

# CAMPUS NEWS

College  Paper



**Win 2 Play Tix  
See Page 5**

*The Play That Goes Wrong*

## Reporting history

A New York journalism student, Helena Cheng is already getting significant experience covering top stories.

**Please read her story starting on page 30**



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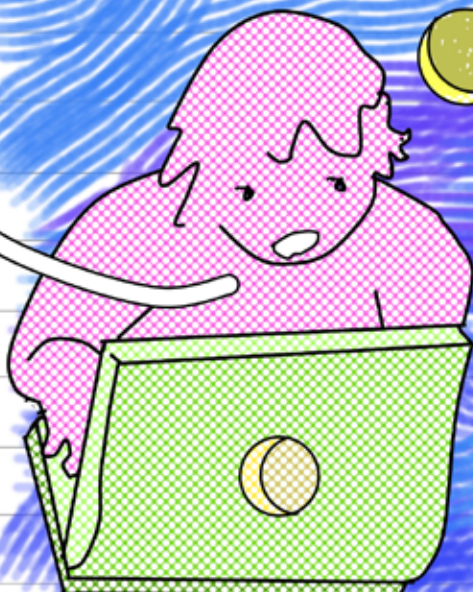
# COLLEGE EDGE

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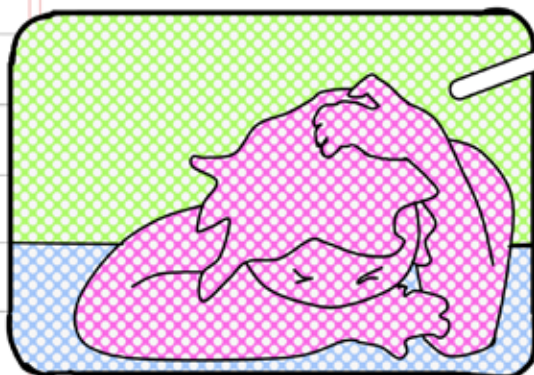


HALF MY STUDENTS  
COULDN'T DEFINE A  
WORD IN THE CLASS TITLE  
BY THE MIDTERM.

I GOT SO  
FRUSTRATED.  
I SENT AN EMAIL  
AT TWO A.M.  
BEGGING THEM  
TO HAVE MERCY  
ON ALL THE WORK  
WE DO FOR THEM  
AND JUST COME  
TO CLASS AND IF  
THEY DON'T DO  
AT LEAST DO THE  
READINGS, MAYBE  
LISTEN. OR JUST  
LOOK AT THE HANDOUTS.



OUCH  
WHAT'D YOU DO?



HALF THE CLASS  
DROPPED AND THE  
OTHER HALF WAITED  
TO GIVE ME SCATHING  
TEACHING REVIEWS  
ONLINE.

YEP.

& HOW DID  
THAT GO FOR  
YOU?





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to wait!

## Win 2 tickets!

If you are a college student, faculty or staff member at a campus where we normally deliver papers (or you found this on the street via one of our boxes), you can enter our photo contest to try to win tickets (simply take a photo of yourself (or have someone else take it) reading Campus News with the name of the paper visible in the photo and email it to editor@ccnews.info) to enter.

Or you can simply buy tickets through Telecharge.com or by phone at 212-239-6200. Or you can visit the box office in person at New World Stages Box Office at 340 West 50th Street (between 8th & 9th Avenues), where the show is now running.



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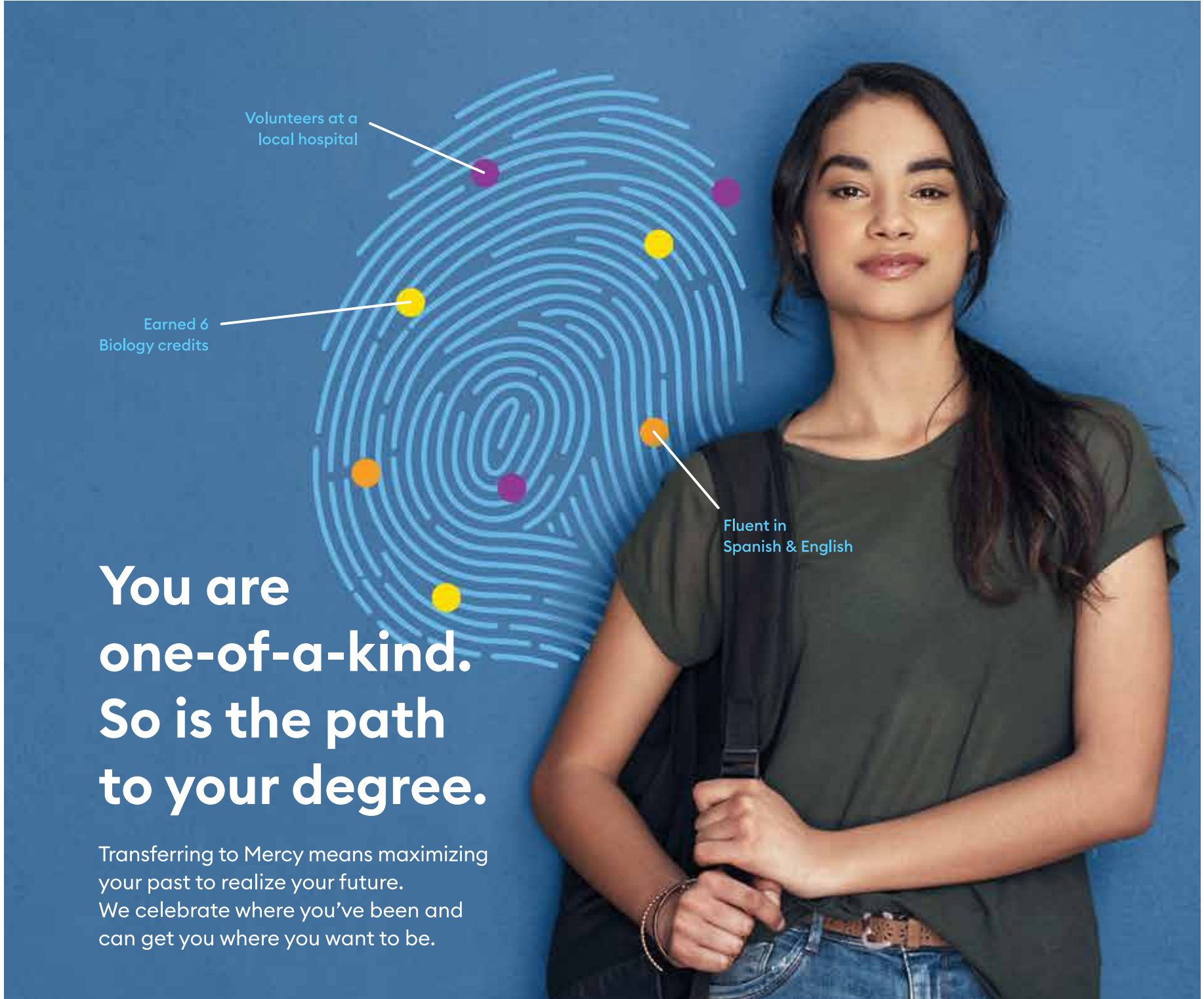
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# Cengage to launch Student Assistant, a bot to help you understand your text

Darren Johnson  
*Campus News*

Normally a journalism story shouldn't break into "first person," but sometimes using "I" is needed if the writer brings a certain expertise or perspective to the piece and also participated in the story in some way.

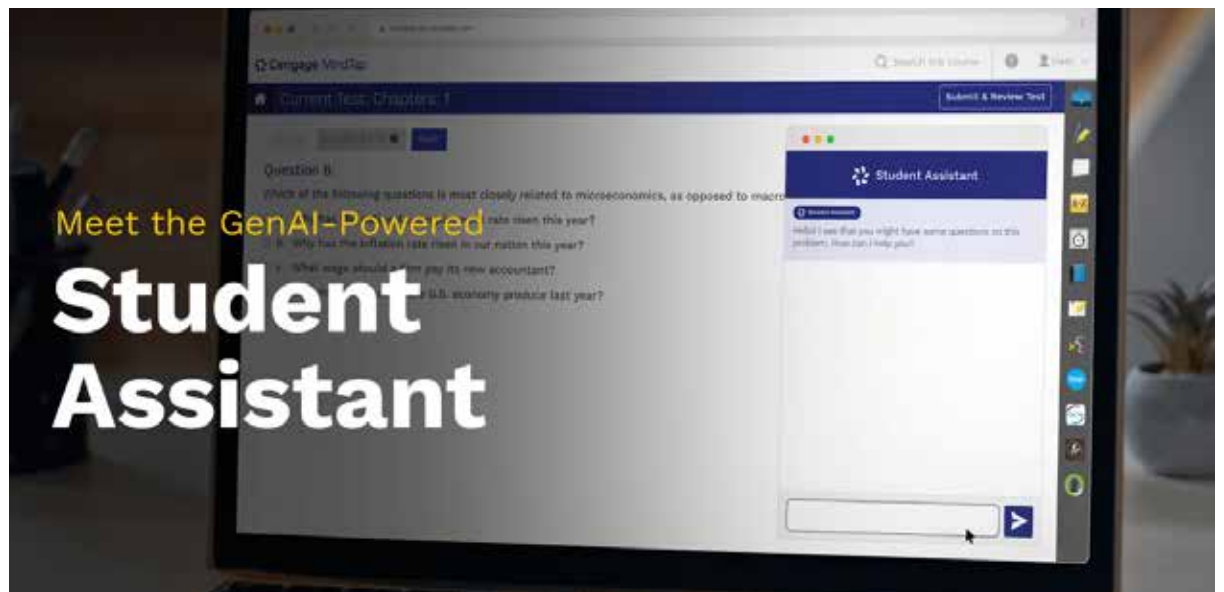
Recently, I spoke with a couple of the experts at Cengage, the huge, century-old higher ed company previously known largely for physical textbooks but now they are almost wholly virtual. They're beta testing something called Student Assistant; it's AI-powered and sure to transform the teaching of at least lower level college courses in the very near future. Student Assistant will go live this coming spring.

I also bring myself into this story because I'm an instructor myself – Communications/Journalism – and the use of AI is being heavily debated among faculty. I belong to several social media groups that debate the pros and cons of using AI in higher education. (Personally, I see some positive applications for it, and believe it's on the instructor to not let students use it to "cheat.")

Via Zoom, I recently spoke with Cheryl Costantini, SVP of Product Management at Cengage Academic, and Michelle Gregory, Head of Data Science, AI and Innovation at Cengage Group about the Student Assistant, and was able to test it out.

Currently, some professors in areas like economics, management and psychology have been using it in the teaching of their courses, and feedback has reportedly been very positive.

In case you're unaware, many professors – especially in lower-level undergraduate courses – no longer just assign a textbook for a student to buy and digest in their own



time. Instead, classes partner with a program like Cengage to offer virtual versions of the texts that are much more interactive and embedded into the college's learning management system (LMS) modules for that course.

Student Assistant now seems to take that to the next level. While within a Cengage learning module, students can be quizzed and ask questions of the AI.

The Cengage representatives assured that students can't "cheat" with it. The Student Assistant is trained to get the student to think critically toward finding a solution to the question *on their own*.

