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Connecticut College

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# THE COLLEGE VOICE

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER, SINCE 1977

## A Cappella Persists Despite COVID

JOSHUA MOYLAN  
CONTRIBUTOR

We saw a big step towards normalcy this past Tuesday. "Our original plan (for auditions) is back on," wrote Associated Director at the Office of Student Engagement Jeanette Williams in an email to members of A Capella leadership. This news comes after a long decision making process in which the Office of Student Engagement met with representatives from Hartford Healthcare and from the Connecticut College Music department multiple times.

Initially against in person auditions, Professor Rachel Feldman, visiting director of choral ensembles at Connecticut College and visiting director of choral studies at Mount Holyoke College, cited the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University's guidelines for in-person choral instruction and stated that "the logistics to safely do in-person auditions (is probably) outweighed by the ease and the convenience of doing auditions over Zoom, and that if auditions were to be happening in person, there would have to be enough time in between each audition for there to be the appropriate amount of air exchange, in order to make the space safe." The guidelines recommend social distancing of 12 feet, limiting vocal activity to 30 minutes, and a 30 room vacancy between sessions to provide for adequate time for the air exchange.

The choral ensembles here at Connecticut College are going to be conducted largely in person, but Feldman expressed trepidation at the prospect of in-person A Capella rehearsals saying that "in order for me to support the idea of A Cappella groups rehearsing in-person, there would need to be some member of the faculty or staff present, in order to maintain all of the protocols going on." She would later state that she would be fine with a student taking on that responsibility.

Midge Thomas, the Sylvia Marx Professor of Music and chair of the Connecticut College Music department, instead offered her sympathies and support, saying that "We all know how frustrating last semester was, whether it was in the music department or in the student clubs...the whole world is frustrated, everyone's frustrated... and so I think Student Engagement is really committed to helping students find a safe way to make music."

However, when faced with the fact that the Student Engagement

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Article continued on page 5.

## What Has Improv Been up To?

ELIZABETH BERRY  
ARTS EDITOR

Packed among the audience like a can of sardines, my friend and I were grateful to have found seats for our first-ever comedy show in Olin's basement. Students overflowed onto the steps, already laughing before the show had begun. Casually late, members of Scuds ran out onto the stage and up to the podium, asking the crowd for a word more creative than pineapple. This routine became my ideal Friday night, a way to laugh and release tension with my friends whether we were brave enough to shout out a word or sit back in ready enthusiasm.

So, it goes without saying that attending shows put on by Scuds and N2O, the two student improv groups on campus, is one of the Conn-specific "going out" events I miss most. The pandemic has cer-



N2O

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## Letter From the Editor

JOZETTE MOSES  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

TikTok has become my new form of self-care—yea, I said it. In brief moments of leisure, between work and school, I'd rather watch obnoxious thirst traps from high school seniors, than complete a five minute meditation focused on centering my chakras. The Renegade dance has replaced meditations for positivity energy, confessional faux TedTalks have taken the place of morning stretches, and “Tell me you're a [blank] without telling me you're a [blank]” overshadow an emotional check-in with a friend. But, honestly, it's not only TikTok that seems to fulfill potential moments of social self-care. It's any form of social media from YouTube to Instagram to a daily podcast. Watching others do mediocre dances or rate their latest Pretty Little Things haul, seems to form connections that have been amiss within the pandemic.

In the issue, Caoimhe Lyons Markey questions whether we've become more addicted to the internet through the pandemic. While my frequency on TikTok concerns me enough to dedicate a letter to it, I'm unsure if I've become addicted. Though I am convinced that I've become incredibly more comfortable. The nervousness which used to arise at the thought of FaceTiming a friend or peer no longer occurs. I can do it with such ease and prevalence that I fear it almost borders on evasive. Sohan Mewada's article on mediation and mindfulness might recommend mindfulness training in order to strengthen my connection with myself, before relying on external interaction. But, just when I feel embarrassed for my undiagnosed internet addiction, Catja Christensen presents an informed overview of the artistic innovation that has emerged through TikTok within the past months. Why would I deprive myself of the “innovative music [of] the pandemic epoch”?

As we enter another semester restricted by COVID-19, many of us are attempting to form connections with one another, that seemed effortless pre-COVID. On our campus, groups which prided themselves on in person interaction and collaboration are tasked with finding new ways to duplicate those experiences. In Joshua Moylan's article, he explores the struggle for A Cappella groups to have in person auditions, and Elizabeth Berry spoke with the improvisational groups, who have found innovative ways of carrying on their famed Olin basement shows. We're all seeking to maintain connections, whether that be virtual or socially distanced and in person.

Here at *The Voice*, we miss interacting with our students, faculty, and staff, and we'd like to find better ways to include our readers and community in answering questions and joining discussions that we have daily. In hopes of fostering that connection, we will be releasing *The Voice* podcast within the next month. Our readers will be able to be a part of our investigative process and hear from our staff and sources. Although it's not *The College Voice* TikTok account (which was proposed), we hope we can continue creating connections and comfort amidst a period that may at times feel isolating.

## THE COLLEGE

The views and opinions expressed in *The College Voice* are strictly those of student authors, and not of Connecticut College. All content and editorial decisions remain in the hands of the students; neither the College's administration nor its faculty exercise control over the content.

JOZETTE MOSES '21  
*Editor-in-Chief*

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## New Semester, New Sustainability Efforts

**KERIN KRASNOFF**  
STAFF WRITER

With the spring semester, dining halls are set to reduce plastic waste with new sustainable carry-out containers. In the fall, changes were made across all aspects of campus life in order to accommodate the students living on campus while keeping everyone safe in accordance with state guidelines for reopening schools. When students arrived on campus in the fall, the dining halls provided plastic takeout containers and pre-wrapped sides and snacks in order to minimize the possible spread of disease. For students, it was difficult to limit the amount of daily waste while also keeping everyone safe. Now, at the beginning of the new semester, things are looking up, sustainability-wise, in the dining halls.

The SGA Chair of Sustainability, Milo Becker '22, has been working behind the scenes with Dining Services Director Ingrid Bushwack and purchasing manager Kristen Serwinski since last semester. His long term goal is to find alternatives to make the dining halls less wasteful, while keeping in mind the economic and social conditions in a time of the pandemic. This posed a challenge for Becker due to the safety measures from the state guidelines that enforced schools to use disposable ware in order to minimize spread in the dining halls. Nevertheless, the planning done during the fall semester was just a springboard for what was to come. After a full semester of learning to live with COVID-19 on campus, Becker wrote via email that dining services are definitely more equipped for challenges and receptive to feedback. At the moment, all three dining halls have been slowly introducing new recycled containers made from the byproducts of crop harvests. From a memo, provided by Becker via Serwinski, the containers are made from an ecologically-friendly "chemical-free pulping process [that] saves energy and water." Also, dining halls are now giving students the option to request different size containers if they want smaller or larger portions, an improvement in addressing food waste compared to last semester. All students need to do is to simply ask the servers for their preferred size since the option is not given by default.

Although this is a step in the right direction, there is still work that needs to be done. Particularly, Becker writes about the necessity "to continue searching for inefficiencies and wasteful practices and products in our dining techniques, in order to make our [Connecticut College] food systems more sustainable." Ideally, Becker hopes that in the long run dining halls "will shift to solely paper and recycled materials," however disposable utensils will be difficult to phase out due to the lack of alternatives for making the dispensing system safe. Fortunately, students can address the problem on their end- Becker encourages students to bring their own cutlery in order to reduce waste. On another note, it is also important to "properly rinse [plastic containers] before recycling to avoid contamination." The same piece of advice goes for pizza boxes; the box must be rinsed well to avoid contamination in the recycling bins.

Overall, when asked if there is anything else he would like to add, Becker mentions the help that he has gotten from the Senior

Fellows from the Office of Sustainability: Grace Neale '21 and Hans Horst-Martiz '21. Becker especially remarks on Horst-Martiz's "incredible work," whose compassion showed how much he valued sustainability. For other students who are passionate about the environment, there is still work that needs to be done. If you are interested in making the dining experience more sustainable, or if you have any ideas on waste-free alternatives for the dining halls, contact Milo Becker at [mbecker2@conncoll.edu](mailto:mbecker2@conncoll.edu).



