



## NEWLY ADMITTED STUDENTS ENJOY AN AUTHENTIC DAY IN THE LIFE AT CHOATE

By **Ethan Zhang '26**  
*Copy Editor*

With the arrival of spring, Choate welcomed the families of over 200 accepted students for Revisit Days on April 2, 4, and 5. As a way for prospective families to familiarize themselves with the Choate community, Revisit Days showcased culture through an opening speech by Chief Enrollment Manager Mr. Jeff Beaton, an expansive Community Fair, and, for prospective students, the opportunity to shadow a Choate student.

As the prospective families arrived at Choate, they were greeted by Boar Pen and a group of Gold Key students congratulating and directing them to Colony Hall. After registering and entering the main stage, Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis and Mr. Beaton gave their opening remarks. Afterwards, families gathered in the lobby, where they socialized, took pictures with Choate's wild boar mascot, and listened to live music from the Jazz Combo student group.

After the opening assembly, visiting students met and paired up with their designated student host while their families attended several Q&A-style panels. Hosted by various Choate faculty, parents and caregivers of newly admitted students got to ask questions about Signature Programs, counseling, and opportunities to study abroad.



Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Choate student hosts walk to class with revisiting students.

Prospective students then joined their student host throughout the day, where they had the opportunity to contribute to classroom discussions, enjoy a meal in the dining hall, and experience Choate through the student lens.

As a host, representing student life accurately at Choate was crucial. "We tell families and students that we want them to be themselves when they come to

campus for Revisit Day, so they have that feeling on campus of 'this is the place for me,'" Associate Director of Admission Ms. Cynthia Stahura said. Emerson Nappi '27 hosted Taeyoung Kim, a swimmer and violinist from South Korea. "I gave him a genuine experience. I didn't fake anything," Nappi said. "I was able to show him [that] you could have a good time in class while still learning."

Student hosts also used their free blocks to show prospective students around other facilities, which helped their hostesses get a better feel for the campus. Madeline Baldwin '27 toured Claire Driver, a cross country athlete from New Haven who was interested in drama and humanities. "I took her to the [Paul Mellon Arts Center] theater where she might be performing plays in the fall," Baldwin said.

Many teachers felt that setting realistic work expectations and classroom norms was necessary for prospective students to understand academic life at Choate. "I want to show them that [Choate] students are comfortable engaging in conversation and capable of critical thinking and potentially disagreeing," Humanities teacher Mr. James Stanley said. "This is a place where we take academics se-

riously. Students are well-prepared and ready to engage." Chemistry teacher Mr. Will Morris added, "While we work hard, I hope students see that our classrooms are not overly cutthroat or particularly high-stress and that it is a supportive learning environment."

At the end of the academic day, prospective students parted ways with their host and headed to the Community Fair with their families. There, they learned about clubs and student organizations, met coaches and captains, and familiarized themselves with Signature Programs at Choate. "It's festive," Ms. Stahura said. "We want to make the end of the day as casual as possible, so [prospective students] can see who they need to talk to and get those final questions answered." As the Girls' Varsity Hockey Assistant Coach, Mr. Stanley said, "[At Community Fair], you get to meet players and parents you might be coaching and establish those relationships early on."

Ultimately, Revisit Days aimed to give prospective students and families a sense of what life is like at Choate. "We want them to see Choate for what we are, as a community ... They may be looking into some peer schools, so we want to help them see if Choate's a great fit for them," Ms. Stahura said.

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## C4W Hosts Annual Poetry Reading

By **Addy Hawthorne '27**  
*Reporter*

Choate for Women (C4W), a club promoting understanding and awareness of women's issues, has provided an invaluable space to engage in thoughtful discourse. In honor of March being Women's History Month, C4W hosted its second annual Feminist Poetry Reading on March 25. This year, the event was centered on creating healthy discussion around female relationships.

While last year's poetry night had no specific theme, Vice-President Mikayla DaSilva '24 explained that C4W decided to introduce themes in order to make each poetry night "more distinct." She added, "We decided on female friendships because we feel like we've highlighted that a lot in our meetings this year." For many members of C4W, female friendships and mutual support within the community are what they love most about the club.

Librarians at the Andrew Mellon Library were excited to help set up for the reading because this event furthered a common goal they shared with C4W: creating a welcoming space for all. Assistant Librarian Ms. Sam Nelson said that when students "get to show off who they are, the space becomes more inclusive, inviting, and enriching as a result."

Many Choate students volunteered to share either original poems or one from a favorite author. Among them was Kadija

Benzinane '27, who read "Beauty Standards," an excerpt from Shahd Allahabi's book *Phases & Their Places*. "Because of the community that Choate for Women has created, I felt very comfortable coming and sharing a poem," she said.

After each poem, readers were invited to share a discussion question with the group. "Beauty Standards" was Camila Granda '25's favorite from the night. Benzinane's pick struck up an interesting discussion regarding the problem of how women of color, specifically ones with curly hair, are negatively affected by beauty standards. "[The poem] got us talking about beauty standards, and it's cool to talk about with so many girls who have curly hair ... to be able to say these are curls, to [be able to] celebrate them and talk about them happily was a highlight for me," Granda said.

The poetry night was successful in its goal of celebrating and appreciating female relationships. "In a place where there's so much rivalry and competition all the time, having healthy female friendships is crucial, and Choate for Women is the perfect place to foster and nurture those types of friendships," Granda said. "Choate for Women and poetry readings are the perfect way to keep getting to know the girls on this campus, even though we might be in completely different social circles."

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## Spring Break Trips: Crossing Continents, Celebrating Culture

By **Aiden Kuo '27**  
*Reporter*

Over spring break, several Choate students and faculty members visited Cuba, Arizona, and South Africa to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and societies. Traveling across the globe, the trips provided students with eye-opening experiences that changed their perspective on various global issues. While participating in different activities, students also had the opportunity to meet local residents and bond with their peers.

### Border Studies in Arizona

From March 1–8, students traveled to Tuscon, Arizona with Biology teacher Mr. Chris Aguiar and Spanish teacher Dr. Maria Ghiggia. In collaboration with BorderLinks — a non-profit offering experiential learning opportunities that explore the difficulties of migration along the Southern border — the trip was planned to give students the unique opportunity to deepen their understanding of the current situation at the United States-Mexico border.

Students worked with numerous organizations to help immigrants on a variety of issues from legal aid to medical assistance. They viewed documentaries highlighting different stakeholders and groups involved at the border and participated in workshops to simulate dealing with fictional situations.

By speaking with both people directly affected by migration and advocates for migrant justice, the students were able to



Photo courtesy of @gochoate on Instagram

Choate students visit an elementary school in Cuba.

learn a lot. "I hope students took away how powerful their stories are and have an appreciation for the privileges and luxuries that we have here," Mr. Aguiar said.

For Rodrigo Chon Him '25, one of the most impactful activities the group participated in was hiking through the same desert immigrants pass through when crossing from Mexico to Arizona. Chon Him described the experience as "humbling" and also "very sad [when] you put yourself in their position. You can imagine kids wandering around for days, maybe even weeks."

The trip also allowed Chon Him to reflect on his own family and opened his eyes to his privileges. "As someone who comes from a Hispanic family, my ancestors immigrated to the United States. Thankfully, I didn't have to go through the same process as them and was able to come to America

legally," Chon Him said. "Seeing and understanding the different struggles and adversities these families faced but still managed to have a smile on their faces made me realize how I sometimes don't appreciate things enough."