One sample question I tried had to do with supply vs. demand; why prices may rise or decrease in a certain environment. The Assistant did a good job at asking me questions so that I could come up with the right solution.

Costantini and Gregory said that this AI is limited to the textbook and the writer of the text's knowledge base, so won't go outside that sphere to get other answers, that may be potentially false.

But at the same time, the AI did have that fun conversational flavor AIs tend to have, to help build a rapport with the user. It was able to joke around when a totally unrelated prompt about Taylor Swift was inserted, and then try to nudge us back on track.

It's also able to interpret spelling or grammatical mistakes; this is good as not all college students are native English speakers (currently, the AI is only in English, but developers seem open to using other languages down the road).

I asked if an instructor could insert their own knowledge into the AI – perhaps the instructor knows something the textbook author doesn't – but that's not a feature yet. Still, an instructor could write their own tests in the LMS with a combination of questions from the text and their lectures.

Personally, I think I will consider using this for my lower-level classes that would normally use a textbook, when Cengage creates a Student Assistant for these

**Please read more on the next page**

## (cont.)

courses; say, Introduction to Mass Media or Visual Culture.

Here is our Q&A:

**DJ:** *We're going through some rapidly changing times in higher education with the emergence of AI. There are pros and cons. How are you ensuring you're doing this the right way?*

**CC:** It is a really interesting but also confusing time because we aren't really sure. We think there is potential to improve learning and to maybe save some time for faculty, but we're also very cautious about it. At the same time, we are thinking there are privacy concerns, ethical matters, the integrity of the content.

Something that's really important to us at Cengage is the quality of the content because we are helping to educate students and we want to make sure that it is the right content and that it is accurate and that it is reliable.

And so we were really grappling with a lot of those questions that I think many people across academia are also grappling with.

But we still knew that there is promise there. And so we brought Michelle on board, who had all of this experience to really help us think through how should we think about a solution, and what problems are we trying to solve.

**MG:** I think what's exciting about this product is we have tested virtually all the large language models that are out there: Claude, ChatGPT 4, ChatGPT 3/5, and as new ones come out. We can test them instantly with the, infrastructure that we have. But importantly, this bot only points to the textbook that you see here. It doesn't get any extra information from the large language models.

We have it walled off for that reason and to train the models, we actually used instructors of these textbooks. They rate it on a five scale rubric, rate each individual

dialogue that has come through.

That's how we trained it for how we want it to behave. And early on, it was the case that it was giving the right answer too often. And the instructor said, "No, I can't do that."

So we were able to go in technically and retrain and retrain it, so it never gives the right answer. Being able to point only to that text gives the instructors confidence that it brings in no new material, no unknown materials being added to the learning.

And it also has the personable kind of interaction; we've had some great feedback from instructors as this is how I would respond as an instructor, which is not surprising given that they helped train it. It was really important to us to get that kind of feedback on how they want to use it.

**DJ:** *Even though you're officially launching this spring after testing, this AI is something you will keep fine-tuning?*

**MG:** We'll be engaging with both faculty and students throughout the process to understand their experience. You know the reason for the beta was really to do a few things. One was to understand what it would take for us to understand the capabilities we need internally to develop this. That meets our level of quality and at scale, right?

So there's sort of technical feasibility and content feasibility that requires us to work with content differently than we normally do.

But then there's also all the other external market oriented things that we wanted to test. Does this help improve student learning? What are faculty's perception of it? What are students perception of it do? Is there a demand for more? And so all of those things, all of those questions, will be answered in the context of the beta, and then that will inform what we do going forward.

**DJ:** *I like the way it looks. So you see AI as something to embrace. And something*

*that is going to be a part of your business plan for the future?*

**CC:** Definitely in the way that it can help improve learning, and it can solve productivity needs. When you think about faculty, as you know, they're always busy. And if there's anything that AI can do to remove some of the burden off of them and help them coach and guide and support their students in learning, that's great.

**DJ:** *So far, your beta testers have been professors whom I would assume are AI-friendly. When you launch, how will you handle those professors who may be more resistant to it?*

**CC:** I'd say that it's very clear from students, and we had a recent employability survey that said this, that students are wanting to better understand how to use AI in all aspects of their lives.

The need for AI literacy is really high. And students right now are feeling unprepared to start their careers without understanding the safe and responsible use of AI in various aspects of what they do.

So, because I think AI is here to stay—it's a part of their lives—I think it's important for us to help students at this point in their lives to understand ways they can use it safely and responsibly; in ways that will actually help them.

**MG:** Yes, and it will be part of their jobs in the future. No matter what job they go into, marketing, math, data science, economics, you know every company uses it somehow, and they do have to be prepared. I would add one thing to that. I would also say for people there's a lot of reasons to be wary of AI, as you pointed out, when you use a large language model, it's basically indexing. A lot of the web and, we all know you can't trust everything you read on the web, it's not indexing, just embedded sites. So having those instructors be a part of the process so they can trust it is key. The Student Assistant only points to this text. It only interacts in a way that as an instructor you find useful. Bringing instructors into that process I think is also useful.



# A 'class reunion' at Anime NYC

**Dave Paone**  
*Campus News*

The Anime NYC cosplay convention in August was a “class reunion” of sorts for Campus News.

We started covering cosplay cons in 2019 with our very first being Anime NYC at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center where this year’s was also held.

We reconnected with some of the attendees we interviewed who were students at the time and found out what they’ve been up to for the past five years.

Sora Wong was an animal-science, pre-medicine-track major at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2019.

The final two months of her time as an undergrad were the first two months of the lockdown, so she finished college online and had no graduation ceremony, but earned a BS in animal science.

After several months she was able to land a job at a hospital (a human one), where she sorted COVID samples. The hospital was so desperate for employees to provide the service that Sora worked with several other “fresh graduates from college” as well as two recent high school grads.

Soon after Sora went back to school – this time Boston College – and graduated with a master’s in health administration. She had decided pursuing a career in veterinary medicine wasn’t for her.

“I realized how hard it was to actually go into vet school,” she said. “There are a lot less veterinary schools in the US, so they’re actually harder to get into than medical school.”

Since she was still working full-time, graduate school was done completely online. Sora currently uses her advanced degree and works in healthcare administration, specifically dealing with insurance problems.

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@xlr8\_cos (L) and Vi

**‘This hobby is not something that should be determined by your age.’**

At our first meeting, Sora was dressed as Mashu Kyrielight of “Fate/Grand Order.” This year she came dressed as Navia of “Genshin Impact” for her first day at the con and as Robin of “Honkai: Star Rail” for her second day.

In 2019 she had taken a five-hour bus ride from Boston to attend, but this year upgraded to a slightly faster and more com-

fortable ride on Amtrak. She and her brother shared a hotel room for three nights at a cost of upwards of \$2,000.

Sora is five years older with an advanced degree but doesn’t think she’s too mature to play dress-up.

“This hobby is not something I feel like that should be determined by your age,” said the 26-year-old.

“When you’re doing something like cosplay, you are exploring a side of yourself,” she said. “It’s a self-exploration.”

We also met cosplaying sisters Sarah Michelle and Nicole Labrador. At the time Sarah was a nursing major at New Jersey City University and Nicole was attending Rutgers University, majoring in bio pre-

**Please read more on the next page**



# (cont.)

med.

Sarah earned her nursing degree and is now a nursing informatics major, taking online classes from the University of Phoenix for her graduate degree.

Nursing informatics deals with the electronic aspect of the healthcare system, such as medical records.

“Nursing informatics just became a master’s a couple of years ago,” said Sarah. Prior to this it was a certificated program. Her anticipated graduation date is in February of next year.

Nicole had to take a leave of absence from college for health reasons but is only two classes short of graduating. She plans to complete her studies this fall.

Sarah is 30 years old with a college degree and just like Sora, doesn’t feel she’s too mature to cosplay.

She knows other cosplayers who have started families and push baby strollers around at conventions and thinks it’s a possibility she’ll do the same someday.

Nicole uses cosplay for a “work-life balance.”

“You only have one life. You’re going to work it anyway, might as well enjoy your life while you’re doing it,” said the 28-year-old.

In the past three years, the sisters attended at least five cons.

Campus News made some new friends at this most recent con.

(Some cosplayers use their first and last names, some use just their first names while others like to be called by their Instagram handles.)

An attendee who goes by the moniker Kate the Great Cosplays is a 2019 graduate of Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, with a major in elementary education

and a minor in theater, where she earned her BS. She earned her master’s in education from Sacred Heart University in Connecticut two years later.

“I loved dressing up and playing pretend since I was a little kid. I think that fueled a lot of why I wanted to be a teacher - especially a theater teacher - because I could keep playing pretend with kids,” said Kate.

She was a late bloomer and didn’t start cosplaying until she was 21. Her first event wasn’t a con, but the Renaissance Faire in Tuxedo, New York. She wasn’t hired as a performer; she just attended in costume along with a friend who did the same.

Why did they do that? Why would anyone do that?

“Adults don’t play pretend but I was an adult who still wanted to,” said the 27-year-old. “It’s an excuse to wear a costume, right?”

“Getting to be in these spaces – from Comic-Cons to Ren Faires – where adults were still playing pretend, I was sold. That was it,” she said with a smile.

A different Kate came dressed as Diane of “The Seven Deadly Sins.” She carried a ham-



Different Kate –dp photos

**‘You only have one life. You’re going to work it anyway, might as well enjoy your life while you’re doing it.’**

mer so enormous it would make Thor jealous, which is fitting because her character represents envy.

She chose this character because she had been the jealous type in the past.

“Her character kind of resonated with me when I was in a lower point of my life,” said the Queens native. “I feel like we all have moments when we envy the lives and everything of others.”

Kate is a Queens College graduate with a BA in computer science. She and her classmates bonded over anime, more so than computers.

“That’s how we became friends,” she said. “It wasn’t so much us being in the same major, it was kind of anime that brought us

**Please read more on the next page**



# (cont.)

together.”

Vi cosplayed as Archon Venti of “Genshin Impact,” in an elaborate costume (which included wings with a five-foot span) that she made from scratch. It took about a month to make and cost about \$200.

Vi is from Brooklyn but attended college at the University of Maryland as a finance major and currently works in finance.

Her coworkers have no idea this is what she does on the weekends.

“It’s a secret,” Vi said, “just from workers; all my friends know, though.”

@xlr8\_cos designs computer chips “for a big corporation” and cosplayed as Tighnari, also of “Genshin Impact.”

Computer chips during the week... cosplay on the weekends... clearly @xlr8\_cos is a geek.

“A hundred percent!” he said. “A hundred-ten percent, actually!”

@xlr8\_cos earned his MS in electrical engineering from San Jose State University in 2022.

He lives in North Carolina and came to New York for all three days of the con, which is an expensive, long weekend.

“It’s nice to have a big, adult job to help pay for my hobbies,” he said.

Lauren Notarianni dressed as Jolyne Cujoh from “JoJo’s Bizarre Adventure Part 6.”

Lauren graduated from Boise State University in Idaho last year with a major in business administration and management.

Cosplaying is a far cry from business administration and management so her classmates didn’t share her interest in playing dress-up.

“I was kind of the odd one out,” said the 22-year-old. “When I was in school, I was working at Instagram, so a few of my friends and coworkers at Instagram actually got me into it.”

