“Life is Pandemonium”: Wig and Candle’s “25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee”

Minnie Madden
Staff Writer

On April 15 and 16, Conn’s student-run theater club Wig and Candle put on their mainstage production of “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.” The show was directed by Caleb Butler and musically directed by Sabrina Malec. An amazing cast and crew made the night full of talent, hilarious jokes, and of course some silly spellings.

Initially, the show was slated to be performed in Oliva Hall, but the show was upgraded a week before curtain call to the much more professional Evans Hall.

Friday night’s show saw around 70 students come out to support the cast and crew. The numbers increased on Saturday night to over 100 – there were so many students, in fact, that they ran out of programs as people piled in to see the show. The stage was set up for a spelling bee, with participants’ chairs and a judge’s table. But the production was not confined to the stage. The musical number “Pandemonium” featured the cast members jumping on and off the stage, singing and causing chaos up the isles and in the pit. Breaking the fourth wall made the audience feel like fellow cast members in the comedy spectacular. Some lucky audience members even got to join in the show itself. Upon arriving at the show, audience members could sign up to be guest spellers who got to go up on stage, spell and even participate in dance numbers. A special shoutout goes to one Saturday’s guest speller none other than theater Professor Jaffe who joined in the fun for most of the first act.

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Article continued on page 14.

Sophomore Justin Finkel Completes a Record-Setting Season

Annie Feldmar-de-Vitre
Staff Writer

Swimming star Justin Finkel ’25 has set countless records for Connecticut College this season. He has exceeded even the loftiest of expectations and brought pride to the Camel community by earning NESCAC Swimmer of the Year and taking home a second-place title from Division III Nationals (NCAAs).

Finkel is from Cheshire, Connecticut, and has been competitively swimming since he was eight years old. He competed in hundreds of swim meets and won many titles for his high school before he was recruited to swim at Conn.

Finkel specializes in the 200-meter butterfly, 200-meter freestyle, and 500-meter freestyle, and placed first in each of these races at NESCAC finals in February. For these incredible finishes, he was awarded NESCAC Swimmer of the Year. Not only did he take home first place in each of these events, but he also set school records in all of them. After conquering the NESCAC, he then moved on to swim in NCAA Div. 3 Championship with his team where he won second place in the 500-meter freestyle and 200-meter butterfly.

During this run, he again broke the school records for all of the events he specializes in. His time for a 500 freestyle, a 20-lap swim, is 4 minutes and 21 seconds, just 15 seconds more than the world record. For both his excellence in the pool and the classroom, he was awarded a Scholar All-American title, meaning that he was a top-eight swimmer in NCAA Division III and had a GPA of at least 3.5. Finkel is also 69th in the country for the 200-meter butterfly across all divisions.

“There’s so much going through your mind when you swim that you don’t even have room to think about how you feel,” Finkel said. “After I win, there’s just so much dopamine and sometimes I just get overcome with joy. Nationals are like a professional sporting event. We put on fast suits, we shave down, just like when we get ready for NESCACs. It’s so much fun. The environment is really fast and the energy is crazy. I’ll never forget how I felt at NESCACs. I finished my 200 butterfly that I won and I could see my whole team right there. They were all jumping and going crazy. That gave me more joy

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Article continued on page 12.
Letter From the Editor

It’s a dark and stormy Sunday in the TCV office. The seniors are celebrating 30 days until graduation under the shelter of a tent on Tempel, sipping mimosas and eating breakfast burritos. The College Voice team is hard at work in our toasty office, fighting off senioritis and stress.

Springtime at Conn is the start of endless end-of-year celebrations, from the Awards Ceremony this coming week to the thesis presentations to graduation. The TCV team is celebrating our new hires and newly elected Co-Editors-in-Chief Grace Contreni Flynn ’25 and Fritz Baldauf ’24. Be sure to congratulate them when you see them!

Additionally, Gender and Sexuality Programs hosted their 7th annual Pride event this month, as Grace reported in vivid detail. The Dean of the College also announced the students who won prestigious fellowship awards, including the Watson, Beinecke, Davis Projects for Peace, Fulbright Study Research, and Fulbright English Teaching Assistant. Our incoming sports editor, Kevin Lieue ’26, interviewed Isa Amaro Vargas ’23 about being one of 42 students selected for the Watson. Lucie Englehardt ’23 also highlighted Gray Area Magazine celebrating their newest publication, a zine titled “COMMUTE.”

As graduation also comes up on the horizon, the Conn community is questioning how much President Bergeron will be present at major ceremonies and what will happen after her official resignation at the end of the semester. Lucie, Zoe Dubelier ’23, and Adrien Prouty ’25 (incoming Managing Editor) explore the lack of student participation in the graduation decision-making process. Sports Editor Hannah Foley ’23 and Business Manager Payton Ferris ’23 explain how the Presidential Search Committee worked in 2013 to elect Bergeron in preparation for the search for Bergeron’s successor.

With the warmer weather, spring sports are also making headlines. Track and Field’s Silfen Invitational capped a week of gorgeous sunny weather with record-breaking results as reported by Hannah. Staff Writer Annie Feldmar-DeVitre ’26 also profiled swimmer Justin Finkel ’25 in light of earning NESCAC Swimmer of the Year and placing second in the NCAAs.

It has been a strange year for Conn students and a chaotic time for TCV. Come join the chaos in our last issue. Write about the many exciting events coming up to round out the year or email us with any questions or ideas. We would love to have you join the team.

Sincerely,

Catja Christensen, exhausted senior and Co-EIC for only 30 more days :(

MANAGING STAFF

Zoe Dubelier ’23
Robbie Lynch ’24
Madeline Cho ’25
Layout Editors

Lauren Carey ’25
Sophie Mulvihill ’25
Social Media Managers

Ben Jorgensen-Duffy ’23
Business Manager

Jocelyn Lewis ’24
Copy Editor

CONTACT US
thecollegevoice@conncoll.edu
270 Mohegan Avenue
New London, CT 06320
thecollegevoice.org
@the_collegevoice on Instagram
@thecollegevoice on Twitter
A Celebration of Queer Joy: The GSP Hosts Its Seventh Annual Pride

ROLLERBLADES, BANANAS, AND OH SO MUCH GLITTER! ALL THIS AND MORE FILLED THE 1962 ROOM IN CROWN COLLEGE FOR THE GENDER AND SEXUALITY PROGRAMS’ (GSP) SEVENTH ANNUAL PRIDE EVENT ON APRIL 2. THIS YEAR’S EVENT WAS A PRIDE BRUNCH HOSTED IN THE LATE MORNING TO EARLY AFTERNOON WHILE PREVIOUS YEARS HAD SEEN A LATE-NIGHT CELEBRATION.