Students on the trip were left with a new perspective and understanding of the border crisis. "[When] we went to Nogales, Arizona, to the wall, we could actually see across — you could stick your hand through — and there was a school right there with children outside playing ... the border literally separates two communities," Thandiwe Taylor '26 said. "People say that this is the most dangerous border crossing, but I just think that showed to me how much they criminalize the migrants who are crossing ... They really have a misconstrued narrative here and being there really opened up my eyes."

### Art, History, and Mystery in Cuba

In partnership with Spanish Studies Abroad and chaperoned by Director of Faculty Development and Arts teacher Dr. Jessica Cuni, Fifth-form Dean and History Teacher Dr. Yaser Robles, and History teacher Ms. Abby Kandel, the trip to Cuba lasted from March 1–9. Students experienced Cuba's art, culture, and history firsthand through activities like salsa dancing and a cooking workshop, as well as visits to Old Havana, the Centro Fidel Castro museum, the José Martí Memorial, and other locations.

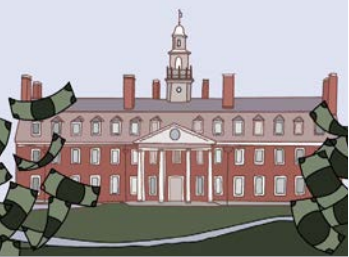
"We talked a lot about the [Cuban] revolution and how art was reflected during that time," Suleika Sandi '26 said. "In U.S. history, Cuba was kind of demonized. We hear a lot about communism and we hear about the Cuban Missile Crisis,

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Are our facilities worth our pricy tuition?

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Social media reshapes women's basketball.

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### Roll the Dice

Five students dive into a D&D fantasy

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### Secreto Succeeds

Choate alumna Lexington Secreto '21 wins big at NCAA

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Xyla Kiang '26,  
Eliana Li '26, Evelyn Kim '25,  
and Lexington Secreto '21.

## What An Odd Thought

TEDx event  
Spring 2024

April 21st at 2:00pm





# HOLI, EASTER, AND RAMADAN LIGHT UP CHOATE'S CAMPUS



By **Eshana Hora '27**  
Reporter

Since returning from spring break, spiritual life events have enlivened campus. Over the past few weeks, students have celebrated three major spiritual events: Holi, Easter, and Ramadan, each encouraging the Choate community to come together.

On April 2, the Choate South Asian Association (CSAA) hosted a Holi event to commemorate the Festival of Colors, which took place on March 25. According to CSAA Junior Officer Zahabiya Khokha '27, "We spent a good amount of time trying to figure out what would be the best way to provide everyone with a Holi that they could remember."

In addition to water guns to spray and colored powders for participants to throw at one another, fragrant Indian food and upbeat Hindi music were provided to make this year's Holi event lively. Attendee Nila Rajan '26 mentioned that the highlight for her was throwing the colored powders. Zoie Wang '26, who also attended the event, said: "I loved it ... when they did an introduction at the beginning, it was very interesting to

learn about." She added that she "hopes to do it again next year."

On the following day, April 3, Choate's Christian Fellowship hosted an Easter service and brunch to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. During the service, students sang hymns, prayed together, read scriptures, and took part in communion. Director of Spiritual Life and Choate's Protestant Chaplain Reverend Aaron Rathbun explained that he hoped the event "provided a gathering for those in the Christian tradition to celebrate what Easter is all about."

Attendee Cait Ahn '25 stated that while she wasn't religious, she appreciated how welcoming Reverend Rathbun was to the whole audience. "He acknowledged that not everyone there was religious, but we're all here to participate respectfully in this event," Ahn said.

Xiu Lim '25 also had a positive experience. He recalled, "The whole ceremony was incredibly joyful. Everyone was in a really good mood." The most memorable part for Lim was the baptism of Sophia Kim '24, which took place in the Chapel by Reverend Rathbun. After the service, a brunch and Easter egg hunt coordinated

by the Student Activities Center (SAC) wrapped up the celebration.

The third spiritual life event celebrated was Ramadan, which lasted from March 10–April 9, where observing students fasted from sunrise to sundown. To support students, Choate offered iftar, the fast-breaking meal, every night during the month in a buffet separate from the dining hall in a private space in the SAC. "We have given lots of support for students," Muslim Chaplain Mr. Yassine Benzinane said. "They can take breaks when they are exhausted, especially from athletics or afternoon activities."

In collaboration with other Spiritual Life groups, a traditional Eid al-Fitr meal, meant to celebrate the end of Ramadan, was held on April 10, and a community Eid event on April 12. "We are joined in efforts so we could have a festive event that includes a diverse group of people and is open to the whole community," Mr. Benzinane said. These events aimed to provide students with a meal similar to a traditional family meal.

Tariq El Mammann '24 was one of the many students fasting for Ramadan. Despite facing challenges throughout the school day,

his Ramadan experience was positive. "I see it as an opportunity to grow myself but also grow my relationship with my faith," El Mammann said. "Fatigue does build up ... [but] my coaches and teammates are all very loving and supportive. I'm very appreciative of everything that they do."

Another student who fasted for Ramadan was Kadija Benzinane '27. She echoed El Mammann's sentiments and said that her friends were "knowledgeable and understanding." Additionally, both Benzinane and El Mammann mentioned that they hope to foster a greater understanding of Ramadan across the Choate community in the future through events that raise awareness about Muslim culture.

From sharing various cultural foods to participating in services, the Choate community has opened the spring term with opportunities to come together, create new bonds, and light up campus with warmth and laughter. "Getting the community together to learn about the diversity on Choate campus ... it was great," Wang said. "I definitely hope to see more."

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## COLT Contest Showcases Languages

By **Nev Rathbun '26**  
Reporter

Three hundred and ninety-two students, 19 languages, and one Zoom room constituted the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers (COLT) Poetry Recitation Contest on March 27. Every year, students from all over Connecticut come together to celebrate their achievements in different language levels and recite the poems they had practiced for months. This year, 22 Choate students competed in the contest.

Spanish teacher and Choate's veteran coordinator Mrs. Patricia Antunez was in charge of communicating with other teachers and administrators of schools that participated in the contest. "Some schools have a limit to the number of students they allow to enter, because the contest was in-person from the pandemic up until now, [whereas in] the last three or four years, it's been virtual," Mrs. Antunez explained. Organizing an online, state-wide competition was no small feat. "Choate actually hosted it in the past, and it was a huge undertaking ... They made the competition a little smaller with the virtual side of things," she said.

Each year during the winter term, students taking language courses recited a poem from a list that COLT provided based on language proficiency for the selection process. They practiced their poem for several months leading up to the competition, allowing them to memorize the poem and master their delivery. Students first recited their poems to their language class, and then teachers nominated students who demonstrated excellent recitations to represent Choate in the state-wide competition.

Ava McClatchie '24, who has placed first at her level of Chinese for three years in a row, was inspired by her Chinese teacher, Dr. Carol Chen-Lin, to participate. "Dr. Chen-Lin is incredibly supportive and really encouraging in terms of getting students to participate in outside-of-the-classroom language experiences," she said. McClatchie also described some of her challenges in memorizing her poem. "The thing that's the hardest for me is making sure that the meaning is coming across, because there's a really big difference between memorizing words and repeating sounds versus being able to actually articulate the meaning of a poem," she said.

Zaki Shamsi '26, a first-place winner in the 200-level Arabic poetry section, shared the importance of understanding the historical and cultural significance of poems. "A lot of poetry, especially from the Middle East, relates specifically to aspects of that culture. There's a lot of historical significance and connection to the region the poetry came from."