Lauren currently works at Stanford University in California. Her coworkers don’t entirely understand the cosplay world but she said, “They’re very supportive of me and happy to see me having fun.”

Carmen Elaine is a full-time content creator and Campus News came across her doing just that. She had a camera on one stand, and her cell phone on another, and was dancing up a storm.

“A lot of social media content pays ad revenue,” she said. “But having a social media presence in general creates a lot of opportunities for brand content, which companies will pay you [for].”

Carmen Elaine has a BA in psychology and feels it helps with content creation. She also studied marketing.

“I’m applying – interestingly enough – pretty much everything I learned in school,” she said.

Her YouTube and Instagram handles are @CarmenCosplays and a recent Instagram post has a graphic on it that reads, “Official-2024 INFLUENCER” for Anime NYC.

Carmen Elaine has had a social media presence for three years but started making money at it almost immediately.

“After a few months, actually, I had brands start reaching out to me, which surprised me,” she said. “I didn’t plan on making money from this. It just kind of happened.”

Kate the Great Cosplays feels the message conventions, tabletop roleplaying games (such as “Dungeons & Dragons”) and Ren Faires send to people is, “Hey, it’s OK for adults to still play pretend. We know you



need to; we know you want to, and that’s welcomed here.”

On her Instagram page, she states her mantra: “We never grow out of our need to play,” which pretty much sums it up for her and everyone else we spoke to.



# How students create their community

**Elizabeth Lowrey**  
*Campus News*

As today's students know, the campus experience extends far beyond classrooms and lecture halls. It is in the communal spaces—libraries, lounges, dining halls, and even outdoor areas—where the most profound learning often occurs. These environments not only support academic pursuits but also foster social skills and community building, essential for preparing young adults for the complexities of the modern world.

By listening closely to students through a process called co-creation, we've learned a great deal about how students live, study, and create community. In the context of university design, the ultimate client is the student. Their feedback informs the design process, ensuring that every corner of the campus can spark curiosity, foster connections, and support diverse learning activities.

### Study Everywhere

One of the most striking insights is the importance students place on having choices in where and how they study. It turns out that the modern student studies everywhere — in libraries, cafes, lounges, and even outdoor spaces. This need for versatility demands that educational environments be designed with flexibility in mind, offering a range of options that cater to different study styles and preferences.

In the wake of the pandemic, many students express a strong desire for community, balanced with the need for spaces that allow focused, individual work. This dual need has given rise to the “alone together” mindset, where students prefer to study alongside their peers, even if they are not directly interacting or working on the same course material.

For example, students often use small study rooms not to work on group projects but to study independently in a quiet environment with friends. This preference for being near others while working alone underscores the value of designing spaces that offer both social and solitary study options.

Similarly, the variety in seating caters to different study preferences and enhances student comfort and productivity. Direct engagement with students has revealed that they are partial to square and rectangular tables over round ones for practical reasons, such as like placing laptops and coffee.

### Inclusive, Flexible Environments

Students also crave a sense of belonging and inclusivity that comes from communal pursuits not necessarily related to their academic pursuits. Notably, we discovered that many students have a passion for music, leading us to include soundproof music rooms and a wellness space designed for jam sessions and performances. These spaces cater to students' creative interests and serve as gathering points for shared experiences, reinforcing the communal fabric of the campus.

Inclusivity is a cornerstone of thoughtful campus design. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work when it comes to creating environments that cater to the diverse needs of a student body. We must design spaces that are adaptable and inclusive, accommodating various study habits, social preferences, and even different ways of thinking and learning. For example, approximately 15-20% of the world's population is neurodivergent, and this percentage is thought to be even higher in STEM fields, where many neurodivergent individuals excel.

Understanding that each student has unique needs, we can anticipate a range of study spaces that provide choices in seating, lighting, and acoustics. This inclusivity extends beyond physical accessibility to consider neurodiversity and other cognitive differences, ensuring that every student feels welcome and supported. It's essential for tapping into the full potential of the student body.

Interestingly, students also show a surprising level of awareness regarding issues such as chemical exposures and environmental sustainability in their surroundings. This attention to the quality of materials and the overall health of their environment underscores a growing trend among students who are

increasingly conscious of their cognitive well-being, but of their physical well-being as well.

### Preparing for the Future

It's important to recognize that physical space is not just a backdrop for learning and social interaction—it's a powerful tool that can be leveraged to get the most out of people. Thoughtfully designed environments can enhance cognitive function, boost creativity, and facilitate collaboration.

By treating physical space as an active participant in the learning process, we can create environments that not only accommodate student needs but also actively contribute to their growth and development.

The design of educational environments is not just about meeting the needs of students today; it's also about preparing them for their future professional lives.

University campuses are microcosms of the real world. They provide a structured yet flexible environment where students can develop independence, learn to manage personal and social responsibilities, and engage in meaningful community building.

By integrating student feedback into the design process, we can create educational environments that not only support academic success but also promote the holistic development necessary for navigating an increasingly complex world. Listening to students and understanding their needs is key to fostering learning, social skills, and community building on campus. As we continue to learn from each project, we remain committed to creating spaces that truly resonate with the people who use them every day.

This commitment to thoughtful, student-centered design ensures that the campus experience is one that prepares young adults not just for their careers, but for life.

*Elizabeth Lowrey is a Principal at Elkus Manfredi Architects (elkus-manfredi.com).*



# Paid service jobs for RCC students

Rockland Community College (RCC) announced its participation in the Empire State Service Corps, New York State's AmeriCorps program. This marks the first time RCC students can engage in this impactful initiative, which provides paid public service opportunities across various sectors, including K-12 tutoring, Sustainability Corps, Anti-hate and Anti-bias Corps, and more.

The Empire State Service Corps offers students the opportunity to complete 300 hours of paid public service work over the course of a year. These public service opportunities allow SUNY students to gain lifelong skills while serving their communities in critical areas such as food insecurity, civic engagement, and more.

Yvonne Rosario-Quiroz, Director of Career Readiness and Success, the designated coordinator for this program at RCC, is excited to support the over 40 students who have already expressed interest in participating. While there are a limited number of placements available, students who secure a spot will benefit from hands-on learning experiences, valuable skill development, and the chance to make a meaningful impact in their communities.

"We are thrilled to offer our students the opportunity to participate in the Empire State Service Corps," said Rosario-Quiroz. "This program not only supports students financially but also equips them with invaluable experience and the chance to give back to their communities."



For more information on the Empire State Service Corps and how to apply, students can visit the SUNY Empire State Service Corps website, or contact Yvonne Rosario-Quiroz, RCC Director of Career Readiness and Success, at [yvonne.rosarioquiroz@sunyrockland.edu](mailto:yvonne.rosarioquiroz@sunyrockland.edu).

# Joins college readiness commission

SUNY Ulster announced the appointment of Alison Buckley, Ed.D., SUNY Ulster's 7th President, to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Commission on College Readiness. The Commission on College Readiness is one of nine commissions authorized by the AACC Board to address important issues and priorities for the community college sector.

"Representing SUNY Ulster as I work with professionals across the United States in developing recommendations for best practices in college readiness is an honor. I

look forward to continued advocacy for students through this important work with fellow commissioners, superintendents, and AACC, as I have dedicated my career to ensuring that all community college students have the resources needed to be successful," SUNY Ulster President Alison Buckley, Ed.D.

The Commission on College Readiness will provide recommendations for consideration to AACC and The School Superintendents Association (AASA) leadership in the design and execution of the two associations' joint meetings. The commission will help to identify promising practices and colleges and K-12 districts that have innovative solutions to advance college-going rates (21st-Century Commission Recommendation 2). Additionally, the commission will volunteer as needed to assist in designing innovative programming for superintendents and college presidents to foster more effective and efficient relationships between the two associations.



"The SUNY Ulster Board of Trustees congratulates President Buckley on her appointment to AACC's Commission on College Readiness. As a champion for community colleges, her dedication to student success is steadfast, and I know she'll contribute significantly to this work for both K-12 districts and institutions of higher education," SUNY Ulster Board of Trustees Chair Deborah Briggs.

President Buckley will serve a three-year term from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2027.

## HVCC grant

The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded Hudson Valley Community College a \$499,157 grant to create opportunities for students to engage in undergraduate research. The grant is part of the NSF's \$14.5 million Innovation in Two-Year College in STEM Education (ITYC) program. The college is one of just 35 grant award recipients.



# \$4.5M for efficiency improvements, pool

Last month, Kenneth Adams, president of LaGuardia Community College/CUNY, hosted New York City Council Member Julie Won (District 26), who presented him with a check for \$4.5 million, on behalf of the New York City Council. The funds will enable the college to upgrade the cooling system in the college’s Shenker Hall and make necessary repairs to the college’s pool— improving energy efficiencies and enhancing facilities for students, faculty and staff, and the community.

“We are grateful to Council Member Julie Won and the New York City Council for the \$4.5 million that will enable us to make critical repairs and upgrades to our college facilities. Our students are working hard to complete their certificates and earn their degrees, and we want to make

sure they get to do so in facilities that are as safe and up-to-date as possible,” said President Adams. “The upgrades to Shenker Hall will ensure our students can pursue their degrees in a safe and comfortable environment. Additionally, the funding for pool repairs will enable us to address critical maintenance issues with this facility, where many community members have learned to swim, competed on youth swim teams, and exercised.”

The \$4.5 million in funding includes \$2.5 million from Council Member Julie Won and the New York City Council for the Shenker Hall Cooling Tower & Chiller Replacement project and \$2 million for essential repairs to the LaGuardia pool.

Shenker Hall, LaGuardia’s main building (the M-Building), first opened its doors in 1971 when the college was first founded. Today, it houses classrooms, labs, offices, a cafeteria, a gym, a performing arts theater, and three daycare facilities.



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# Freedom to read: a ‘pretty darn good thing’

**Sarah Murphy**

*Special to Campus News*

In celebration of the current exhibit on display in the library’s Community Room—Baseball: Once Simple, Still Timeless—we screened a few popular baseball films last weekend, starting with the great 1989 movie “Field of Dreams.” When was the last time you saw that movie, and what do you remember about it? The iconic, “If you build it, he will come” whispers from the corn fields. The leave-no-eye-dry final scene, just a game of catch. Kevin Costner and James Earl Jones sitting together at Fenway Park, or Jones extolling the virtues of baseball in the pitch perfect “People will come, Ray” speech. But do you remember the inciting incident that introduces James Earl Jones’s character, novelist turned recluse Terence Mann, into the action of the movie? It’s an attempted book ban.