*Morgan Maccione*

## For the Middle East, the U.S.A.'s New Boss is the Same as its Old Boss

LUCAS SIEGEL  
STAFF WRITER

On the campaign trail, newly-inaugurated President Joe Biden's main pitch was that his presidency would mark a sharp break from that of his predecessor, Donald Trump. Biden promised a return to decency and normalcy, a restoration of the nation's soul. On the crucial topic of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, however, the new boss doesn't seem very different from the old boss.

Given the prevailing sense of anxiety over the Trump administration, it was only natural that voters would look to Trump's opponent as a more sensible, kinder foil to the former real-estate mogul. But a glance over Biden's history in U.S. politics shows this hope to be little more than wishful thinking. Biden has always been a hawk in his attitude toward the world outside the U.S.A.'s borders. A quick glance over Biden's record in the Middle East illuminates this fact.

In June 1986, less than four years since the end of Israel's war of aggression (legally defined at the Nuremberg trials as "the supreme international crime") against Lebanon, in which over 20,000 civilians were killed, then-Senator Joe Biden proclaimed that "it is about time we stop... apologizing for our support for Israel... It is the best \$3 billion investment we make. Were there not an Israel the United States of America would have to invent an Israel..."

Two decades later, when the George W. Bush administration was gearing up for another war of aggression in the Middle East, this time against Iraq, Joe Biden was in a position to potentially inhibit it. He chose instead to enable it. As chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he supported Bush's illegal war at every step.

In July 2002, Biden organized a series of hearings in the Senate to discuss Iraq. None of the witnesses called to testify objected to the lies that Iraq was harboring weapons of mass destruction and that al-Qaeda received direct support from the Iraqi government. On Oct. 11 of that year, he voted to authorize war against Iraq, which went on to kill a million Iraqis and destabilize the region for decades. It is thus perhaps not surprising that twenty years later, Biden is turning down another opportunity for peace, this time with Iran.

One of Biden's major promises on the campaign trail was to re-enter the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal (officially the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA). The deal, which Trump unceremoniously tore up in 2018, obligated the Islamic Republic of Iran to halt its nuclear program and submit to inspections in exchange for an end to crippling sanctions imposed by the US.

Iran has maintained its willingness to re-enter the JCPOA on the ground that the United States, as the party to initially break compliance, first return to its obligations under the deal. However, on 1 Feb., 2021, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif demonstrated a willingness to adopt a more flexible approach, proposing that both countries synchronize their resumption of JCPOA obligations under European Union supervision. The Biden administration, however, dodged this offer, insisting that Iran must halt its nuclear program before the US would reciprocate.

Iran has repeatedly asserted that it will not wait forever for the United States to soften its stance. In Dec., 2020, Iran's parliament passed legislation which set a two month deadline for the United States to lift sanctions on Iran, after which its negotiating stance would harden. The Iranian presidential elections, set to occur June 2021, impose another potential time limit on the U.S. Given Iran's current political climate, Iran's current moderate President Hassan Rouhani will likely be replaced by a conservative, who may refuse to re-enter the deal at all.

While Biden's approach to Iran thus far differs from Trump's stylis-

tical, it amounts to the same end: the intensification of hostilities between the two nations. Iran has every reason to resent Washington's sanctions regime: the sanctions restrict Iran's supply of crucial medicines and other essential goods, a death sentence for many Iranians even before the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected Iran worse than any other Middle Eastern country.

Biden's policy towards Israel presents another point of comparison. While Biden is unlikely to be as openly supportive of Israel's illegal policies towards the Occupied Territories as Trump, he is just as unlikely to substantially challenge Israel on those policies.

Biden has so far refused to revise any of Trump's policies towards the Israeli occupations of Palestinian and Syrian land. The Biden administration has confirmed that the US Embassy in Israel will remain in Jerusalem, effectively legitimizing Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem shortly after its occupation in June 1967. The Biden administration's policy towards the Syrian Golan Heights, occupied by Israel in 1967 and illegally annexed in 1981, appears to be more of the same.

Questioned on the occupied Golan Heights, Secretary of State Tony Blinken stated that "leaving aside the legalities of that question... the Golan is very important to Israel's security as long as Assad is in power in Syria..." Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights is illegal under international law, violating UN Resolution 242, which mandates the "[w]ithdrawal of Israel[i] armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict [the 1967 Six-Day War]." Far from Syrian possession of the Golan Heights being a danger to Israel, Israeli possession of the territory is a severe danger to Syria, given that Israel has launched hundreds of attacks on Syria since 2011, many of them from the Golan Heights. In effect, Blinken is stating that inducing Israel to follow international law is of secondary importance to allowing Israel to use the Golan to further violate international law.

The only area of Biden's Middle East policy which breaks from the previous administration's is the 4 Feb. announcement that Biden would cut off military aid to Saudi Arabia in its war against Yemen. The war in Yemen has been raging since the Ansar-Allah movement (colloquially called the Houthis) ousted the unelected government of Abdrabbah Mansour Hadi in late 2014. In 2015, Saudi Arabia, backed by the Obama-Biden administration, attacked Yemen to reinstate Hadi, causing 130,000 deaths and the imposition of famine conditions over much of Yemen.

Though likely a positive development overall, Biden's promise includes several caveats. First, Biden has only ended support for 'offensive' Saudi operations in Yemen. Given the ambiguity of the distinction between 'offensive' and 'defensive' military operations, especially given that Saudi Arabia has frequently framed its war on Yemen as 'defensive,' this could easily be used to justify further US support. Secondly, Biden administration officials have clarified that the decision does not affect US operations against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Given the constantly-shifting and ambiguous pattern of regional alliances on the ground in Yemen, this could also be used as a blanket justification to conduct strikes in the country.

Biden's policy towards the Middle East so far should serve as a sobering reminder. Just as Biden broadly follows Trump's lead in the region, so too did Trump broadly follow Obama, Obama Bush, and so on. US actions in the Middle East are guided by imperial interests, not the individual personalities of individual presidents. For Iranians denied essential medicine under a harsh sanctions regime, Palestinians displaced by Israeli settlements, and Yemenis surviving under Saudi bombardment, it really doesn't matter who sits in the Oval Office. •

## Meditation and Mindfulness

SOHAN MEWADA  
BUSINESS MANAGER

I thought about writing a piece on the current nature of political discourse and my opinions on what may remedy the issues that seem to be eating away at our ability to have important conversations. But it seems to me that there are enough opinions out there to disorient our minds and drive ourselves insane —truly insane. Instead, I want to write about something that offers a method to counter the overwhelming feelings and emotions one may feel throughout their daily lives. I am talking about mindfulness. This seems relevant now more than ever. We are college students navigating situations that place immense amounts of stress on our mental and physical well-being. This stress takes a toll on us, and we each pay the price. Some deal with anxiety, crippling depression, feelings of isolation and loneliness, or denial about the current situation. Put simply, all of us are lost in thought one way or another at some point in our lives, and we all suffer from being trapped in the prisons that are often created by our own minds. Mindfulness and meditation are methods of training your mind to experience the thoughts that appear in front of you without judgement, and to notice that you have the ability to choose how these thoughts influence your emotions and subsequent actions. The more you practice mindfulness, the more you begin to recognize that feelings of being trapped, being helplessly lost in thought, can be an illusion.

Most of our lives are spent lost in thought: thoughts about the future (things we want to do) and thoughts about the past (things we really wish we hadn't done). Most of us spend our lives searching for true happiness by trying to navigate this minefield of desire and regret, and we often fail to realize that we can only really be happy in the present moment. Now, I'm not saying that you should stem your desires to go out into the world and do meaningful things with your life and relegate your existence to sitting in silence. It's important to educate yourself, connect with other people, and form meaningful relationships. But there is a difference between living a life full of love and opportunity and a life that feels like you're constant-

ly putting out fires just to get through on your way to put out the next one. Meditation is the most direct way of correcting for these issues. The simple act of paying attention to the nature and contents of your mind can result in profound realizations about the availability of human well-being in each moment, and this at its core is what it means to live an examined life.