The Director of the GSP, Justin Mendillo, explained the shift: “A lot of queer folks have thoughts around queer events being solely around drinking are often around evening time, which isn’t accessible to all of that folks we encapsulate. So, having it during brunch time we hoped that maybe some more folks would be able to come.” And they absolutely did. The 1962 Room was crowded with people from 11 am to 1 pm. The GSP also made a conscious decision to represent a diversity of experiences, bodies, and identities in the performances during this year’s event.

Reflecting on the significance of hosting such a public Pride event, Mendillo said, “It is always important to see yourself in your peers but also just in grown folks, to see that we age and age beautifully. Then also, I think that folks feel very restricted on this campus in boxes of hetero and cis-normativity. So drag performances like these allow folks to feel more free to experiment and do whatever they want with their bodies.”

The Pride Brunch was hosted by the Connecticut Mother of the House of LaBeija, Xio Marie LaBeija, with guest performances from Queen Midnight, Mia E. Z’Lay, Kenya Moneheart, Mx. Understood, and Harmony the Valkyrie. Xio Marie opened the show with an affirming performance of ‘Special’ by Lizzo. The audience visibly beamed and danced in their seats as she waltzed around the room, gesturing to tables singing, “I’m glad you’re still with us. Broken, but damn, you’re still perfect.”

The show continued on with audience members being pulled up to dance and Drag Royals performing a variety of feats including Harmony the Valkyrie’s head-spinning roller-bladed rendition of “You’re Makin’ Me High” by Toni Braxton during which she skated circles around audience members. The event featured Drag Royalty from across the state, representing the fabulous range of talent in Connecticut. Mendillo commented on the variety of performers stating, “We were reminding ourselves that pride is just not about one set of performances or identities but about the plurality of performances and identities that we all have.”

The event was not only composed of traditional drag performances, but saw the guest DJ, Cody Rigorous, sing a moving cover of “Read All About It, Pt II” by Emeli Sandé. The Pride Brunch also welcomed activist and educator Ace Ricker back to campus, however this time he arrived in his drag persona Mx. Understood.

Mx. Understood is a nonbinary, activism-oriented performer. They delivered a spoken word piece at the beginning of the brunch and closed the event with an emotional performance displaying pride in their trans identity. As the first notes of True Colors by Zedd and Kesha echoed through the room, Mx. Understood began drawing individual cloths out of their sleeve with each representing a different color in the trans flag. They ended their performance by stretching the full trans flag, emblazoned with the words “We Will Not Be Erased,” across their chest.

Ricker described the process of first pulling the pink, then the white, and finally a blue cloth as being representative of his personal journey as a transgender man. On the significance of this performance, Ricker said “It was this way of reaffirming that I am valued by the audience that is bearing witness to this but also valuing myself [...] there’s this sense that I should not in any way shape or form have to hide myself.”

Ricker lives a variety of lives and has come to campus in the past in his role as an educator. Near the end of our interview, he acknowledged the hardships that LGBTQ+ people are facing in the United States today amidst the passing of hateful legislation nationwide. His advice to any LGBTQ+ reader is as follows, “It’s going to be heavy sometimes. But I want to make sure that I am ready to help lift that heaviness up off of your shoulders and that if you feel like you’re in this dark room and you can’t find the door, I’m very willing to open that door for you. Even in this hard place through the words that are printed on that page, I want you to see that there’s someone that wants to uplift you. There’s someone that loves the word because of the uniqueness and beauty of every aspect of you.”
On Mar. 24 at 11 a.m., current president Katherine Bergeron sent an email to the campus community to announce her resignation as president of Connecticut College to take effect at the end of the semester. This was in response to weeks of protests from the faculty, staff, and student body. Now, the exciting and daunting task of finding a new president must begin. The last presidential search occurred in 2013 with the Presidential Search Committee. Professors Stanton Ching and Ron Flores, as well as alum Timothy Kast ’14, agreed to speak about their time on the committee to shed light on what the College may expect shortly.

The 2013 Presidential Search Committee was composed of nine members of the Board of Trustees, four faculty members, two current students, and one staff member: two faculty members were chosen by the Faculty Steering and Conference Committee (FSCC), two faculty members were elected by the faculty body, and the two student representatives were chosen by the SGA President. We were not able to find out a lot about the staff representative, but we can confirm that the 2013 member, Bill O’Neil, worked in the Office of Advancement at the time.

After the committee formed, they selected an executive search firm that would bring in and help sort through candidates. During the 2013 search, a team from Spencer Stuart was hired and guided the committee throughout the process. The search firm was tasked with talking to the campus community to assess desires for the next president. “The goal of the bigger search committee work was to find out what our strengths and weaknesses of the colleges were, what the opportunities looked like, [and] what the challenges were,” said Ching. He went on to mention the numerous groups that the search firm met with while on campus, including SGA, department chairs, and the retiring president. Once they gathered campus input, the search firm put together mock profiles for the committee to review. These helped the firm develop a sense of the committee’s natural inclinations, which later helped them determine which applicants would appear more attractive to the committee.

After getting committee feedback from the mock profiles, the search firm wrote a list of desired characteristics for the next president. Among the 2013 preferences was someone who could raise Conn’s reputation: “There was a common understanding among the committee that what Conn offered as an institution didn’t necessarily match its reputation—that we needed to increase our standing amongst peers given the high quality and distinctiveness of a Conn education—so the search really centered around the goal of finding someone to move Conn forward and correct that disconnect,” said Kast.

Candidates were gathered from all over. There was one internal applicant in 2013 from the Conn community and hundreds of others that the search firm sifted through before presenting them to the committee. Several rounds of finding applicants and conducting interviews occurred next, along with lots of internal deliberations within the committee on who should move on to the next round. In 2013, Bergeron was attractive to the committee as a NESCAC grad with a love for liberal arts and proficient fundraising history, according to Kast. These factors are also listed by Board of Trustee member Pamela Zilly in the 2013 Fall Welcome Event for Katherine Bergeron. Once candidates made it to the final interview stage, their references were checked, and opinions were gathered from others not included on their reference lists.

When asked if they felt their voices were heard, Ching, Flores, and Kast all agreed they felt their membership was valued and that their thoughts and concerns were taken into consideration by the whole committee.

“I think it was a very healthy search committee in the sense that we worked well together,” said Flores. “I was very proud to have served on that committee.”

With less than a month from the end of the semester, the College is once again looking to undergo this search process. We encourage students to keep watch for open forums and campus-wide surveys that will look for your opinions on qualities for the next president, since these have been tools used in past presidential searches. It is most likely that the College will appoint an interim president who will hold the office while a formal search committee is assembled. It is never too early to start thinking about what you want to see in our next president, and it is important to never forget the point of a college president is to serve the needs and desires of the student body.
Student Rights and the ADA

The Connecticut College Student Handbook has a section titled “Student Bill of Rights.” In this section, various rights of students on campus are outlined. These include prominent examples, such as the “right to individual beliefs and expression,” “the right of governance and participation,” and “the right of inquiry and expression.” An important right that has become a topic of conversation amongst disabled students recently, is right five: “The right of academic pursuit.” This right reads, “Enrolled students have the right to an environment conducive to the pursuit of academic requirements and interests, and reasonable access to, and support of, faculty and staff.” In other words, all students should be able to access classrooms, offices, and resources necessary for their academic success.

