GARNET&BLACK

STUDENT MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Fall 2025

THE WORLD IS ON FIRE AND I HAVE AN EXAM ON FRIDAY

+

PAST IS PRESENT

How changes to student visas are affecting USC's international community

AI METAMORPHOSIS

Does AI have a home in academics? Students and faculty respond

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LETTER FROM THE *EDITOR*

AUTHOR AND PHOTO ***SYDNEY LEWIS*** DESIGN ***SOFIA MILLINER***

No matter what year, the start of the fall semester always feels the same in a way. There's a feeling of regaining your footing, taking in the changes around you and reuniting with friends who'd been scattered across the country just weeks before. Entering my junior year at USC, I felt the same stomach-in-knots excitement of returning to campus, of readjusting. The start of my term as Garnet & Black's editor-in-chief has brought me closer than ever to that feeling of being a wide-eyed freshman again. Not literally – my freshman self could barely handle switching to Microsoft Suite – but the gratitude and exhilaration I feel now echo back to my first steps on campus.

However, there has been a lot of change since I began my journey here at USC. The political climate seems to be more tense than ever, and student safety is an ever-present concern following the active shooter hoax which rocked campus in the first week of school. With everything going on in the world now, it can feel harder than ever to grow to your full potential as a college student. That is precisely why seizing the moment has never been more important – take chances and believe that you have the ability to change your life in your time here.

Cultivating community is a surefire way of weathering the various storms that life puts us through, and though, yes, that does mean finding a wonderful circle of friends, it also means getting to know and giving back to the USC and Columbia communities at large. Garnet & Black strives to platform student and community stories that will open a door for you to do just that. Whether it's discussing student and faculty takes on the new university AI policy, highlighting local clothing vendors or digging into new student visa policy impacting international students, we endeavor with each issue to take the time to listen to what's important to our neighbors. To be in community with others is to get out of your comfort zone, but it is also to enrich your life.

The making of this issue of the magazine – and the people I've had the pleasure of making it with – has enriched my life beyond measure. I couldn't have done this without our amazing staff, with special thanks to our management team, who have been a lifeline. It's never too late to start something new no matter who you are, maybe especially if it scares you, so let's get after it and have a great year!

Best of luck,

Exams & Entrepreneurship: *a balancing act*

Classes have a lot of outside work, and university jobs are hard to come by, but two students have created their own alternatives.

AUTHOR ***ROBIN ADAMS*** PHOTO ***CHELSEA GOURDINE*** DESIGN ***AVERY MALONE***

It's a Tuesday on campus, and Thomas Cooper Library is bustling with students arduously knocking out work for the week. One student finishes her assignments, but instead of going home, she drives to an apartment – not one belonging to a friend or a classmate, but a client's. Another heads straight to her studio to paint a new canvas.

As a college student, managing school alongside with expenses such as housing, food and transportation can be complicated. On-campus jobs are coveted and hard to come by. However, a growing number of students are finding ways around these barriers by using their creative passions to start businesses, all while grappling with time management.

Less than a year ago, junior exercise science major Laney Hicks started her small-business journey. Hicks gained experience in self-tanning through her years in competitive dance, where the practice is common. Her fellow dancers, friends and family members told her she had a talent for flawless self-tanning and began requesting her services themselves. Then, her college roommates began asking her too. Recognizing her expertise, they encouraged her to start a business in spray-tanning. Hicks was hesitant in the beginning, unsure if she would have time for it.

"I just don't know if I have the time for it. And then, this past Christmas, my grandma actually got me the spray tanning kit," Hicks said. "Now I love doing them. Everyone gives me great compliments on them, so it makes me feel good."

After Christmas, she started off providing her services to dancers at her former studio and to college students getting ready for formal events, which has since expanded into offering tans before dance competitions and USC sporting events.

With a growing number of clients since her business started, Hicks now has more responsibilities. These include advertising her business, transportation to and from clients and finding time for her services during particularly load-heavy school weeks. Despite these, she has created a balance that works for her – relying on help from her friends, utilizing social media and building her booking schedule around school responsibilities has allowed managing a business to fit into her life. Hicks advertises her work on platforms such as Snapchat and her business Instagram under the handle @tansbylaney, while her friends and regular clients spread her business by word-of-mouth.

Hicks would manage her schedule depending on how many tanning appointments she would have weekly.

"If I knew I had a lot, I would prioritize schoolwork in the morning throughout the day, get whatever assignments I had done because they usually don't come until night," she said.

"I think that as long as you believe in yourself and you surround yourself with people who believe in you, you can accomplish anything."

- Sofia Harsey

With a difficult curriculum comes new challenges. For college students nearing the end of a semester, burnout becomes increasingly common, especially for students with extracurricular engagements. Rather than work inspiring additional stress, she finds comfort in running her business during these times.

"I think, honestly, it makes my mental health better. I get excited to do people's spray tans," said Hicks. "It just makes me feel better."

Junior Sofia Harsey, an art history major who began selling her art in September 2024 also finds meaning in running a small business. Across many social media platforms, she documents her work and the process behind it, typically under the handle @faithfully_living. She has an impressive range of wares, including but not limited to handwoven baskets, acrylic paintings, and even tote bags adorned with Cocky's likeness. She often sells her work at craft fairs for local churches and street events. For Harsey, art is not simply transactionally motivated. She paints what she feels like painting and hopes others will follow suit.

"I don't want to make something just because I think someone else will like it. I'd rather make art that I truly enjoy doing," she admitted. "I definitely lean more toward what I do like and

then hope that other people will like it as well."

However, Harsey's passion for art and her subsequent business make for a busy schedule during the semester. While the exact amount of time per week that she spends on her business varies, the hours she works generally range from 10 to 20 depending on events and commissions. As for schoolwork, Harsey typically works upwards of 15 or 20 hours. To balance both of these pursuits as equally as she can, she has a specific schedule in place.

While Hicks divides her responsibilities on a daily basis, Harsey halves her commitments during the week.

"I try to do most of my schoolwork at the beginning of the school week – Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday," said Harsey, who dedicates the rest of the week to creating.

As her own boss, she keeps a dedicated itinerary to stay on track with her commitments. But as art is often time-consuming - let alone producing multiple projects for others - burnout can become a significant issue.

"I definitely do experience burnout like everybody, especially during midterm week and finals week," said Harsey. During these more intense periods, Harsey prioritizes her schoolwork to preserve her mental health.

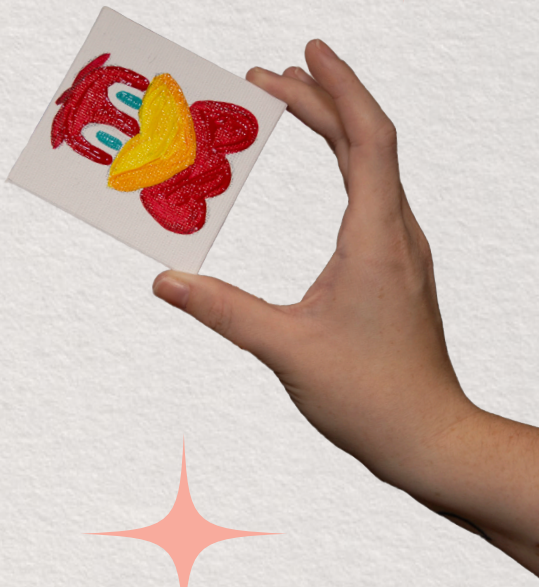
Like Hicks, Harsey reiterated that while sometimes challenging, turning her passion into a source of income has been a rewarding experience.

Both students say they've loved their journeys and hope to continue their thriving businesses after they graduate. For any student looking to potentially start their own business, Hicks and Harsey advised them to go for it.

"Just try it and get out there," said Hicks, who added that starting off slow and having a support system is crucial to building confidence as a business owner.

Harsey emphasized that placing trust in yourself is the most effective path to success.

"I think that as long as you believe in yourself and you surround yourself with people who believe in you, you can accomplish anything," said Harsey.



SCIP TO SUCCESS

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Students Turn Internships into Impact

Neuroscience Major Discovers a Passion for Research Thanks to SCIP

Ansley Martin, a student at the University of South Carolina studying neuroscience, has spent the past two summers at Prisma Health in Greenville researching Parkinson's disease.

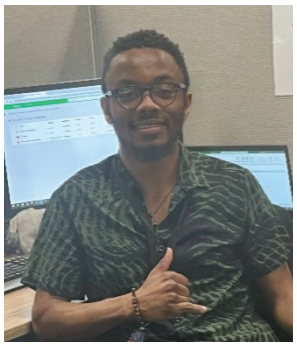
As part of the Structured Neuroimaging Intensive Research Program (SNIRP), her role evolved from student participant in her first year to teaching assistant the next. Still, Ansley sees herself first and foremost as a lifelong learner.

"I'm a sophomore, and I started interning with SNIRP going into freshman year," she explained. "I wasn't sure I would come back, but I reached out to Dr. Absher last February with a proposal for a new position. That turned into the TA role I had this summer, where I was able to help further structure and teach within the program."

The South Carolina Internship Program (SCIP) supplemented Ansley's internship with a stipend. "If I didn't have the stipend, I don't think I could have done SNIRP because you need to live and pay for life, and life is expensive," she said. "SCIP gave me the opportunity to pursue my career and professional interests — and my personal passion for teaching and mentoring." She first heard about SCIP from a research partner.

On a pre-med track, Ansley understands how critical strong experiences are for medical school applications. Yet her advice to fellow students is unexpected: "This experience showed me it's not what you have on your resume, but how you talk about it. Being a part of SNIRP showed me that research is so much more than something you put on your resume. It's exciting and interesting — and now, one of my passions."

Ansley has since passed her TA position on to one of her former students. This past summer, she took a break from work to study for the MCAT, while cheering on the new TA as they expand on the role she helped create.



Mechanical Engineering Graduate Leverages SCIP Internship Experience in the Workforce

Tambo Tagne, a University of South Carolina graduate with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, completed an internship at Schneider Electric, a global leader in energy management and digital automation. He worked in the company's quality department, gaining valuable insights and skills.

Although Tambo had originally been interested in the manufacturing side, he found the quality experience equally rewarding. "Good quality means the customer is going to be satisfied. The quality department was the first step, and I was really proud to be in that department," he said.

During the internship, Tambo had the opportunity to move between quality and manufacturing, which allowed him to gain diverse mentorship and leadership skills. One of his biggest lessons was the value of networking: "It's important to talk to people — not just those in your department, but people across the factory. You may need to collaborate with others on projects, and without good connections, that can become a barrier."

The South Carolina Internship Program (SCIP) supplemented his internship with a stipend. Reflecting on its impact, Tambo shared: "SCIP and the money was a great thing. It was a great tool to boost me and empowered my freedom and focus. It helped me become more marketable and competitive compared to my peers." He first learned about the program through a display board on campus.

Tambo graduated in May 2024 and now works at Trane Technologies, where he continues to apply the skills and connections he built during his internship. He remains committed to growing his professional network and leveraging his experience to advance his career.

SOUTH CAROLINA INTERNSHIP program

The University of South Carolina offers $3,000 supplements to students working an internship or co-op in high-demand industries in South Carolina. Supplements are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis, so apply early!

Since its inception, SCIP has awarded $4.6 million to 1,545 student recipients, and 99 percent of SCIP employers say they would work with their USC intern again in the future!

THE PAST IS PRESENT

In April of 2025, a series of visa revocations caused chaos in USC's international community. New visa policy shifts may cause even more disorder in the fall.

AUTHOR ***GUS VARALLO*** PHOTO ***ALDEN ZERKLE*** DESIGN ***SOFIA MILLINER***

It's Friday afternoon and USC's International Student and Scholar Support office is already half-full. In the lobby are members of USC's international community, here to talk with advisors about visas, academic requirements and the many on-campus social events run by the ISSS. Usually, the department's work involves paperwork and check-ins with advisees, all with the aim of helping the university's international scholars feel as comfortable as possible at USC. This week, however, has been unusual.

On Aug. 27, U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services, a branch of the Department of Homeland Security, revealed a new policy proposal that would end the duration of status protocol (D/S) for F, J and I visa holders. F and J visas are the main visa types used by international students in the United States. D/S, which has existed since 1978, allows international students to maintain their visas so long as a university department confirms that they are still pursuing their academic program. The USCIS proposal would replace D/S with "admission for a fixed time period" concurrent to the program's duration, with a maximum of four years. Students can apply for extensions to this time period based on academic need, but these extensions would not be handled entirely within a student's university. Instead, the student would have to apply to the USCIS through their university and make their case to a federal immigration officer.

For many international students and international student advisors, these policies feel like a reversal of decades of visa policy. For ISSS director Harlan Smith, the proposed changes represent a new set of challenges for USC's international community.

"It's a complete rollback," Smith said of the USCIS proposal. "The past is present now, and it appears that, irrespective of public comment, the change will occur."

These new policies come in the wake of a tumultuous spring semester for many international students across the US. March through April of 2025, the USCIS, the Student Exchange Visitor Program and the Department of State revoked over 1,000 student visas for infractions as minor as traffic citations. This wave of revocations reached USC's student community, where, according to the Daily Gamecock, the visas of multiple international students were cancelled. According to Smith, none of the visa cancellations that happened at USC were the result of criminal activities.