The CT COLT Poetry Recitation Contest was an invaluable opportunity for Choate students to practice public speaking, meet students from across Connecticut, and connect with their learned language and culture. Mrs. Antunez particularly enjoyed the opportunity to unite as a community, teachers and students alike, to celebrate each other's achievements. "I know poetry recitation is not an easy thing," she said, "but as you practice it, [you] get more of the melody of the language. It makes it sort of an art form, in that sense."

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## SPRING BREAK SPANS BORDERS

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but over there, it's kind of the opposite. They saw everybody as people and they just wanted us to know that too."

Malcolm Mahaney '25 specifically enjoyed the diverse music they listened to during a music workshop and a salsa class. "Not all the best music in the world you can find on Spotify," he said. Sandi added, "We saw a lot of live performances in restaurants. We learned a lot about Cuban music and how it relates to different types of music, like R&B, hip-hop, and reggaeton."

In addition, the group interacted with local residents during visits to an elementary school and an art high school. "It was a super fun experience just to sit down and interact with kids from another part of the world," Zoie Wang '26 said. Sandi added, "[At the high school], we were asking about their lives and I realized it's not much different from ours, but their school system is very different ... They don't have a lot of the same access that we do in terms of materials, but their quality of education, whether it's public or specialized, is still really high."

Student interactions with locals served as invaluable opportunities to learn about their daily lives and Cuba's rich culture and history. "When I first came to Cuba, I thought a lot of it was going to be serious conversations ... However, I honestly learned the most through having regular everyday conversations with the people there," Sandi said.

### Public Health in South Africa

From March 1-10, in collaboration with the Council on International Educational Exchange, Biology teacher Dr. Selena Gell and Director of Counseling Ms.

Raynetta Gibbs chaperoned students on a trip to Cape Town, South Africa. Throughout the trip, students learned about public health and wellness and were exposed to the raw experiences faced by locals. Students visited various communities, like Bo-Kaap, !Khwa ttu, and Langa, and participated in several activities, like cooking samosas, volunteering at an elementary school, and hiking to forage for a meal.

The starkly visible wealth inequality stood out to many students. Visiting Langa, a township in South Africa, students were able to see the direct impacts of Apartheid. "I remember seeing photos that showed the wealth inequality, but seeing one side of the highway flourishing and the other side almost barren, was kind of bizarre," Vivi Jenkins '26 said.

Among the students, one particularly memorable experience was their volunteer work with Greenpop, where they planted indigenous plants at a local elementary school. They learned more about the native ecosystems and dug deeper into the cross-section of public health and urban greening. "We learned about the importance of urban greening in an environment and the need to restore greenery in more barren areas," Nicole Pelski '26 said.

Overall, students found this year's spring break trips to be fulfilling, and the opportunity to travel abroad helped many to learn about different cultures and pique their curiosity about their histories. From the borders of Arizona, to the art museums of Cuba, to the coastlines of South Africa, these Choate students were involved in a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

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## WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEADER? INSIGHTS FROM PROFESSOR GAUTAM MUKUNDA

By **Chelsea Branch '25**  
Copy Editor

On March 19, Choate welcomed Professor Gautam Mukunda to the Colony Hall stage for the annual Adlai Stevenson II '18 Lecture. Students enrolled in history, economics, and political science courses were required to attend his presentation on leadership and power.

Dr. Mukunda has amassed accomplishments in several disciplines, including economics, teaching, literature, and political science. However, it was the professor's recent book, *Picking Presidents: How To Make The Most Consequential Decision In The World*, that prompted the Stevenson Lecture Series's Coordinator and Humanities teacher Mr. Jonas Akins to choose Dr. Mukunda as this year's presenter.

Mr. Akins and Dr. Mukunda attended Harvard College together and reunited this past summer by coincidence at a Choate-affiliated party. Mr. Akins remarked that Dr. Mukunda's book was "directly relevant to this election year, and it's also a book that we read in [Government and Politics II]."

Dr. Mukunda's book reveals how leaders are filtered by the political system, and discusses the importance of electing officials who will enact meaningful change. Xiu Lim '25, a student who was in Government and Politics II during the winter term, said that his book featured "an absolutely fascinating central theory of leader-filtration, which seamlessly combines learnings from both political science and psychology."



Photo courtesy of Mr. Jonas Akins

Dr. Mukunda speaks to students about leadership and character.

Dr. Mukunda's speech was an extension of the concepts tackled in his book, and he presented his message in a manner that resonated well with high school students. He opened his lecture by painting a striking picture: on his way to Choate, he watched a homeless man ravage through trash cans for a meal. Minutes later, he found himself on Choate's sprawling campus. This illustration of contrast challenged listeners to reflect on the bubble of privilege Choate students reside in. Dr. Mukunda explained that such stark disparity is a direct reflection of our elected leaders.

Mr. Akins walked away from Dr. Mukunda's lecture questioning the concept of election. He shared, "I've been reflecting a lot on the process we use to identify leaders, both in terms of a national perspective — how do we pick a president? What does our prima-

ry cycle look like? Is the Electoral College a good idea? Those sorts of things, but also how do we identify leaders here on campus?"

The latter half of Dr. Mukunda's speech focused on the effect of authority on character. Dr. Mukunda highlighted the statistic that only 10% of elected leaders become more altruistic, honest, and empathetic after being given power. The other 90%, however, are more likely to steal, cheat, and lie. Dr. Mukunda explained that it wasn't that power corrupted the human character, but that power unveils who you are at your core, stripping away the need to pretend.

The Stevenson Lecture Series exists to inform and empower Choate students, and that was exactly what Mr. Akins hoped listeners gained from Dr. Mukunda's presentation.

"What [Dr. Mukunda] talked about in terms of what power does to people, whether it reveals character, whether it changes character — I hope that students who might not yet be in a position of responsibility are able to think about those questions before they get into a captain position or a prefect position or a cabinet for one of our clubs," he said.

Ana Bury '25 also has plans to integrate Dr. Mukunda's wisdom into her Choate experience. To live by Dr. Mukunda's idea of a good leader, Bury emphasized that "when we receive power, knowing that you received that power through other people, because of other people, and to help other people — I feel [that] should remain at the forefront [of our minds]."

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## Favio's Trattoria Brings Italy to Wallingford



Photo by Elizabeth Burghstaler '26/The Choate News

An interior view of Favio's Trattoria.

By **Gopika Sheth '27**  
Reporter

Tucked away in downtown Wallingford on Center Street, Favio's Trattoria offers a taste of Italy only minutes away from Choate. With its promise of authentic Italian flavors and warm hospitality, this culinary haven has become a favorite for Wallingford's locals and visitors alike.

Ms. Jennifer D'ericco, a waitress and mixologist at Favio's, shared her enthusiasm for the restaurant's Italian cuisine. "Our chefs are unbelievable and the portions are beyond generous," she said. "Our pasta dishes are incredible." From fried zucchini "Zucca" chips to a classic lasagna, Favio's is sure to satiate any cravings one may have. According to Ms. D'ericco, the restaurant's most popular dish is either their chicken parmesan with vodka sauce or their signature lollipop lamb chops.

Favio's Trattoria is owned by Mr. Favio Pillacela, an Ital-

ian immigrant who now manages several successful restaurants in the area. Mr. Pillacela is admired by many of his employees for his ambition.

"He's passionate about his work," Ms. D'ericco said. "He started off as an executive chef for years, and now he's got four restaurants. That's really impressive."

Local patrons Mr. Robin Harkness and Ms. Lisa Donahue reflected on their dining experiences at Favio's. "First time dining here ... would definitely come back with our family," Mr. Harkness said. "The pasta's really good, and the ambience is just right," Ms. Donahue added.

Diners can rest easy knowing that Favio's Trattoria deeply values their relationships with their customers. "Our customers are great. We have so many regulars already, and they become friends," Ms. D'ericco said.