As displayed on the College’s website, six of the thirteen academic buildings on campus are fully accessible. Blaustein Center, Shain Library, Fanning Hall, Olin Science Center, Hale Laboratory, and New London Hall. Four buildings, Bill Hall, Bolles House, Cummings Art Center, and Holmes Hall (more commonly known as the Lab School), are considered partially accessible as the ground floor can be accessed. These buildings house the Psychology, Neuroscience, Education, Human Development, and Arts departments, offices of many professors, and classes that are taught in these locations. Three buildings are completely inaccessible: Winthrop Annex, Winthrop House, and Woodworth House. These buildings house offices of professors in the History, Government, Hispanic Studies, Sociology, Anthropology, East Asian Studies, and Economics departments. For students who use mobility aids, or are generally unable to climb stairs, this makes these departments and professors almost completely inaccessible.

Under Title III of the ADA, most “public accommodations” had to be modified to meet 2010 ADA standards of accessibility. This includes things like elevators, curb cuts, wider doorways, and ramps to make buildings fully accessible. Although the College is considered a “public accommodation” under the law, there are loopholes in the legislation that allow the College to avoid meeting ADA compliance requirements. One such exception is that an institution can avoid accessibility if it would cause undue financial burden. Although it is commonly believed that the ADA has a grandfather clause, there is no such section in the ADA. There is an exception for buildings that are labeled historic, however Conn’s buildings do not fall into that category. This means that Conn has claimed that making buildings ADA compliant would be an undue financial burden on the College.

There are several buildings on campus which have been renovated recently, however, remain inaccessible. A building that has undergone renovations which impact its “primary function area” is required to meet current ADA standards, according to the ADA’s Archives, which is why buildings like Fanning are now accessible. A primary function area is defined as the space which addresses the primary purpose of the building such as dorm rooms in a dorm building. There are several older dorm buildings on campus, such as Katherine Blunt (KB) and Branford, that are in dire need of renovated bedrooms but have only seen adjustments made to select bathrooms. If the bedrooms were to be updated in any of these dorms the entire building would be legally required to be altered for ADA compliance. This means that the College is able to update some aspects of dorms and academic buildings while avoiding the ‘undue burden’ of making these spaces accessible.

It is clear that Conn is ashamed of its lack of accessibility, as the “accessible tour” given to potential students with mobility aids simply excludes these buildings from the tour rather than actually representing the campus in its entirety, inaccessibility and all. We estimate that in order to make all academic buildings on campus fully accessible, it would cost the College upwards of $9.6 million (measurement based on the cost of commercial elevators per floor). This rather large price tag is most likely one of the many reasons older buildings are not renovated at all, because if part of the “primary function area” is renovated, the building must also meet ADA standards that require an elevator.

Article continued on page 6.
A student who anonymously spoke at the SVE Testimonies on Mar. 2 shared that they wanted to pursue a degree in Neuroscience and Psychology but has a disability that inhibits them from climbing stairs in Bill Hall. When they approached the administration about this issue, they were told that if they wanted to pursue this degree, they would need to transfer institutions, as Neuroscience and Psychology classes are inaccessible. By doing this, Conn violated its own Student Bill of Rights.

Beyond physical inaccessibility, "an environment conducive to pursuit of academic requirements" also includes academic accommodations that allow students to participate equitably in the classroom. Academic accommodations may include, but are not limited to: additional time on exams and written assignments, the ability to type rather than handwrite, recording devices for lectures, and an alternative location for exams. Accommodations like these help students with a variety of disabilities to fully participate and excel in the classroom. Although students who are granted formal accommodations through Student Accessibility Services (SAS) are protected under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, students still have to fight for their accommodations on a professor to professor basis, as some professors are not trained in providing accommodations or refuse to provide accommodations at all.

As a senior with multiple learning disabilities, Zoe Dubelier ’23 (one of the authors of this article), has experienced a variety of faculty responses to requesting accommodations:

"My sophomore year, I had an incredible professor who went above and beyond when I met with them individually to discuss accommodations. I have a general processing disorder, which my professor asked me to explain further as they did not have background knowledge on the disability. Due to my processing disorder, I receive additional time on exams, which were not a part of the class curriculum, but rather than not providing any accommodations the professor offered to exclude me from cold calling right after a question is asked, allowing me additional time to process and formulate an answer. On the flip side, the following semester I met with a professor who had to dig through their email’s trash folder to find my SAS accommodations request, a document they are legally required to abide by, that they had not even read. That same semester a professor told me that their quizzes were so straightforward that I would not need additional time, clearly demonstrating a lack of knowledge of learning disabilities."

The denial of academic accommodations is a further violation of the Student Bill of Rights. Connecticut College is in the midst of a massive potential turning point. This past semester, students, faculty, and staff collectively demanded to be provided with the resources to live full and enriching lives on campus. Accessibility is a crucial element of collective wellbeing and must be included in the ongoing DIEI-oriented conversations. A school that claims to champion shared governance should live into that value. Disabled community members must have an empowered seat at the table and must be able to access campus activities just as their non-disabled do. •

MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 2023!

We want to hear about your experiences at Conn and your plans for the future, so please complete the Senior Survey! This should only take 10 minutes or so.

To thank you for your time, all survey completers will be entered into a drawing for a pair of 3rd generation Apple AirPods or a refund of their cap and gown purchase price!

(10 winners will be chosen!)

Scan this code to take the survey or check your email for a link to the survey. Thank you!
Adrien Prouty  
News Editor

Lucie Englehardt  
Managing Editor

Zoe Dubelier  
Layout Editor

As the final days of the semester creep closer, so too does the ceremonial celebration of the hard work of the Class of 2023 as their collegiate education draws to a close. Given the events of this spring, many are wondering how current president Katherine Bergeron will be involved in graduation. Unfortunately, we still don’t know what to expect because the administration has excluded graduating students from these conversations. A committee, separate from the Commencement Committee, has been formed to determine Bergeron’s role at graduation without any student involvement. As students who have experienced the rollercoaster of the last four years, the voice of the senior class is integral to these conversations and their exclusion is just additional evidence of how much this administration needs to change.

Students from the Class of 2023 started their journey at Conn in the fall of 2019 when the world seemed normal. In the past four years, they have spent semesters at home and in isolation, watching as the Class of 2020 missed their graduation and wondering if they too would lose this special day.

Now, their graduation date is approaching, and they are excited to celebrate their tremendous class achievements. They have made friends in spite of COVID-19 restrictions, received honors in spite of Zoom classes, won national championships and prestigious scholarships like the Fulbright and Watson, participated in a historic Fanning occupation, and, finally, made it to the finish line. If graduation is a day to celebrate the lengths to which they have gone, why are they not given a voice in making decisions for this special day?