"All things being equal, that should not have been the basis for revoking a visa and it has never been the basis for revoking a visa in the past," said Smith.

Since then, uncertainty surrounding visas has continued. Over the summer, the Department of State announced that all applicants for student visas would have their social media accounts screened by the department. These screenings can take place during the application process and upon arrival to the United States, with both being run by a federal immigration officer. The new policy has been labelled as a breach of privacy by some of its detractors, since it requires applicants to set their social media accounts to "public" prior to vetting. Nonetheless, the policy was approved by the federal government and has been implemented shortly after its proposal.

With the start of the fall semester, the United States' international student community is expecting new USCIS and Department of State directives to further change the norms of visa law.

> **"It's a complete rollback. The past is present now, and it appears that, irrespective of public comment, the change will occur."**
>
> Harlan Smith, ISSS Director

Now more than ever, international students are trying to keep each other informed about any policy shift.

Bhavya Amin is an international student at USC currently pursuing her masters in exercise science. Alongside her studies, she works with the ISSS on their undergraduate and graduate programming, such as Buddies Beyond Borders, Global Graduates Network and Thinking Globally. Thinking Globally gives international students the opportunity to give presentations about their home countries to U101 classes and Columbia-area schools. Buddies Beyond Borders and the Global Graduates Network pair international and domestic students to help acclimate exchange students to life at USC.

"[Domestic students] can show them some grocery stores and some traditions we have at USC. They can introduce them to First Night Carolina, or Sandstorms, something like that, so that they don't feel alone," Amin said.

However, the threat of visa revocations is a major source of stress for many exchange students. Amin mentioned how the degree of worry a student might have over a visa cancellation depends a lot on the conditions of their home country or the level of investment they have in the US.

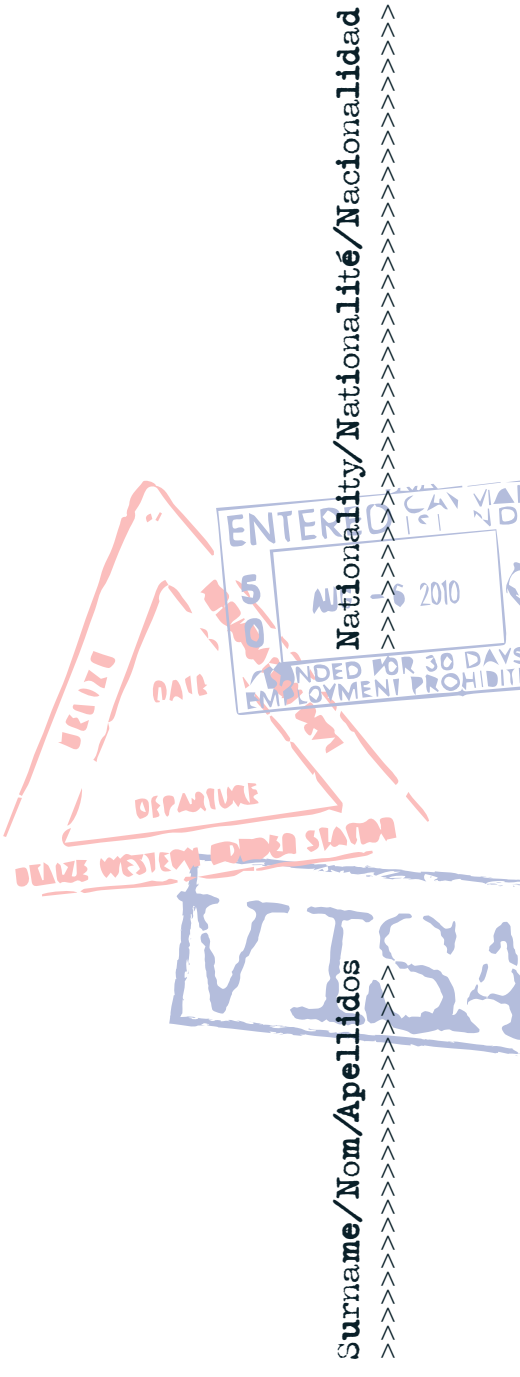
"If someone has well-settled family back in their country, and everything is good at home, they might not be that worried about going back home if nothing works out," she said. "But if they have a mortgage to pay or have a financial burden or it's not safe back there they are definitely more stressed out about visas."

Social media screenings are also a point of anxiety for students applying for visas or visa renewals. According to a list of screening guidelines posted by Tulane University's Office of International Students and Scholars, the Department of State will be checking for "any indication of hostility towards the citizens, culture, government institutions, or founding principles of the U.S" as well as any support of "foreign terrorist organizations." In the eyes of critics, these guidelines unduly punish unpopular speech, specifically speech critical of the United States government. For Amin, the guidelines open up the possibility for applicants' political opinions to be misinterpreted as terroristic.

"They are just posting stuff to support their country and what they feel, what they think, and they're just expressing their thoughts, and they might not be actually related to terrorism. It's just their thoughts, what they think about a situation," she said.

These policy shifts have already happened, but USC's international community is still figuring out how to respond to the possible elimination of the D/S protocol if the Immigration Services' proposal passes. Smith worries that the process of applying for an extension could become slower if students must apply to the federal government, largely because the federal government cannot be as responsive as an on-campus department. He also thinks that it would be harder for applicants to get visa extensions due to federal officers not understanding individual students' academic plans.

"We understand academia, federal agencies don't, immigration officers don't," he said. "We know all the many various reasons why something is late, or why something is not clear. Now it will become a matter of we have to explain that to the government."



In the face of this legal uncertainty, Amin stressed the importance of staying up to date with new policy. She discussed how weekly ISSS newsletters helped inform her about visa-related news but wished that there was more overall clarity about how these legal changes would affect students with different academic situations, such as those with highly competitive STAMPS merit scholarships.

"If I'm a STAMPS student, it might act differently for me and if I'm not, then it differs," she said.

Smith also believes that international students need to keep up with these policies, but he mentioned how even the ISSS itself has issues understanding and anticipating new directives. In the past, the ISSS received updates on visa law from government sources. However, Smith said that recently the department was learning of new proposals from third-party news articles, leading to confusion as to how the proposals would actually be implemented.

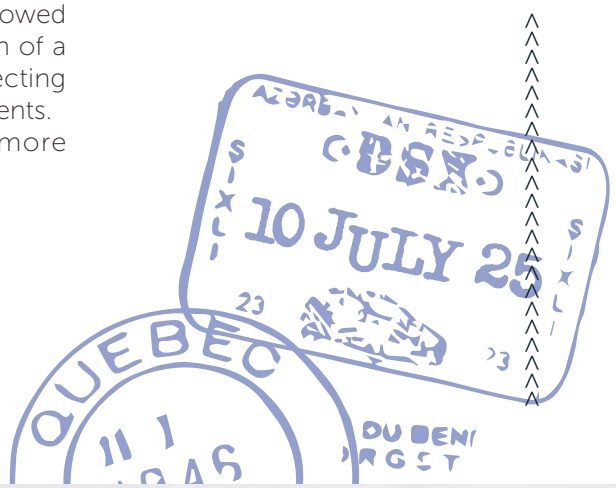
"We're stressed because international students are stressed. We're stressed because department chairs are stressed and program directors are stressed and faculty are stressed. So it's a food chain. We are expected to have answers and we are expected to respond and tell students what they need to do and when they need to do it," he said.

Despite these visa uncertainties, Amin is enjoying her experience at USC. She's particularly grateful for her job at the ISSS, which has allowed her to ease the financial burden of a college education while connecting her with other international students.

"It feels like home, like more connected," she said.

Still, new regulations on student visas run the risk of alienating international students from their university communities. From Smith's perspective, this alienation has already begun to happen.

"People like me have spent our entire careers trying to make domestic students and international students essentially on parallel," he said. "Now, international students are being held to a much higher standard by governmental authorities, which is contrary to how we in academia try to make people welcome or treat them." ■



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Roaring Back 1920S TO 2020S

PHOTO ***TARA O'TOOLE, SARAH ROMERO, JULIA SPIES, EVELYN ESQUIVEL*** STYLIST & AUTHOR ***ERIN KELLY*** DESIGN ***SOFIA MILLINER, MADISON GISSENDANNER***

A century later, the spirit of the Roaring 20s is still alive and well. "Roaring Back" is a tribute to the styles that were born from that age and reflected in the modern trends of today. The styles from a century ago were full of rebellion, confidence and glamour. Aspects from this style, like drop waists, beading and luxurious dresses are timeless - and because of that, constantly recurring.

Fashion acts as a bridge between times as trends return with echoes of the eras that shaped them, whether born from joy, rebellion, or recovery. The styles of the 1920s were full of freedom and change. Revisiting them today isn't pure nostalgia, it's about embracing that spirit of empowerment and using fashion as the tool of expression that it is.

In this shoot, elegance meets boldness. A black full-length gown brings quiet drama, while a maroon flapper-inspired dress moves with flair and confidence. The beaded blouse paired with a velvet skirt brings the past into the present. The shimmer, textures and silhouettes all nod to the original trends they came from. Taking inspiration from fashion from the past ignites creativity and originality for the present. It's a reminder that true style is timeless and always evolving.

DANIELLE COOK

PannerPete, Fully beaded long-sleeved blouse, *$25*

Strange Times Vintage, Velvet above-the-knee skirt**,** *$15*

Aukmla, Gold head chain jewelry, *$8.26*

Target, Black strappy kitten heels, *$19.50*

HALLIE COLE

PannerPete, Black full length dress, *$35*

Strange Times Vintage, Off-white sequin clutch, *$15*

DSW, Silver heels**,** *$98*

CADANCE DAVIS

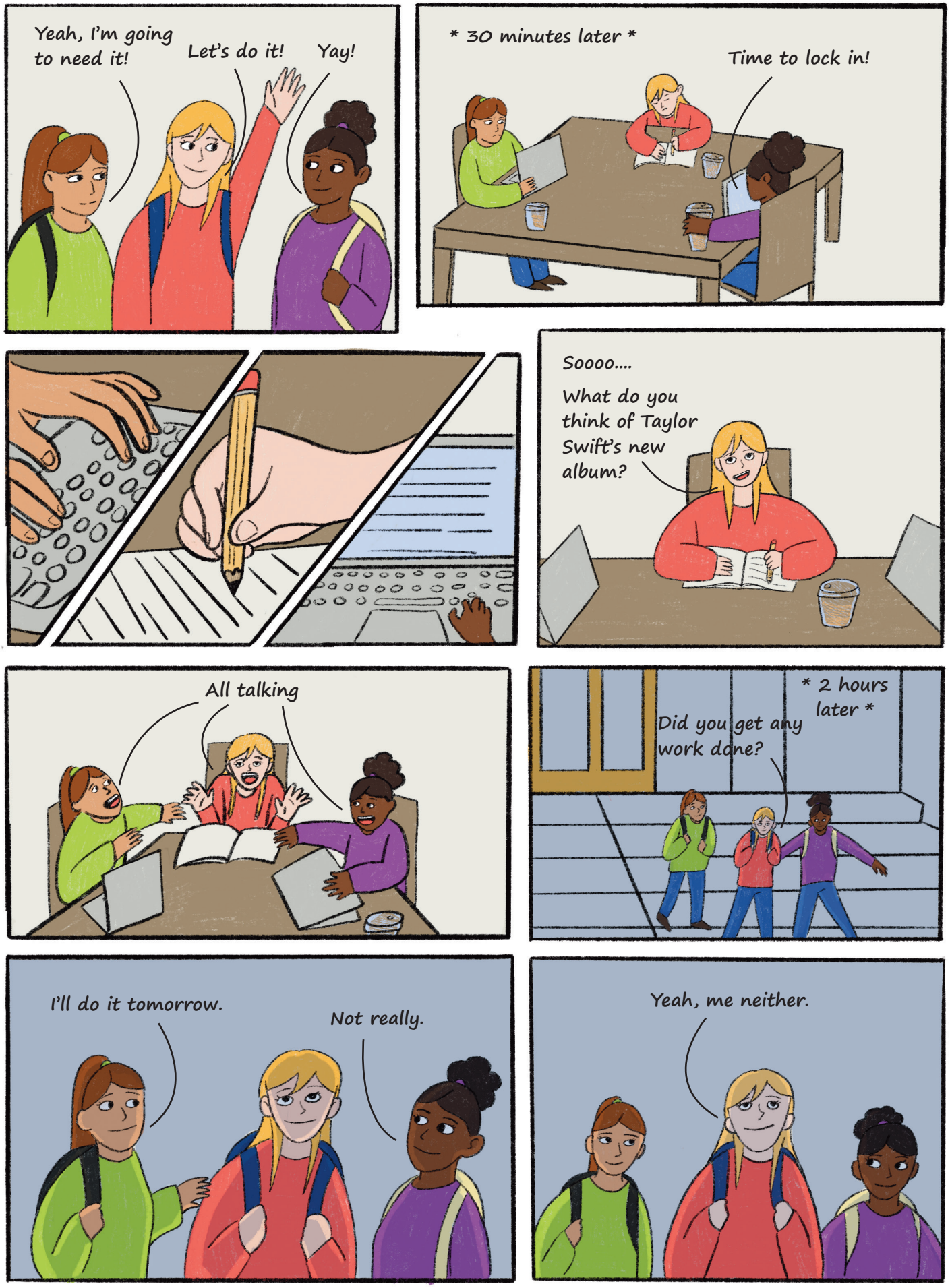
Babeyond, Maroon flapper inspired dress, *$45*

Pannerpete, Velvet purse**,** *$15*

DSW, Beige chunky heel, *$144*

STUDY SESSION

AUTHOR ***HANAA JATOI*** DESIGN ***HANAA JATOI***


Yeah, I'm going to need it!
Let's do it!
Yay!
* 30 minutes later *
Time to lock in!
Soooo....
What do you think of Taylor Swift's new album?
All talking
* 2 hours later *
Did you get any work done?
I'll do it tomorrow.
Not really.
Yeah, me neither.