Now, how does one begin this practice? What needs to be understood first is that at its simplest form, mindfulness is a practice. This isn't something that you will acquire by performing activities that seemingly calm your mind such as folding laundry, listening to music, doing yoga, etc. It is in fact a skill that one can attain, and once you get it, you can never really lose it. You merely adjust and tune it as you continue. Mindfulness is the practice of training your mind to notice each moment as it arises as experiences in consciousness. There are similar methods used in many Eastern traditions. The concept of meditation in these traditions is often entangled with religious dogma, but you need not practice something on the claims of faith alone. Although what I have said thus far seems rather simple, I can assure you that it is not. I like to use an analogy that was given to me many years ago. Meditation is akin to training your body. One can be in an objectively horrible state of physical health and train to attain better physical well-being. These transformations may seem impossible from certain points of view, but they are actually possible. Who says the same can't be said about your mind?

Meditation is a process with a lot more substance to it and this piece of writing simply does not have the space to cover it. Instead, I wrote this to introduce the subject to those who are unfamiliar with it or to help those who have a loose understanding of what it is to meditate to expand on their endeavors. Thank you for taking the time to read this. If you think you are in a position to benefit from this or simply wish to learn more about the practice of mindfulness and meditation and the logic behind it, please feel free to reach out at smewada@conncoll.edu, and we can start a conversation.

Wishing health and happiness to whoever is reading. •

## A Cappella Persists Despite Covid

Office wanted to allow in-person auditions, Thomas and Feldman raised concerns about how they could be conducted safely, before sharing the Peabody guidelines and leaving Student Engagement to make the decision. At first, that decision was to scrap the plan for in-person auditions.

With newfound confidence as a result of a shift to Alert Level Yellow, the Office of Student Engagement changed their minds and decided to give the A Cappella groups the go ahead to conduct auditions the way that they had initially planned.

Hannah Maki '21, Co-Pitch of the ConnArtists, says that the current plan is "to hold one day of in-person auditions with one to two members of each A Capella group present." These auditions will be held in Evans Hall, and although there are a lot of specifics still to be worked out, she expressed that she's very excited. "In-person auditions are critical to finding the people that are the right fit for the A Capella group, not just from a voice standpoint, but from a

personality standpoint as well," explains Maki. She's no more apprehensive about in-person auditions than she would be with any other in-person activity, even if the current plan breaks slightly with the Peabody guidelines.

Maki expressed that she feels very hopeful embarking into this unknown and "very grateful to have the support of the Student Engagement Office, who are supporting our in-person endeavors as musicians."

This is a big win for the arts community, and signifies the next step in the slow march back to normalcy here at Connecticut College. •

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Article continued from front page.

## Is Zoom Ableist?

MADELINE VANECH  
CONTRIBUTOR

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced professors and students to rethink how to teach and learn in a completely new format. These adjustments have taken a toll on neurotypical and able-bodied students and teachers alike, but is online learning even more difficult for neurodivergent and disabled students? “Neurodivergent” students have brains and/or bodies that do not function in the way that society deems acceptable and standard. “Disabled” students have a physical and/or mental condition that limits their movements, senses or activities. Neurodivergence and disability are not inherently “bad”, but they can make life difficult for individuals living in a world not designed for them. As someone diagnosed with ADHD and chronic migraines, I have some insight into the physical and mental effects online learning has on neurodivergent and disabled people. With that said, I am not speaking on behalf of the neurodivergent and disabled communities, nor any other individual with ADHD or chronic pain. All of the groups I have mentioned thus far encompass an incredibly diverse range of brains and bodies, and each have unique experiences.

For something to be considered ableist, it needs to cause distinct disadvantage to one or many groups of disabled and neurodivergent people. Online learning is hard for all of us, but for some of us, the way our bodies and brains function disproportionately adds to the stress and inaccessibility of this format: so is Zoom learning ableist? Absolutely. So is a traditional learning environment.

Most of the ways we “do” education in the United States are intrinsically ableist. The United States was built by capitalist white cisgender straight(ish) Christian men, for other capitalist white cisgender straight Christian men, and the oppressive institutions created by these men still impact American politics, policy, culture and consciousness. Just as racism and sexism are ingrained in American institutions, so too is ableism. The only reason we call people “disabled” is because their body and/or brain are unable to succeed, or at least succeed with comfort, in the world they live in. Since American society is dominated by capitalism, one’s worth is measured by their potential for productivity. A body or brain that is incapable of continuous labor, or that cannot produce consistently, or does not behave efficiently is not useful to capitalists, so such bodies and minds have been deemed less worthy. Accommodating disabled and neurodivergent people is often not very difficult, but it is also not always cost effective. In order to hold onto the money it would take to accommodate disabled and neurodivergent people, institutions continue the narrative of unworthiness, and pity without action. Ableism permeates culture and experience so aggressively, but insidiously, that even those who are disabled or neurodivergent often don’t see all the ways they are disadvantaged. One of the reasons detecting this ingrained ableism is so difficult is because the historical record has been wiped of neurodivergent and disabled people. Your different brain either made you a unique genius, or sent you to the periphery of the community in prisons, hospitals, or asylums. Your different body was a curiosity to others, or secret shame that you did everything you could to hide. Nowhere in mainstream history do we see someone suffering with disability or neurodivergence question why the system that is so hard for them to exist in was created the way it was. Our world was constructed to exclude the disabled, we just fail to see that the system, not the people, are the issue. In a world focused on profit, a body that cannot be exploited is not useful, and a brain that cannot conform is problematic.

Online learning presents all sorts of new challenges. Sitting still at a computer and paying attention for extended periods of time is not only grueling for my ADHD brain, it is

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*Articles continued on page 7.*

## Social Media Flourishes During COVID

CAOIMHE LYONS MARKEY  
CONTRIBUTOR

While it is true that the world gave power to the Internet years before COVID-19 paid an unwelcome visit to the United States, there is nothing that could have secured its importance in the modern world as advantageously as a pandemic. Americans have been unceremoniously stuffed inside their homes with nothing to do, and few other convenient ways to communicate with the outside world.

Although the Internet has been a fantastic technological tool which allows us to engage and learn, unrivaled in the history of human invention, it has also resulted in many negative effects particularly among kids who grow up with perhaps too much access to social media platforms.

Social media feeds on the hungry human ego, which is infallibly ravenous for external validation. It is fueled predominantly by a need to distract oneself from the lackluster mundanities of everyday life, and from personal problems. This is perhaps why we turned to social media outlets for comfort during an equally quiet and very distressing era of our existence.

It’s no accident that social media has a vice-like grip on the world. The Social Dilemma, a recent Netflix documentary, co-written by Vickie Curtis ‘07, depicts the ways in which social media giants have assembled their platforms to be colossally addictive. In the years since the Internet took the world by storm, U.S. hospital admissions for non-fatal self harm have gone up 62% in girls aged 15-19, and 189% for girls aged 10-14. Similar statistics exist for the rates of suicide in teen girls; it has almost tripled in the years since 2009. Those numbers have only risen since the pandemic.

Of course, the obvious argument would be to point out that this rise in Internet usage is attributed to the transition of work and school to the online world. While this is true, I find more interesting the growing reliance on the Internet, particularly with young adults and teens. As it has become more and more normalized in society for its plethora of benefits, it has become harder and harder for people to recognize an Internet addiction as something palpable and dangerous. Which perhaps is why it is so dangerous.

It has been remarkable to me to observe the evolution of our collective experiences through the Internet’s curated lens since March when lockdown began. Suddenly, those glimpses of an Instagram post or a Snapchat became all that was known of the person, as real life interactions seemed more and more dangerous. This pressured us to make use of all this time at home despite the obviously stressful circumstances that put us there. It then became trendy to make one’s quarantine experience seem as interesting as possible, to take up baking bread, to get that perfect summer body, to learn how to knit cat sweaters. In other words, to self improve to the point of self implosion.