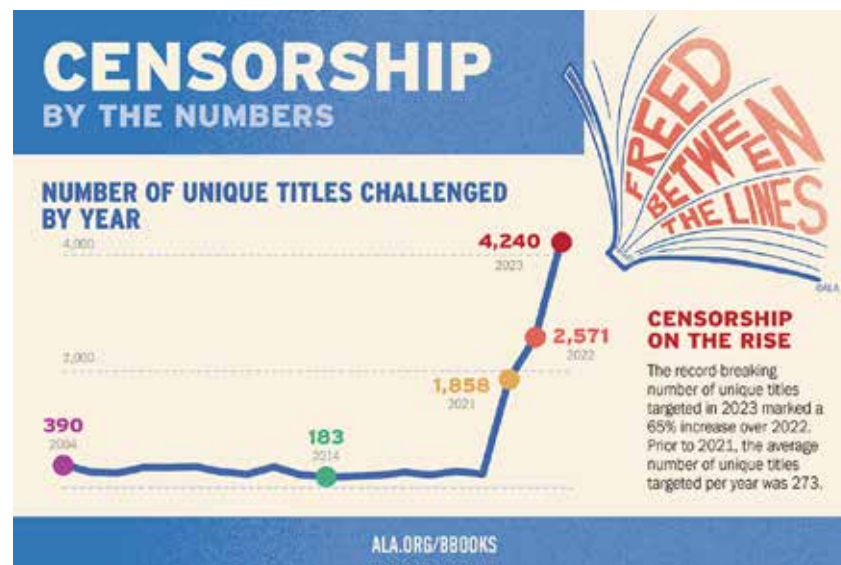
Ray Kinsella (Costner) and his wife Annie (Amy Madigan) attend a PTA meeting at their local Iowa school that turns contentious as a small group of parents ask that a novel by Mann be removed from school classrooms and libraries, calling it “smut and filth.” A school board member attempts to explain the book’s literary merit, but others call out words like “pornography” and “pervert” in an attempt to discredit the book and the school board. This is when Annie gets involved, first by defending the author as “a warm and gentle voice of reason during a time of great madness,” then by attacking the would-be book banner as a “Nazi cow.” Finally, Annie energizes the entire auditorium and brings them around to her point of view by asking, “Who wants to burn books? Who wants to spit on the Constitution of the United States? Anybody?” She is met with silence, and continues, “Who’s for the Bill of Rights? Who thinks freedom is a pretty darn good thing?...Who thinks that we have to stand up to the kind of censorship that they had under Stalin?” Everyone raises their hand. Censorship and book banning has been rejected, rendered as absurd, fascistic, and utterly anti-

American.

This was the 1980s, hardly a progressive era. The movie is a corn-fed celebration of family and baseball. Annie’s speech was not radical; it was common sense. Banning books was the radical act, celebrating freedom was the treasured right of all Americans.

In 2023, the American Library Association reported the highest number of challenged titles ever documented. According to ALA’s Office of Intellectual Freedom, 4,240 unique book titles were targeted for censorship, representing a surge of 65% over the previous year. It was not always like this. For comparison, 183 titles were challenged in 2014. This recent vigor for banning books would have seemed bizarre to the viewers of “Field of Dreams” back in 1989. More than bizarre, dangerous. Anti-American. Most of us still see this trend as inherently opposed to freedom, so what accounts for the massive numbers? ALA reports that the surge is the result of pressure from politicized groups or individuals demanding the censorship of multiple titles, “often dozens or hundreds at a time.” Furthermore, 47% of the titles targeted for censorship made the list for representing the voices and lived experiences of LGBTQ individuals and people of color. We try to eliminate what we fear, and it appears that book banners fear their own neighbors who don’t look, love, or live the way they do.

“Field of Dreams” was based on a book: “Shoeless Joe” by W.P. Kinsella. The Terence Mann character, played by James Earl Jones in the film, was named J.D. Salinger in the book. Yes, that J.D. Salinger. Famously a recluse later in life, Salinger threatened legal action should his name and likeness be used in any future adaptation. So for the



sake of the movie, Salinger became Mann, a fictional author who had stopped publishing, sought solace, and whose best works were beloved by many, banned by others. From 1990-2000, Salinger’s classic, “The Catcher in the Rye” was the tenth most frequently challenged book, according to ALA’s data. It might seem quaint to have seen “The Catcher in the Rye”—widely assigned, broadly popular, maybe a little old fashioned but still as honest a depiction of adolescence as we’re likely to read—as dangerous. But when we allow others to dictate what is and is not appropriate for our bookshelves, our classrooms, our families, and our libraries, we give up our right to choose, and we can’t predict what will be deemed dangerous to whom.

Known for his voice as much as for his acting, the late James Earl Jones also recorded several audiobooks throughout his career. If you search for this information online, the first audio title listed is the Holy Bible. Which also happens to be the 52nd most frequently challenged book from 2010-2019.

*Sarah Murphy is director of The Greenwich Free Library in Upstate NY.*





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# From BMCC to Lawrence U. – *more light!*

**Brianna M. Abreu**  
*Campus News*

Anthony Chimbay is a Mexican first-generation college student raised in Brooklyn, New York. Anthony's mother immigrated from Mexico to New York while not knowing much English. As his mother pushed through this hardship and took care of Anthony and his sister, Anthony didn't know what the future held for him. These challenges inspired him to pursue a path that could help not only himself, but also other people as well. Even if he didn't seem too motivated about the future. As Anthony was interviewed, he mentioned how Kaplan really ended up changing his whole life right around. At a younger age, Anthony realized how there were hard nights when it came to balancing out family. Some days, it was difficult to cover basic necessities. These challenges would present themselves as drivers of motivation for Anthony.

Anthony attended Borough of Manhattan Community College, majoring in Computer Science, getting his Associate's in Science in July of 2024. He fell almost in immediate love with Computer Science. He engaged in research at the National Science Foundation (NSF), becoming an LSAMP Senior Researcher, as well as a Research Intern for this foundation. His big leap of going to artificial intelligence derives from his want of helping other people and the deep desire to give back to his community. His research aimed at helping children with autism by helping to develop AI tools that could: interpret facial expressions, as well as aiding in social and emotional development. His work began as a solo effort, but then grew into a bigger collaboration project with a team of dedicated individuals. His dedication to making a real difference in communities through technology aligns with his journey of overcoming obstacles to pursue his dream career in Computer Science.

With support from the Kaplan Leadership Program, Anthony's academic career flourished. The program helped him elevate his GPA to a 4.0 which also helped

encourage him to step out of his comfort zone. He moved from New York to attend Lawrence University, located in Appleton, Wisconsin. This was his first time living outside his city, and Kaplan's continuous support helped him transition to this college seamlessly. Now at Lawrence, Chimbay is focused on completing his Bachelor's of Arts Degree in Computer Science, with plans to extend his research on autism and pursue his career in Artificial Intelligence. Throughout his story, he demonstrates his resilience and drive to improve his own life, and the lives of

over.

Anthony Chimbay (AC) was interviewed by Brianna Abreu (BA), a student writer for Campus News, via Zoom in mid September. Valerie Silverman Kerr (VK), a Kaplan spokesperson, joined the call. This interview was edited for clarity.

**BA:** *What would you say inspired you through those experiences as well as any other experience that you can share with me to pursue a career in artificial intelligence software engineering?*

**AC:** I believe that this big leap of going to artificial intelligence derives from my want of helping other people out. Coming from that place where I felt like I had nothing, this became more than something. I believe that I wanna give that to more than just other people. And I believe that



Anthony Chimbay

with my skill in computing, as well as understanding machinery, I can provide artificial intelligence that can help our community as a whole, helping humans also develop and work through anthropology in today's day and age.

**BA:** *Can you tell me a little bit more about your work of helping children with autism in relation to artificial intelligence, and your research in this field as well?*

**AC:** We started figuring out how we can help children with autism regarding artificial intelligence. We then came to the conclusion that facial recognition was not really permanently used for the market, so we tried correlating facial recognition with facial expressions. This would help children understand emotional expressions from others, and help them provide an understanding of what specific emotions may look like.

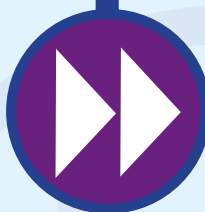
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**(cont.)**

**BA:** *What would you say from that research is your most profound experience through these findings?*

**AC:** I believe that it was a collaboration, where I was the one mainly dealing with the team. It was just me to begin with, then I invited a friend. After that, more and more newcomers began to arrive. I believe that through me collaborating with my team, I was able to create an efficient team where we work together and try to see how it can potentially help kids with autism. Basically, supporting their social and emotional development through this project.

**BA:** *Would you say that you developed a love for learning through Kaplan, or would you say you already had the sense of always*

*being a curious learner?*

**AC:** Originally, I feel like I grew up with no motivation to pursue education in middle school. I did not go too far in depth with education, and I really was considered a trouble maker. I believe my mom was very on top of me with “get on your education”. It was all for good reason, honestly. It was during highschool where I really just stopped thinking about pursuing education for real. I used to be a 4.0 GPA student my freshman year. From there on, my grades just dropped drastically. This was also around the same time the pandemic was at its peak, and for an entire two years I had to just wake up and sit and basically do nothing.

I had a scholarship for a Brooklyn college, yet I still felt no push deep down to do community college. I took this path of realization of wanting to continue my life regardless of education. I ended up going into sales and marketing for the two years I wasn't in education. As a first generation

college student, it was a shock to my mom that I picked up education again. It further shocked my mom that I was doing my best for that 4.0 GPA that I strived to have once again, to make my freshman self proud. I took 4 summer courses that I needed, got involved in an internship, and through this experience I started taking more courses, graduated with an Associate's degree, and managed to complete it in a year and a half. Afterwards, I felt like the Kaplan Leadership Program was right behind me the whole time. They helped me push myself more outside these barriers and they really just pushed me to the point of being knowledgeable of boundaries set for me, and really helped me enforce setting these boundaries myself. I'm more than just someone from New York City. With the help from them, they put me into a school location in Appleton, WI, which took place at a competitive 4-year university that was a great push... as I've never been outside

**Please read more on the next page**

# (cont.)

of my city before, or really just out of the state, honestly. I was nervous, but here I am going to Lawrence University and it's better than ever.

**BA:** *When exactly did you learn about the Kaplan Leadership Program?*

**AC:** I learned about the program mostly during my fall term in 2023. An advisor emailed me this opportunity, and at the time I didn't really feel like it was necessarily meant for me. I still definitely struggled with self doubt at the time, but deep down I was more than capable to do this leadership program. I realize to myself that I'm never gonna get out of this boundary if I don't explore these different opportunities. I think that through these interviews and info sessions from Kaplan, I realize how they would provide all these resources for me out of a real care for me. When I got accepted, it felt like a dream came true. I received a writing coach and a lot of assistance from a family-like community, and they also gave me the chance to explore new colleges which are beyond my budget; lifting all of these financial burdens right off my shoulders. I am capable of writing a stronger application. This pushed me to really believe in myself.

**BA:** *Before you were engaged with Kaplan, did you think of college being a possibility or was Kaplan the door opener for you?*

**AC:** I can say that I wouldn't get to explore these different opportunities if it wasn't for Kaplan. I felt like I was really staying in the city. With Kaplan, it really elevated my perspective outside of my state, and made me realize that there are so many opportunities in the world, and that the world is bigger than it is. Kaplan introduced me and helped me find the college I currently go to now.

**BA:** *Can you tell me a little bit more about the writing coach and the resources that they provided you with and how they supported you through your professional*

*goals?*

**AC:** At first, it started with me making an attempt at creative writing for John Shammice. It really elevated my skill because throughout my entire writing process, I would submit a draft, he would send me back a revision, and I would submit yet another draft, and get back a revision. So from those points on, I felt like I was learning piece by piece how to become a better overall writer. Whether it be stories or an essay, just to write better. It really transitioned to now writing overall a lot more advanced. My friends tell me sometimes that they wouldn't recall me writing like that. Sometimes I'm shocked at some of the pieces I could write.. Seeing my potential kind of opens up my eyes a little. I really recognize my ability to write more proficiently and with a sort of passion that I can notice in my writing. I truly do thank my writing coach for the elevation.