WHERE THE HEART WANDERS

What a long weekend, a quiet question, and a three-hour visit taught me about leaving home and learning how to love it differently.

PHOTO ***CALEB HARGROVE*** DESIGNER ***CAROLINE SMITH***

Home is supposed to be where the heart is. But what happens when your heart packs its bags and falls in love with someplace else? Many students face this dilemma when moving away from their hometowns to pursue an education, and I believe I'm no exception. But what makes a hometown no longer feel like home?

I didn't notice it happening right away. Freshman year was moving so fast--one long stretch of welcome events, dining hall dinners and late nights with people I had only just met but already trusted with my secrets. When Labor Day rolled around, going home felt natural. Everyone around me was so excited to head back, and while I didn't quite feel the same way, I knew that it was something I needed to do.

I packed a small bag and took the familiar drive back with some friends. When I got home, I stepped through the door expecting the same comfort I had always known.

But after three hours, one reheated plate of food and a silent scroll through my phone, I was itching to leave.

Thankfully, my best friend was also home for break and had to go to Columbia to pick something up. When he told me that he was about to leave, I asked him if he would be able to drop me off at school. He was slightly confused about why I wanted to go back, but he agreed anyway.

So I repacked my things and headed back to Columbia. My mother had been out, so she didn't realize I had left until she called me. When I told her I was already on my way back to school, she paused for a moment, then quietly asked, "Did you not want to come home and see me?"

The question sank deeper than I had expected. It wasn't angry, just... honest. A mirror holding up something that I hadn't fully admitted to myself: I was starting to feel more at home somewhere else.

It surprised me how quickly campus started to feel like home. It wasn't just the newfound freedom I had, though that played part. It was the small routines that made the days feel like my own. My favorite spot to sit and people watch in Russell, late night walks from Cookout with friends that I had only known for a month and the way that my dorm smelled like dryer sheets and food, but in a way that made me feel safe.

There was something exciting about building my life and routine from scratch. I didn't feel the need to be defined by who I was back home; I was just me. That freedom made it easier for me to breathe.

But realizing that made me feel guilty, especially after my mom's question. It wasn't that I didn't love her, or that I didn't appreciate home. I was just growing, and the version of me that was taking shape didn't quite fit into the space I left behind.

I even started to notice the small cracks in conversations with people from my hometown. There were references that I didn't understand, stories that I wasn't around for. The disconnect was hard to explain, even to myself.

Over time though, I started to view home differently. I stopped expecting it to feel the same and I had to let myself grieve over that. But I also started to appreciate the parts that stayed the same--like the way my mom always cooks my favorite food for dinner, or how my little brother runs to hug me.

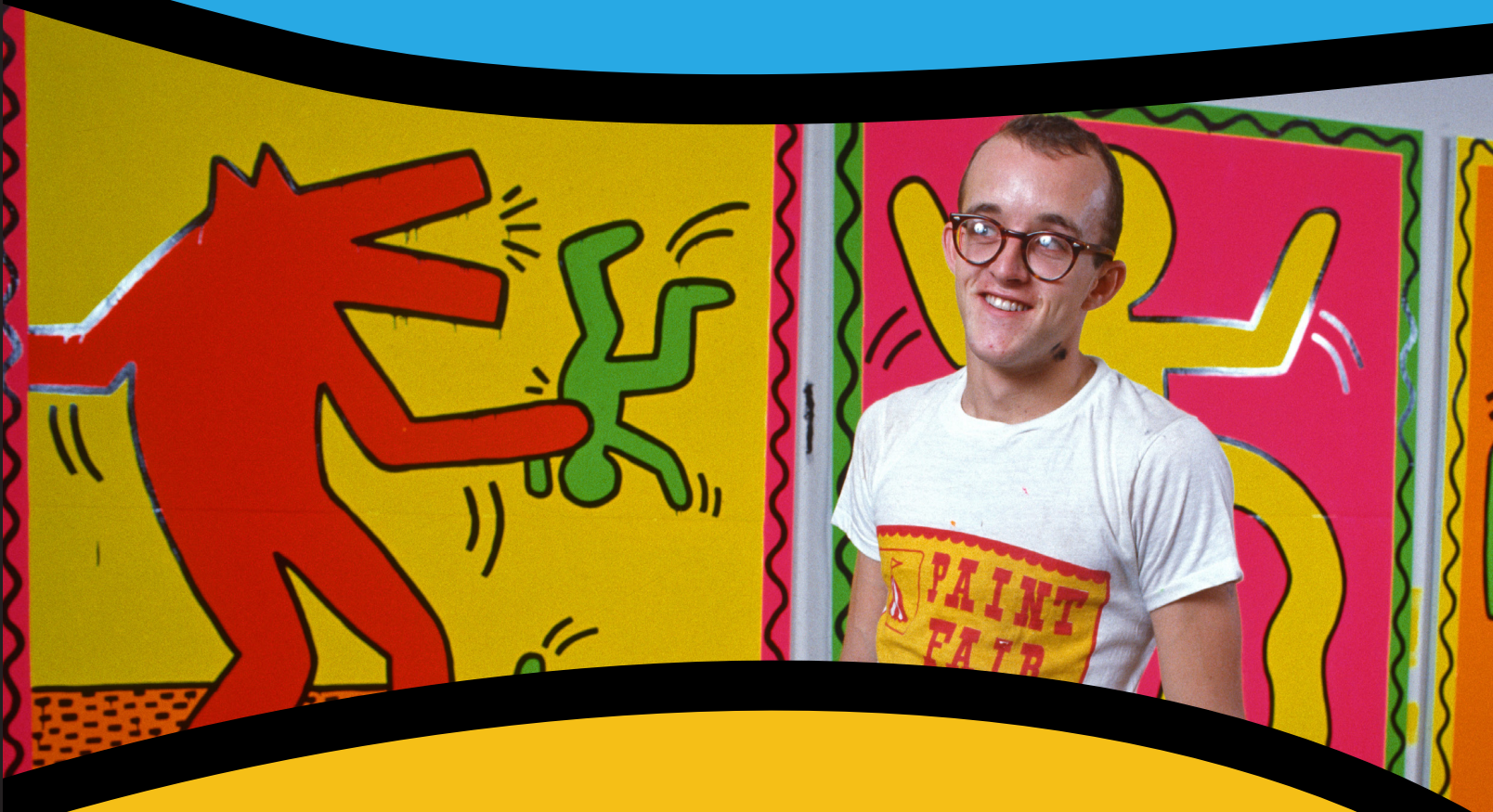
My mom and I had more honest conversations about it. We both realized that this was an adjustment, that we were both missing something. Even though I couldn't be at home as much as she wanted, I tried to be present when I was.

I used to think of home as one single place, a fixed point on a map that could never change. But I now see it more like a feeling. Home is where I feel seen, where I can be myself, where I feel safe. Sometimes that's back in my old neighborhood. Sometimes it's in the crowded chaos of Greene St.

And sometimes, more often than I expected, it's in the quiet phone calls with my mom; catching up on life from miles away, learning how to hold on and let go at the same time.

Maybe the heart doesn't leave home, it just learns how to stretch across places, holding on to both where we came from and where we're going. ■

FROM SUBWAY WALLS TO MUSEUM HALLS



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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACADEMIC

METAMORPHOSIS

AUTHOR ***AUDREY MILLER*** DESIGN ***SOFIA MILLINER***

.01

Human intelligence is in a perpetual state of metamorphosis. Our minds are constantly creating these inventions manifesting in physical objects, in art and in words both written and spoken, produced by thousands of years of human thought.

Then comes AI.

Artificial intelligence has existed for decades, and it's solidified itself as one of humanity's current metamorphic projects. Suddenly, human thought becomes replicable, a set of numbers, a computer code. Generative AI has further blurred the lines between human and artificial learning, allowing everyday people to not only use but train this experimental mind.

USC is one of many universities partnered with OpenAI to give students and staff access to generative AI programs such as ChatGPT Edu, a university-specific version of the program. According to The Daily Gamecock, GPT-5, GPT-4, GPT-4o mini and DALL-E image generator are all included in the university's $1.5 million deal, which launched Aug. 16.

This newfound partnership with OpenAI sparks the university's own state of metamorphosis. With AI steadily creeping into classroom curriculum, it's time to question the university's hospitality. Does AI have a home in academia? And if it does, what doors stay open and what doors stay locked?

First, it's important to distinguish between typical AI and generative AI. Marcia Purday, former co-chair of the College of Information and Communications' AI initiative and current professor at USC, likens both to an assistant chef. The difference lies in the product, what that assistant actually creates with the ingredients someone else gives.

"You tell them to cook a specific dish, let's say spaghetti. So the assistant can do that and does it every time perfectly. That's artificial intelligence," Purday explained. "Generative AI is where you say okay, here are the ingredients and everything that you need. Assistant, go cook something. And the assistant comes up with a brand-new dish that's never existed before."

Programs like ChatGPT generate a unique product with the resources humans provide it. Previously, students used ChatGPT to help with difficult homework questions, create study tools for an upcoming exam and even write specific parts of their essays, all without approval from professors or the university. Now, with ChatGPT Edu, students and staff are encouraged to openly use AI as a tool in the classroom.

Some professors are embracing AI. For Forest Agostinelli, an assistant professor at USC, exploring AI's role in education is vital to fully understanding it.

"I think it's exciting because we're not sure the role OpenAI is going to play in education," Agostinelli explained. "AI, and these large language models in general, are not going away, so I think it's a good thing we get to experiment with it and see how it can enhance learning."

Agostinelli teaches a lower-level course for students just starting to learn how to code called "AI for All". He hopes the class familiarizes his students with code that works with AI and includes assignments where students create code using ChatGPT.

"They're explicitly encouraged to use it," Agostinelli said. "I think it's a great opportunity because most people aren't from computer science in that class, and to have the ability to work with AI and seeing it working or not working in real time and being able to modify it so it does work I think is a vital skill."

AI has deep roots in computer science, but its influence is expanding into other fields of education as it becomes more accessible. Rachael Davis, a junior at USC who studies English, noticed the different reactions to AI based on the professor's department.

"I have a lot of friends who are STEM majors, and their classes are approaching it very differently, not really talking about it as much," Davis said.

She's had lengthy discussions in class about AI, and most of them ended with a general consensus: the humanities don't need it.

Evren Özselçuk, an assistant professor from the Department of English, shared this sentiment. Özselçuk teaches a collection of English and Film Studies courses at USC, and she emphasizes the importance of human thought when students are reading, watching and analyzing her material.

"I mean, for a very long time now in universities, the product has become more valued – the essay, the assignment, the project," Özselçuk said. "But I think, in humanities, we need to sort of emphasize that it's not so much the product that matters, but the process of how you get to the product."

For Özselçuk, the uncertainty and discovery that's paired with human thought is lost with AI.