How else would a person disseminate the ongoings of their suddenly quiet inside life? How else could a person broadcast the ‘self-care journey’ everyone seemed determined to embark on? How else could we tell everyone we’re living our best lives despite being locked up in a global pandemic with no escape and no opportunity for social interaction? The Internet offered an easy solution to this ego-driven issue. And what a tempting mistress she is.

The ‘main character’ disease our generation and younger ones have so willingly embraced is a direct result of social media exposure. It shrinks the lens of focus from others, and places an emphasis on our own self perception. We are so entangled in our own little world that we’ve somewhat lost the ability to appreciate the good and grand things about being ‘average’ because we’re so busy trying to entertain ourselves and others and make ourselves seem special. I worry that ‘steady’ will become more synonymous with ‘bland’ and ‘uninteresting.’

It’s no wonder then, that the younger generations are the most depressed and anxious of all generations previous. The Internet provides such consistent dopamine and excitement, compiling all of the best and worst moments and experiences of human existence in one big endless void. We have to relearn the beauty of steadiness and stability, and not confuse it with boredom or mediocrity. Stability and occasional unmemorable days allows us to appreciate those extraordinary moments of life even more. •

## A COVID Dilemma: Determining Beethoven's Social Value

EMILE SMIGIELSKI  
CONTRIBUTOR

In America, we're taught that everyone is equal because we each possess intrinsic value that is impossible to quantify or compare. However, when a life-saving treatment is in limited supply, this idealistic idea goes out the window. There may be no better example of this than the aptly named "God Committee," a group created in 1961 by hospital administrators to determine who could use the then newly created dialysis machine. They relied heavily on a measure of social worth based on economic status that is generally seen as a 'black eye' for medical ethics. Because of the limited supply of life-saving COVID-19 vaccine, comparisons of social worth are starting again, seemingly going against what's been ingrained in us our whole lives.

The CDC created vaccination rollout recommendations with three different goals in mind: "decrease death and serious disease as much as possible [...], preserve functioning of society," and "reduce the extra burden COVID-19 is having on people already facing disparities." The two groups that are in the initial 1a phase of COVID-19 vaccines are healthcare personnel and residents of long-term care facilities. This does not include all people over 75. Vaccines going to residents of long-term care are focused on trying to "decrease death and serious disease as much as possible." After all, "while only 1% of the US population lives in long term care, the residents and the staff who work there account for 6% of COVID-19 cases and 40% of the deaths" (<https://time.com/5916925/who-gets-covid-19-vaccine-first/>). This is not a choice based on social worth. In fact, elderly people are routinely forgotten about or viewed as inferior in American society that focuses on how one can benefit it. Rather, this is a case of vaccines going to those who most need it to protect themselves.

In comparison, studies suggest that healthcare personnel get COVID-19 at lower rates than the public. This is because healthcare personnel have access to better medical protection from COVID-19 than the average American. Additionally, healthcare personnel range from dentists to physical therapists, a large group of people, many of which are not directly responding to COVID-19. Since a majority of healthcare personnel are not at a greater risk than the general public and are not responding to COVID, the reason for prioritizing their vaccination is not related to protecting those at higher risk. Rather, they are likely being vaccinated because the CDC believes they are essential to "preserve functioning of society," which equates to a statement that healthcare personnel are the most valuable members of our society. More importantly, it's a valuation that a 14-day stint with COVID-19 for a 30-year-old physical therapist is more

necessary to prevent than my 94-year-old grandmother getting COVID-19.

How do we define importance? If you define importance as contributions to society, then this is an easy problem. Due to their education, physical therapists, and healthcare personnel in general, can contribute more to society than my grandmother at this point. For the most part, healthcare personnel do not need the vaccine more than my grandmother. However, they can do more for society because of the education they've received.

The CDC is evaluating social worth based on one's contributions to society. In a case like this, it seems obvious that this evaluation of social worth is out of touch with who we are as humans. Yet, in other circumstances, it seems to fit well with who we are, both as humans and as a society. Let's say you're living in the 1700s and are put in the uncomfortable position of choosing who will survive between two people. Your choices: Beethoven and con man known as John. All other things being equal, you're probably choosing Beethoven. Beethoven's repertoire consists of some of the most performed classical musical pieces in the world. John, on the other hand, is busy trying to sell you a pocket watch he knows will stop working in a year. Most people would choose Beethoven. Everyone has different reasons, but most would likely choose Beethoven for what he could continue to contribute to society. Yet, if you're doing that, you're saving someone based on what they can do for society. You're saying someone's life is more valuable than another because of their potential contributions.

Our individual contributions to society are inherently unequal. The very nature of being a human means that your contribution to society is different from the person standing six feet away from you. If any aspect of our social worth is dependent on our contributions to society, then humans undeniably have different social worth. Humans seem to like that. After all, it was probably very easy for you to choose Beethoven rather than John. Growing up in American society, we've been pre-conditioned to evaluate social worth with what one can contribute, which is usually in the form of their job.

Yet, what are a society's values, aside from the sum of its citizens'? While the problem of social worth may seem like a social question, it is a deeply personal one. Who and what one deems worthy of respect and intimacy reflects one's own beliefs. Can you confidently say yours are any different than the society you're growing up in? Finding answers to this question might give some value to this interminable year. •

## Is Zoom Ableist?

also exhausting for my eyes, which will trigger a migraine. Perhaps I am at a particular disadvantage because the extra focus I need to put into online learning to counteract my ADHD creates the triggers for my migraines, though I would posit that anyone with a learning or visual disability also struggles with the extended screen time. Some class formats have shifted in a difficult way, too. The increase in lecture classes has decreased my learning capability because class participation is usually one of my key strategies for staying focused.

However, there are also some benefits to Zoom. The subtitles function for those of us with auditory based issues, asynchronous lectures that those of us with learning disabilities can pause, rewind, slow down or speed up, and the ability to turn the camera off for those of us with mood disorders, for example, are life savers we don't have in traditional schooling. Before Zoom, whenever I had a migraine I would need to miss class, take my medicines, and lie down in a quiet, dark room. Online learning allows me to follow my

treatment plan while attending class with my volume low and my camera off. This ability keeps more kids learning that otherwise would've missed class—and not just those of us who are neurodivergent and disabled, but for anyone going through a bout of depression, or a tiring injury. This feature alone makes me wonder if I might actually prefer Zoom learning because it's more accessible for me than the traditional classroom. As educators and the general public begin to understand this, truly life-changing adjustments are made and we begin the crawl to systems that work for everyone. This necessary improvement has far reaching intersectional effects. If COVID-19 has accomplished anything even remotely positive, it has revealed flaws in our systems that the more powerful or blissfully ignorant did not see before, or can no longer ignore. •

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Articles continued from page 6.



## Camels Stay Active During Onboarding Quarantine

EDIN SISSON  
CONTRIBUTOR

Conn's campus has been teeming with students partaking in outdoor exercise that follows the school's COVID-19 guidelines during the first two weeks of mandated onboarding quarantine. It is common to see students running or walking the 1.5 mile loop around campus, despite the ground being layered with slush, snow, and often ice. It seems that the extensive time spent in front of a screen has pushed the student population out the door and into the fresh air, regardless of the harsh New England weather. Yet, despite the outdoors being a constant source of relief from the confinements of quarantine, there are other safe alternatives to get the body moving from within the dorm rooms.

Ella Ross '23, swears by the Peloton app, which provides a wide range of workout videos including bodyweight, HIIT cardio, dance cardio, strength, yoga, and stretching that can be done without any equipment. To make it fun, she even likes to Facetime her friends and work out with them virtually. Ross "thinks it's been really beneficial for this period because it gets you moving, you break a sweat, and it's a specific time just for you to get endorphins. Being in quarantine is really tough but if you can have something such as getting active to look forward to it's really helpful."

Some students though, have brought the gym to their room. With adjustable dumbbells up to 50 lbs, resistance bands, a pull up bar, and kettlebells, Sean Geisler '23, a member of the varsity men's swim team came prepared for onboarding. Although he admits that having this type of equipment might not be available for everyone, he finds it worthwhile. "I try and workout daily doing different muscles each day. I try to do makeshift set ups to mimic having a bench and other equipment but it's obviously not the same as real gym access," said Geisler. The second year swimmer also points out that housing assignments do make a difference. "I'm glad I decided to live in a double because I have the space to work out. It would be very difficult in a single," he reflects.