**BA:** *What other kinds of resources impacted your social or emotional wellbeing that Kaplan provided, if any?*

**AC:** I would say that the community they provide with alumni, peers, Kaplan scholars, cohorts really impacted me in a positive way, and I do definitely feel comfortable with using these resources. Alums from the previous cohorts connect to give advice, mentor, network with community, etc. These people can even include people with careers who graduated through the Kaplan Leadership Program. At first, it feels like a family. It feels like an incredible opportunity to click with different minds and generations. You can gain different opportunities even if you may be in a different college now. I would also like to say that they provided me with ease on my financial burdens and helped me with my mental health and wellbeing. I was able to not worry about the financial part of my life, but to focus on academics, being fully present in the moment.

**BA:** *How would you say you have stayed connected to some of your mentors?*

**AC:** Right now, I'm connecting with my advisor, who has regularly checked up on me to make sure I was all right with my Lawrence application and the whole

transition process. We went through financial aid, etc. The small stuff like that really helped me out a lot because I felt like I wasn't alone. Having this continuous support feels so welcoming. Considering I came alone from Brooklyn, New York, what I can say is that I feel like I have a friend. I feel like they always care for me... and for them to care for me means a lot. If I fall down and they believe me, I'm gonna get up and start fighting back. And that's what the Kaplan Leadership Program does for me..

They give me the motivation I need to keep on going. We keep each other up, almost impossible to be knocked down.

**BA:** *What are you working towards right now in your career?*

**AC:** Right now I'm working on my Bachelor's in Computer Science. I am trying to get into more research for children's autism, doing more and more research at Lawrence University. After finishing at Lawrence, I would like to look into employment at a firm of artificial intelligence. From there, I hope what I learned from Lawrence along with the research as well can really help be put together to really leave a true impact on society.

**BA:** *What would be some advice that you would give your younger self knowing everything you know now.*

**AC:** I would say to not give up. There were many things in my life that made me want to leave all this baggage on the floor and just give it up. I believe with how I am, and how my mom and dad told me to never give up, I never really gave up. I kept it going even if I knew that the odds were all against me. I would also wanna tell my younger self that everything will work if you do your best. I always tried doing my best, and I guess everything ended up working out in the end.



# CITY SCENES

## Slutwalk

*Photos by E. Marlay, Queens College Photography Master of Fine Arts student.*

**Caption:** On Friday, September 20th at 5 pm the Colectivo Intercultural TRANSgrediendo (CITG) held the 7th annual SlutWalk in Woodside, NY. CITG is an advocacy organization that seeks to promote and defend the human rights of TransGNB, QBIPOC and Sex Workers, including their access to a comprehensive healthcare. They work to influence public policy initiatives that support an equitable, inclusive, and non-discriminatory society. The SlutWalk is meant take back the label's "slut" and "whore" to empower trans sex workers of color, as well as demand the recognition of the rights of Trans-Latine people, Trans-Black people, and all other Transgender people of color.





# A chat with actor Michael Nichols-Pate

**Kathryn Zelkowitz**  
*Campus News*

Michael Nichols-Pate isn't a method actor. Despite countless TV and movie clichés that would make you believe it's the only way to go, Nichols-Pate believes it can often do an actor more harm than good. "[I]t can just weigh on you," he told a Writing and Reporting the News class at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts recently via a Zoom interview. "You don't want to start embodying the negative aspects of your character, which is easier to do than embody[ing] the positives."

The 31-year-old actor and Glens Falls, NY, native speaks from experience, recounting the unease that would follow him home after the final bows of Sandy Hill Arts Center's production of "Cabaret" in June of 2024. Despite his upbeat demeanor, Nichols-Pate admits the car ride home from the theater was a struggle. "I'm still feeling everything...this is a heavy thing."

He's not a rookie, either. Nichols-Pate has been acting for nearly 20 years since landing his first role in a local production at age 11. His fascination with theater started long before that first show, when 5-year-old Michael was entranced by a high school production of "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory." Minus a brief hiatus in LA where he wasn't acting, he has been in theaters ever since.

Nichols-Pate plays the dashing Robert Martin alongside "Chaperone" and Salem Theater visiting-guest-artist Rebecca Paige in Upstate New York's Fort Salem Theater's production of "The Drowsy Chaperone." Catch him onstage September 27th-October 6th and in future plays at the theater. Tickets are available for purchase at [fortsaalem.com](https://fortsaalem.com).

As an actor from New York working in theater, it would be natural to assume he aspires to Broadway and, like so many in his shoes, spends each day striving to make it to Manhattan. Natural, but incorrect.

He's much more excited about the theatri-

cal work going on that's a little less visible or mainstream. Some of the most thought-provoking productions, in his opinion, are happening on much smaller stages.

"We're seeing a lot of really interesting and creative pushes being done locally and regionally that [are] not necessarily translating to Broadway."

For one example, he points to the production of "Cabaret" he'd appeared in. The show's run was a smaller stage in both the literal and figurative sense: Sandy Hill is a regional theater, without the same reach as Broadway, but it was also a uniquely immersive venue. "Cabaret" is set in a nightclub in Berlin as the Nazi Party is rising to power.

"Utilizing this small, little hole-in-the-wall theater that wasn't even so much a theater as a banquet hall and allowing the show to be very immersive, I find that was really impactful," said Nichols-Pate. "I've actually become really interested and invested in creating immersive theatrical experiences as I feel it helps further the story along."

Building a world around audience members for them to react and interreact with is a frontier of theater that Nichols-Pate feels deeply connected to.

"You can go see Cabaret, or you can go and the minute you walk in the doors, you're in the nightclub, they're all around you, and then at the end when the characters are going through turmoil and the Nazis are stomping and marching around, you say to yourself: I could have stopped this at any point, but I, too, sat there. It creates an interesting, unique experience where each show is different."

Nichols-Pate says Broadway productions can't (or won't) take risks. With so many eyes on them, these nationally known productions push fewer boundaries, and tend to



Michael Nichols-Pate, right, with Rebecca Paige.  
*Photo by Mike Hatzel.*

stick to the brief. On the local and regional levels, however, companies can be bold. In choosing atypical castings, unique stagings, and unconventional designs, local theaters are going outside a box Broadway can't afford to, with great success.

"You're seeing that more locally because you're not getting a list of folks, and you don't have to make up \$40 million to just break even. Broadway is not willing to take risks."

It's not just the capacity for bold choices that draws him to theater at the community, local, and regional levels. It's also the accessibility. Nichols-Pate is the Executive Director of Bunbury Players: a company of volunteer theatrical artists who present easily accessible theater, free of charge. Bunbury Players was started by Garrett West, Nichols-Pate's close friend, during the COVID-19 pandemic as a "Zoom Theater," with the goal

**Please read more on next page**



# On radio: Where do my words go?

**Darren Johnson**  
*Publisher*

I think there are two types of art — that which is recorded, archived, curated and relatively permanent (of course the world will end someday, so nothing is truly permanent). And art that is consumed with no real record left behind.

Acting in a stage show, a busker dancing on the street, an open mic comedy night, a master chef's meal — all arts that disappear on consumption. Literally, in the case of the chef.

I largely haven't participated in those worlds. My main art is writing. Writing is archived and can be repurposed. Books on shelves, newspapers in library archives and online. Even some of my creations in other mediums like cartoons and podcasts can be found and consumed over and over again by future audiences.

But I've been participating in a transient

**(cont.)**

of keeping theater alive in a safe and accessible way. Since then, the company has transitioned into in-person productions, but the mission has remained the same.

"Theater has gotten so expensive. Not just

art the past couple of years. More so recently. It's radio. You broadcast and then it's done — gone forever.

(Some say the radio waves go forever into space and can be heard by aliens many centuries from now. I have little proof of that.)

There's something liberating about the lack of permanence with this art. You say something — maybe something you feel is important — and then it evaporates. It's gone. You're unburdened by the thought.

(Perhaps some harried commuter in the car spilling coffee is then burdened, who knows?)

I was hired to be the journalism instructor and manage the school paper at a local college, but the part-time radio guy quit upon my hiring — maybe in part because of my hiring (he'd wanted a full-time job there, I hear), so I was offered to add the radio post to my usual duties. I'd had an online radio station that lasted a while, so knew enough to get started.

to create it, but to see it...I get it, theater is expensive. But also, you want an audience to come, and you don't just want a certain demographic. You want it to be accessible."

It's that desire to ensure that anyone who wants to see and engage with live theater can that keeps Nichols-Pate, and the Bunbury Players, going, he said. "Sometimes, the most important show is unable to be seen

In my first year, the students in the radio club were really resistant. They were loyal to the last radio instructor, who apparently poisoned the well when leaving. I couldn't get much done. But in year two, and now in year three, we have students that started with me as freshmen, clean slate, and we all work together great. Now I do a show during my "office hours" and find this has a much different feel than recording a podcast or anything "permanent."

The ethereal nature of radio has a certain magic, and doing more than a couple of hours on the air is draining — not spiritually or emotionally, but in some other way that's hard to grasp rationally. You leave the mic beaten up and worn out.

Anyway, if you'd like to hear my show, go to [wjjwradio.com](http://wjjwradio.com) or listen to 91.1FM in the Berkshires. I have students on from noon to 12:50 then I stay on solo to about 2 p.m. This is Mondays and Wednesdays, unless it's a holiday or the school is on break.

because there's a price wall. Suddenly, there are children who might want to see 'Cinderella', and become inspired by it, who can't afford getting to see it...It blocks people off."

Bunbury Players aims to close that gap by making theater that is free to see and engage with. It's Nichols-Pate's way of giving back to the things that built him. "Community theater raised me. I stand by that."

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A <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	B <sub>3</sub>	A <sub>1</sub>	S <sub>1</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	RACK 2 = <b>59</b>
M <sub>3</sub>	U <sub>1</sub>	S <sub>1</sub>	K <sub>5</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	A <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	RACK 3 = <b>76</b>
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B <sub>3</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	D <sub>2</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	O <sub>1</sub>	L <sub>1</sub>	L <sub>1</sub>	RACK 5 = <b>60</b>
PAR SCORE 265-275							TOTAL <b>332</b>

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T	I	H	U	M	M	I	N	G	B	I	R	D
P	E	R	C	H	S	I	M	S	S	W	A	N

2	8	4	5	1	6	3	7	9
6	5	9	7	8	3	1	2	4
7	3	1	4	9	2	6	8	5
8	7	5	6	4	9	2	3	1
4	6	3	1	2	5	8	9	7
9	1	2	8	3	7	5	4	6
3	4	7	2	5	1	9	6	8
1	9	8	3	6	4	7	5	2
5	2	6	9	7	8	4	1	3

# Vote in this election and use your political power

**Na'ilah Amaru**

*Special to Campus News*

I'll never forget the first time I voted. As a college student and Democrat living in Texas in the early 2000s, I felt invisible. Then, in 2004, I cast my first ballot. While my preferred presidential candidate lost, the experience was still transformational. I realized that I wasn't just voting for a candidate, I was claiming my power and voice in the voting booth.