The politics of the current president’s involvement in graduation is important, but more important is how the students themselves are included in the decision-making process for graduation. There is widespread consensus among the senior class that they would prefer Bergeron’s absence or absolute minimal involvement. Her attendance risks detracting from the seniors as the focus of the event because of the scandals she has been central in. They have spent four years keeping up appearances for Bergeron’s benefit; Bergeron could, for them, honorably step aside and let them have their spotlight in the way they deserve.

Students aren’t only excluded from presidential decisions regarding graduation. In a recent conversation with the Board of Trustees, the Faculty Steering and Conference Committee (FSCC) was told that there is no plan for meaningful student participation in the selection of the anticipated interim president. This comes in spite of weeks of protests against the administration and its lack of transparency and inclusion of students in decisions impacting their College experience. It is overly ambitious for the administration to presume they alone have the means to acquire an interim president that satisfies the student body.

It also comes across as a slap in the face that after everything, every attempt of the students to share their needs, passion, dedication, and commitment to the College to now be excluded from a decision like this.

Hopefully, the administration will reconsider this decision to continue their faulty and exclusionary decision-making traditions, but it is unlikely. As conversations about the search for an interim president continue, students will look toward each other and student leaders to assess how much they will put up with before demanding their voices be heard. Connecticut College is built on shared governance, so including student voices in decision-making is the least the College can do. •

Why Do We Lack Financial Transparency? “BECAUSE WE’RE CONN”

Anyone who has perused the Connecticut College website recently may have noticed the new “Defy Boundaries” button at the top of the screen, which leads to an interactive page centered around the Defy Boundaries campaign. Viewers are met with Conn’s “message to the status quo” in bold white letters: “We’re planning to upend you.” This somewhat aggressive message is just the beginning; Conn’s new marketing strategy is full of bold, assertive, and borderline hostile rhetoric. Scroll down to read, “Our founding was an act of defiance in the name of possibility. We’ve been at it ever since, doing things our own way. And doing them better.” This alludes to the fact that Conn was founded to provide women in Connecticut with a prestigious higher education after Wesleyan University stopped admitting women. The sharp line, “And doing them better,” might be an insult toward Wesleyan, or other colleges in general. Either way, it implies a sense of hierarchy and evokes overcompetitiveness. Throughout the website, Conn uses vague language to exploit alumni and parents’ lack of awareness about the College’s real issues and persuade them to donate.

The all-caps line “BECAUSE WE’RE CONN,” an aggressive answer to a question that has not been asked, appears several times on the new Defy Boundaries page. Realistically, it should be preceded by “Why do we prioritize fundraising for non-essential areas of the College over the wellbeing of our students?” or “Why do we lack financial transparency?” The website claims that Conn’s priorities are “removing barriers, challenging assumptions, and refusing limitations.” This hazy language hides the College’s true priorities reflected in the College’s actions. Students would like to see Conn prioritize the Division of Institutional Equity and Inclusion, residential facilities, dining services, and overall accessibility on campus. However, the Defy Boundaries website is aimed toward potential donors, which typically excludes current Conn students. This vague list of values may be enough to convince Conn alumni and parents to donate since they are not as acutely aware of the disconnect between Conn’s rhetoric and its actions.

The website then includes sections dedicated to major aspects of the College. “Athletics” is first, followed by “Career Preparation,” “Financial Strength,” “Student Life,” and lastly, “Teaching and Learning.” First and foremost, colleges are educational institutions. If this is true, then why is “Teaching and Learning” last? Athletics is intentionally first because Conn knows that many athletes reflect on their college experience fondly due to their heightened sense of camaraderie and school spirit, increasing their likelihood of donating. Conn has already heavily funded its athletic program, a division of the College which, arguably, is not in as desperate need as other areas in the
**Why Do We Lack Financial Transparency? “BECAUSE WE’RE CONN”**

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*Article continued from page 7.*

wake of recent protests concerning a desperate lack of DIEI funding. Interestingly, on the website menu, “Teaching and Learning” is first rather than last, making it easy to navigate to.

“Shatter expectations. Don’t mess with a Camel,” the athletics page states. The campaign goals include expanding the athletic center, “[r]ecruit[ing], support[ing] and retain[ing] the finest coaches,” and providing more funding for “equipment, team travel, recruiting and more.” Colleges (and sports) are inevitably competitive; Conn is a business that aims to outperform its competitors. "We see the scoreboard, and we see how much everything that helps Camels win matters,” the website reads. This line implicitly compares the act of donation with a competitive game in order to convince former Conn athletes, or parents of Conn athletes, to donate.

After athletics comes the “Career Preparation” section. Conn is proud of its Hale Center for Career Development (named after multimillion donors Karen and Rob Hale). The page’s title reads “Rethink everything.” This is an unfitting slogan for a career program. The website falsely states that $3,000 is “available to students who, having completed the career course, are seeking career-related internships or research opportunities,” ignoring the other necessary steps to even apply for the funds.

Many students do not even bother completing all of the steps (ACEs) because they are tedious and students would rather dedicate energy to finding jobs.

Its next page, “Financial Strength,” boasts that the average student debt burden of the Class of 2021 is $22,740. Is that a number to be proud of? The College transitions from boasting its $3,000 stipend to each student while simultaneously trapping students with tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Part of the Hale family’s $30-million donation to Conn was directed to the Hale Scholarship Initiative. “When fully realized, the Hale Initiative will add $20 million to the endowment for scholarship and financial aid, significantly advancing the College’s commitment to access and attracting the nation’s top students, including BIPOC and first-generation students, as well as those from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds,” the website reads. Generous scholarship packages may be a way to attract students of all backgrounds, but Conn does not do enough to support students once they arrive on campus. And if those prospective students learned the reality of Conn’s deceit, they would turn away.

In reality, the government determines how much financial aid students qualify for, and Conn’s Office of Admissions gives out merit scholarships (the highest scholarship does not even cover half of Conn’s yearly tuition). The statement that Conn meets 100% of a student’s demonstrated need is misleading because the FAFSA really determines how much a student “needs” (the aid is often insufficient).

The “Student Life” section of the website emphasizes the importance of learning outside of the classroom and “impassioned debates.” Conn may be using protest rhetoric in their campaign to attract more donors. At the bottom of every page, the quote “Every gift of every size helps Conn tear down another barrier” appears. The notions of removing barriers, challenging the status quo, and “Defying Boundaries” are prominent on the new website. Conn’s marketing team could be leaning into this rhetoric to appear radical and gain credibility for their campaign.

23 percent of the Class of 2025 are domestic students of color. This is not a statistic of pride. According to the U.S. News & World Report 2022-2023 list of “Liberal Arts Colleges Ranked by Ethnic Diversity,” Conn holds the lowest diversity index of all the NESCACs. While Conn makes efforts to increase diversity, many may not even consider a school with BIPOC students making up less than a quarter of the student population.