"What happens with AI is we're basically outsourcing this process to something outside of our brains, outside of our bodies," Özselçuk explained. "And

USC x OpenAI

A $15 Million deal

GPT-5

GPT-4

GPT-4o

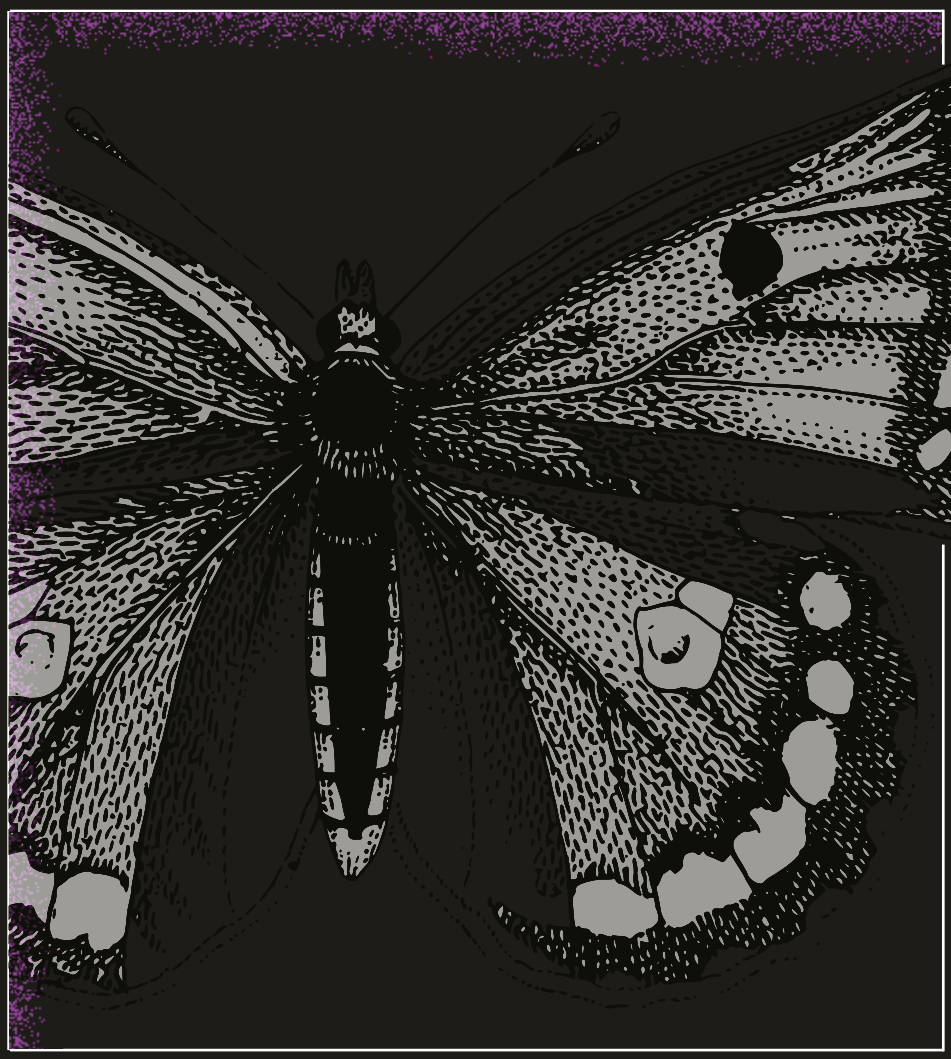
DALL-E

***According to the Daily Gamecock**

when it's doing the work, we're not doing the work, which means we're not really flexing those muscles that we need to become good thinkers and good writers."

Özselçuk is one of many professors who are implementing different techniques to dissuade students from using AI. Özselçuk completely banned AI in her classroom, and she's shifted to more low-stakes, in-class writing. Students are also required to attend office hours and discuss their papers before they're due. She hopes her students will learn to be less intimidated by writing so they rely less on AI.

"I want to preserve the classroom as a different space where we continue to do a different kind of thinking," Özselçuk said.



While some believe AI impedes human thought, others see AI as a tool, one that bolsters human insight. James Kravchuck, a sophomore at USC, frequently uses AI for problem-solving. ChatGPT helped him make practice problems for his Calculus II class, fix a 3D printer and walk through an issue with his computer software.

"It's almost like you're talking to a person where they understand what you're asking and then give a very human response," Kravchuck said. AI gives him carefully curated feedback using a computerized human psyche, something he might not have found on the Internet.

Purday also sees AI as a creative starting point for students.

"What I have seen happen is that the students who are copywriters who use it as a tool become even stronger copywriters," Purday said. "So they're still taking their knowledge, they're still using their writing and their skills, but it just helps them. It pushes them sometimes to the next level, especially if they hit a roadblock."

Purday is one of many professors who use AI as a brainstorming tool, one meant to push students in the right direction. But, as Agostinelli said, AI's role in education is still an ongoing experiment. AI is still learning alongside human beings, so it's bound to get some things wrong. But while AI's replicated mind is still growing, Purday insists its imperfection doesn't dismiss its value. She likens AI to a calculator, a tool we didn't always have but rely heavily on today.

"Students still need to know how to be able to do those functions in order to understand how to use the calculator," Purday explained. "My students still have to have the skills, the strategic skills, the analytical skills, to make sure that they know that what's being produced is good work."

.03

> **AI is gearing up to be the next stage of our lives, one with roots rapidly spreading deeper.**

But universities aren't simply giving students access to the next groundbreaking academic invention; it's also preparing students for an increasingly particular job market. With the rise in generative AI, jobs across the board are starting to look for innovative new hires.

Purday participated in a two-day conference USC held about the role of AI in the workplace, and businesses were open about preferring candidates familiar with AI technologies.

"They are saying that if students don't know how to ethically use AI, they will not be hiring them," Purday said. "So students have got to have those skills to know how to ethically use generative AI."

Davis on the other hand, doesn't see an immediate problem, but acknowledges AI's influence is a ticking time bomb.

"I think you could still get by for a little while longer without needing it," Davis said. "But it's going to become kind of this thing that everyone is going to assume you use."

When it comes to AI, there's a lot to keep an eye on – false information, plagiarism, its future in classrooms and cubicles – but for many skeptics, the biggest issue lies in personal data. According to OpenAI's website, ChatGPT and other generative AI systems use collected data from users and outside sources to train its own systems. But the university claims ChatGPT Edu is different.

"The data itself that students, faculty, staff put into ChatGPT and OpenAI will not be used to train any of OpenAI's models," USC spokesperson Collyn Taylor wrote in a statement. "Furthermore, USC cannot see anything that users put into ChatGPT. The only time those searches and prompts would be able to be seen would be in the event those were subpoenaed in a legal proceeding."

Despite USC's assurance that personal data will be protected, staff and students remain skeptical. With different social media platforms notoriously experiencing major data breaches, it's hard for some to ignore the potential flaws in large online programs.

Agostinelli tends to proceed with caution, only putting data and information he's comfortable with sharing in OpenAI programs.

"I think we've seen enough examples of people like Facebook doing weird things with your data," Agostinelli said. "I only put data in there that I'm comfortable with OpenAI knowing and using."

Not everyone is doubtful; Purday still has faith in USC's privacy contract with OpenAI.

"I do trust it, because OpenAI has got these enterprise contracts that they have secured with other large organizations, and that's to protect the organization's data," Purday explained. "So it's not training the AI that's open to everyone out on the internet, which is very different."

With every new manifested thought, with every step forward, humans have changed how we think and how we learn. AI is gearing up to be the next stage of our lives, one with roots rapidly spreading deeper.

"The industrial age changed the economy," Purday said. "The internet changed the economy. Both of those things were kind of slow. It took years for them to come about. With AI, we're seeing it very dramatically change the way that we work and the way that we live." ■

THE WORLD IS ON FIRE AND I HAVE AN EXAM ON FRIDAY

How USC students are coping with global chaos while navigating campus life.

AUTHOR ***CALEB HARGROVE*** PHOTO ***TARA O'TOOLE*** DESIGN ***SOFIA MILLINER***

Every morning, college students wake up to breaking news — climate disasters, political turmoil and global atrocities. For many, those notifications come just as they're racing to class or cramming for exams. It raises a question: how do students balance the weight of the world with the pressure of academic success?

At the University of South Carolina, the answer is quite complicated. Students describe living in two different worlds at once: the pressing reality of exams, papers and part-time jobs, and the overwhelming amount of crises unfolding far beyond campus.

Nikki Bui, Associate Director for Mental Health Education and Training with Counseling and Psychology Services, says global events often add to the pile of challenges students already face.

"It seems like every day the political climate changes and we don't know what we're getting daily," she explained. Students juggle academics, jobs, housing and food insecurity, while also having to worry about events across the globe. "All those things are what I like to call stressors that can really impact a student's mental health in a negative way, especially if they don't have the support and resources in place to navigate through those challenges."

Bui notes that CAPS has seen an increase in student demand for services compared to last year. She believes much of that demand is tied to the way that global stressors intersect with students' personal lives. "People forget that students are still humans who have families," she said. "Things that affect their family members, their peers, things they're passionate about—those are impactful, too."

Social media complicates the issue further. For many students, platforms like Instagram and TikTok have replaced the evening news as their main source of information. The constant stream of updates can help them stay connected, but it also has its drawbacks

"I feel like social media can be like a blessing and a curse all wrapped up in one," Bui said. "It allows information to spread quickly and helps students stay connected with what's going on, but at the same time, we don't always know if it's factual information. Social media is known for taking stuff and running with it, and spreading misinformation can be detrimental if students aren't getting the right information. And if they're on TikTok for four or five hours straight instead of resting or studying, that can negatively impact both their academics and their mental health."

For some students, the solution is not to step back, but to step forward. Sophomore Kabir Zaman, a dual-degree student in chemical engineering and political science, says activism actually helps him find a healthy balance.

> **People forget that students are still humans who have families.**

"It's better than doom-scrolling on Instagram," he said. "It feels like a productive way to take a break from academics."

Zaman comes from a family of activists and sees advocacy as an extension of the values he was raised with. He admits global events can sometimes distract from schoolwork, but emphasizes that collective action

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

encourages empowerment.

" Doing activism kind of helps defeat a lot of the nihilism that surrounds the world today," he said. "You go out to a protest and see 500 people there, and you realize it is more meaningful than you might first believe."

Brooklyn Brown, a junior public relations major, echoes that sentiment. She described herself as an empathetic person and an activist, which sometimes makes the weight of global issues especially hard to carry. But to her, activism often transforms that stress into connection.

"Every time I go out to protest, I feel a lot happier because I'm surrounded by a community of people that really care," she explained. "Even though the reason we have to protest would normally cause me stress, I try to look at the better side of it as, 'Wow, look at how many people care, look at how many people are rallying.'"

Still, Brown acknowledges the importance of taking care of yourself. Sometimes, she says, it's necessary to step away from the news cycle.

"I think it's okay to acknowledge that you might need that so you can show up stronger later," she said. She encouraged students to get involved with existing organizations rather than trying to tackle too much alone and to remember that they can't show up for others if they're not taking care of themselves. Bui shares a similar sentiment, encouraging students to practice daily "body scans", checking in on their physical, emotional, and academic well-being before small stressors pile up into crises.

"Students need to be aware of what's going on, but also find that balance of knowing what you have the capacity to hold," she said. "Set those boundaries because that's part of self-care."

Finding support is key, whether through counseling, friends, or campus groups. CAPS offers individual and group therapy, couples counseling and outreach programs on topics like mental health awareness and suicide prevention. Outside of CAPS, students have access to resources like the Gamecock Pantry for food and the Carolina Closet for clothing, in addition to wellness services and dietitians on staff.

For many students, that kind of support makes the difference between being crushed by global events finding strength despite them. Zaman finds hope in the act of showing up, even when change feels far away. "[What] I often like to think about is Robert F. Kennedy, who went to apartheid South Africa and delivered a speech against the apartheid government in which he said that every single action is a ripple of hope," Zaman said. "And that one day, all the little ripples of hope will collide and form a massive tidal wave that will wash over all injustice. When I don't want to get out of bed and go to a protest at 11 in the morning, I just tell myself, you're right that this isn't going to immediately have a change in the community, but it's a ripple of hope."

Brown takes a slightly different approach, drawing strength from the solidarity she feels in activist spaces.

"Even though the reason we have to protest is stressful, I try to look at the better side of it as, wow, look at how many people care, look at how many people are rallying," she says.

It isn't easy to study for a chemistry exam or finish a public relations campaign while the world feels unstable. But their stories suggest ways forward. For Brown, the lesson is to transform heavy emotions into something constructive.

"It's okay to feel sad, but let it flow through you," she says. "Let your sadness turn into action. Even if you can't solve these big problems by yourself, you can still make an impact—and that feels a lot better than just sitting in your sadness for too long." ■

FALL SHOW QUIZ

Find out which fall-coded show you should dive into this semester!

AUTHOR ***SYDNEY LEWIS*** DESIGN ***SOFIA MILLINER***

Your favorite coffee shop near campus is...?

A. Drip
B. Knowledge Perk
C. Cool Beans
D. Indah Coffee

Favorite fall food...?

A. Pumpkin pie
B. Soups and stews
C. Apple cider donuts
D. Pecan pie

Your favorite study spot...?

A. Caroliniana Library
B. The Horseshoe
C. Darla Moore School of Business
D. Quiet floors of the Thomas Cooper Library

Favorite fall movie...?

A. Dead Poets Society
B. Wicked
C. When Harry Met Sally
D. Halloween

A: 1 point **B: 2 points** **C: 3 points** **D: 4 points**

4-7 pts ***The Haunting of Bly Manor***
You're drawn to the spooky, melancholy side of autumn, and would enjoy this series' touch of wistful romance!

8-10 pts ***Over the Garden Wall***
You'd be best off with a series that leans into coziness, though it does have its eerie parts - for best viewing, watch under a mound of throw blankets.

11-13 pts ***Gilmore Girls***
You'd rather stick to a classic, and we can't blame you! It's a fall staple for a reason and remains one of the most rewatchable shows around.

14-16 pts ***American Horror Story***
You're down for some serious fright. For maximum scare we recommend AHS: Asylum, but for more drama try AHS: Coven!