For college students balancing the demands of school, work, and family obligations, it can be easy to feel overextended and politically powerless. But I learned in Texas 20 years ago that when we show up to vote or make a choice, we assert our power, and that is when we start to make a difference.

With a presidential election on the horizon, this is a crucial time for college students to exercise their political power.

Here are some lessons I've learned about building political power, especially when time is short, and life seems overwhelming.

### **Recognize Your Political Power**

Political power is the ability to influence decisions, policies, and leadership. It's the ability to shape the world around you by contributing to who holds office and what policies get passed. In a democracy, this power comes from people, not just elected officials or policymakers. Democratic political power is collective; when we join forces, our voices are amplified, and our ability to create change becomes much stronger.

### **Identify Issues That Matter to You**

Before we can build political power, we need to understand what drives us. The first step is identifying the political issues

that resonate most with you. What issues affect you the most? Is it education affordability? Climate change? Racial justice?

It's also important to consider your community's needs. As students, many of us live, work, and learn within a specific community. What are the challenges that your community faces? Are there issues of underfunding, accessibility, or representation? These questions can help identify opportunities for coalition-building. By focusing on issues that impact both you and your community, you can begin to connect with others who share your concerns and are motivated to act.

When I moved to New York in 2012, I was surprised to find there was no option for early voting. Voters only had one day to cast their ballots. For students and people juggling multiple jobs, that limited window made voting nearly impossible. Concerned that my voice might not be heard, I looked for ways to get involved and found the #LetNYVote coalition, which worked to change state law and allow early voting. Through this group, I helped organize press conferences, rallies, meetings with elected officials, and draft talking points. I trained hundreds of grassroots activists to spread the word about the need for change. In January 2019, both legislative chambers voted to pass early voting. Thanks to the collective efforts of concerned New Yorkers, we pushed our representatives to make voting more accessible and inclusive.



### **Vote to Preserve Your Power and Our Democracy**

Voting is the most direct way to influence political outcomes, and it's also one of the easiest ways to make your voice heard. Make sure that you are registered to vote and have a plan for voting on or before Election Day — Nov. 5.

In addition to voting for president, you also get to vote for local and state officials who have a direct impact on community issues and the issues that likely matter most to you and your fellow constituents.

Beyond voting, college students can organize voter registration drives. This is an incredibly effective way to ensure that your peers are registered to vote and ready to participate in elections.

Turnout efforts are equally important. It's not just about getting people registered; it's about making sure they show up on Election Day. Hosting early voting events, working with existing organizations and local election boards, or even offering trans-



# HIGHER ED THOUGHT PIECES

**(cont.)**

portation to the polls can increase turnout.

## Engage With Elected Officials

Engaging with your elected officials is another way to exercise political power. This could be as simple as writing an email or calling your local representatives about issues that matter to you. Representatives at the local, state, and national levels are there to serve their constituents, and they listen when enough people raise concerns.

You can also attend community or town hall meetings. These public forums provide an opportunity to ask questions, voice concerns, and build relationships with political leaders.

## Organize Your Community

Once you've identified issues that matter to you and people you know, try community

organizing. Community organizing brings a coalition of people together around shared concerns to advocate for policy changes. It has been one of the most successful methods of influencing politics.

As students, you have a built-in community in your school, making it an ideal place to start organizing. Your coalition might include fellow students, faculty, local residents, and community organizations. Together, you can strategize on how to tackle the issue, whether that means meeting with elected officials, organizing protests, or gathering petitions.

## Now is the Time to Act

As college students, you have the power to shape the future by voting in this year's election if you're eligible and, beyond that, by using your voice to influence politics.

My own story is a testament to how advocacy can lead to meaningful change. From a college student unsure of the power of her own voice, I have since led coalitions to secure voting rights and criminal justice re-

form, to fight for policies that empower underrepresented communities. Through my work, I have seen how everyday people, by showing up and speaking out, can make a lasting impact. By voting, organizing, and standing up for the issues that matter to you, you too can be part of driving change. Your participation in our democracy is not only a right but a means to create a more just and equitable society. Your voice matters. Use it wisely.

*Na'ilah Amaru is a Political Science Ph.D. student at the CUNY Graduate Center and a political strategist and campaign adviser based in New York City.*



## Write for us!

Are you a student, faculty member or staff member with something to say to the Campus News audience? Then consider writing an article, essay or opinion piece.

Contact [editor@cccnews.info](mailto:editor@cccnews.info) to get involved, or visit us online at [cccnews.info](http://cccnews.info). Get published and reach thousands of people.

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## A podcast about newspapers

Ever wonder how this newspaper is made, and all of the journalistic decisions that come with managing a newspaper? Then listen to publisher Darren Johnson's Weekly Newspaper Podcast.

You can find it on your favorite podcast app or go to [WeeklyNewspaperPodcast.com](http://WeeklyNewspaperPodcast.com).

Johnson mixes talk about the business of small-town newspapers with national journalism trends, often using his hometown The Journal & Press as an example, as well as his independent college paper, Campus News.

Johnson is also a Visiting Professor of Multimedia Journalism at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

## Food lockers for hungry college students

State University of New York Chancellor John B. King Jr. recently announced a pilot program to expand food pantry capacity at five SUNY campuses with automated food lockers, so students can access food when campus food pantries are closed. Chancellor King made the announcement during a visit to Monroe Community College, which alongside Finger Lakes Community College, SUNY Plattsburgh, SUNY Polytechnic Institute, and SUNY Potsdam, will participate in the pilot.

Each SUNY campus has a food pantry with a refrigerator for perishable items. In 2023, Chancellor King announced \$1 million of dedicated ongoing state-supported operating funding to provide sustainable financial assistance for SUNY campus food pantries. The funding was part of New York

State's historic investment in higher education approved by Governor Kathy Hochul and state legislators in the 2023-24 Enacted State Budget.

While on campus, Chancellor King joined President DeAnna R. Burt-Nanna, Assemblywoman Sarah Clark, and the MCC community for a roundtable discussion on SUNY initiatives aimed at tackling food insecurity that college students face and for a tour of the campus food pantry.

The automated food locker pilot – an initiative from the 2024 State of the University agenda – is part of SUNY's comprehensive approach to addressing students' basic needs that also includes three important steps set out in a resolution adopted by the SUNY Board of Trustees that take effect beginning this fall to:

- Ensure students who are eligible for SNAP receive outreach and support in enrolling for SNAP benefits.
- Ensure that information about basic needs resources is provided to all students in destigmatizing ways, including during orientation for new students and on campus websites.
- Request that faculty voluntarily include information about basic needs resources in syllabus statements.

A lack of regular access to food is an issue that plagues many of today's college students, with analysis from the Government Accountability Office revealing that approximately 23% of college students (3.8 million) experienced food insecurity in 2020.

# Fall Preview Days

Throughout the day you will have the opportunity to tour campus with a current student, meet our amazing faculty and staff, and get your questions answered.

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- Admissions Information
- Faculty/Staff Presentations
- Honors College Information
- Pre-Health & Pre-Law Information
- Scholarship & Financial Aid Information
- Student-led Campus Tours

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# Counter “bad AI” with “good AI”

**Andrew Makridis**

*Special to Campus News*

Could terrorists or other bad actors use artificial intelligence to create a deadly pandemic?

Scientists at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology conducted an experiment to find out last year. Researchers asked a group of students, none of whom had specialized training in the life sciences, to use AI tools, such as OpenAI’s ChatGPT-4, to develop a plan for how to start a pandemic. In just an hour, participants learned how to procure and synthesize deadly pathogens like smallpox in ways that evade existing biosecurity systems.

AI cannot yet manufacture a national security crisis. But as biotechnology becomes more advanced, policymakers are understandably worried that it’ll be increasingly easy to create a bioweapon. So they’re starting to take action to regulate the emerging AI industry.

Their efforts are well-intentioned. But it’s critical that policymakers avoid focusing too narrowly on catastrophic risk and inadvertently hamstringing the creation of positive AI

tools that we need to tackle future crises. We should aim to strike a balance.

AI tools have enormous positive potential. For instance, AI technologies like AlphaFold and RFDiffusion have already made large strides in designing novel proteins that could be used for medical purposes.

The same sort of technologies can also be used for evil, of course.

Once a potential bioweapon is identified -- maybe with the help of AI -- a malicious actor could order a custom strand of DNA from a commercial provider, who would manufacture synthetic DNA in a lab and return it via mail. As experts at the Center for Security and Emerging Technology at Georgetown University has posited, perhaps that strand of genetic material “codes for a toxin or a gene that makes a pathogen more dangerous.”

Scientists frequently order synthesized DNA for projects like cancer and infectious disease research. But not all synthetic DNA providers screen orders or verify their customers.

Closing such loopholes will help, but we can’t regulate away all of the risk. It’d be

wiser to beef up our defenses by investing in AI-enabled early-detection systems.

Today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Traveler-based Genomic Surveillance program partners with airports nationwide to gather and analyze wastewater and nasal swab samples to catch pathogens as they enter our borders. Other systems are in place for tracking particular pathogens within cities and communities. But existing detection systems are likely not equipped for novel agents designed with AI’s help.

The U.S. intelligence community is already investing in AI-powered capabilities to defend against next-generation threats. IARPA’s FELIX program, in partnership with private biotech firms, yielded first-in-class AI that can distinguish genetically engineered threats from naturally-occurring ones, and identify what has been changed and how.

We have barely begun to tap the potential of AI to detect and protect against biological threats. In the case of a novel infectious disease, these systems have the power to determine how and when a pathogen has mutated. That can enable the speedy development of vaccines and treatments specifically tailored to new variants. AI can also help predict how a pathogen is likely to spread.

For these technologies to play their vital role, leaders in Washington and around the world must take steps to build up our AI defenses. The best way to counter “bad AI” isn’t “no AI” -- it’s “good AI.”

*Andrew Makridis is the former Chief Operating Officer of the CIA, the number-three position at the agency. Prior to his retirement from the CIA in 2022, he spent nearly four decades working in national security.*



## Skidmore concert

The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College announces the twenty-third season of its popular summer concert series, Upbeat on the Roof, which will run each Thursday from July 11 through August 15. Also returning this season are art-making activity kits for kids, called Crafts on the Grass. The July 11 show is “Future of Broadway — Contemporary showtunes from works-in-progress, presented in conjunction with The Orchard Project.”

The musical acts this season include

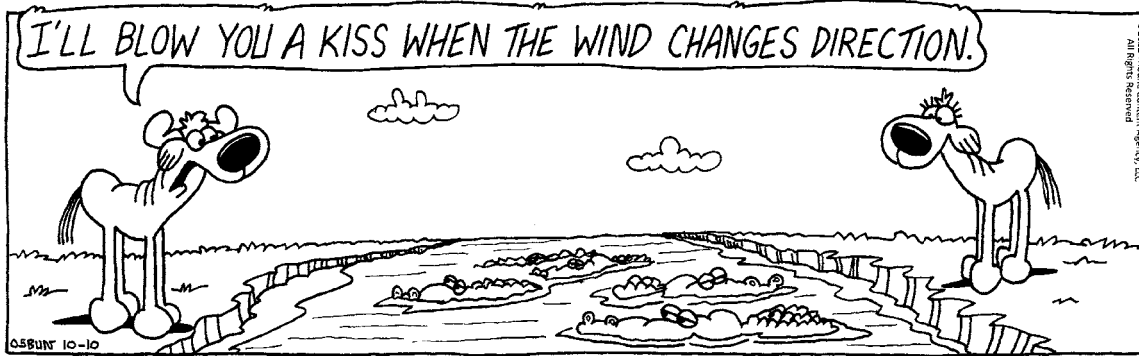
returning favorites, rising stars, and award-winners of the vibrant Capital Region music scene, as well as a new collaboration with Visitors are invited to bring blankets, camping chairs, food, and drink to picnic on the lawn. Craft kits will be available at 5:30 pm; concerts begin at 6 pm.