According to the website, “Conn fosters an environment of equity and justice by promoting civil discourse through such endeavors as the landmark Agnes Gund ’60 Dialogue Project and the Conversations on Race series.” While the Gund Dialogue Project is technically active now, their last training session was in September 2021 and they lost their advisor, Rachel Stewart.

The renovation of Crozier-Williams is first on the list of campaign goals under “Student Life.” While the project is exciting, it is not as essential as the renovation of Harris Refectory, which has been postponed due to the Cro project. The Harris employees express frustration, as they struggle to meet the needs of the masses of hungry students every day with underperforming equipment and a subpar work environment. Unsurprisingly, “Dining Hall and Student Residences” is at the bottom of the campaign goals list.

“Dining Hall and Student Residences” is at the bottom of the campaign goals list. “It is easy to take for granted the lasting impact that shared experiences over meals and in residence halls can have on students,” the blurb reads. Conn admits that they do not prioritize dining and residences in their campaign; they attempt to appeal to the emotions and nostalgia of donors who likely have no desire to give to these essential elements of daily campus life. The “Teaching and Learning” page claims, “93 percent of incoming students are drawn to Conn because of the Connections curriculum” with no indication of where the statistic comes from.

Concerns about financial transparency are rising. The Defy Boundaries website’s list of donation options is misleading. On the “Give” page, the first area of support to which people can donate is the “Area of Greatest Need.” Who determines the “Area of Greatest Need”? Certainly not Conn students, faculty, or staff. In November of 2021, The College Voice surveyed students for their “Areas of Greatest Need” and found that housing, counseling, sexual violence prevention, and food were the most common responses. Ironically, residential and dining services are not even on the list of areas to which people can donate; the broad “Student Life” category is the closest. To donate to those vital services, one has to select “Other” and type in the area themselves. This could partly explain why money is going toward non-essential areas, like building a new entrance sign, while those in desperate need are neglected. Athletics is one of the main areas to which people can donate, yet arts are nowhere on the list.

While Conn’s new marketing scheme may be effective in collecting donations, it fails to persuade donors to give to the true areas of greatest need. The Defy Boundaries campaign makes it easy to give to Conn’s performative sources of pride and almost impossible to give to students’ desperate needs. •
A Sleepy Floralia for MOBROC

ABBY DAWSON
CONTRIBUTOR

It’s May 7, 2022: my first ever Floralia, and I am beyond excited because I have the privilege of performing as a first-year! I had gotten a mere 3 hours of sleep the night before because I could not contain my anticipation. It’s 12:50 p.m., time for us to take the stage. The music runs through my veins as I pluck the strings on my bass. It’s muscle memory. But it’s not being on stage that excites me, it’s the fact that I get to play for all my peers, some of whom have been waiting years for the moment MOBROC once again takes the stage at Floralia. I will never forget the looks on their faces, the dancing, the arms waving in rhythm, and the cheers. It is a shame that my peers in MOBROC are unlikely to have such a crowd when they take the stage on May 6, 2023. Instead, student musicians will be met with the almost nonexistent “nap time” crowd, between 4-6 p.m.

Students gear up and wait in lines with their tents to not only get the best spot on the green but also to prepare to see their classmates rock out on stage. As members of the MOBROC executive board candidly wrote in a letter to the Office of Student Engagement and Student Activities Council, “We feel that MOBROC’s performance last year in the opening slot brought much energy to the festival, and that the overall campus community is enriched when student musicians are able to play for a crowd of their peers.” The 12 p.m. to 12 a.m. music festival is far too long for students to be out dancing and is frankly a very unrealistic expectation. In addition, the pressure to watch all of the acts raises concerns for students who are permitted to drink alcohol. Students cannot be blamed for wanting to stay healthy as well as see their peers perform, and they shouldn’t have to choose between the two. This is why including a designated “nap time” period would be beneficial for student health and would encourage people to slow down and rest. This could be achieved by having conversations with the administration to see what is the most adequate approach for students, and playing music through speakers during the aforementioned “nap time.” We comment once again in the letter, “Instead of utilizing the solutions which were cooperatively created by musicians and administrators, it seems clear to us that the decision made to place student musicians during this time demonstrates a value system which takes for granted the hard work that we put into Floralia performances. MOBROC, a student group that has been repeatedly expected to work and perform for free (despite negotiating for payment), has been placed in the time slot that nobody would dare disrespect a paid artist with.”

Why is it that artists who grace the same stage get paid thousands while we have never been reimbursed for our labor?

I also want to comment on the ethics of scheduling bands to play for empty crowds during “nap time.” Several paid artists were scheduled during the “nap time” period last year, lugging their expensive gear and spending gas money only to be met with an empty crowd. It saddens me that my fellow student musicians must endure the same fate and experience the same level of disrespect from student and administrative organizers who did not inform them that there would be no crowd to play for. The disrespect is palpable from organizers who did not officially contact MOBROC about the change of time slot, prompting us to write the aforementioned letter. We requested in our letter that we be moved back to our original time slot. However, members of the MOBROC executive board were told during a subsequent meeting—which I was not able to attend—that SAC was unwilling to break contracts with the opening musicians, though most of them are fellow Conn students unaffiliated with MOBROC.

To solve this, SAC claims that they will attempt to implement measures that will get people to stay midday, and claimed that our proximity to the larger acts will attract a larger audience, however, speaking from my and many others’ experiences, people will most likely need a mid-day break. Payment for MOBROC musicians playing at Floralia was not confirmed at this meeting.

Student musicians choose to donate their labor toward building a live music culture on Conn’s campus, and I know of bands that have been preparing for months for Conn’s biggest event of the year. What good are we if there is no crowd to play for? Furthermore, it was a slap in the face for fellow student musicians who happened to have more power over the logistical processes of Floralia to move our time slot without informing us. There was talk of MOBROC boycotting Floralia due to this appalling treatment of fellow students, and my band had to drop out not only because we were disgusted by this treatment, but because MOBROC’s slot was cut from 3 hours to 2 hours and 40 minutes. Nonetheless, we all stand by the fact that MOBROC is a culturally relevant part of Floralia, and we will continue to play.

Lastly, I want to make it clear that a rest period is essential. It is impossible for me to be angry at my peers who need to rest during nap time; who knows if I will feel the same? Please listen to your body, rest when needed, and have a happy and safe Floralia.

Photo Courtesy of Catja Christensen ’23
The Big Three of the East and the Wild, Wild West

Fritz Baldauf
Sports Editor

The 2022/23 NBA Regular Season was wild to say the least. Wild in both good and bad ways. But the NBA Playoffs are finally here. The regular season was a slog at times, but fans are about to be rewarded with one of the most anticipated playoffs in recent memory. Never has the playing field felt so level. Normally in an NBA season, there are only four to six teams that seem to have an actual shot at winning the title. This season, that number feels more like eight to ten. Here are some of the biggest storylines in the 2023 playoff field.