Even diners with specific dietary requirements, like Kadija Benzinane '27, are able to find something to appreciate at Favio's. "I had gluten-free

pasta, and it was really nice of them to have that option for me," Benzinane said. "The service was great."

Favio's Trattoria has quickly found its place within the local community, and are in turn happy to see other restaurants in the area thrive. "With other new restaurants opening up in town, we embrace it ... It brings more people into our town, more business," Ms. D'ericco said.

Despite the restaurant's relatively recent opening in October 2023, Favio's Trattoria has enjoyed remarkable success. While lunches typically attract smaller crowds and a more intimate atmosphere, Friday and Saturday evenings see a surge in customers. As a result, it is best to plan ahead. Favio's Trattoria recommends securing a reservation during these peak times to ensure that diners can get a spot at the Italian eatery and fully enjoy their dining experience.

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## UNAUTHORIZED DOORDASH LISTINGS STIR DISCONTENT



Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/The Choate News

By **Maia Shah '27**  
Reporter

Recently, the online food delivery company DoorDash has listed local Wallingford restaurants on its platform without their permission, leading to confusion, upset customers, and tarnished reputations. Knuckleheads and Tap & Vine, two restaurants in the heart of downtown Wallingford, found themselves listed for food delivery on the DoorDash app without registering themselves.

In several recent instances, customers have placed orders via an online menu, paid a delivery fee, and even tipped their "dasher," yet never received their meal. While the menus that appeared on DoorDash seemed to be registered by the restaurant itself, in reality, the restaurants were posted by someone unaffiliated with the establishments.

Knuckleheads's General Manager Mr. Tony Dorsey dug into mix-up after contacting DoorDash support and uncovering that an individual named "Danny" had done the listing. To register a restaurant on DoorDash, one only needs the name of the establishment, a menu, and the restaurant's information. No additional verification is needed.

Rectifying this mistake involved a cumbersome verification process to remove the outdated menu items. Still, despite making the request, Knuck-

leheads wasn't removed from DoorDash; their menu was simply listed as "inactive."

Mr. Dorsey was frustrated by the difficult process of addressing the conflict. In addition, he was bothered by the ease with which the error occurred in the first place. "We had a lot of angry customers, you know, because they thought it was us, when it wasn't us. It was this private company," Mr. Dorsey said.

Similar to the experience of Knuckleheads's management, Tap & Vine, a bar and restaurant that serves classic American cuisine, was also listed without their consent.

Mr. Hector Samuel, the owner of Tap & Vine, also found the situation frustrating. "I don't know how we ended up on DoorDash. It wasn't something that we did. It wasn't something that we wanted," Mr. Samuel said. He explained that the mix-up with DoorDash stirred up a lot of customer dissatisfaction.

"When they place an order with us, they get a refund for the food they ordered. But the service charge that they paid when placing the order is not refunded ... And the tip to the driver still goes to the driver," Mr. Samuel said. "So even though they didn't get any food, they still lost money."

Even loyal customers can be dissuaded from supporting these restaurants in the future. Meanwhile, those who contribute to the problem by listing

restaurants against their wills face no repercussions.

"It's not about being against any delivery service. They serve a purpose, and they work great for a lot of people. We just shouldn't be forced into obliging to what they want," Mr. Dorsey said. "We have our business, and they have theirs." The situation has raised concerns among residents and restaurant owners regarding the responsibilities of food delivery platforms and the protection of local businesses. Following this issue, the Connecticut Attorney General William Tong sent DoorDash a cease and desist letter about the unauthorized listings.

Although DoorDash professes a zero-fraud policy, little action was taken to reimburse these two Wallingford restaurants for the damages done, and no preventative measures were taken. DoorDash has stated that it is looking into the situation, and they hope that restaurants facing similar situations will reach out.

The restaurants who have been listed without their consent remain irritated by the mixup with DoorDash. Mr. Dorsey said, "This third party did something bad, and now we look bad because of it." They face repercussions such as smeared reputations and lower customer satisfaction for situations that are out of their hands.

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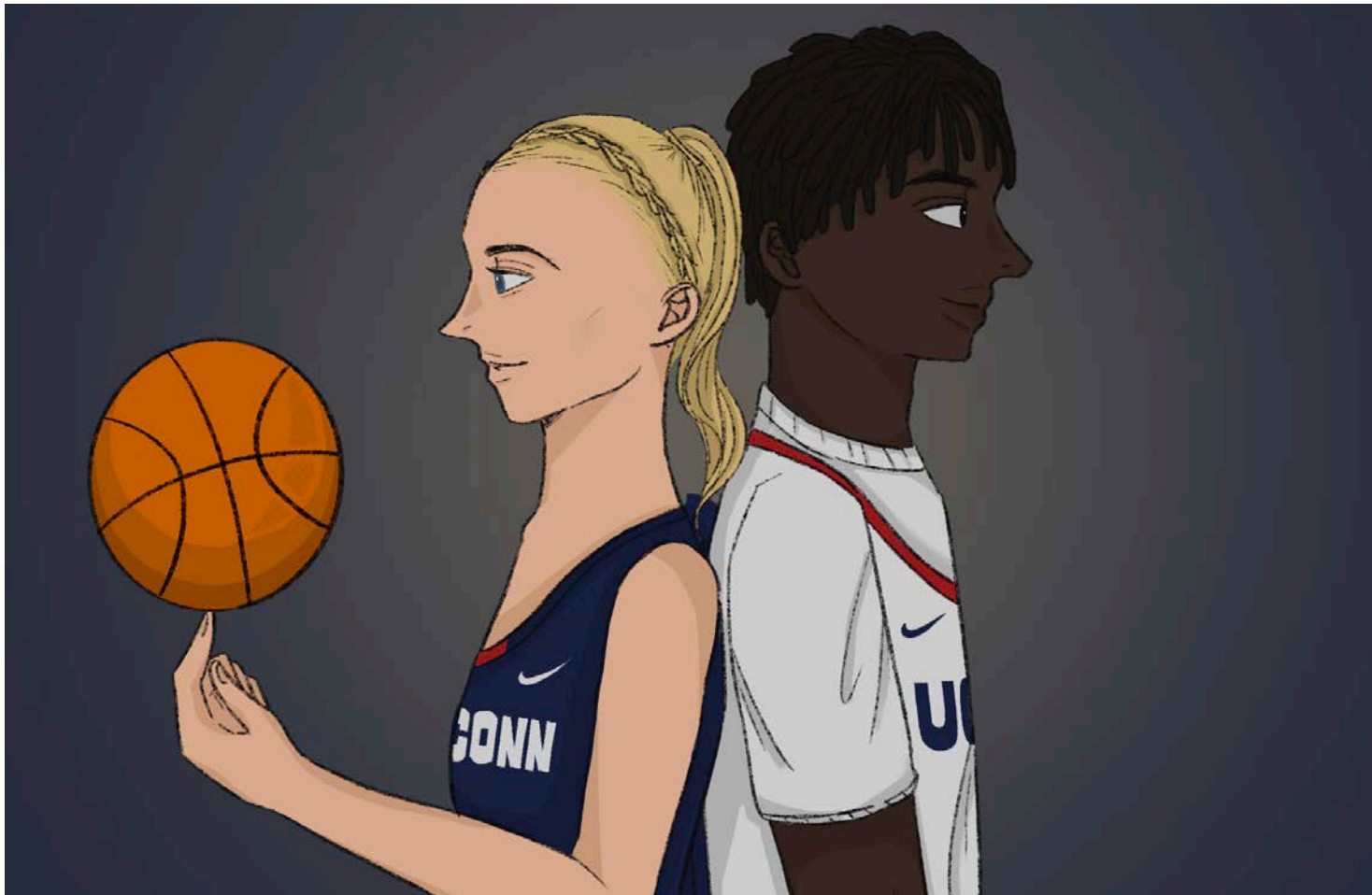
## UConn Huskies Achieve Immense Success in Men's and Women's Basketball

By **Reid Bock '27**  
Reporter

The University of Connecticut (UConn) has long been known for their exceptional collegiate basketball teams. Once again, both the men's and women's teams have experienced tremendous success, advancing to the national championship and final four in this year's March Madness Tournament.