Renzo Albertoni '22 recognizes how tough it can be to stay active during these times on campus. "Quarantine can definitely make it a bit more challenging to stay active," he commented. Despite this, he has also been taking advantage of the Peloton app in his room as well as going for runs around campus. In addition to these activities, Albertoni has found meditation to be a relief from the anxiety surrounding onboarding quarantine and feelings of being unmotivated.

Peering into the Athletic Department at Conn, Analisse Rios, class of 08' and the current women's varsity soccer assistant coach and strength and conditioning coach for an array of teams, has been working tirelessly behind the scenes to help athletes through the two week quarantine period here. She has gone beyond creating onboarding workouts to be completed in dorm rooms with limited or no equipment, time, and space.

With video editing and production help from Jackie Smith, the women's varsity basketball coach, for editing and production, Rios has created 4 different types of workouts that make it easy for athletes to follow along, ensuring correct form and maximum effectiveness. As Rios explains, her aim is to make these workouts "engaging, challenging, but also fun."

Focusing on these goals, Rios has also been involved in the creation of the Athletics Scavenger Hunt. Working in conjunction with women's ice hockey coaches Kristin Steele and Kenzie Lancaster, she hopes that the week-long scavenger hunt proves "a good [virtual] way to get athletes working toward a common goal" and "have a little friendly competition against other teams."

Women's soccer athlete Sophia Hartley'23 especially loves that Rios' new

workouts are recorded ahead of time on YouTube for student athletes to follow along. "I like the videos because it's like having another person in the room with you to motivate you to do the work," she said. Hartley has also been using this quarantine period to take a bit of stress off her body. "As Analisse always reminds us, I listen to my body. If I'm feeling refreshed that day, then I might take a run. If I am sore and tired, then I might just take a walk to get outside," she concluded.

As the college moves out of onboarding quarantine, the athletic facilities are opening up and are available upon appointment, similar to how it was run during the fall semester. With proof of negative test results and in agreement with the COVID-19 protocols, the building has opened all the cardio machines for use, along with a fitness studio containing eight workout spaces. This provides students with a variety of workout equipment including plyo boxes, dumbbells, and medicine balls. Using the Time Tap website, students can schedule an appointment in the Athletic center to use the facilities.

As students are freed from the confines of their rooms, COVID-19 has brought appreciation to easily accessible activity. Running from the safety and warmth of the treadmill or lifting free weights were once taken for granted; now the ability to skip that outdoor job in the blizzard and step away from bodyweight workouts is not a necessity, but something to be thankful for. •



@plantsandburpees Analisse Rios' Instagram

## Institutionalizing Diversity in College Athletics

SAM MAIDENBERG  
SPORTS EDITOR

In order to thwart a Patrick Mahomes-led offense, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and their defensive coordinator, Todd Bowles, were tasked with creating an innovative game plan to do what no team has managed to do since Mahomes burst onto the scene in his 2018 MVP season.

The Kansas City Chiefs attempted to defend their 2020 championship season on Feb. 7, 2021 in Super Bowl LV. Led by Mahomes and the Chiefs' high powered offense, they were the consensus favorites to become the first team to win back to back Super Bowls since their opponent, Tom Brady, did with the New England Patriots in 2004 and 2005. Mahomes, however, was held without a touchdown for the first time all season as the Buccaneers went on to win 31-9.

Bowles, whose first NFL job was as part of the player personnel staff with the Green Bay Packers in 1995, has since held various coaching positions, mainly as a defensive specialist and coordinator. Before joining the Buccaneers in 2019, he held his longest and most recent head coaching job spanning from 2015-18 with the New York Jets, leading them to a mere .375 win percentage during his four seasons in charge. His experience and longevity as a prominent member of the coaching scene in the NFL led him to his first championship as a coach with the Buccaneers, having previously won the 1987 Super Bowl as a player for the then Washington Redskins.

The Buccaneers recent Super Bowl victory was certainly one for the city of Tampa, who has enjoyed recent success from their major sports teams: The Tampa Bay Lightning won the 2020 Stanley Cup while the Rays reached the World Series in the same year. The win was, however, a victory of equal merit for underrepresented coaches around the NFL and in the greater world of sports. The Buccaneers tout an extremely diverse coaching staff, as Bowles, a Black man teamed up with Offensive Coordinator Byron Leftwich and Special Teams Coordinator Keith Armstrong, both part of the Black community. Their diverse staff spans more than just racial boundaries, as Lori Locust and Maral Jaradafir are on their books as two female coaches in an inherently male-dominated sport.

While the Buccaneers staff reflects today's standards of inclusion, many of its NFL counterparts lack diversity. Seven teams parted ways with their head coaches following the conclusion of the 2020-21 NFL season, leaving highly sought after vacancies. While various Black coaches, like Bowles, conducted interviews with potentially suitable organizations, only two of the seven franchises went in the direction of hiring a person of color. Despite a majority of Black players in the league, there continues to be a lack of representation among coaching staff and more strikingly among owners.

Similarly, athletics at Connecticut College lack representation, as

there are no Black coaches at the Predominately White Institution (PWI), with limited representation among other minority groups. The Connecticut College Athletes of Color Coalition (CCACC) was established at the beginning of the fall 2020 semester, when Conn became the final NESCAC school to establish such a coalition. Vice President of the CCACC, Meera Narayanan-Pandit '23, explained that the goal of the coalition is "to create a space for student athletes of color at Conn" and stressed its importance as "we do not have a lot of coaches or athletic staff of color at Conn." Narayanan-Pandit, a member of the women's tennis team, also brought up the idea of intersectional representation in athletics as "racial representation is just one part of it" as there are many "social areas of diversity." She concluded, stating that "race happens to be a really important one as we are at a PWI."

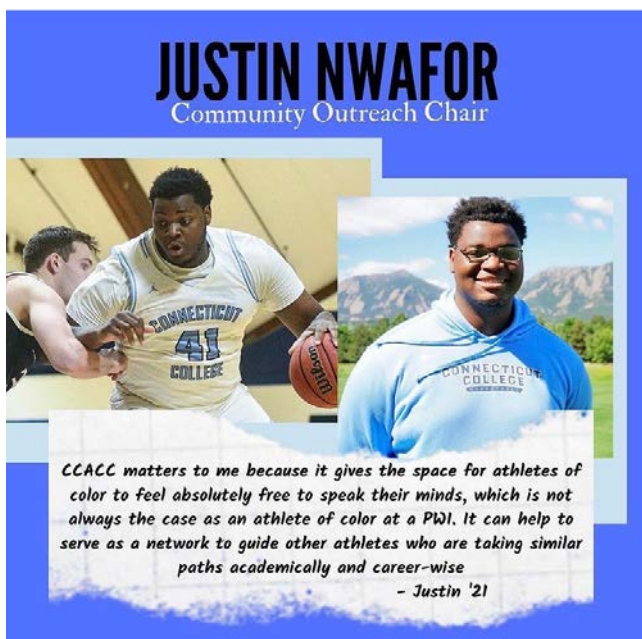
Echoing his co-member of the CCACC, representation, to Justin Nwafor '21, is important as "it always gives you a different level of

confidence when you see people that look like you." Nwafor, a member of the Men's Basketball Team and one of three Community Outreach Chairs for the CCACC, came to Connecticut College as a member of the Science Leader Program, described on the college's website as a "challenging undergraduate program that will prepare you for a wide range of science-related careers and provide a solid foundation for graduate study or medical school" that is "particularly focused on students from groups that are underrepresented in the sciences." While the Science Leaders Program was an early sign of Conn's increasing commitment to inclusion, other initiatives, like "the DIEI program are doing a lot more in representation for students that are on campus, not just through athletics, that we are building through the coalition, but having a lot more stu-

dents coming to campus and being comfortable" which ultimately leads to "succeeding in athletics and academics," stated Nwafor.

Similarly, Nwafor, in his last semester on campus, spoke to the underclassmen leadership in the field of representation. "It's important that young people are doing it too, there's the People of Color alliance that is pretty much all freshmen [...] are able to plant the seeds and watch those things grow," he concluded.