Eastern Conference:

Who can stop the Bucks (other than injuries)?

The 2021 NBA Champions cruised to the first seed in the east, coming up just short of sixty wins. This is the same core that captured the title two seasons ago. Jrue Holiday remains the best defensive guard in the league. Brook Lopez is an elite rim protector. Khris Middleton is the perfect sidekick, and it all revolves around the consensus best player in the world, Giannis Antetokounpo. Milwaukee is the odds on favorite to roll through the east, but the injury concerns around Middleton that derailed their championship hopes last season haven't entirely gone away, and Antetokounmpo injured his back in game one of the first round.

After last season's Finals defeat, is it finally the time for Tatum, Brown and Co.?

The Boston Celtics will certainly view last season's NBA Finals as the one that got away, after they led the Warriors two to one in the series with a lead in the fourth quarter of game four before eventually losing in six games. Can they finish the job this year? The answer to that question will largely revolve around the shot making of star forwards Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown, which has been inconsistent in the playoff runs of years past. A rematch of last year's seven game marathon with the Bucks looms in a potential Eastern Conference Finals showdown. Brown's impending free agency is also hanging over this year's playoff run, and his cryptic remarks about the team's fan base have done nothing to quiet rumors of his potential exit.

Can the Sixers get past round two?

Star center Joel Embiid has been the runner up for MVP the past two seasons, and has campaigned hard for himself to win the award this year. If he does, it would be deserved, but what would do more to change the perception of himself and this iteration of the Sixers would be to make it to a Conference Finals for the first time since 2001. With co-star James Harden aging, this may be the last best chance this Sixers team has to make a run.

Can a dark horse knock off one of the East's heavyweights?

Unlike the western conference, there has been a clear top three in the East all year. The seedings reflects that. Nobody has given any team much of a chance to make it to the East Finals other than Milwaukee, Boston or Philadelphia. It's highly unlikely either of those teams will be challenged in round one, and Boston and Philly are on a second round collision course. But could the winner of the four vs. five seed matchup shock Milwaukee? The New York Knicks are resurgent, deep, and well-coached, although they lack a real superstar. A young and exciting Cleveland Cavaliers team has superstar power in the trio of Donovan Mitchell, Darius Garland, and Evan Mobely, but lacks depth. Don't be surprised if either of these teams pushes the Bucks more than expected, especially if Middleton and Antetokounpos injury issues linger.

Western Conference:

Denver is healthy for the first time since the bubble; it's time to make a run.

The Nuggets boast back to back MVP Nikola Jokic, but have only won one playoff series in the past two seasons. This is in large part due to Jokic's sidekick Jamal Murray spending 15 months sidelined with a torn ACL. With a healthy Murray and the ever steady Jokic, the Nuggets captured the West's first seed and appear primed to make a deep run. Questions do remain about this team's ability to defend in a playoff setting. All three of their top scorers, Jokic, Murray, and Michael Porter Jr., are subpar defenders and defense wins championships. The team also looks lost in the minutes when Jokic is on the bench. A second round matchup with the loaded Phoenix Suns (more on them next) looms.

The Suns have the most star power on paper, but haven't played together much.

On paper, the Phoenix Suns should win the NBA title, but basketball isn't played on paper. The midseason blockbuster trade for Kevin Durant gave the team a needed shot in the arm, clearly vaulting them into the category of title contender. Their nucleus of Durant, Devin Booker, Chris Paul, and DeAndre Ayton has only played eight games together due to Durant's injuries this season. They've been dominant with all four on the court, but Durant and Paul are both old and constant injury concerns. Not to mention Paul's long history of playoff flameouts. There is no depth on the bench, and there is no precedent in NBA history for a team acquiring its best player midseason and then winning a title that same year.

Are the Kings anything more than a feel good story?

The Sacramento Kings snapped the longest active playoff drought in American pro sports by capturing the West's third seed this year. Led by point guard DeAaron Fox and big man Domantas Sabonis, they're one of the most fun teams to watch in the league. Their defense is solid and they have an experienced and talented roster. But will their play translate to the playoffs, however? Their defense was one of the worst in the league, and they are incredibly inexperienced. They also drew an incredibly challenging first round matchup: the defending champion Golden State Warriors in the first ever playoff battle for I-80 and Northern California bragging rights. Defensive and experience concerns aside, if they can get past the Warriors, the Kings would have a real path to the Conference Finals and—with some luck—maybe even the Finals.

Is this the last gasp of the Warriors' dynasty?

The Golden State Warriors have defined the last decade of NBA basketball, winning
The Big Three of the East and the Wild, Wild West

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*Article continued from page 10.*

four of the past eight championships, including last season’s crowning achievement against the Celtics. This was one of the rockiest seasons that they have had under Steve Kerr. The team sputtered through injuries, inconsistent play, a remarkably bad road record, and a preseason fight to the six seed, the lowest seed they’ve been in any year they made the playoffs since Kerr took over as coach. The team faces an uphill battle to get out of the first round. Yet they are still the Warriors. This is still the core of Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson, and Draymond Green that has never—I repeat NEVER—lost a playoff series in which all three started all of the games. Although these might not be the same Warriors of old, the championship DNA is still there. They are battle tested, and know how to win deep in the playoffs more than any other team in the league. Sacramento has given them more than they can handle for much of the first round so far. With the aging core and time running down on Green’s contract, this could be the last time we see this iteration of the mighty Warriors dynasty all together.

Track & Field Leaps to New Heights at Silfen Invitational

*Hannah Foley  
Sports Editor*

On April 14 & 15, the Connecticut College Track & Field team hosted their annual Silfen Invitational, bringing roughly 20 teams to New London to compete. The event was a huge success, with Conn athletes breaking four school records and boasting 19 top 3 finishes. The women’s team took first place in the women’s division and the men’s team came in second in the men’s division.

Senior three-time All-American Jeffrey Love broke the record for the fastest 10K by a male Conn athlete. He won first place in the 10K race, with fellow Conn senior Matt Carter finishing in third place, roughly 30 seconds behind Love.

The women’s 4x800m relay team set a new school record, finishing with a time of 9:25.09. The relay team, made up of freshman Grace McDonough, freshman Alexa Estes, freshman Abby Fernald, and senior Julia Curran, finished first in their race at Silfen.

Senior Erica MacSweeney broke the Conn record for women’s triple jump, landing at 11.54 meters. She claimed the new school record and first-place prize for women’s triple jump, as well as a first-place finish in the women’s 400m hurdles and a third-place finish in the women’s long jump.

Junior Chris Koskinen racked up 5399 points in the men’s decathlon competition, shattering the Conn record and placing second in the Silfen competition.