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THE NICK

LAYERS on LAYERS

PHOTO ***TARA O'TOOLE, SARAH ROMERO, JULIA SPIES***
AUTHOR ***ERIN KELLY***
STYLIST ***ERIN KELLY***
DESIGN ***CAROLINE SMITH***

As the seasons change from blistering heat to a chilly breeze, our wardrobes follow suit. This doesn't mean we have to say goodbye to our summer clothes, though. Layering and reusing pieces in new ways not only makes for interesting outfits, but it also encourages reusability and versatility, making outfits personalized and unique. Layering different materials like soft knits with corduroy or delicate lace with denim, can create visual diversity, texture and contrast in an outfit. Each layer tells a story, contributing to that effortless "I just threw this on" energy, while actually reflecting thoughtful styling.

"Layers on Layers" also pulls inspiration from grunge fashion, a popular style in the 90s that keeps making its way back into modern trends. It's known for its sustainability, muted tones, its use of layering and fits perfectly with the shifting mood of autumn. These looks are comfortable and effortless while also inspiring individuality.

There's never really "nothing to wear", not when mixing unexpected pieces and contrasting textures - formerly left sitting in the closet - could create a sudden new style.

OUTFIT ONE: EMILIA MARCUS

Vestique, Black lace strapless dress, *$68*
H&M, Denim vest, *$20*
PannerPete Red, black, and white maxi skirt, *$20*
CIDER, brown knit scarf, *$17.90*
Wolf & Badger, white knit wrist warmers, from *$30*
Dr. Martens Platform Dr. Martens, *$140*

OUTFIT TWO: ALEXANDRA FLANAGAN

PannerPete, Red, black, and brown floral blouse, *$25*
Vestique, Red corset, *$34*
Brandy Melville, Pleated denim skirt, *$30*
Urban Outfitters, Beige cutout sheer lace tights, *$20*
PannerPete, Brown, red, and black neck tie, *$10*
Urban Outfitters, Beige cutout sheer lace tights, *$20*
Dr. Martens, Platform lace up leather boots, *$150*

OUTFIT THREE: DEJUAN CARSON

PannerPete, Striped turtleneck shirt, *$20* and red zipper vest, *$20*
Walmart, Brown corduroy jacket, *$30*
Dillards, Levi 501 jeans, *$60*
Turquoise Network, Turquoise pendant necklace, *$49*
Dr. Martens Leather lace up boots, *$170*

The Plight of Icarus

Icarus laughed as
He fell from
the sky and,
No,
It wasn't from
Joy at the
Miraculous attempt of
Flight,
But,
From the realization
That he had
Been stupid all
Along.
I fear that
Me and Icarus
Icarus and I
Are one in
The same.

I Thessalonians 4:16-18

I heard a cacophony.
And I thought
Of the rapture
And I thought
That I was the only one left on Earth.
How trivial it would be then,
For me to write this poem.

AUTHOR ***KENNERLY MCELVEEN*** DESIGN ***MADISON GISSENDANNER***

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WINGING IT

One Volunteer's Story of Animal Rehabilitation and Education

AUTHOR ***OLIVIA CYR*** PHOTO ***ALDEN ZERKLE*** DESIGN***HANAA JATOI***

How do we get people to care?

Dharmik Namineni, a sophomore at USC, has been asking himself the same question during his time as a volunteer at the Carolina Wildlife Center, a Columbia-based nonprofit organization that specializes in the rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife native to South Carolina. The center's mission emphasizes protecting wildlife through education within the community.

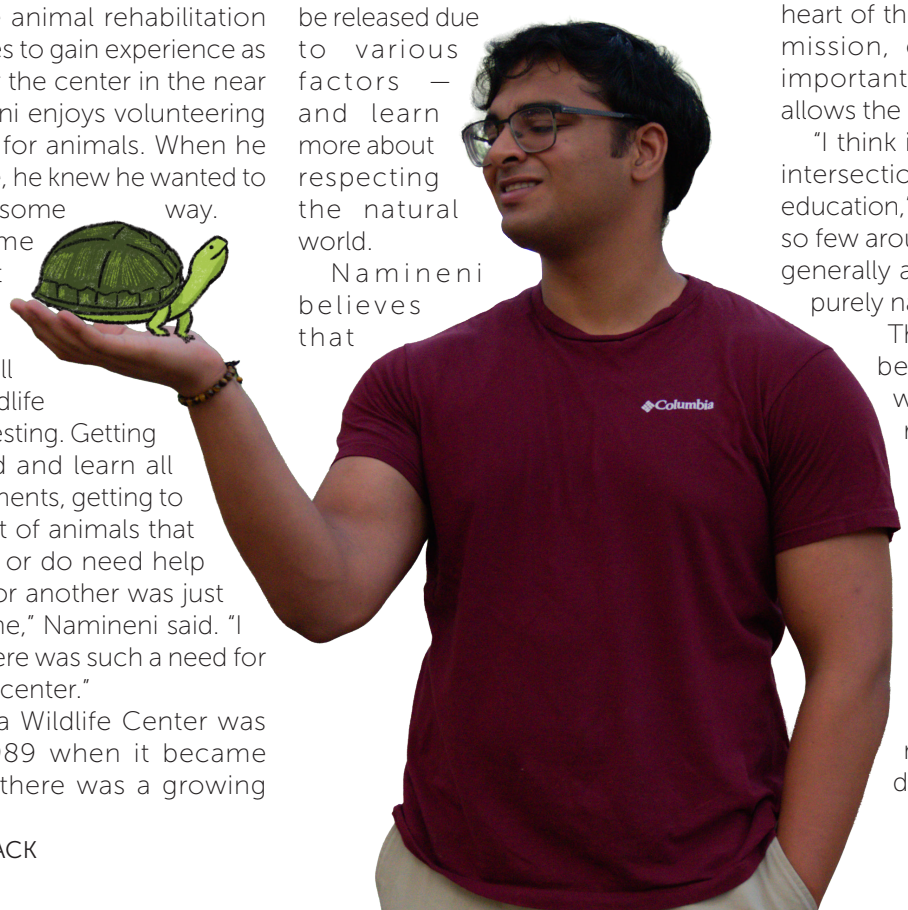
Although Namineni is currently involved in the animal rehabilitation aspect, he hopes to gain experience as an educator for the center in the near future. Namineni enjoys volunteering and has a love for animals. When he came to college, he knew he wanted to get involved in some way.

"My first time there, just getting the tour and getting to see all of the native wildlife was super interesting. Getting to get involved and learn all about the treatments, getting to see the amount of animals that do need rehab or do need help at some point or another was just interesting to me," Namineni said. "I didn't realize there was such a need for a wildlife rehab center."

The Carolina Wildlife Center was founded in 1989 when it became apparent that there was a growing need for an organization dedicated to helping and rehabilitating animals.

"The idea with the rehabbing is that it's as natural as possible, we don't play with the animals, we don't do anything crazy with them," Namineni said.

He appreciates the educational component that the center is committed to, which includes community-facing events over the summer where participants have the opportunity to meet with "Animal Ambassadors" — animals that cannot be released due to various factors — and learn more about respecting the natural world.



Namineni believes that allowing the community to interact with the Animal Ambassadors encourages them to engage with the environment beneficially and understand the importance of their everyday actions in keeping these critters safe.

"Having something visual there, or having something they can actually engage with, is something that's really powerful when you're trying to educate someone," Namineni said.

Although rehabilitation is at the heart of the Carolina Wildlife Center's mission, education is an equally important component — one that allows the center to distinguish itself.

"I think it's just such an interesting intersection between care and then education," Namineni said. "And there's so few around South Carolina, just like generally anywhere. There's very few purely native wildlife centers."

The Carolina Wildlife Center began with five individuals with a passion for songbird rehabilitation. Today, the organization relies on volunteers and paid staff to support the abundance of animals that come through their doors, helping anywhere from 3,500 to 5,000 animals each year.

Caring for a staggering number of animals in need of rehabilitation demands both attentiveness

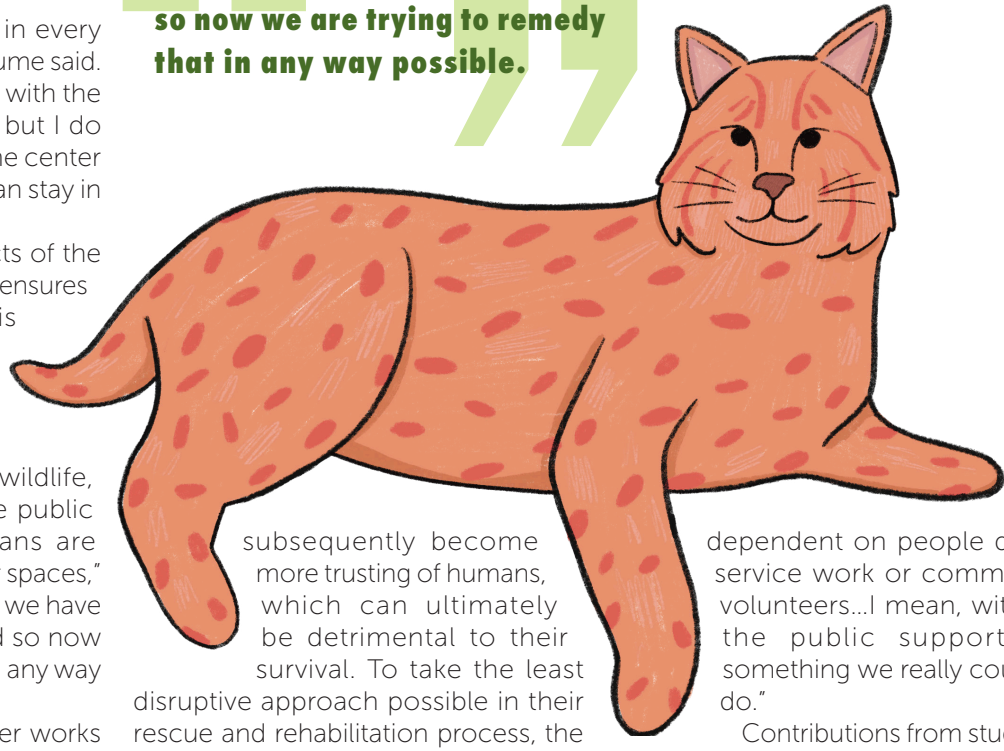
and strong organizational efforts. Executive Director Ashton Blume meets the challenge head-on by taking a hands-on approach that guides the center's success.

"My role is really involved in every single aspect of the center," Blume said. "I'm not a hands-on individual with the animal care on a daily basis, but I do go in and work physically in the center and do animal care so that I can stay in touch with our mission."

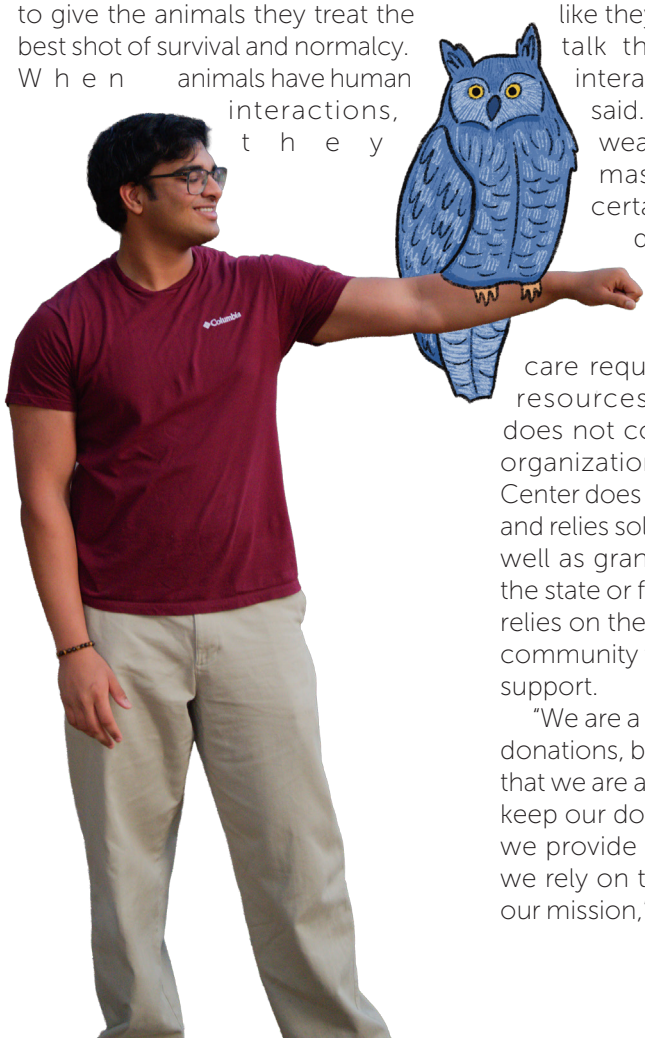
By engaging with all aspects of the center's daily functions, Blume ensures that the center's mission is kept at the forefront, even as they face the fallout from growing environmental issues and anthropogenic change.

"Our goal is to conserve wildlife, protect wildlife, educate the public about the harm that humans are doing by encroaching on their spaces," Blume said. "We exist because we have taken their habitats away, and so now we are trying to remedy that in any way possible."