Holding a 37-3 record, the UConn Huskies Men's Basketball (UConn MBB) have won the National Championship. Led by Coach Dan Hurley in his sixth year in the position, UConn MBB possesses the "ability to blitz teams and just be able to kill off the game right away," UConn freshman Udayan Chidambaram said. The team demonstrated this athletic prowess with a commanding 91-52 win over Stetson University, a 75-58 win over Northwestern University, and a 77-52 win over Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

What sets UConn apart from these other teams, Chidambaram said, is that "a lot of teams in college basketball rely on one guy, while at UConn ... there is not one superstar; everyone has their role." With this team-oriented game style, UConn MBB managed an 86-72 win over the University of Alabama in the final four and bested Purdue University with a score of 75-60, winning the national championship for the second year in a row.



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

While everyone played crucial roles in the final championship victory, Coach Dan Hurley is certainly an important figure to spotlight throughout the season. "When you go anywhere online, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, you can just see videos of Dan Hurley just ripping the players, just making them want to train harder," Chidambaram said.

The team's success fosters strong school-spirit throughout UConn's campus. "Oh, [the cam-

pus atmosphere is] ridiculous and it gets bigger every game," UConn freshman Ryan Heuer said.

The men's team has had a long history of success, which first began in 1999 when they defeated Duke University in the finals. Since then, UConn MBB has gone on to win four more National College Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I Championships.

Most recently, UConn MBB defeated San Diego State in the 2023 finals, becoming the

fifth team in history to win all six of their NCAA March Madness Tournament games by double-digits since the bracket expanded. UConn MBB is currently tied with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for holding the fourth most NCAA March Madness Tournament championships. UConn MBB has also earned a record 11 Big East Regular Season titles.

Under the guidance of Coach Geno Auriemma, UConn Huskies Women's Basketball (UCo-

nn WBB) started off the season on a successful note, defeating Jackson State University 86-64. The Huskies accumulated wins over Syracuse University with a score of 72-64 and Duke University with a score of 53-45. Ultimately, the UConn WBB team triumphed over the first-seeded University of Southern California with a score of 80-73, which secured their position within the final four.

"There was one player that stood out," Chidambaram said.

"Especially in the last game, Paige Bueckers, taking over the game and making us go to the final four." Bueckers had a great game, earning 28 points, 10 rebounds, six assists, three steals, and two blocks.

Even with a tough 71-69 loss to the University of Iowa in the semifinals on April 5, Bueckers continued to stay positive, according to *USA Today*. "Everybody can make a big deal of that one single play, but not one single play wins a basketball game or loses ... Maybe that was a tough call for us, but I feel like I could've done a better job preventing that from even happening," Bueckers said.

UConn WBB is also a dominant program. With 11 NCAA titles, the team holds the most NCAA Women's Basketball Championship wins of all time. In the past two decades, the Huskies have accumulated 29 All-Americans, 21 final four appearances, 21 Big East titles, and seven American Athletic Conference titles, making them among the most respected and feared teams in March Madness history.

Overall, the 2023-2024 season was a tremendous success for both UConn's men's and women's basketball teams, who showcased their talents on the court and managed to secure a win at the National Championship and reach the final four respectively.

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# The Choate News

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## How to Responsibly Integrate AI



By **Sky Hinton '26**  
Opinions Writer

Graphic by David Glover-Barr '25/The Choate News

dents learn at their own pace, seek clarification, and generate ideas makes AI a helpful auxiliary to teachers.

AI systems such as ChatGPT can also help students brainstorm general ideas that catalyze authentic creative writing. However, they should never be used to plagiarize or diminish the effort put in by the student.

This means not copying entire phrases or sentences from AI and instead using it as a mere starting point in the writing process. In order to prevent misuse, teachers should lay out clear guidelines that list what prompts students are allowed to enter into AI systems. Clearly outlining these boundaries as a part of the School's Honor Code would allow for responsible integration of AI into the curriculum without the risk of students abusing the tool.

The world is becoming more involved with AI. By becoming well-educated on the topic, students can learn computational thinking, digital literacy, and how to use AI with caution. A responsible way to make sure students are gaining these skills is for teachers to take the time to address AI in classrooms. Teachers should emphasize AI's potential to be a tool to enhance learning, not something that replaces human interaction and guidance from adults.

AI is a useful tool that, when used correctly, can be very beneficial to a student's learning experience. When permitted by teachers, AI has been a great resource for me, helping me generate ideas, expand on existing ideas, and providing me with feedback. AI should not be abused but cautiously implemented as a problem-solving tool in the classroom.

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# Discerning the Ethics of Dissections



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Ava Hult-Falk '27**  
Opinions Writer

Within the hallowed halls of scientific academia, among the buzz of eager minds and the scent of formaldehyde, lies a controversial learning practice: dissections. Having engaged in these hands-on explorations of anatomical structures myself, I can attest to their importance as a longstanding component of scientific education.

Dissections serve as a crucial tool in pioneering breakthroughs in the medical world, benefiting both humans and animals alike. Choate must acknowledge these crucial benefits, while also considering dissections' drawbacks, to responsibly cement them into science curriculums.

There is no denying the profound impact that dissections have on shaping the minds of future scientists and medical

professionals at Choate. Despite facing ethical scrutiny, dissecting animal specimens remains indispensable and irreplicable in advancing students' understanding of anatomy and physiology.

By providing students with hands-on opportunities for anatomical exploration, dissections offer a tangible means to comprehend biological structures. Tatum Kent '24, who has taken four courses at Choate involving dissections, said that her most significant lesson from the practice was the stark contrast she noticed between textbook diagrams and the actual layout of a specimen's body. "What you learn on a diagram is so incredibly different from what is actually the layout and organization of structures in the body," Kent said.

Having personally conducted a chicken dissection in a science lab, I too was provided with photos and illustrations to prepare. However, after making the initial incision, I was shocked by

the discrepancies and differences between the real-life chicken and what I'd seen on a diagram. There is simply no substitute for this hands-on learning experience.

It's important to recognize that there are certain minor drawbacks when it comes to performing dissections that still warrant our attention. Firstly, it is undeniable that dissections involve a sacrifice of life. As humans, we must acknowledge the ethical responsibility inherent in ending an animal's life for educational purposes. With this in mind, it is crucial to ethically source specimens and ensure dignified disposal of animal remains.

Additionally, dissections can be unsettling, particularly for first-timers. Cutting into an animal is a weighty undertaking, and teachers or administrators must ensure that students are adequately prepared for and supported throughout the process. This can be achieved through mandatory briefing sessions outlining dissection expectations and goals to cre-

ate a sense of preparedness before students' inaugural incisions.

Some students may be opposed to dissections and aim to opt out following information sessions. However, if a student enrolls in a class that includes dissections, they should be expected to participate or remain in the classroom in observance. Without experiencing the dissection, they will fall behind in the class and lack a proper understanding of the content.