Other top three finishers include:

- Senior Chris Verstandig captured a first-place victory in the men’s 800m with a time of 1:54.56.
- Senior two time All-American Malissa Lindsey defended her crown, winning the women’s 100m with a time of 12.16 seconds. She also came in second place in the 200m race with a time of 25.33 seconds.
- The women’s 4x400m relay team comprised of junior Jazmyn Gillespie, senior Malissa Lindsey, freshman Camille Cortes, and senior Mary Rusnock finished second with a time of 4:07.67.
- Senior Julia Curran came in second in the Women’s 5K with a time of 17:33.08.
- Freshman Alex Estes finished second in the Women’s 800m with a time of 2:17.99.
- Sophomore Harry Hardwood finished second in the Men’s 1500m with a time of 4:07.67.
- The women’s 4x100m relay team, comprised of Gillespie, Rusnock, sophomore Abby Ilsorio, and Lindsey, placed third with a time of 49.19 seconds.

Congratulations to the entire Conn Track & Field team on a great showing. Conn will be hosting the NESCAC Track & Field Championships this Saturday, Apr 29, where the athletes will be looking to qualify for NCAA Regionals. Go Camels!
than getting the best time. Seeing how excited I made my teammates and seeing how happy they were made me happier than the win itself. I love uplifting my team.”

Finkel is a Biology major with a minor in Hispanic Studies. Around campus, you’ll often find him at Zachs Hillel House, where he works as the Shabbat Coordinator on the Conn Coll Hillel Board. He is also a SAC representative for the swim team and is a member of the golf and chess clubs.

In order to succeed so highly in swimming, Finkel and the rest of his team have a rigorous practice schedule. During peak season, Finkel practices 20 hours a week. He has double practice four times a week, which means a 5:30 a.m. wake-up time for each of those mornings. Practices consist of lifting in the gym and training in the pool.

Finkel has faced a few injuries throughout his swimming career, but has managed to persist nonetheless. He dealt with two torn ligaments in his ankle at the beginning of this season, and has had multiple nerve and shoulder injuries. Finkel has done over two years of physical therapy, and considers himself injury-prone. He has also dealt with a lot of mental blocks and obstacles during his career, but manages to get through by always challenging and pushing himself harder.

“I don’t even know what life is without swimming anymore; it’s been my whole life,” Finkel said. “It’s like second nature to me. It takes a lot of conditioning to get faster in swimming. You have to keep pushing yourself, and I definitely push myself. I love the individual aspect because I feel like I’m not letting anyone down and I only have myself to blame. I work my hardest not to disappoint myself and not to disappoint my team.”

While Finkel doesn’t have any specific good luck charms, he does employ a pre-race strategy. “I like deep breathing,” Finkel said. “I look like I’m having a panic attack behind the block, but I’m just zoned in. I’d say the overall summary of my ritual is that I like to zone in, take deep breaths, and just YOLO, go for it.”

Finkel attributes his success to a few key people who have guided him throughout his career, including his parents, his high school swim coach, Sean Farrell, his current college coach, Marc Benvenuti, and all of his teammates who have helped and supported each other along the way.

“I’m so thankful for Conn swimming,” Finkel said. “I’ve done better in these last two years than I have in my entire swimming career. Conn swimming is something different. It’s not a team, it’s a family. It destroys my expectations. It’s so fun to do the sport you love with the people you love. My teammates and I have all built our lives around swimming, so we can relate very well. My best friends here are swimmers and it’s easy to connect with them. We have such a good culture, so that makes it more fun. It’s like torture but, I love being tortured with my teammates.”

Although the star swimmer has already broken and exceeded his current goals, he has plans for his future swimming career that guarantee to push him further.

“I’m really happy with myself and where I am,” Finkel said. “I didn’t even expect to be here, so it’s awesome. I have high goals, but a lot of the goals I set for this year, I completed. So, I’m not really sure where to go from here. After college, I’d love to train for a triathlon. But while I’m here, I’d like to make the U.S. Olympic Trials and continue to keep breaking all of my current records. In my senior year, I would love to set the NCAA records in my events.”

Justin is finishing up his sophomore year and still has 2 years left to accomplish those big goals. Make sure to check him and the entire swim team out next season!
In July 2020, soon-to-be EIC Kendrick Hawkins was flipping through options on what to name a new campus style magazine, a seemingly lofty imagination which was then just blossoming. In her head, she landed on Gray Area Magazine, a name she thinks captures what the creative ambiguities of fashion lay bare.

GAM had a slow burn of a first year, moving through a labyrinth of COVID restrictions, but managed to produce an impressive Fall 2021 debut edition – cleverly and colorfully shot at the arcade at Ocean Beach boardwalk – and published its sequel in the spring. The club now has garnered a sizable, dedicated layout and operations team with an excited campus following to fuel their work.

Their newest creative landscape entitled COMMUTE is a visually magnetic and eclectic “zine,” showcasing a melange of curated moments stretched out across a funky accordion fold. The ‘zine is something different from the typical 8.5”x11” editorial publication; it is an inventive and eye-catching layout that intends to build momentum for GAM’s final issue of the academic year, which is set to release in May 2023. It discusses travel fashion in both its trends and its pasts, alongside patchwork graphics of models hauling suitcases, awaiting their trains, and lounging on the classic Shoreline East imitation-leather. They shot at the downtown New London train station and on the ride itself, to Old Saybrook and back.

“By introducing a zine to our publication cycle, we hoped to bring in more students who may not know what they want to do in the club,” Hawkins shares. “Oftentimes modeling can be very scary, but COMMUTE gives the models an opportunity to have fun with the theme and with themselves. Each layout team member had a unique vision for their 1-3 page spread and worked hard to create this awesome collage of community. I think it came together perfectly.”

The intent of Gray Area is to make fashion media and creative projects more accessible, foster meaningful conversations on style and design, and support eager writers, artists, and models in this new vision. By reaching more corners of student life and working with brands like Generation Consciousness in their latest shoot, Hawkins is hoping to continue deepening the GAM influence on campus and using it as a tool to forge community.

Outreach and accessibility was a priority for the magazine. Hawkins’ original intent for Gray Area was to create something meaningful in the wake of Conn’s past two fashion publications. Excited to play a part in The Look as an eager first-year, Hawkins immediately volunteered herself into its frenzy; she enthusiastically attended club meetings, showed through at photoshoots, and wrote a couple articles. The Look was tight and stylish, visually impressive cover-to-cover. The social dynamics, though, were intimidating to many and its lack of inclusivity limited the overall creative potential of the magazine. Hawkins didn’t want a rebrand of The Look – or its second iteration, the long-retired Bespoke – but to instead start an entirely new vision to accompany a new set of principles.

“I wanted it to become a brand – literally – that people could rely on. Where someone could say, ‘I have an idea, let me send it to Gray Area, and we can make it happen with them.’”

GAM seeks to serve the ebbs and flows, ambiguities, and eccentricities that lay within fashion’s vast landscape. It asks, what are current trends that we see? How are these trends heightened within digital spaces? Upon what is fashion predicated?