> **"We exist because we have taken their habitats away, and so now we are trying to remedy that in any way possible.**



The Carolina Wildlife Center works hard to combat improper rehabilitation advice from outside sources in order to give the animals they treat the best shot of survival and normalcy. When animals have human interactions, they subsequently become more trusting of humans, which can ultimately be detrimental to their survival. To take the least disruptive approach possible in their rescue and rehabilitation process, the center follows certain rules.



"We do not talk to these animals like they are pets. We don't baby-talk them. We have minimal interaction with them," Blume said. "We even go as far as to wear certain different animal masks when we're feeding certain animals because we don't want to imprint on them."

Providing this level of attentive, hands-on care requires a level of expertise, resources and dedication that does not come cheap. Unlike other organizations, the Carolina Wildlife Center does not receive federal funding and relies solely on public donations, as well as grants, excluding those from the state or federal level. The nonprofit relies on the kindness of people in the community for financial and volunteer support.

"We are a free service. We do ask for donations, because that's the only way that we are able to stay operational and keep our doors open. But not only do we provide the service to the public, we rely on the public to also support our mission," Blume said. "We are really dependent on people doing service work or community volunteers...I mean, without the public support it's something we really couldn't do."

Contributions from students like Namineni ensure that the Carolina Wildlife Center can continue its mission of educating the public and rehabilitating wildlife. By raising awareness, the center can foster a deeper understanding of the delicate balance between animals and humans — and why protecting wildlife is a human issue. Blume urges everyone to consider the larger importance of animal rehabilitation.

"If all of those animals are no longer playing a role, if all of those animals cease to exist, the human population would not exist. We have to have them. They do not have to have us," Blume said. ■

PHOTO ***EVELYN ESQUIVEL, TARA O'TOOLE***
DESIGNER ***ALLISON DUBON***
STYLIST ***TARA O'TOOLE***
AUTHOR ***TARA O'TOOLE***
MODELS ***ABBY LEE, DEJAUN CARSON, KAYLEE MELLUSO***

TRUE BLUE ESSENTIALS

Denim is more than just style**;** it's a love letter to authenticity. Inspiration was drawn from GAP's iconic campaign with Katseye, which celebrated denim as not only a staple in our closets, but as a statement piece in and of itself. That campaign resonated with many because it showcased denim in its purest form: simple and completely effortless. This shoot highlights denim at its most stripped down, basic level. Denim doesn't need to be loud or embellished to stand out. A simple but good quality pair of jeans or a jacket can hold its own, helping to frame a look without overpowering it. At its most simple, denim can be cool, chic and confident, a reflection of the person wearing it.

This take on denim is all about quality and simplicity, because you carry confidence in the classics. ■

PannerPete, Cropped Denim Jacket, *$30*
PannerPete, Dark Wash Jeans, *$40*
Nike, Blazer Mid, *$85*

Sid & Nancy, Denim Vest With iCRUSH Art, *$25*
PannerPete, Lugz Jeans, *$60*
Nike, Air Jordan 4s, *$195*
Turquoise Network, necklace, *$49*

Sid & Nancy, Oversized Denim Jacket, $34
Old Navy, High waisted skinny jeans, $24.99

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SUPERMAN AND THE CAPED CRUSADE FOR OPTIMISM

HOW HOLLYWOOD CAN LEARN FROM JAMES GUNN'S EMBRACE OF SUPERMAN'S INHERENT CHEESE AND WHY WE CAN LEAVE "GRITTY" SUPERHERO FILMS IN THE PAST.

AUTHOR **SYDNEY LEWIS**
DESIGNER **MADISON GISSENDANNER**

Watching the opening scene of James Gunn's summer blockbuster "Superman", as overeager super-pup Krypto dragged Superman (David Corenswet) through the arctic tundra, I have to admit I laughed a bit incredulously, before realizing that Gunn planned to lean into the unabashed cheese that – until Zach Snyder's reign of terror – made the Superman brand. Even setting the red tights aside, the dearth of cynicism left many to wonder how a sincere Superman would survive in the modern media landscape.

Luckily for audiences and the future of the genre, the new Superman and his director seem unafraid to go without the shield of sarcasm and moral ambiguity that superheroes have wielded for years.

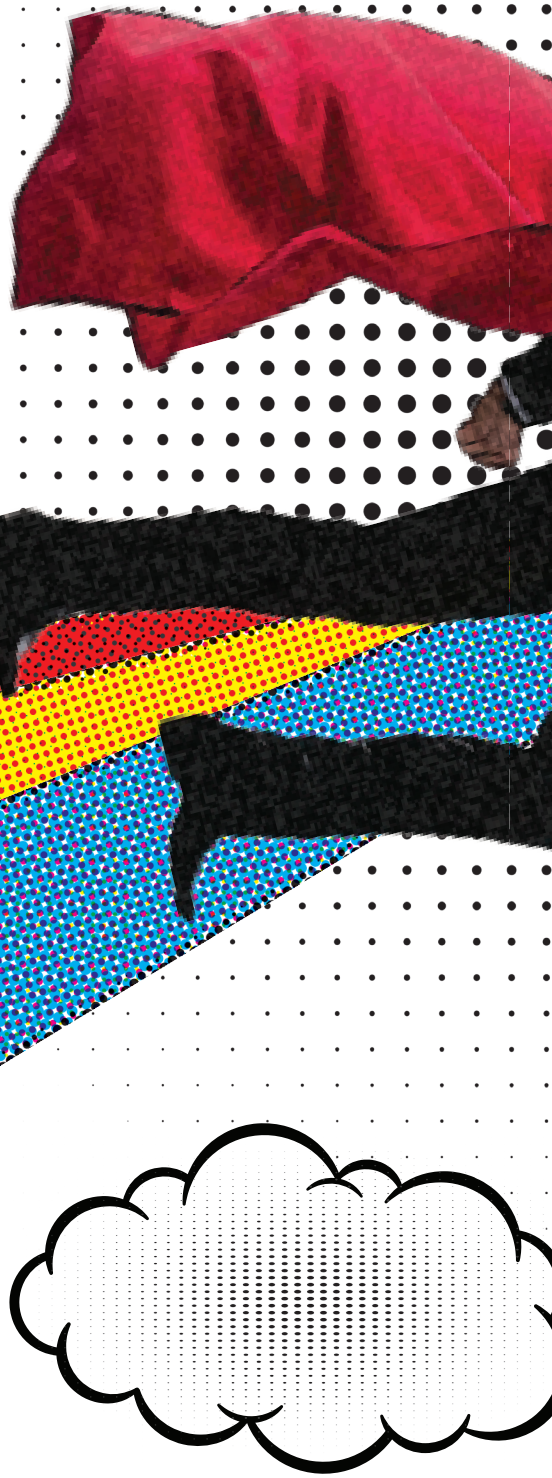
In an interview with Rolling Stone Magazine, roughly a month before the film's theatrical release, Gunn explained how and why "Superman" diverged from the previous work he'd done at Marvel Studios. "In the past I would have done it making fun of the character, and I don't think that's what I do here. I'm less afraid now than I used to be," Gunn said. "I'm less afraid of being goofy or sentimental, or boring or straight."

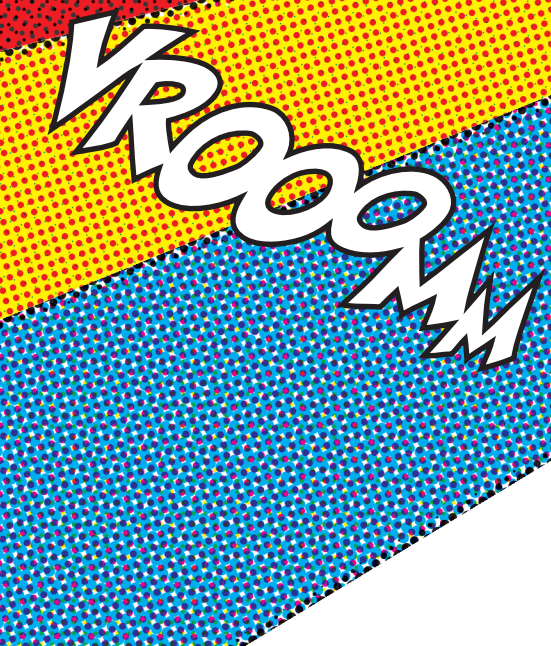
Leaning into the unabashed goodness, sometimes bordering on naivety, of the principal hero very much paid off.

Overall, the film was a breath of fresh air in an oversaturated, increasingly trite genre, and a breath of relief for Warner Bro., grossing over $600 million at the box office. For a little over two hours, audiences were transported to a world where unabashed kindness is the epitome of strength – an idea which has been steadily falling out of fashion probably since Chrsitopher Reeve held the mantle, but one which we now need more than ever.

Particularly touching was Superman's willingness to show vulnerability. Raw emotion define a heartwarming scene with Pa Kent (Pruitt Taylor Vince) as he reconciled the conquering Kryptonian mission with his personal commitment to protect every life on Earth. Superman saves a squirrel before he saves the world - no life is worth more than another, even if the squirrel freeze frame is a bit ridiculous.

The film was sincere without being preachy, and well-paced even if some of the witty one-liners missed their mark. The cast of the Daily Planet staff, including the indomitable Lois Lane (Rachel Brosnahan), is charming and noble in a more attainable way than Corenswet's hero, while the so-called Justice Gang tests the audience's credulity. Green Lantern (Nathan Filion)'s micro-bangs and the very existence of





mock the caped hero urged the audience to embrace Superman's absurdity and radical empathy, inviting them to escape to sunny Metropolis for a little while. With a slew of sequels seemingly on the horizon for the DC Universe – the studio had already slated "Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow" for next summer – audiences can be glad that it has pivoted in a more promising direction.

However, Gunn's adaptation is not entirely without teeth. Many right-wing commentators, such as Fox News' Jessie Waters and Kellyanne Conway, were angered by Gunn's insistence that Superman's story is intrinsically an immigrant narrative. "Superman is the story of America," Gunn told The Times in an interview before the the film's release. "An immigrant that came from other places and populated the country." Amid President Trump's push for mass detainment and deportation of immigrants – at times in squalid conditions or without due process – this movie understands it cannot afford to ignore the elephant in the room.

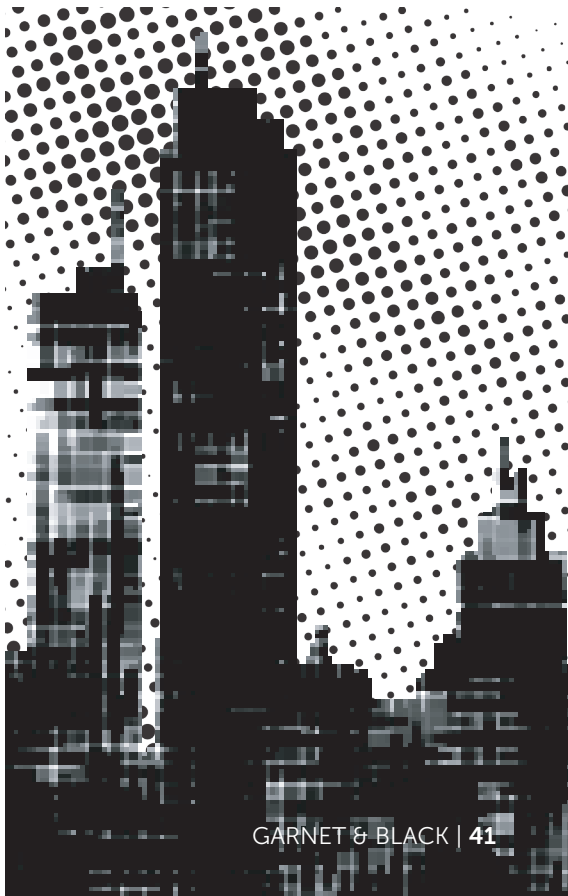
Like the rest of the movie, this too is a return to Superman's origins. The Man of Steel was originally dreamed up by the sons of Jewish immigrants, Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel, to combat the rising tide of Nazism, with his first appearance in 1938.

When asked about the backlash at the film's Hollywood premiere, Gunn held firm on Superman as an immigrant narrative. "People who say no to immigrants are against the American way," Gunn told Variety.

The boldness of Gunn and the film's production team has paid off. The combination of Clark Kent's renewed corniness and the rejection of apoliticism have imbued this new franchise with a fresh optimism America's theaters sorely need. ■

Hawk Girl have in previous DC adaptations been cast aside in fear of ridicule. But Gunn's movie embraces the absurdity with open arms. Nicholas Hoult, too, is compelling as billionaire manchild Lex Luthor, delivering a performance which is both cheekily satirical and biting. The additional villainous lackeys often felt unnecessary and unintimidating in comparison.