Upon its creation, the CCACC submitted a list of demands ranging from funding to inclusion in the Athletic Department. So far, this has resulted in a 21 day allyship program completed by all coaches throughout the month of January. The Athletic Department has additionally applied for a Strategic Alliance Matching Grant through the NCAA that, if approved, would provide Camel Athletics with funding to support representation-based initiatives and the hiring of people of color to administrative positions. •



@conncoll.aocc Instagram

## First-years Reflect on Conn's Recruitment Amidst the Pandemic

JOHNNY ALEXANDRE  
CONTRIBUTOR

In March 2020, when COVID-19 was just beginning to be recognized as a threat in the United States, all major American sports suspended their respective seasons. College sports soon followed suit, cancelling all collegiate athletic activity. While this was disappointing to current student athletes who were having their seasons cut short, a real threat was felt by high school athletes determined to find schools that would welcome their talents.

Jack Kelesoglu '24, however, an incoming men's soccer recruit, was proactive and started his recruitment process early during his sophomore year of high school. It was his early start that gave him a huge advantage when soccer games for his New Jersey club team STA began getting cancelled, limiting his and other high school athletes' opportunities to be scouted.

Kelesoglu, a center back, a position responsible for providing security by anchoring the back line of defense of a soccer team, secured his spot by attending a soccer showcase at Connecticut College during his sophomore year. One of the youngest athletes on the pitch, Kelesoglu stood out and created a positive relationship with the head coach of the Men's Soccer team, Reuben Burk.

A grateful Kelesoglu spoke on the importance of his early start to the recruiting process, stating that, "Having a head start on my recruiting process gave me a huge advantage. When COVID and the NCAA dead period began there were already several coaches with whom I had a rapport that had seen me play. This allowed me to continue my recruitment process despite not being able to play." He pointed to the challenges that other high school athletes would have to face. "Those who didn't start the recruitment process until after COVID began were forced to recruit solely through video and recommendations for months, which is much more difficult."

By the time it came time for Kelesoglu to make a decision about where

to play college soccer, it was an easy one. Despite being deprived of an overnight visit, typically a major step in the recruiting process, Kelesoglu chose Conn because of the school's strong academics as well as the "ambition and philosophy" of Coach Burk to continue to push the men's soccer team to succeed like they have in the recent past.

Skylar Rice '24, a freshman on the women's hockey team also shared her experience of being recruited amidst a pandemic. Conversely, Rice first looked at Conn during her senior year of high school.

Rice's club team, The East Coast Wizards, were supposed to play in their nationals tournament in April before COVID-19 resulted in the entire tournament being cancelled. That nationals tournament would have "been a significant opportunity for exposure to coaches in person," said Rice. Luckily, Women's Hockey Coach Kristin Steele saw enough in Rice's highlight reel to offer her a spot on the team despite having never seen her play in person.

When it came time to make a decision about where to play college hockey, Rice intended on having an in person campus visit to think on. Unfortunately, due to restrictions in place to stop the spread of COVID-19, that was no longer possible either. Through phone calls with potential future teammates, Rice could tell that the Conn women's hockey culture was one of tight knit relationships with a high level of competitive play. She also "appreciated the value of interdisciplinary learning and the experience of a small school community."

With COVID-19 still present and affecting various aspects of everyday life, the hope is that the Conn community will be able to be vaccinated by the summer, assuring a return to normal life this fall and the continuation of competitive sports as soon as possible. We look forward to seeing how coaches handle recruitment this spring, now having the experience of recruiting during the last year while remote. •

## MLB and Players Union Reach Agreement for 2021 Season

PETER GATTUSO  
STAFF WRITER

The Major League Baseball (MLB) and Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) reached an agreement on Feb. 9 on the rules and health protocols for the 2021 season. Opening Day is scheduled for April 1, despite the push by the MLB to delay the season until May 31 with the hope that the COVID-19 vaccine rollout will reach players and staff. Safety protocols for COVID-19 will focus on contact-tracing technology and regular testing along with team supervision from infectious disease specialists. These are similar protocols implemented in the 2020 season only without the regionalized team schedule—team schedules will return to normal for the upcoming season, traveling nationwide for games.

Teams will play a full 162 games this season, having only played 60 in 2020 after the MLBPA rejected an earlier MLB proposal of 154 games. Certain gameplay rules implemented in 2020 will remain for at least 2021 as part of the agreement. Doubleheader games will be seven-innings as opposed to the typical nine-innings. Roster sizes will remain at 26, an increase from 25 in 2019, but will not feature the expanded 40-man rosters in September. Lastly, extra-innings will start with a runner on second. These rules aren't designed to address safety concerns, but are a part of MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred's agenda to speed up the pace of play.

A universal designated hitter and an expanded postseason—new features of the 2020 season—will not return for the 2021 season after being voted down by the MLBPA. The MLB had made a previous offer including both rules for the 2021 season, along with an adapted 154 game season

and delay, but the attempt was rejected by the MLBPA. While the MLBPA had been open to the extension of the universal DH (designated hitter), which would open up 15 new starting positions in the National League, they balked at the expanded postseason under the assessment that teams would be encouraged to spend less if it was easier to make the playoffs.

While the rules are set for 2021, with Spring Training having started on Feb. 17, issues such as the universal DH and expanded postseason, along with the currently implemented shortened doubleheaders and extra-innings changes, will be debated and discussed for the 2022 agreement.

Another issue absent in the 2021 agreement that's sure to be reviewed prior to 2022 is the implementation of a salary floor. According to Spotrac, a sports financial database, the Miami Marlins, Baltimore Orioles, Pittsburgh Pirates, and Cleveland Indians have 2021 payrolls under \$50 million, more than four times less than the Dodgers 2021 payroll of over \$225 million. These examples represent the trend of teams increasingly unwilling to spend money when they are rebuilding. More recently, teams have been showing unwillingness to spend even when they have opportunities to be competitive. The most prominent example of this is the Cleveland Indians, who have traded key players Francisco Lindor, Trevor Bauer, Mike Clevinger, and Corey Kluber, among others, in the last year and a half to appease Cleveland's ownership's request to limit spending. The MLBPA has advocated a salary floor, creating a minimum payroll allowed for teams, in order to get teams to spend again and encourage them to be competitive. The MLB may be willing to trade a salary floor in exchange for new pace-of-play rules for the 2022 agreement. •

## "The Hill We Climb": Amanda Gorman's Inaugural Address

NEFERTARI PIERRE-LOUIS  
MARKETING MANAGER

Years ahead, when our country reflects on the 46th inauguration, we will remember the five minutes reserved for Amanda

Gorman. The Capitol building, insurrected 14 days prior to the ceremony, reclaimed its palpable glow as Gorman stood, heightened, in front of it. Countless eyes, present and overseas, fixed on her vibrant display as she mustered might to deliver "The Hill We Climb." It was a poem poured powerfully, each stanza succored by her delicate hand motions. The 110-lined composition rejuvenated the exhausted hopes of listeners nationwide and officialized Gorman's status as the youngest inaugural poet in U.S history.

Colorfully clad, the 22-year old wordsmith dazzled in a crown-like headpiece and canary-yellow overcoat to weld words in immaculate style. Gorman embodied light and grace to recite a length of sentiments that exposed the nation's collapsing core. "We've learned that quiet isn't always peace/ And the norms of what just is/ Isn't always just-ice," she articulates. Her rhyme emboldens us to recognize that a truly great union does not shy away from accountability and repair, but strives towards reconciliation and recovery. Gorman strips our democracy of its prideful disguise and shines a light on its impropriety. To weave the heart-rending truths of this nation into poetry, whilst representing a race dehumanized and abused by those truths, is a traumatic feat. The cum laude graduate of Harvard University had a significant task before her, and she conquered.