The popular GAM merch, designed by Gemma Savitz-Vogel ’25, ties together some loose financial ends: a much-needed source of funding for a magazine unwilling to skimp on the visual details. Hawkins, a senior, will tie a bow on her hard work on May 11 when the Summer 2023 issue releases, and leave Gray Area in the hands of the talented team who she confidently credits getting the magazine up and off the ground.

She has plenty of faith for the future of the magazine. “I’m excited for hopefully having a website, I’m excited for the incoming leadership team because we have a lot of creative people with creative ideas coming in.”

Gray Area is still in the early stages of defining itself, but similar to its take on fashion, the power is what will come and go in its future.

You can check out GAM’s zine floating around campus, or visit https://issuu.com/grayareamag/docs/commute_zine.
“Life is Pandemonium”: Wig and Candle’s “25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee”

Some individual highlights of the show:
Rona Lisa Peretti’s (Katie Caviness) classic expressions as she attempted to control the cast of spellers. Caviness fully sold Rona’s character of the spelling bee champion whose life peak was winning that title.
Sophia Bianchi as Chip Tolentino lent in to her masculine side portraying the middle school boy crushing on a randomly chosen audience member. His unfortunate erection at Leaf’s sister left the audience in stitches.
Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre’s (Louise Wade) overbearing parents did not stop her from reaching political success and overcoming her stammer in the end.
Leaf Coneybear’s (Jo Duckett) cape caused chaos on the stage as Duckett adorned their fellow spellers with stickers and, later in the show, their sock puppet nailed spelling capybara. Seems like you actually are quite smart, Coneybear, after all.
William Morris Barfée’s (Elora Maxwell) humorous “Magic Foot” rendition complete with the best jazzy dance moves.
Marcy Park (Cate Hashemi), who artfully spoke six languages, yet realized (thanks to Jesus) that she didn’t need to win at spelling to be happy.
Olive Ostrovsky (Maggie Sendlenski) gave a moving performance of “The I Love You Song.” Her parents may not have turned up to see her, but she found a friend— and not just the dictionary this time— through spelling.

This show drew quite a crowd, so suffice to say, Wig and Candle was fortunate to have the space afforded by Evans Hall. With crowds brought to their feet each night, dancing and hollering with laughter, the “25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” was a once in a lifetime experience.
I have played video games since I was incredibly young, and they have been a staple in my life. Embarrassingly enough, I have a bit of a reputation among my friends that I am a big fan of the Nintendo character, Luigi. With this context, to say I was excited for “The Super Mario Bros. Movie” (TSMBM) is an understatement. The movie was released to general theaters on April 5, but I was looking forward to it since hearing about its production.

This movie is incredibly fun and colorful, and it possesses the same magic that comes from sitting down and playing the video game. The film includes an incredible amount of Easter eggs and nostalgic factors for gaming fans, while still providing an accessible story for younger audiences. TSMBM is the kind of film that most audiences will enjoy whether they like video games, animated films, or just the movie theater experience.

One thing that makes me hesitant is the film’s voice acting. Fans were nervous that the voice actors cast, specifically Chris Pratt as Mario, were a bad idea. While not perfect, the cast seems to have done their best. The talented Anya-Taylor Joy as Peach brings a reassuring and powerful princess to the big screen, and the character had a lot more agency in the film than previous adaptations. Charlie Day as Luigi is both comedic and endearing, and he portrays the timid younger brother very well. Seth Rogen, however, really just plays himself in the film. The deep-voiced comedian with his notorious laugh works surprisingly well for the character of Donkey Kong. Fans seem to be in agreement that the star of the cast is Jack Black as Bowser. Without giving too much away, Black has some wonderful (and surprisingly musical) moments. I also want to point out that Charles Martinet, the original voice actor for Mario, Luigi, and many other Nintendo characters, has a few voice cameos in this film, so be sure to listen for them!

The animation is absolutely beautiful. It felt like the stellar graphics of recent Mario games had been translated onto the big screen almost perfectly. There are still moments where certain background characters are a little reminiscent of Illumination Studios’ famed style (as seen in movies such as “Despicable Me,” “Sing,” and more) which has been criticized for looking generic and somewhat “plastic.” In my opinion, it is nothing noticeable, and this is coming from someone who has already seen the film three times in theaters. Just the Rainbow Road segment, which has been shown in trailers, is truly stunning. By the time the film ends, you want to go home and play a Super Mario game, whether that’s Mario Kart or Super Mario Galaxy.

The absolute highlight of this film is the soundtrack. The soundtrack has so many well-known and recognizable themes. Not only does the film feature some of the funniest raps in Nintendo history, but the instrumental work is flawless. The score almost feels like you walked into a Nintendo concert featuring tracks from Mario, Donkey Kong, and even games like Captain Toad Treasure Tracker. I seriously recommend that people go see this film solely for the soundtrack.

I do think some of the pop song choices outside of the instrumental score might have seemed odd to people. There were famous songs like “Thunderstruck” and “Mr. Blue Sky,” which I didn’t have an issue with! People suspect that the classic song choices were due to the franchise originating from the 80s, thus having an older selection of songs.

One of the downsides is that the movie was too short. Its runtime is only about an hour and a half. Of course, animation takes time to complete and a feature-length film takes years to finish. But my friends and I felt so sad when it was over, because we were having such a good time. We’re all hopeful that this film was the start of a larger cinematic franchise of video game movies, but only time will tell.

TSMBM is really a fun watch and a good experience, regardless of how much of a fan you are. The film has heart, both from the video game perspective and in the emotional sense. The movie has themes about family dynamics, love (in many different forms) and finding yourself in a difficult-to-navigate world. It’s not just a film about video game references and logic, but it’s a film that encourages you to surround yourself with people who love and support you. I 100% recommend you go and see “The Super Mario Bros. Movie.”
Arts • 16

FLORALIA '23
SATURDAY, MAY 6TH

LUTE LEONDIS
MOLLY MAGUIRES - SHE-J MERCULES - PONCHO AND THE RAINMEN
PROSE AND CONNS - GALLows LANE - THE GREAT SENIOR SENDOFF
TYLER & ASSOCIATES - SLIPPIN' JIMMY AND THE WET FLOORS
ANOTHER MICHAEL - THE PREPPY KID B2B TY - PINTREE - BOYSCOTT

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EDITOR'S FLORALIA PICKS

ELLIE WAGNER
NOAH KAHAN
PHOEBE BRIDGERS
ARCTIC MONKEYS
DAISY JONES AND THE SIX
ONE DIRECTION

ZOE DUBELIER
CAT BURRSS
NEW RULES
NUMI WEIR
CATY BAGER
MAHSIE PETERS
KELSER BALLOW

CATJA CHRISTENSEN
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MARCUS MAN
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PRINCE
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THE 1975
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