The film's unwillingness to



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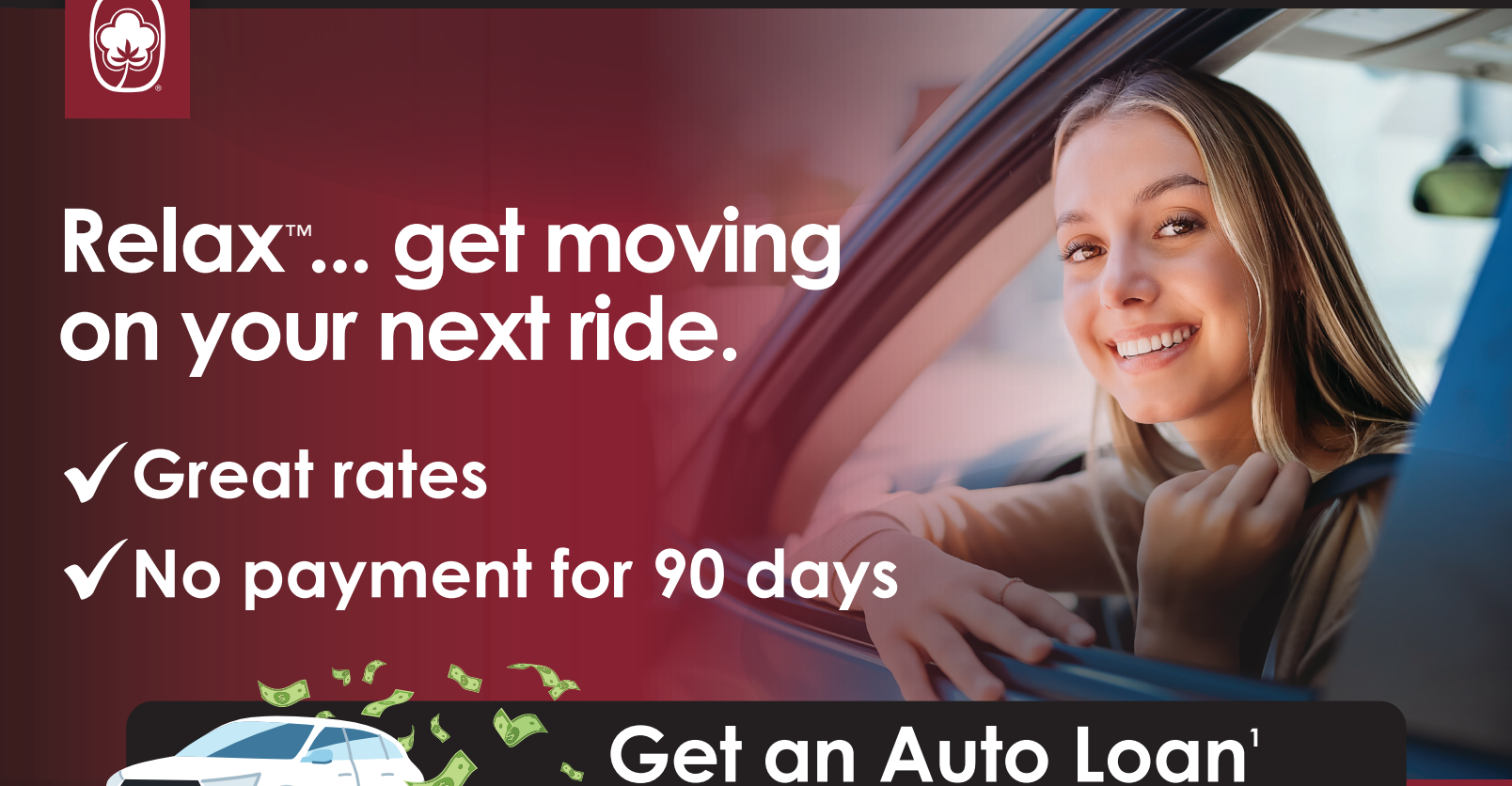

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Kintsugi

AUTHOR ***KENNERLY MCELVEEN***
DESIGN ***CHELSEA GOURDINE***

I am whole
At a quick glance: normal
A perfect shape
Round and radiant
Full and exquisite

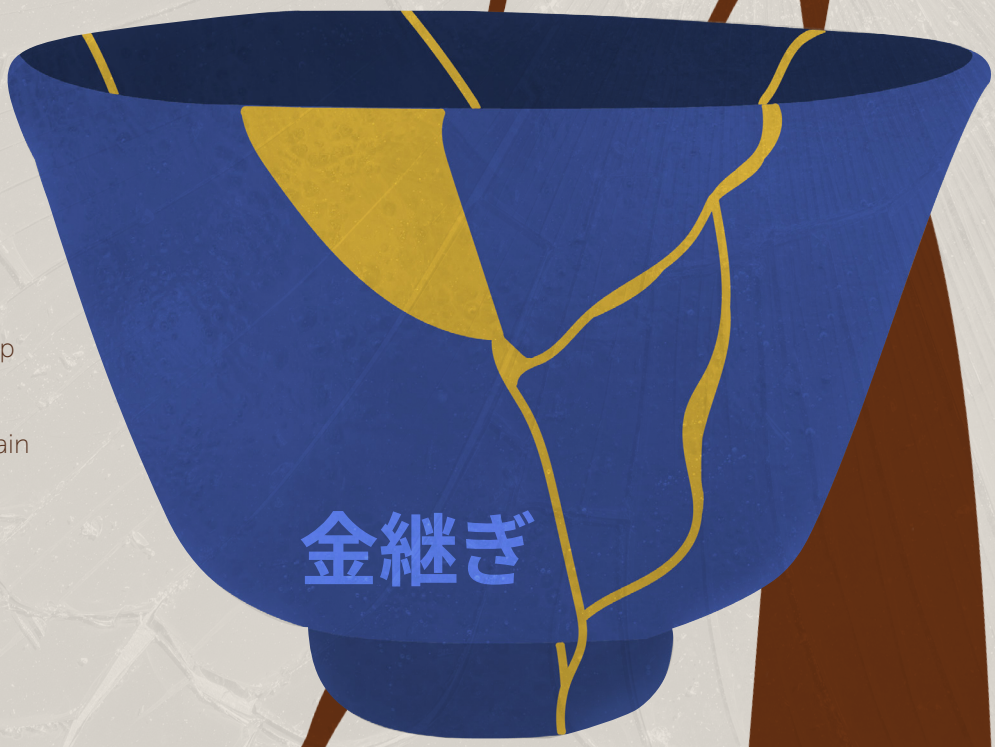
I have a place
On the kitchen table
Where you walk past every day
To store your trinkets in me before
You remove your shoes

I am broken
Look—my cracks!
Dusted off and put back together
Outlined in gold
For all to see

I am discarded.
Thrown away
Into the trash
Hidden from the light
In the farthest reaches of the bin
That You take to the curb

I have a place
On the top of the pile at the dump
Surrounded by trash
Lost and forgotten like me.
No one will walk past me ever again
A kind smile on their face
A whisper on their tongue

The sun will set tonight
And it will be the last one I see.



SHOP 'till you DROP

Discover Columbia's hottest shopping finds for all the 2000's Nostalgia you can get!

Vintage Vixens

Into Vintage fashion? Columbia's Red Rose Vintage is your spot for all things retro and timeless!

Earthy Girls

Flowy skirts, tie-dye tops, and natural textures galore—Loose Lucy's is the ultimate spot for free-spirited fashion lovers.

Mall Rats

Whether you're on the hunt for iconic brands, juicy accessories, or just people-watching with a pretzel, Columbiana Center brings back that classic vibe.

Y2K Hotties

Step into Columbia's Saturday staple Soda City and scoop up bold, funky finds that scream Y2K chic.

G&B is proud to select Kyleigh McComish as the winner of its spread contest for this semester's print issue. In an era where many college students are feeling the drain of social media – some so much that they're returning to the flip phone for solace – revisit the bubblegum glam of the early 2000s. McComish created the spread based on what the theme nostalgia means to her. "A big part of my childhood was spent pouring over teen magazines, taking all the quizes and ripping out the posters to scotch-tape on my walls. I wanted to bring a little bit of that joy back!," McComish wrote of the concept.

Back to 2002 QUIZ

Find out which throwback item totally matches your early-2000's vibe!

GO!

Do you like being the center of attention?

Do you like to experiment with bold, new styles?

Do you prefer relaxing at home over a day out on the town?

Are you one for fierce competition?

Do you consider yourself a girly girl?

Do you enjoy zoning out and daydreaming?

Do you have a knack for making people laugh?

Would you consider yourself a "class clown"?

Are you good at "going with the flow"?

Do you consider yourself more sporty than artsy?

Do you love all things pink and glittery?

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You're a Lavalamp! You're great at going with the flow, relaxing, and keeping it cool.

NINTENDO

You're a Nintendo! You like fast-paced adventure and are always up for a challenge.

SILLYBANDZ

You're a SillyBandz! You're known for your hilarious personality and are impossible to ignore.

NAIL POLISH

You're Nail Polish! You're always up with the latest trends and know exactly what's hot.

AUTHOR ***HUNAR GILL***
PHOTO ***TARA O'TOOLE & EVELYN ESQUIVEL***
DESIGN ***CHELSEA GOURDINE***
STYLIST ***HUNAR GILL***
MODELS ***IVANNIA CARDENAS & ADIA PARKER***

This "***Sequin Season***" shoot is inspired by the vibrancy that sequin clothing brings into today's fashion. Two models, styled in sequin skirts and tops, with the touch of glittery hair tinsel and body glitter tattoos, radiate fun and playfulness that can be incorporated into a night out!

Under the beautiful lights on Main St., this shoot highlights the magic of sparkly clothing, showcasing how sequin fashion can be both striking and chic. The Polaroid images capture how well sequins, often reserved for special events and parties, can be styled creatively on any fun occasion, celebrating the joy in dressing with shimmer and shine! ■

MODEL: IVANNIA CARDENAS

Windsor, Pink sequin top, *$35.99*
Urban Outfitters, Pink sequin skirt, *$49.99*
Lulus, Gold heels, *$30.99*
Amazon, Hand-chain and ring, *$8.99*

MODEL:
ADIA PARKER

Windsor, Black sequin top, *$34.99*
Urban Outfitters, Silver sequin Skirt, *$9.99*
Nine West, Silver heels *$44.99*
Etsy, Sequin scarf, *$22.5*

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"Play Forever": UFO 50 and the Retro Game Revival

So why are pixels back in the video game vogue?

AUTHOR ***GUS VARALLO*** DESIGN ***NA'HALEY WILEY***

To beat Magic Garden, you can't ignore the cat. It's sleeping under the scoreboard in the midst of pixelated trees. Since touching the courtyard walls is a one-hit-kill, you might assume that everything outside the play area is useless. I did, anyway, until my seventh failed run.

Here's the trick: whenever you stash a pink blob in the safe zone, the cat begins to wake up. After six blobs are stashed, the cat will throw an invincibility potion into the courtyard — the potion I initially thought spawned randomly. Take the potion. The enemies should start flashing; it means they're vulnerable. You can now kill them just by running into them, like with power pellets in Pac-Man or super stars in Super Mario.

Magic Garden is one of the games included in UFO 50, a collection of 50 minigames that pastiche the design and aesthetic of 1980s arcade and console games. According to the in-game lore, it was developed in 1984 by Gerry Smolski for the LX-II gaming system. None of this is true, of course. UFO 50 was actually released in September 2024 by a six-person development team. It's part of a "retro revival," a term used to describe the spate of retro-influenced indie games that have cropped up on the independent game circuit. Many commonalities exist between these games: 16-bit graphics, chiptune music, brutal difficulty spikes and copious 1980s references. Some, like Celeste and Shovel Knight, remain cult classics within the indie game community. Others, like Balatro and Stardew Valley, have long since entered the video game mainstream.

So why are retro games cool again? How can they be popular with Generation Z gamers like myself, who came of age far after the mythologized '80s and '90s? In keeping with UFO 50's minigame format, I'll give you a series of vignettes detailing my experiences with the game.

One of the first games I played on UFO 50 was Ninpek, a Super Mario-adjacent adventure where you fight enemies as a shuriken-armed ninja. The game has charmingly bad graphics, to say the least. You fight dragons that conveniently hide their bodies in the water along the screen's southern perimeter, their necks looking like a cross between a sock puppet and a garden hose. Snails patrol platforms with lips half the size of their heads. There's this half-frog, half-spider creature that shoots missiles at the player. Its skin is shaded light blue, neither the color of frogs nor spiders.

Remember, this whole game was made by six people. I'm guessing the majority of this team was more versed in game design than artwork. Then again, this lack of professionalism was a cornerstone of early video games. Look at old Atari games or the first NES releases — amateurism runs deep in video game history.

This history stands in for the game's narrative, as each game in the collection has a "history" tab that details the fictional origins of the program. I discovered this halfway through my playthrough when I accidentally selected it instead of starting another round of Ninpek. The descriptions

begin with the game's release year, which ranges from 1982 to 1989. From there, you get a backstory of that minigame's creation, often laden with retro game references. For example, each game was developed for iterations of the "LX Computer System," a likely reference to the MSX computer line that kickstarted Japan's video game industry during (when else?) the '80s. There are tales of overworked developers coding entire games in two weeks, a figure not far off from Atari's notorious six-week development cycle. UFO 50 doesn't just preserve retro games' graphics, it maintains their frantic culture. It retells the history of video games through these mini-histories — part love letter, part parody.