Despite these downsides, the importance of dissections in advancing students' scientific knowledge cannot be ignored. When approached responsibly and thoughtfully, dissections are essential tools for furthering our understanding of anatomy and physiology, making them an indispensable practice in Choate classrooms.

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## Debunking Myths Surrounding Tuition

By **Steven Kee '27**  
Copy Editor



Graphic by Xyla Kiang '26 and Eliana Li '26/The Choate News

Over the past decade, Choate has erected three new buildings: the Kohler Environmental Center (KEC), Colony Hall, and the Lanphier Center. These facilities had a combined construction cost of \$87 million, with more projects such as Carr Hall to come. Upon hearing these figures, concern naturally arises regarding the correlation between annual increases in tuition fees and the cost of these projects.

Some may wonder whether Choate should lower tuition fees rather than continue developing new projects, while others may question why a Choate education is so expensive. However, Choate's financial picture has numerous layers that demonstrate fiscal responsibility and fair pricing which members of the Choate community fail to recognize.

According to Chief Financial Officer Mr. Patrick Durbin, all new construction projects are funded entirely through donations, not tuition fees or the endowment fund. "Zero percent comes from tuition and fees, so there's no, really, link between tuition and fees or the annual increase in tuition and fees to projects," Mr. Durbin said.

The contributions from donors are classified as "capital gifts" and are separate from the endowment. As none of the funds for construction are derived from student tuition, worries regarding tuition increases for new projects are unfounded. Remarkably, Choate can build impactful projects such as Carr Hall and Colony Hall without ever affecting the cost of tuition or other school expenses.

Although this is the case, Choate's tuition is still expensive, and it's fair to ask whether donations can be used to slow the pace of increasing tuition instead of constructing new buildings. However, Choate would not have buildings such as Colony Hall or the KEC if funding for new projects were diverted to lowering Choate's tu-

ition. Imagine a music program without the auditorium in Colony Hall or an environmental science program without the KEC. Buildings like Colony Hall, the Paul Mellon Arts Center, Lanphier Center, and other top-of-the-line facilities all form the core of the Choate experience. If these facilities did not exist, a Choate education would be nowhere near its current quality.

Given Choate's position as a constantly progressing and evolving school often ranked as one of the best in America, it is logical that the School is at the forefront of innovation and continues developing new facilities to provide the best possible education for its students. As such, when donations are earmarked for new building projects, they must be spent as such, as these uses promote the best interest of students.

An important question persists: why is Choate's tuition so expensive if money for new projects doesn't come from tuition? Despite the seemingly hefty tuition fee, the costs are responsibly set, considering what students get in return. In fact, students actually aren't paying enough tuition to cover the total cost of a Choate education. Tuition only covers around 55% of Choate's operating budget. To fund the deficit, Choate uses around 4.5% of the endowment annually to continue its operations. When funds from the endowment run out, money from the annual fund, another donation fund, can also be tapped.

If Choate were to fully rely on tuition fees to operate, tuition would have to rise to almost double its current amount—from \$69,370 to around \$126,127 annually. In reality, Choate students get a lot more than what they are paying for, as they only pay for slightly more than half of what their actual Choate experience costs. Given this disparity, the current tuition fees are warranted, but they also highlight the true cost of a Choate education.

Annual tuition increases at the School have also been reasonable. The average year-on-year tuition increase was 2.93% over the past ten years—a smaller figure than our peer schools and similar to the national average.

Considering that inflation does play a role in rising tuition costs, Choate adjusts increases appropriately and considers other factors that may affect affordability. At the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in fiscal year 2022, tuition increase was limited to 1.95%.

Only when the economy began to recover in fiscal year 2024 did tuition growth rise to 3.95%. Choate adjusts the rate of these increases based on students' financial situations, ensuring that tuition remains reasonably priced. Mr. Durbin emphasized that maintaining a 2.93% average increase is important to the Board of Trustees and the Administration to maintain affordability. Without the prudent financial planning of the Administration, tuition increases would undoubtedly balloon to extremity during economic

downturns, and tuition would be far beyond its current cost.

Additionally, Choate actively tries to slow increases in tuition by creating additional income. The School generates revenue by renting out fields, running Choate Summer Programs, and collecting other revenues that are used to lower tuition. "We're always looking to [use] those other revenue sources so we can try to keep tuition as low as possible," Mr. Durbin explained.

In essence, Choate is always looking for ways to act in its students' best interests, ensuring that tuition increases are financially manageable. Given these efforts, it would be wrong to accuse the Administration of inaction when it comes to protecting the wallets of Choate families.

Choate's approach to tuition fees and developing new projects is justified and reasonable. Contributions from donors are the sole reason why Choate students have access to unparalleled facilities that are integral to the Choate experience. Additionally, tuition itself is low relative to the value of the student's education, and the School does its best to lower annual tuition increases. Given this often unseen reality, it is clear that Choate benefits its students by providing the highest quality of education while ensuring that tuition doesn't become an obstacle.

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# Truth Social: Is the Platform Living Up to Its Promise?



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Jai Midha '27**  
Opinions Writer

In the ever-changing social media landscape, we often question the validity of online information. The creation of Truth Social, a social media platform helmed by Former President Donald Trump P'oo, marks a pivotal milestone in the ongoing debate of free speech and media biases. However, the site may prove to be more of a threat to productive speech than a facilitator of it.

Trump launched Truth Social in February 2022 after being banned from most social media platforms for his involvement in the January 6 United States Capitol attack. The primary purpose of Truth Social is to offer an alternative platform that promises less censorship for its users, especially those who feel that mainstream media platforms are biased against conservative voices. Trump also wanted a platform to communicate directly with his supporters without the risk of being banned.

Perhaps most importantly, Trump's supporters see Truth Social as a direct counter to what they would call "fake news," as it allows for free speech that can't be taken off the Internet. Whereas other platforms like Instagram work with third-party fact-checkers who are certified through the non-partisan International

Fact-Checking Network to help identify, review and label false information, Truth Social does not have any such mechanism. According to the Pew Research Center, nearly two percent of Americans get their news from Truth Social; therefore, a decent percentage of the voting population is being informed by sources without credibility or validity.

Moreover, it's very likely that Trump had an ulterior motive in creating Truth Social besides the apparently altruistic goal of furthering freedom of speech. In its crusade against "fake news," Truth Social actually enables Trump to spread misinformation to benefit his political campaigns. We've already seen Trump use social media to spread rumors and gain support, whether that be making false claims about the results of the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election or his persistent denials of Russian collusion in spite of the revelation that he has more than 140 contacts with Russian nationals. With a free-for-all social media platform run by his own team, it is easier than ever for Trump to continue his pattern of lies and spread more "fake news" or propaganda.

In fact, this phenomenon has already taken place. On February 13, Trump shared screenshots of news articles apparently forecasting that President Joe Biden has little to no

chance of winning the 2024 Presidential Election against him. However, these news articles had been heavily edited; any mention of President Biden's strengths as a candidate were removed, along with references to the outcome of the 2020 Presidential Election or any of Trump's previous political failures. By omitting all information that did not align with the message he wanted to send his followers, Trump is capitalizing on Truth Social's lack of fact-checking to frame the current political situation in a fundamentally untrue way.

The fake news being propagated on Truth Social has shown that productive speech is not necessarily free speech. While Truth Social claims to be a center for open dialogue, at its core, it is a means for Trump to spread misinformation without facing the consequences he received on other mainstream social media platforms. The reality of Truth Social, particularly under the thinly disguised veil of Trump's propaganda, is not the idealistic platform that Trump has advertised it to be. If anything, it begs the question: is free speech possible without also being accompanied by the spread of misinformation.

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# Social Media Ruined Women's Basketball. Can It Save It?