"The Hill We Climb" filtered through captivated ears and awoke a sense of humanity in the depths of each listener. A poetic plea like Gorman's inspires one to do away with the bias they've accumulated thus far so that only an untouched sense of morals remains within. Gorman's ability to breach the human heart catapulted her into abrupt fame. An admirable trope of the "The Hill We Climb" is its assertion that hope, intermingled with action, will birth a nation we can all take pride in. Since pen first strode paper to compose the ideals and amendments of a great union, patriotism has historically been reserved for white Americans. For Gorman to emit prideful energy towards a country that has fundamentally functioned to devastate her is heroic. This is why we applaud Ms. Gorman.

Our democracy is a layered wound deprived of adequate treatment. There are periods of crippling comfort in which we suppose another bedazzled band-aid over this nation's gaping gash will suffice; but, it is clear a systemic operation is needed to heal our rotted roots. "And yes we are far from polished/ Far from pristine/ But that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect/ We are striving to forge a union with purpose," Gorman reads. Within the horrifying years that the 45th president reigned, the rate at which our democracy submitted to more infection was unspeakable. "The Hill We Climb" is an ode to justice, ethics, and decency. Gorman asks us to believe in

the light that will heal our wound, "if only we're brave enough to see it/ If only were brave enough to be it." The choice is ours to make. •



Unsplash

## Tik Tok is the New Medium For Viral Collaboration and Breakout Stars

CATJA CHRISTENSEN  
CONTRIBUTOR

Throughout the pandemic, TikTok has been a source of comfort and distraction for so many isolated individuals.

As we approach the one-year mark from when everyone's lives were drastically changed by Covid-19, TikTok influencers have been busy experimenting with new forms of creating and releasing music. From musicals to sea shanty remixes to breakout artists gaining large-scale traction, TikTok has become an ideal medium for innovative music in the pandemic epoch. With artists having more time and fewer live opportunities available, turning to a popular app with over 100 million global users\* to continue performing makes sense. The app's magical algorithm makes it easier than ever before for artists to reach their target audiences, no matter how obscure or specific the genre. Hashtags, Duets, and Stitches — when a creator adds onto another's video — enable users to even tag onto popular accounts and draw inspiration, leading to incredible virtual collaborations.

As Broadway and most theaters remain shuttered, musical theater lovers have grown a dedicated fan base on their corner of TikTok. While many artists performed covers of famous songs from shows like *Phantom of the Opera*, *Frozen*, and *West Side Story*, others began composing original songs based on hypothetical musicals. One that gained the most traction was *Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical*. Emily Jacobsen (@e\_jaccs) posted a short song she made up about the beloved Disney-Pixar character in Aug. 2020. The catchy tune soon went viral with fans posting their own covers. Musicians added an orchestral score, songwriters wrote songs for other characters, and others designed sets, costumes, and playbills. Even though the animated film was released in 2007, TikTok users fed off of their collective pent-up artistry and nostalgia for the feel-good Disney universe and turned a simple earworm into a social phenomenon. As more and more users posted their takes on the “Ratatousical” theme and the buzz extended to established news organizations, a crowd-sourced virtual show was released on January 1, 2021, combining Broadway professionals and TikTok performers in a lighthearted, pandemic-safe, musical celebration. Advertised as a benefit concert, ticket sales and donations raised over \$2,000,000\* for The Actors Fund, providing relief for individuals in the struggling industry. Thus, TikTok established itself as a platform for creating collaborative, virtual musical productions.

As *Ratatouille* was coming to life, *Bridgerton*, a Netflix Regency-era rom-dram, was released on Christmas Day. The show grew a massive fanbase, including many TikTok creators. While many dressed in Regency-inspired fashion or recited lines from the show, singer-songwriter Abigail Barlow (@abigailbarlowww) took it one step further. Barlow first posted a short song that poetically encapsulated the character Daphne Bridgerton's poignant pining for the hunky Simon, Duke of Hastings, which currently has 1.8 million views. However, it was her second inspired song, “Burn for You,” named after Simon's iconic line in the show, that ignited the newest musical craze. That song, currently sitting at 5 million views, was duetted by many talented singers, vying for the hypothetical roles with their own mock auditions. Barlow became inspired to write an entire concept album based on the 8 episode series. Collaborating with fellow talented musician and composer, Emily Bear (@emilythebear), the unstoppable duo has been releasing snippets of new music almost daily, both in posts and via live streams on TikTok. Similar to *Ratatouille*, Barlow and Bear's musical progress has been featured in many news articles, including on *Playbill* and *People Magazine*. The pair often duet covers by fans

on the app, and with their rapid song production pace, the hype will likely not die down for a while. *Bridgerton*, both the show and this new musical prospect, have garnered a devoted fanbase, revealing how these movie/tv to musical adaptations have become the new book-to-movie craze.

Music and sounds are integral to TikTok's success as an app. 60 seconds of popular songs of all genres and original sounds created by users themselves are reused by other creators, building trends identifiable in great part by their sounds. TikTok even released a Year in Review\* of the most popular music, breakout artists, genres, and more. Additionally, casual users are able to discover new music easily thanks to the algorithm's ability to adapt to individual preferences. Taylor Swift's 2009 hit “Love Story” is an example of this combination of algorithms and trends. Millennials and older Gen Zers associate this song with their childhoods but many younger users have only been introduced to the pop anthem through the app. With Swift's updated re-release of the iconic song on Feb. 11, new life has been breathed into her music, transcending generations of fans. Nonetheless, Swift has been prevalent in pop culture for years, as have other big-name musicians. For breakout stars, the 60-second format may lend itself better to one-hit wonders rather than established artists. If the key to viral success is to hop on the bandwagon of big names in the industry, is TikTok just a temporary means of staying connected in a temporary period?

Tai Verdes (@taiverdes), a 24-year-old artist whose single, “Stuck in the Middle,” exploded in popularity throughout the summer of 2020, believes a lot of musicians' success on the app is just luck. In a *Rolling Stones* interview\* in July, he commented, “TikTok is like buying lottery tickets. I just played a bunch of lottery tickets.” After years of trying out for voice competitions, like “The Voice” and “American Idol” as well as using TikTok video trends to market himself, his upbeat song happened to make its way onto people's “For You” Pages. Verdes encouraged his growing fanbase to like and share the initial 60-second snippet if they wanted him to release a full version, and sure enough, his social media savvy paid off.

18-year-old Lyn Lapid (@lynlapid) had a similar experience earlier in April 2020. After posting hundreds of videos of her covering popular songs and duetting with other artists, she posted an original song snippet, inspired by a frustrating interaction with a music producer. That first clip of what is now “Producer Man” currently has 51.5 million views, and Lapid signed a deal with Republic Records shortly after that initial video. Both artists' narrative lyricism and catchy beats attracted massive fanbases, and both songs rose on Spotify's viral charts. As more artists quickly rise to fame, TikTok is now partnering with UnitedMasters\* to help artists distribute their music and maintain ownership over their work.

Several questions remain: How will live performance regain traction after the pandemic? *Ratatouille* and *Bridgerton* reveal that crowd-sourced virtual musicals are possible, but will artists in isolation provide the same Broadway magic as live performance? Verdes and Lapid exemplify the lottery that TikTok is for musicians, but with the company joining forces with UnitedMasters, will the platform be a feasible career entry point for future breakout artists? The social shifts that will happen within the next year will undeniably impact the music industry, hopefully for the better, but how TikTok responds will be fascinating indeed. •

## Wintertime at Conn: Past and Present

**BROOKE SPONZO**  
STAFF WRITER

dampen their spirits any further—a resolve that was evident in the aftermath of the first snow storm of the semester. On Feb. 7th, late-waking students arose to find Tempel Green littered with snowmen and other frosty creatures of all shapes and sizes. The hill in front of Cummings was covered in sled tracks of abused container lids and laundry baskets. In the Arboretum, a snow angel graced the powder-coated bog and boot prints ventured cautiously out into the freshly iced pond.

It was as though every onboard-ing student had reached the same realization: they were not above having a good old-fashioned snow day.

But this was certainly not the first time that Connecticut College has entertained such a blizzard, nor was it the first time that Camels became penguins for a day.

“The trays came out of the dining halls and the Lyman-Allyn museum hill (Conn. College’s best kept secret) was visited by many adventurers,” pens student Ross Dackow in a 1986 TCV Letter to the Editor documenting a similar February storm. “Cross country skis hit the terf, snowballs hit you in the face, and the class idiots were walking around in their Bermuda shorts catching pneumonia.”