But this retro-centric design preserves a lot of the more frustrating aspects of old school video games, the most obvious one being the difficulty.

UFO 50 is a very, very hard game. The platformers require intense multitasking — running, shooting, jumping and dodging all at once, all of the time. The puzzle games demand near-perfection in order to complete them; one misplaced bomb in Devilition can ruin your run. Many times, the game flat-out won't tell you what to do. Think back to Magic Garden: all you get before you start is a list of controls. It's up to you to figure out how the game actually works.

I can easily see an avid retro gamer picking up UFO 50 and loving the game's ambiguities. I can just as easily see someone new to retro-style games being confused by its lack of instructions and frustrated by its difficulty. This has been a critique of the retro revival since its foundation: it only caters to video games' most hardcore demographic. Retro revival games assume that everyone feels nostalgic for the digital glory days. If you're not, can they still be fun to play?

Everyone has a different relationship to retro gaming. Some may love the old stuff, but others don't care. I won't make any claims about whether you'll like retro revival games, but I know that I do--how about I tell you why?

I started playing retro games in high school, largely because I wanted to be "not like the other gamers." Feel free to laugh at me. I got a SNES Classic Edition for my birthday and decided to make my way through the lesser-known Nintendo catalog. I played Star Fox. I played F-Zero. I played enough of those old games that I got another mini-console, the Sega Genesis Mini. Then came Castlevania: Bloodlines

and Streets of Rage 2. Eventually, I started reading Wikipedia articles on the games I loved. I learned the developers' names. I memorized release years. All the while, I spent my evenings slowly progressing towards Dracula's Castle, Planet Venom, whatever screen I needed to reach. Night came. Crickets would start chirping.

Then there was college, and trust me, I still layed, but late-night gaming sessions aren't as feasible when taking 15 credit hours. My time spent playing continued to drop year after year. I read more. I wrote more. Then, last week, I booted up UFO 50 for the first time.

The opening screen shows a pixelated LX computer, unattended controllers lying by its sides.

Vaguely familiar chiptune music starts in the background. The bottom of the screen reads "Play Forever."

It's getting dark outside. I close the blinds.

I pick up my controller.

I hit "start."

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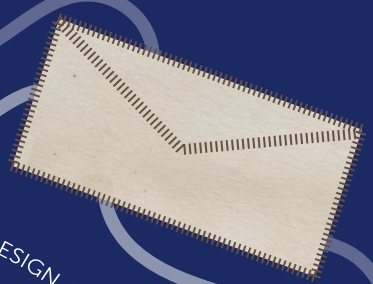
By Generation



AUTHOR **LIBBIE BROWNLOW** DESIGN **AVERY MALONE**

Her only cocktail dress flutters in the wind. She wore it for this very occasion. The sun silhouettes the sickly trees, creating an illusion of beauty in death. Will those leaves grow back? Who knows. Smaller fingers grip her right hand. Her left waves at the receding shoreline. A dot in the distance. Goodbye. The men on that boat certainly cannot see her, but she can see their wake. She doesn't know if it's the last she'll ever see of them. She's losing his face already. Is that possible? How is that possible?

The little one tugs at her soft, pale legs. No tears now. He's hungry.

She wrings out the laundry in front of the fancy shingles on the white deck. Summer has come, but no men with it. A particular mosquito plagues her, and she swats at it uselessly. Her blood must be sweet with the unfallen tears. The girl is with her, learning her duties. What now, mama? Cook, clean, and say goodbye to your family. Lose your fathers, lose your husbands, lose your sons. Repeat.

The little one turned three yesterday. A candle in a watermelon slice; they can't afford to waste flour on a cake. His sister made him a horse and a rider out of sticks. Sophisticated for an eleven-year-old. He made his wish out loud. Daddy come home. Doesn't he know that means it will never come true?

Daddy doesn't come home. There were too many pieces, and they couldn't find them all. She hears that the surviving members of his company buried his arm with a cross. So alone. Kind King George sends a letter of condolences. Thank you for your sacrifice. No tears. The girl is watching closely, back to piano lessons.

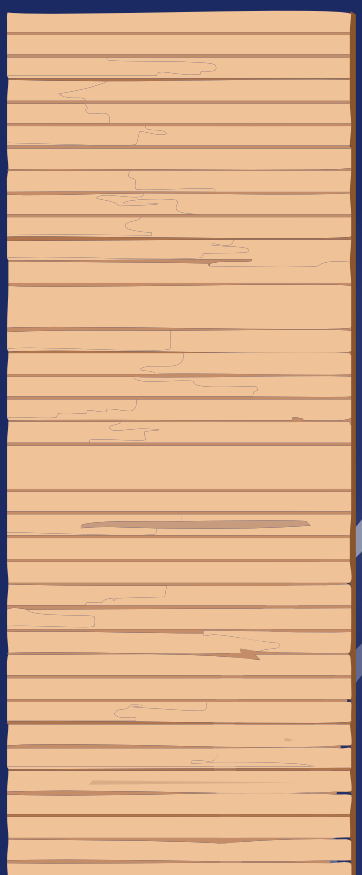
He left them enough money to keep the house with the fancy shingles and the white deck. She gets a job in a factory so the kids can stay in school. The women whose husbands were returned to them send gift baskets. You're so strong, dear.

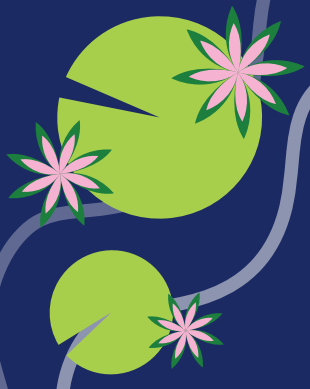
She doesn't hear from the others. Factory work is dull, but it provides. Packing bullets, oh the irony. Her fingers shake against the washboard. Her now teenage daughter takes over.

The little one isn't so little anymore. He delivers papers and makes his coin like a good boy. He wants a puppy, of all things. He is his father's son.

When he runs up the hill, shaded by the sun, his floppy tangle of hair bouncing against his forehead, she swears it's him again. His joy is contagious. His sixteenth birthday rolls around. Sister reminds him, Wish it in your head. He does.

The girl has developed into a beautiful young woman. People tell her she is the spitting image of her mother. She plays the piano, teaches music to the younger kids. Finds a sweetheart, and sticks with him. I do. She's kind, she's polite, she's everything her mother taught her. She doesn't cry on her wedding day, something else she learned at a young age, on that dock so many years ago.

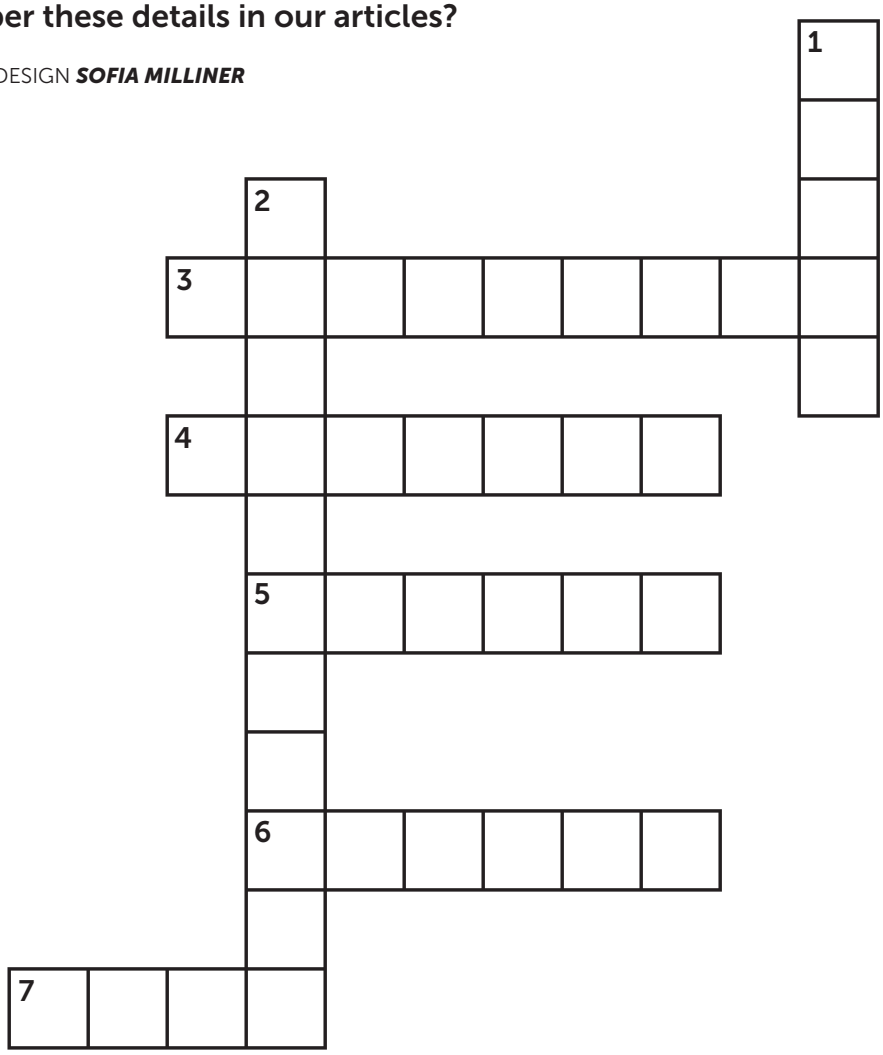




CROSSWORD

Can you remember these details in our articles?

AUTHOR ***GUS VARALLO*** DESIGN ***SOFIA MILLINER***



Across

3. Superman caused controversy by depicting the titular character as an _____

4. The type of small business Laney Hicks runs

5. The USCIS had proposed eliminating duration of _____

6. Name of the AI company that partnered with USC

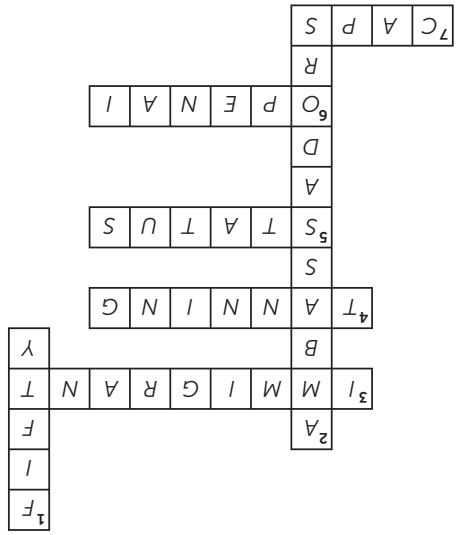
7. Acronym for Counseling and Psychology Services

Down

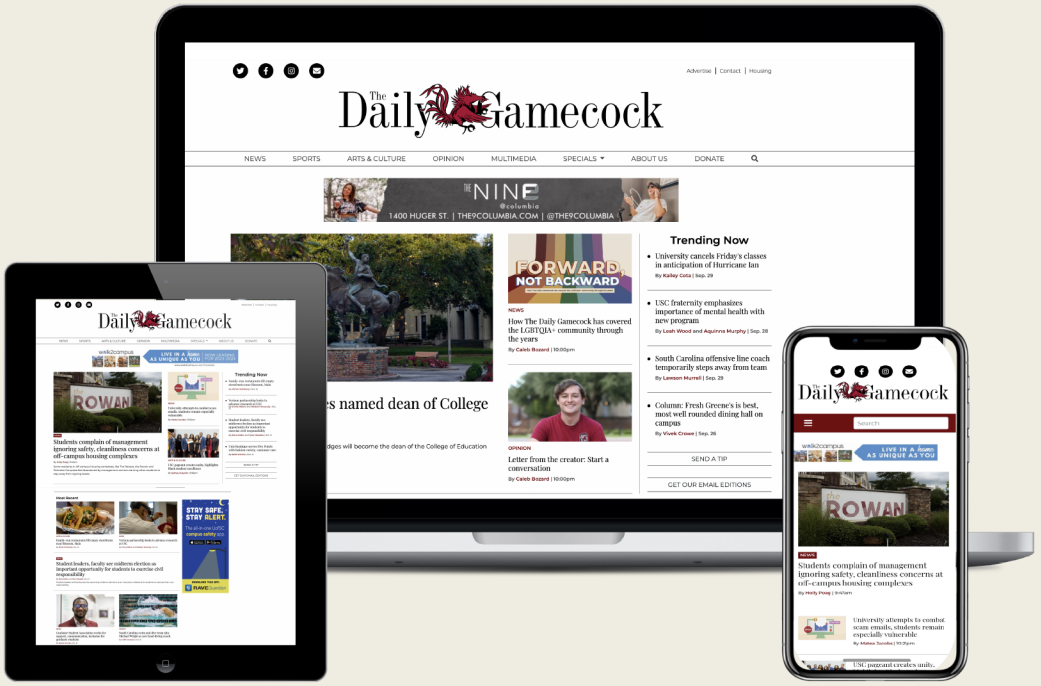
1. The amount of minigames in UFO 50

2. Animals that can't be released into the wild can become "Animal _____" within the Carolina Wildlife Center

Answer Key



SCAN ME!



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