By **Ethan Zhang '26**  
Copy Editor

The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) has long been criticized for relying on the National Basketball Association's (NBA) revenue to stay afloat. Simply put, the WNBA does not generate enough revenue from viewers to even profit, let alone match gigantic NBA-level contracts. However, improved social media marketing can change that.

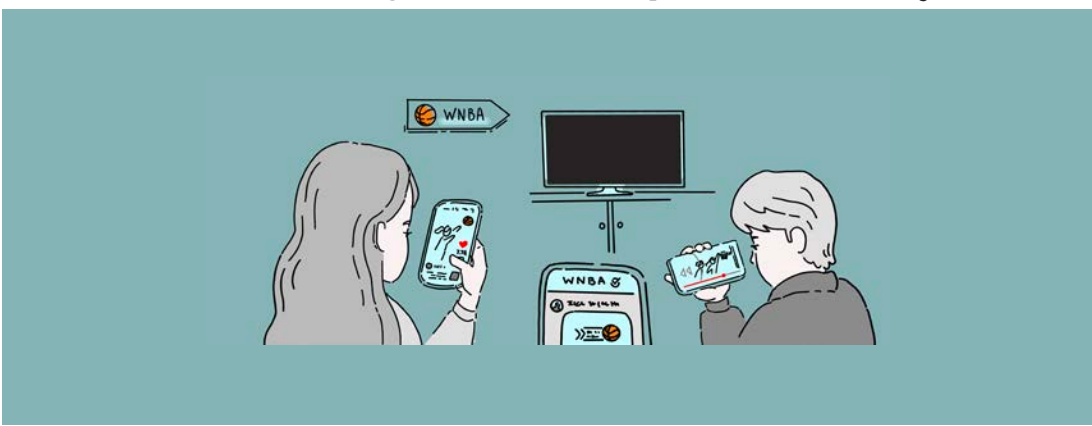
Social media has pushed the narrative that WNBA stars are untalented and unathletic through the spread of cherry-picked lowlights that amass hundreds of thousands of views from uninformed, social-media-reliant users. This has prevented many potential fans from watching the WNBA. As a result of its comparatively low revenue generated from ticket sales and sponsorships, a significant wage gap exists between WNBA and NBA contracts — the average WNBA salary being \$103,000 and the NBA's being \$9.4 million.

Despite the widespread impact of these social media posts, the WNBA reached its highest viewership total in 21 years during the 2023 regular season. Some may argue that the rising talent of female athletes has created this recent surge in women's basketball viewership. While that may be true, there have always been talented female athletes; they just went unrecognized on social media, and consequently, amongst mass audiences.

A watershed moment in the public reception of women's basketball has been the most recent National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) season. The Women's March Madness game on April 1 between Louisiana State University's (LSU) Tigers and the University of Iowa's Hawkeyes had a record-breaking 12.3 million viewers — the most in collegiate basketball history. Moreover, clips and edits of NCAA players — Iowa's Caitlin Clark, Louisiana State University's Angel Reese, and the University of Connecticut's (UConn) Paige Bueckers — posted by both fans and athletes themselves are getting millions of views. For once, these videos highlight their athleticism instead of tastelessly ridiculing them.

Thanks to social media, the young female players of the NCAA have appealed to audiences that the WNBA failed to reach. Through viral clips of fierce rivalries, flashy passes, and physical brawls, social media is proving to basketball fans that women's basketball is just as entertaining as men's. The recent surge in viewership for women's collegiate basketball has bled into audience reception of the WNBA.

As collegiate players get drafted into the WNBA, the league is bound to continue garnering popularity and, eventually, the average WNBA salary may rise. While social media has been extremely influential for both women's collegiate and professional basketball, trends on social media often die down eventually. In other words, though college athletes have spotlighted the WNBA, the profes-



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

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# PRINCESS CATHERINE: ANOTHER ROYAL "SCANDAL"

By **Francesca Howard '26**  
Copy Editor

The late Queen Elizabeth II famously said that "the royals have to be seen to be believed." Recent events have only proven her right. Chances are, you have probably heard about the recent debacle with the British royal family — specifically, the insensitive remarks made about the hidden cancer diagnosis of Catherine, Princess of Wales (Princess Kate). This event highlights how blatant invasions of privacy have been normalized and that there must be a change in these online habits.

Since her introduction to royal life in 2011, Princess Kate has been turning heads. However, as of this January, public interest in the princess has reached new heights. The princess is back in the limelight, ironically, by stepping out of it.

It all began when Kensington Palace stated that the princess had abdominal surgery on January 16. They assured everyone that the princess was in good health but would be hospitalized. They also mentioned that she wouldn't return to her royal duties until after Easter.

Despite this, by mid-February — well before Easter — rumors and conspiracy theories had already begun to swirl. Initially, the publicity sprang from a place of concern. For a figure who has graced the public eye for over a decade, the princess's departure made people speculate about her wellbeing. Princess Kate had not been seen publicly since Christmas, despite her husband William, Prince of Wales routinely attending public events. When a picture of the princess released by the palace for Mother's Day was revealed to have been edited by Princess

Kate herself, the public was more dubious than ever.

In a lighthearted attempt to clear the air in mid-March, the princess apologized for any mix-up, quipping, "Like many amateur photographers, I do occasionally experiment with editing," on X, formerly known as Twitter. But this apology did little to calm the storm of internet sleuths and royal enthusiasts. Instead, it made them even more determined to unearth the truth behind the princess's absence.

As the months passed, attempts to uncover the truth about Princess Kate grew more malicious. Hearsays, conspiracies, and deepfakes were ubiquitous over various media platforms. Everyone, it seemed, was confident that they figured out what was going on with the princess, and, as it always is on the internet, the hotter the take, the better. Rumors ranged from the somewhat reasonable to the downright ludicrous (the princess did not, in fact, get a Brazilian butt lift).

After months of speculation, the internet trolls got what they wanted: the truth. The princess was not in a coma. She did not get cheated on. She was not the famous street artist Banksy. The princess has cancer.

This revelation was met with a deluge of apologies. "Omg we are all douchebags," one viral post read. "I'm going to hell," another said. Everyone felt bad, and rightfully so. Princess Kate wanted peace and quiet while she recuperated, both for her and her children's sake, but she was unable to do so because of the media frenzy.

The situation probably would not have gotten so out of hand if not for the utter ineptitude of the royal family's media team. Transparency, or the lack thereof, has often been the Achilles' heel of the royal family. The family's decision to release a manipulated photo to quell rumors fed into the speculation they aimed to dispel. The moment there's an information gap, people will fill it.

Some argue that Princess Kate signed up for this level of scrutiny the moment she took on her title. However, just because she has a royal crown does not make her less entitled to dignity. We need to remember that famous people have their own lives behind the dishes cooked up by the media and served to the public. The expectation that public figures must lay bare every facet of their lives, especially personal health matters, is unreasonable and dangerously voyeuristic.

This situation warrants those who were involved to reflect on their carelessness. While such speculation is not new, and each theory was wildly divergent, they all share one thing: they reveal a voracious public appetite for scandal. In fact, Princess Kate was not a one-off event. The Brits have always loved a good scandal.

Before she even took to the royal stage, Diana, Princess of Wales (Princess Diana) had already won over the public, quickly becoming hailed as "The

People's Princess." Her genuine warmth and compassion set her apart from the royal family, which was otherwise seen as out of touch. Princess Diana wanted to use her power to enact positive change in her community, all while rocking some seriously iconic outfits.