In 1938, a writer simply known as “Blackstone’s Snowlady” reported that: “not Spring, but SNOW, has arrived to this, our college, and it would seem that C.C. has gone ski crazy. From eight o’clock on the mad rush for skies continued. Those who owned a pair began waxing and polishing, and in general, overhauling their prized possessions, but those who didn’t have any of their own soon found pairs—after a short search of some two or three hours.”

In fact, Camels have historically been quite attached to this winter sport. In 1937, the Voice archives divulge mention of a ski slope “starting from the top of Overlook Hill (the highest point in the arboretum), above Gallows Lane,” that “goes gradually from a steep to a gentle slope for about 800 feet and is graded onto the lake.” But skiing wasn’t the only winter activity that former students enjoyed. For many years, there’s record of Camels attending a winter

Though the spring semester has only just begun, it’s clear that students are more determined than ever to make the best of this unusual year. The Camels are unwilling to let the pandemic

carnival held at Dartmouth, where a “Carnival Queen” was chosen and a snow sculpture-building contest took place. In 1935, student Doris Gilbert tells the campus of her experience there: “the snow sculpting was very lovely. Almost everything imaginable was represented—a sphinx, the north wind, several nude ladies who looked very cold, and one huge king kong, so tall we couldn’t figure out how it was built”.

Of course, with the threat of February storms also comes the promise of Valentine’s Day. This year, students celebrated by sending Cameltine Grams to friends in dorms they cannot yet visit and attending virtual Valentine-making parties, like that hosted by PRISM. In years past however, students would have been preparing

for the Mid-Winter Formal: an event that was perhaps Conn’s biggest. Throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, this tea dance followed by a prom was the talk of campus. In the months preceding, the Voice contained ads for nearby dress and beauty shops and the College selected eight esteemed women to serve as the event’s “waitresses,” who were treated like celebrities and wore themed costumes.

But, like now, Valentine’s Day at Conn has not always been perfect, or free from hardship. In February 1943, the ballroom in Knowlton (known as the Knowlton Salon then, the Dining Room now) hosted a Valentine’s Day dance where “defense stamp corsages were sold at the door” to raise funds for the second World War. “Only a tangy punch was served in the way of refreshments,” one of its attendees details: “because ‘the sugar problem was too great for anything else,’” referring to wartime food shortages and rationing.

Even in such gloomy times though, Camels were still Camels, and still up to their usual antics just like today. “Happy Moore ‘41,” the paper reports, on the efforts of various campus Cupids: “sent a box containing sixteen make-your-own Valentines (all unmade) to a certain boy, who shall be nameless, with the enclosed note, ‘Choose

one and please return.’” I’d challenge any current Camel to hold onto half the confidence Happy had.

And I’d challenge them too, the next time they see flakes falling outside their window, or hear the plows roar by, to grab the nearest snowball and start rolling. For not only will they find a bit of fun in this trying year, but they’ll also take part in a tradition as old as Connecticut College itself. •



Carly Spozzo

## What Shenanigans have Scuds and N2O Been Up To in Quarantine?

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*Article continued from front page.*

community, and hosting events.

In fall 2020, neither group held a virtual or in-person event partially because they were thrown into a whole new world of making improv over Zoom and Google Hangouts. Both clubs were also cognizant of what their members needed. Scuds member Tess Beardell '21 explains "we were struggling with adjustments...and family being sick." Margaret Condon '21, also in Scuds, agrees with Beardell and says that "the whole group was lethargically meeting" but adds this new semester promises new energy. Seniors in N2O felt similar to their peers. Sydney Lamb '21 explains that as a club "we weren't really ready to kind of adapt to the Covid world." Instead, they worked on vibing as a group again so that when new members joined in the spring the bond would be stronger. Both comedy groups "tabled" at the Spring Involvement Fair and received interest from first-year students and sophomores who wanted to be part of either notorious improv group who have come to define Friday night culture at Conn.

However, hosting auditions is an obstacle within itself. Scuds hopes to host auditions in-person when the College enters Alert Level Green, but they are open to having one-on-one or virtual auditions if necessary. Until then, the group is raising more awareness for their club. They hosted a game night over Google Hangouts on Feb. 11 where club members and participants could interact and bond with each other through popular virtual gaming sites such as Skribblio and Jackbox on Quiplash. "Part of the purpose of the event...was to get our name out there and get people excited to audition," explains Beardell. A game, whether online or in-person, can often break the awkwardness even a cool senior feels when they log onto a Google Hangout.

In a similar vein, N2O hosted a Zoom event on Feb. 13 to bolster excitement for auditions but also reimagine their Olin routine. The group prepared fill-in-the-blank sentences for audience members to fill in; members then gave a brief presentation with pre-selected images on a phrase selected from the chatbox. They were also able to Zoomify their radio hour game where two members host a talk show about a topic the audience pitches. Now past their first event of the semester, the club hopes to shift into audition-mode. Fiona Hull '21 recounts that 10 to 15 students have already signed up for their mailing list after the Involvement Fair. However, Jimmy Cork '22 points out that while they want a lot of interest, "the more people who are interested, the more difficult it's going to be to actually coordinate." The pandemic has certainly thrown a wrench in student clubs that rely on being able to see facial expressions and physical touch.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions on campus last semester, Scuds and N2O were still able to practice outside in-person in the fall semester, which they hope to continue this semester, weather permitting. However, practicing in-person while socially distant has created new challenges. Beardell explains that a lot of Scuds' humor relies on physical touch and being close to each other to respond to movement; so the question becomes how to translate their humor when spaced apart or over Zoom. But, "if you can make someone laugh over Zoom, that is a pretty good sign that they are going to be good in-person too," comments Beardell. Condon added that technically speaking, "it [improv] is possible anywhere." When the group meets over Google Hangouts, there is a lot of back and forth banter. In many ways, "[we are] passively rehearsing the things we would do in-person," explains Beardell.

Although both groups are improv-based, Scuds is perhaps more free-flowing in that they ask for a singular word from the audience to guide their skits while N2O cycles through certain games which also require a word or phrase given from those watching. Lamb explains that many of their typical games can easily be performed

tainly impacted how both groups approach practicing together, building a sense of

socially distant, as seen during their first show of the semester. Audrey Black '21 adds that N2O's comedy is more based on physicality so reading each other's facial expressions was more of an obstacle given masks and socially distancing. That being said, N2O members are cognizant of speaking up during practice and being aware of their distance from each other. Cork recounts a particular practice round of Director (one person directs a movie that has never been made before) where he asked someone to touch another member's elbow before realizing such activity is egregious in the Covid climate. However, Cork doesn't recall a time when following social distancing guidelines and wearing masks hindered the comedic effect of the game.

Both groups have become more comfortable producing content live over Zoom and Google Hangouts, but they are now considering the implications of using their social media, mainly their Instagram accounts, to make comedy. Beardell expresses the desire to use their Instagram @scuds\_improv to share more than just event details. On the other hand, Black, who runs N2O's Instagram @n2oisfunny, explains that the group uses Instagram to show their personalities and group dynamic but doesn't see them producing content online to the same extent as they do in person or over Zoom. "The premise of improv is that it is temporary and reactionary," explains Black, so posting permanent humor online goes against the nature of their work.

While it has become harder to step into the goofy space for many members, Beardell says that the openness implicit in improv is one way to process what is happening in the world. For Beardell and Condon, Scuds has been a welcoming and friendly space community that they hope to extend to everyone through events similar to their Game Night. Similarly for Hull, N2O has been a space to laugh with her friends and release tension: "the beauty of having a group is that we all come together, and just being there with the group immediately kind of picks you up a little bit." Cork adds, "in the fall, who knows. Maybe it will be back to saliva spreading chaos."

Although Scuds and N2O are planning more events for the spring 2021 semester, Beardell acknowledges that it is all tentative. There will always be the unknown, but for now, we can laugh together in-person or over Zoom whether out of nostalgia, Zoom fatigue, or the world's best Slice pun. •