### The Lineup

July 11: Future of Broadway — Contemporary showtunes from works-in-

# FUN & GAMES

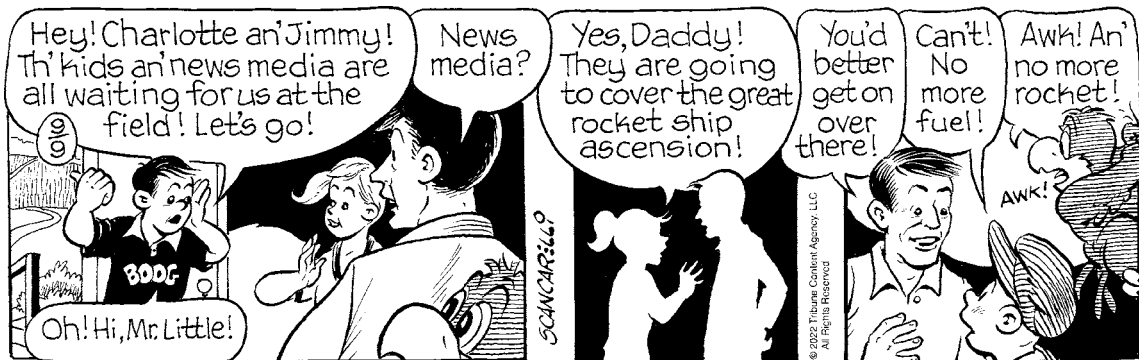
## Animal Crackers by Fred Wagner



## Broom Hilda by Russell Myers



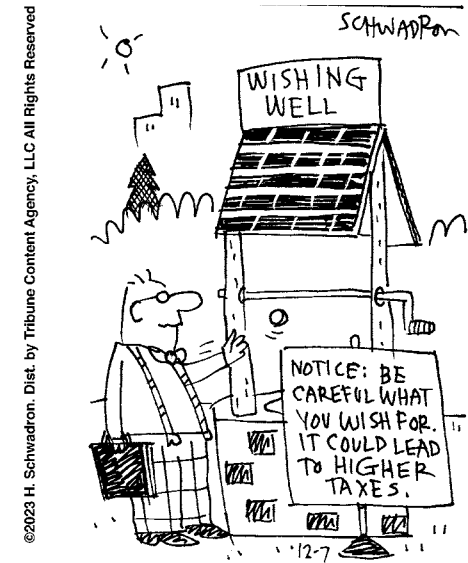
## Gasoline Alley by Jim Scancarelli



## The Middletons by Dana Summers



## 9 to 5 by Harley Schwadron



## Word Play Answers Page 21

### JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

CEIRI

RMAAO

THNISC

CUDITN

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### THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

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## Boggle BrainBusters!

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek



INSTRUCTIONS: Find as many words as you can by linking letters up, down, side-to-side and diagonally, writing words on a blank sheet of paper. You may only use each letter once within a single word. Play with a friend and compare word finds, crossing out common words.

BOGGLE POINT SCALE

3 letters = 1 point	YOUR BOGGLE RATING
4 letters = 2 points	151+ = Champ
5 letters = 3 points	101-150 = Expert
6 letters = 4 points	61-100 = Pro
7 letters = 5 points	31-60 = Garner
8 letters = 10 points	21-30 = Rookie
	11-20 = Amateur
	0-10 = Try again

Boggle BrainBusters Bonus

We put special brain-busting words into the puzzle grid. Can you find them?

Find AT LEAST SEVEN BIRDS STARTING WITH A VOWEL in the grid of letters.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Answers to Last Sunday's Boggle BrainBusters:  
HILL MESA, GLEN DALE, RIDGE KNOLL, GORGE CLIFF, CANYON



# FUN & GAMES

## More Word Play Answers Page 30

**SCRABBLE** G<sub>2</sub> R<sub>1</sub> A<sub>1</sub> M<sub>3</sub> S<sub>1</sub>

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A<sub>1</sub> O<sub>1</sub> Y<sub>4</sub> R<sub>1</sub> F<sub>4</sub> T<sub>1</sub> C<sub>3</sub>

RAK 1

A<sub>1</sub> A<sub>1</sub> E<sub>1</sub> I<sub>1</sub> R<sub>1</sub> B<sub>3</sub> S<sub>1</sub>

RAK 2

A<sub>1</sub> U<sub>1</sub> K<sub>5</sub> S<sub>1</sub> T<sub>1</sub> R<sub>1</sub> M<sub>3</sub>

Double Word Score

RAK 3

A<sub>1</sub> E<sub>1</sub> U<sub>1</sub> Z<sub>10</sub> D<sub>2</sub> N<sub>1</sub> F<sub>4</sub>

2nd Letter Triple

RAK 4

E<sub>1</sub> O<sub>1</sub> L<sub>1</sub> D<sub>2</sub> R<sub>1</sub> B<sub>3</sub> L<sub>1</sub>

RAK 5

PAR SCORE 265-275  
BEST SCORE 332

FIVE RACK TOTAL  
TIME LIMIT: 25 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. Finally, 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All the words are in the Official SCRABBLE® Players Dictionary, 5th Edition. SOLUTION TOMORROW

## Word Find By Frank J. D'Agostino

Find these words associated with birds (and find Frank's word find books on Amazon):

Crow	Heron	Prey
Cuckoo	Humming-bird	Raven
Dove	bird	Robin
Duck	Lark	Snipe
Eggs	Loon	Stork
Emus	Nest	Swan
Falcon	Oriole	Toucan
Finch	Ornithology	Wings
Goose	Owls	Worms
Hawk	Perch	Wren

D C O N D O R F A L C O N  
C U C K O O Z S N I P E F  
R Q C A N A R Y H K R M S  
P O V K E D S X E M E U F  
G F B L S F D T R V Y S I  
O R N I T H O L O G Y H N  
O X I N N W R N R Y A C  
S O O E A O L A I D K W H  
E O R C R W S V P O Z K K  
L W U C Z O I E E V L A Z  
Z O Z L A R K N G E E E  
T I H U M M I N G B I R D  
P E R C H S I M S S W A N

## Filbert by LA Bonté



## Political Cartoon of the Month by Joel Pett



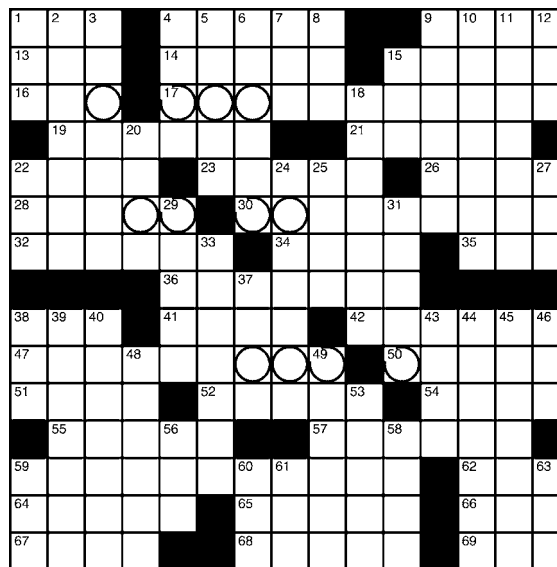
## Sudoku

Each column/row must contain the numbers from 1 to 9, without repetitions. The digits can only occur once per block. The sum of every single row, column and block must equal 45.

			1		7	9		
	9				1		4	
	3			2		8		
		5	4		2		1	
	6						9	
9		2		3		5		
	4		2				6	
1		8				7		
5	2			7				

## Cambridge Crossword

Across  
1 Remind repeatedly  
4 Girl \_\_\_ Cookies  
9 Journalist Swisher  
13 "My man!"  
14 Alpha \_\_\_ Alpha sorority  
15 Lubricated  
16 Half-\_\_\_: rhyming coffee order  
17 Closing line after presenting an argument  
19 Elsie the Cow's dairy brand  
21 "Questions welcome"  
22 Ireland, to the Irish  
23 "The Dancing Class" painter Edgar  
26 Cedar Rapids state  
28 Nebula Award genre  
30 One way to get caught  
32 Silky fabrics  
34 Island home of the Hana Highway  
35 Magazine VIPs  
36 Pinches pennies  
38 "Now I get it!"  
41 Holier- -thou  
42 Scheduled  
47 North American evergreen  
50 Say "I do" without the ado



51 Quaint "once"  
52 Lets up  
54 \_\_\_ and proper  
55 Fatherly nickname  
57 Hide-and-seek hideout  
59 Fourth of July noisemaker ... and the function of the black squares in lines 3, 6, and 10  
62 "That hurt!"

7 Emotional highs  
8 Body ink, for short  
9 Begin to take effect, as medicine  
10 Dessert menu phrase  
11 Mended for a second time  
12 Citrus drink suffix  
15 Yiddish laments

64 Future DAs' exams  
65 Member-owned grocery stores  
66 Actress Thurman  
67 Eclectic online digest  
68 Arizona's National Forest  
69 \_\_\_-Mex cuisine  
7 Emotions  
8 Losing candidate  
9 European peaks  
10 Left in a big hurry  
11 Pursue your dream!  
12 Tampa Bay city, familiarly  
13 Actor Vigoda  
14 Plucky member of an orchestra?  
15 Perfect example  
16 Rep.'s opponent  
17 Slide on an icy road  
18 Was concerned  
19 First game of the season  
18 Songs made by mixing two songs  
20 Mortgage adjustment, for short  
21 Twisty letter  
22 Some spring babies  
23 Driver at the Oscars  
24 Commercials  
25 Lead-in to "gram" in social media  
26 Ideological gap in Congress  
27 Bagel spread  
28 Nadal of tennis, familiarly  
29 Actor Vigoda  
30 Plucky member of an orchestra?  
31 Losing candidate  
32 European peaks  
33 Left in a big hurry  
34 Pursue your dream!  
35 Tampa Bay city, familiarly  
36 Was concerned  
37 First game of the season  
38 "In that neighborhood" phrase  
39 Wintertime bug  
40 Do something  
41 Dove sound  
42 Number on older business cards

# Do I have enough pillows to fall asleep?

**Greg Schwem**

*Tribune Content Agency  
Special to Campus News*

I am struggling to keep my eyes open as I write this column, having just completed an overnight stay in North Carolina, which included a night of restful sleep.

That's correct; I slept great. The exhaustion occurred the following morning as I was preparing to leave the spare bedroom in my relatives' home. Always striving to be the perfect houseguest, I made every attempt to leave the bed in its former condition. I pulled up the sheets, tucked the blanket's corners under the mattress and made sure the spread was free of wrinkles.

