuition and fees. Last month, The Princeton Review ranked the University the nation's number one public school for financial aid. Still, even the most generous aid policy at a single university does little to change the broader reality that the price of higher education across the country continues to balloon upwards, and that is the trend public opinion is responding to.

McMahon is right that confidence in higher education is in trouble, but wrong about why, and wrong that statements will fix it. If universities want the public back, they should spend less energy answering her questions from the letter and more following the University's lead on the one Americans are actually asking — if college is worth the cost. Answer that one well, and the rest of the letter answers itself.

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HUMOR

GUIDE: The scariest laundry day possible

We've all been there, unless you belong to a family of one-percenters with their own laundry butler

Picture this — you're sitting comfortably and quietly in your bedroom when you realize that today is laundry day. Finally, a day of respite where your impossibly dirty clothes gain a second chance in your rotation. You wrangle the basket, check Speed Queen and smile at the fact that there is a washer available! What luck, you think to yourself. This will be painless.

You enter the laundry room, laundry bag swung over your shoulder, and gasp in horror — the only available washer is full. Some absolute oaf had neither the smarts nor the strength of will to transfer their wet clothes to one of the many empty dryers! You fall to your knees, you clench your tragedy-stricken fists and you let out a wail that causes none of the passersby to sympathetically look your way. After the initial wave of shock, anger and grief washes over you, an important question arises — exactly what will you do?

Wait it out

You've got nothing better to do. Reviewing the material for an important exam the next day? Couldn't be you. Grabbing a nourishing lunch after missing breakfast? Who needs food anyway? You could wait it out in the sanctuary that is your bedroom, but why would you do that? You need to get this person dead to rights. You need to stare into their very soul as they sheepishly transfer their laundry from the washer to the dryer, fully aware of the grave error they have committed. Patience is a virtue, they say, and who has more patience than you? Your whole day is free!

The 'dump-and-run'

The more seasoned, cynical and war-battered laundry users know that this is the correct option. You don't have time to wait. You have an exam and lunch and all of that important stuff. This person has wasted enough of your time already. Punish them for their untimeliness by grabbing their laundry by the armful and throwing it onto a nearby surface, preferably one covered in old detergent. If they leave their clothes in the washer for an hour after the cycle ends, they're no longer laundry owners. They're laundry donors. Possession is nine-tenths of the law, and right now, those damp sweatpants are in your custody. Yes, they could return at any moment. They could also start reading the syllabus before their grade is too far gone to be salvaged, but neither outcome seems especially likely.

Find the source

This is ridiculous, you think to yourself. This problem needs to be tackled head on! Using your ace detective skills — and some bloodhounds — you can track the clothes to the source. The next step is breaking down the perpetrator's door and watching them scramble to their feet, as they're ripped away from their more "important" endeavors, such as schoolwork and paying bills. Do not lose focus, soldier. Filter out the nonessential chatter, including questions about who you are and what you're doing in their room. Make sure they get the message — nobody leaves their clothes in the washer after the cycle has finished on your watch. Play around with the role a little bit. Wear a mask to conceal your identity. Break out your best Batman voice for intimidation. While there is risk for disciplinary and perhaps legal action, it's always better to go to jail than to cower away from justice.

Break the Honor code, not the bank

In a move more dangerous and daring than Taylor Swift's record label deciding to release that last album, you could always steal the clothes. They clearly forfeited ownership when they forgot about their own laundry in the first place. Look at me. All of my clothes are "re-gifted." It's like going thrifting. Some guy once left a Barbour jacket in the machine. My eyes practically morphed into dollar signs. What a moron, right?

Pick what's right for you. Are you a sniveling pushover, a cynical pragmatist or the Dark Knight? Whoever you are or whatever you might call yourself, nobody likes to deal with a late laundry transference. To the few of you guilty of such an offense who might come across this guide, take a good long look in the mirror and ask yourselves — where did it all go wrong?

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