Then came the pillows. All 10 of them. The one I slept on and nine more.

It was a queen-sized bed, so it made sense that two rested at the mattress's head. Covered in gray pillowcases that matched the sheets, they awaited one, or two occupants to close their eyes and comfortably drift off to dreamland.

Two more identical pillows were stacked on top of these, in case a higher sleeping position was preferred. Personally, I've always been a one pillow type of guy. Unless that pillow was manufactured by Mike Lindell. Then I'd rather rest my head on bare concrete.

The others, a mix of square, oval and skinny rectangular shapes, were covered in mismatched fabrics. An interior decorator would likely describe them as "throw pillows" and suggest they be "thrown" on top of the spread, accentuating its appearance.

I believe they should all be "thrown" away.

Seriously, how many pillows, of any variety, does one need on a bed? Beds are for sleeping, nothing more. I don't care if the mattress is filled with foam, feathers or water; I should be able to collapse onto it without first eliminating everything on top of it.

I feel the same way about those bowlfuls of colorful bathroom soaps, which may as well contain a "Do Not Touch" label. Even if my hands were covered in tar, I would wipe them on white pants before touching these babies. No need to incur my host's wrath.

In Charlotte, when I retired for the evening, I took each decorative pillow and haphazardly threw it on the floor. That was easy. The next morning, as I reassembled the bed, I had to stoop down and pick up each one individually. Not an easy task for a guy with an aching back.

Furthermore, I had to return each one to its rightful position. Which was... where, exactly?

Did the beige oval pillow go on top of the striped rectangular ones? Or beneath? Or between? I didn't return home the night before until nearly 1 a.m., so I wasn't exactly paying attention to the layout. Maybe I should have snapped a picture of



the configuration the moment I entered the room. My back would still ache, but I'd leave knowing that, as a model tenant, my bed would be available for return trips. My relatives aren't that anal, but I've stayed with some hosts who would probably need therapy sessions if their throw pillows were misplaced. Haven't we all?

For the record, the number of pillows on a bed should be two. The number of soaps in a bathroom? One. Mismatched coffee mugs in your pantry? Four. Candles in a living room? Three. Are you purposely trying to burn down your house?


I am now back home, in my bedroom, completing this column. I need to go to sleep — on my one pillow — because I'm hosting a football watch party tomorrow.

Which one of my 47 Chicago Bears shirts should I wear?

*Greg Schwem is a corporate stand-up comedian and author of "The Road To Success Goes Through the Salad Bar: A Pile of BS From a Corporate Comedian," available on Amazon. Visit Greg on at [www.gregschwem.com](http://www.gregschwem.com).*



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**NONFICTION** *for the* **CURIOUS**

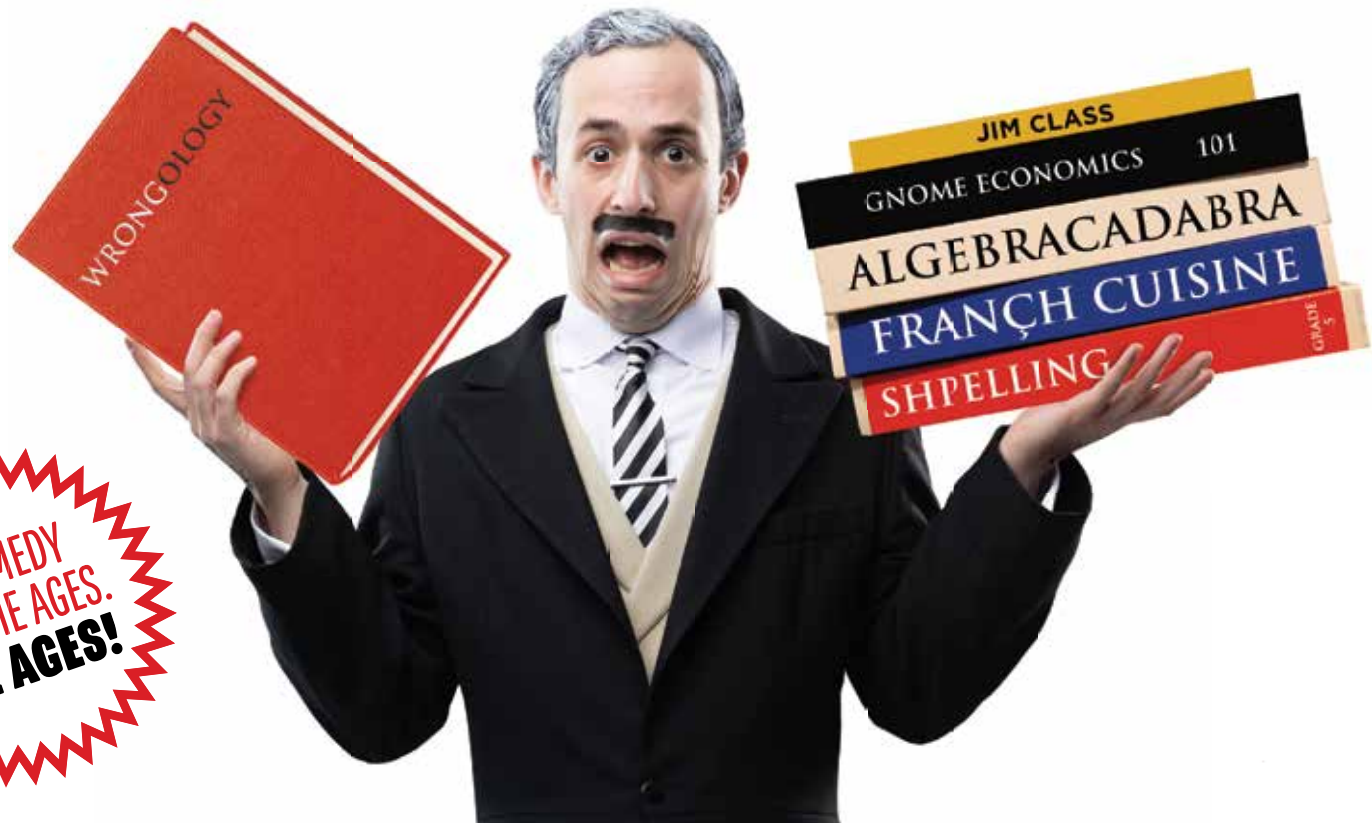
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# On the frontlines of history

**Dave Paone**  
*Campus News*

Helena Cheng sat as a reporter for Fox News four rows behind Donald Trump at his first trial in New York City.

She sat as a reporter in the courtroom next to a young mother whose one-year-old died of a fentanyl overdose while the judge sentenced those responsible to prison.

She was there when Congress sent a team of inspectors to the Roosevelt Hotel in Manhattan during New York City's migrant crisis.

Helena did all this while still a student majoring in journalism at New York University.

Here's how it worked: in her first semester as a grad student, Helena landed a paid internship at CNBC, specifically at "The News with Shepard Smith."

She edited individual, 90 to 120-second video packages for the nightly, live broadcast.

Helena took part in the daily, editorial meetings each morning where Smith and his team worked out the game plan for the day.

"During my internship with him, the show got canceled," Helena said with a laugh.

In her second year as a grad student, Helena took part in an "associate program" with the Fox News Channel. It was a paid position designed for recent grads.

On her first day covering President Trump in court for Fox, she woke up at 4:00 AM to get a spot in line at the courthouse at five.

In the courtroom, she noticed Trump give "a look" to Attorney General Letitia James (the person prosecuting him) and made a note of it to relay to the Fox team outside the courthouse.

Upon graduation earlier this year, she was accepted to a "rotational program" at ABC News, which helps recent grads explore various career paths in broadcast news.

It was there she worked Joe Biden's State of the Union Address from the control room at "ABC News Live."



Her job was to listen to the president's speech and make note of any key issues the network might want to report on in more detail or people they might want to interview immediately following the address.

She was confident POTUS would speak of *Roe v. Wade*, so Helena searched archival footage for the most recent protests to be used during the broadcast (called B-roll – also the name of her cat), which it was.

At ABC she works on both "ABC News Live Prime with Linsey Davis" and the "Good Morning America" digital team.

Helena's story began 24 years ago when she was born in Guangzhou, a city near Hong Kong, in China.

As early as kindergarten she knew she wanted to be a newscaster.

However, if she wanted to be one in the

**'This is the kind of moment you realize how important a multi-cultural reporter is.'**

United States, she needed to learn English. Fortunately for her, English language classes start in elementary school in China.

For many Chinese children, reading and writing English comes more easily than speaking it. Helena's solution to that problem was to repeat everything Rachel on "Friends" said. (It's a good thing she didn't pick Pheobe.)

Both her parents have college degrees and her mother is a high school philosophy teacher.

"You know how Asian parents are," she said. "They stress a lot on education. Education is the number-one, most important thing," she said but credits her parents with letting her choose her own profession which led her to the US.

The first stop in America was a summer program at Harvard University, while she

**Please read more on the next page**



# (cont.)

was still in high school.

Helena recalled her first day in New York City as a college student: “I opened the door and was like, ‘Good morning, New York!’ and I bumped into a homeless guy on the street.” She describes the encounter as “very New York, very authentic.”

While at NYU (where she was also an undergraduate student), Helena was an on-air anchor and reporter, writer, and producer for “NYU Now,” which is a weekly, online newscast produced by students.

In 2020, NYU financed a “class trip” for the dozen students in her program (as well as their instructor) to cover the midterm elections as “boots-on-the-ground” reporters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Another assignment she had at Fox News was to cover disgraced Congressman George Santos’ arraignment. When he spoke at a press conference outside the courthouse, Helena shouted a question to him and he answered it.

This might not sound like a big deal but for a “cub reporter” (which is what a newbie in journalism is called) it is.

At the Roosevelt Hotel, while covering the exterior press conference (known in the industry as a “presser”) a protest broke out. The crew she was with had two cameras and one had to stay framed up on the podium, where Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-

Cortez was speaking.

Helena described the scene as “very chaotic” and she couldn’t hear the congresswoman over the shouts of the protesters.

“I dropped my computer,” Helena said, “and I pulled out my phone.” She shot the only video of the protest the crew had and it was aired that night.

A cub reporter having footage she shot aired on national television is another big deal.

## ‘During my internship, the show got canceled.’

News people are supposed to be “hard-boiled” and not get emotional over the stories on which they report.

But the one on the dead one-year-old kicked her right between the eyes.

The backstory is the people convicted had used a daycare center in the Bronx as a cover for a fentanyl mill. While children were playing on the first floor, there was a drug manufacturing operation in the basement.

At the press conference following the sentencing, “Everyone was in tears,” said Hel-



ena. “Especially reporters who have kids.”

“I had to type down information even though I could not see anything with my eyes because I was crying so hard,” she said.

In addition to tugging on her heartstrings, the assignment was the key factor in the direction of her career.

When the judge read the sentence, he said it in Spanish. Helena had to turn to another reporter to translate for her.

It was at this instant Helena knew what path she would take.

“This is the kind of moment you realize how important a multi-cultural reporter is,” she said.

And that’s what she’s going to be.

## ABOUT CAMPUS NEWS

### CAMPUS NEWS

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