Despite the praise, however, Princess Diana was no stranger to scrutiny. Everything from her fashion choices to her dysfunctional relationship became a subject of global fascination. Even in death, Princess Diana hasn't found peace. To this day, the public continues to dissect every aspect of her life, trying to get to the heart of who she really was.

History repeated itself in 2016 with the next social pariah of the royal family: Meghan, Duchess of Sussex (Markle). Markle took the public by storm when her relationship with Harry, Duke of Sussex was first confirmed. In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, Markle rocked the boat, discussing her experiences with racism within the

royal institution and the lack of support for her mental health struggles. But such attention soon backfired with allegations of Markle bullying royal staff, which she later denied. Other conspiracies soon arose, ranging from the plausible to the not-so-plausible. Markle was said to have seduced her way into the spotlight in order to garner more media recognition and advance her career goals. She became the classic gold digger in the eyes of the people. From Princess Diana to Princess Kate, the public's obsession with the royal women has been unending.

One can't say the same for the royal men. King Charles III, for instance, has been undergoing similar treatments for an undisclosed form of cancer, and yet I don't see conspiracies around his supposed Brazilian butt lift and facelift. The post-surgery scrutiny Princess Kate was under far outweighs anything directed at the ruling monarch over his arguably more dire situation.

We cannot be absolved of blame. Everyone, myself included, who spiraled down internet rabbit holes and jumped to conclusions based on unsubstantiated theories should feel ashamed. I'm not saying we shouldn't ask questions — however, we should do so in a way that is respectful, empathetic, and humble. We can be skeptical without resorting to hyperbolic and uncorroborated accusations. What I've taken away from this fiasco is that behind the clickbait, there are real people whose lives do not serve the sole purpose of amusing others.

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## CHOATE’S LATEST OBSESSION: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

By **Erin Li ’24** and  
**Helen Ryan ’24**  
*School News Editors of  
the 117th Masthead*

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), a tabletop role-playing game, offers students a brief respite from Choate’s stressful workload, allowing them to dive into the fantastical world of magic, mythical creatures, and epic quests. Though multiple campaigns are active, some Choate students have decided to take this hobby even further. As a special project sponsored by the Arts Department, five students made D&D their afternoon activity with their campaign *Black Arrow*, creating a 13-episode mini-series documenting their progress.

*Black Arrow* unfolds as a science fiction saga set in Year 15 of the Galactic Era, featuring a diverse cast of characters portrayed by Connor Zeitlin ’25, Aidan Geaney ’24, Carter Foster ’24, Max Leventon ’25, and John Freeman ’24. Although each character brings their own distinctive personality and backstory to the table, they come together to vanquish a mighty foe, learn of a mysterious magical force, and embark on a journey of self-discovery.

As the Dungeon Master (DM), Zeitlin acted as a referee and storyteller, helping the players adhere to the rules while guiding them through the foreign and magical world. According to Zeitlin, “The idea behind *Black Arrow* was that



Graphic by Evetyn Kim '25/The Choate News

a group of people in a galaxy far too big for them would come together and fight against forces vaster and more powerful than you can really comprehend in order to protect their home.”

The beauty of the game lies in the art of storytelling, where the plot unfolds organically based on the actions of both players and the DM. Unlike scripted forms of entertainment, D&D offers an authentic and dynamic experience filled with raw emotion and unexpected twists. “It’s not like a play or a TV show where everything is scripted. In D&D, you

have actors playing the characters, but they’re experiencing the story as the characters are experiencing it. And so they feel the emotion just as the characters do,” Zeitlin said.

Many are drawn to D&D for its unparalleled storytelling potential, including Leventon, who said that he likes D&D “because, at its heart, it is an opportunity to create.” As both a passionate writer and reader, Leventon appreciates the opportunity to input his skills “not into a stagnant story, but rather something I can change in real time.”

Since D&D is an intensive and lengthy game, the players wanted the opportunity to fully immerse themselves. Their goal proved to be difficult given the busy nature of their schoolwork. “[D&D] demands a lot of time and a lot of effort even for casual fans. And so it’s been tough to play as much at Choate as I would have liked. And so I think that was part of what made *Black Arrow* so special. I wasn’t expecting to be able to put that much time into this thing that I really loved,” Geaney said.

The nature of the *Black Arrow* campaign provided players

the chance to immerse themselves fully into their characters and stories. “A good session,” Zeitlin said, “is a session where everybody enters the session, for whatever reason, forgets who they are and what they’re doing outside of this session.” Players appreciated the opportunity to lose themselves in the game and create a whole new character and persona. “I like to separate the character from myself because it allows me to delve into a new world ... It’s really the experience with a new character that I really appreciate,” Foster said.

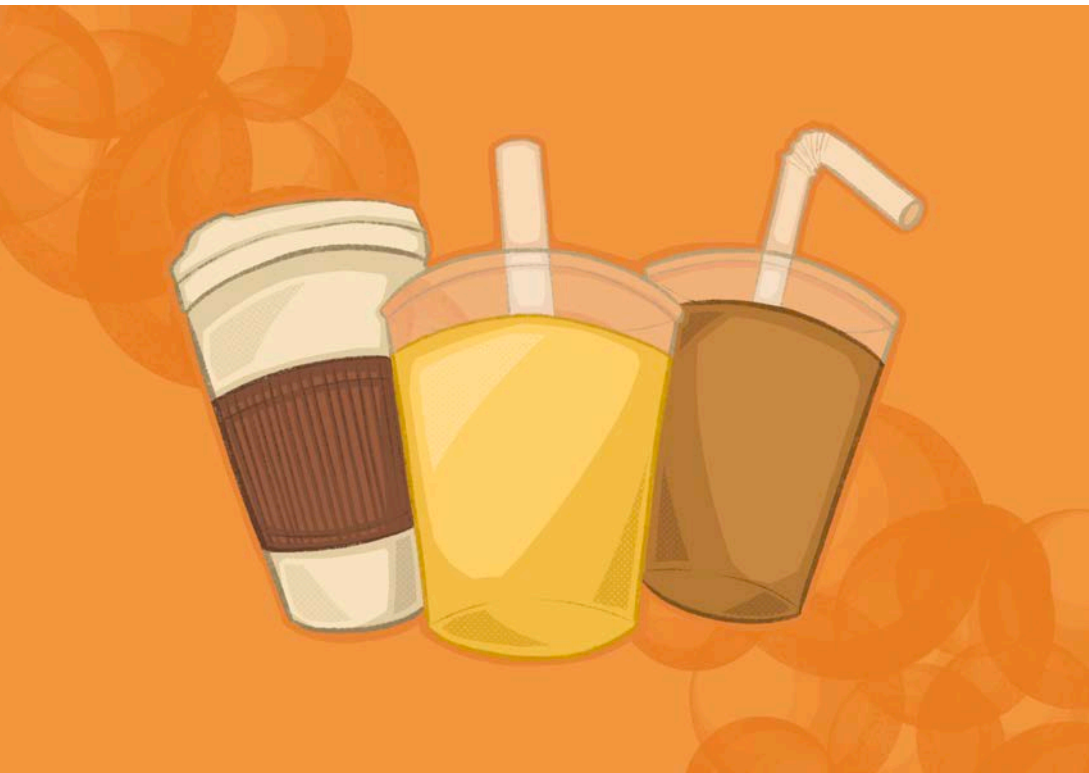
Beyond the *Black Arrow* saga, there have also been new additions to D&D on campus, including an all-girls campaign with Ella Morris ’25, Nev Rathbun ’26, Eva Swanson ’25, and Isla Geaney ’26. As a member of this all-girls campaign, Morris said that she “went in not knowing much. The game is so complex, but my first time playing was fun. I definitely made mistakes, but I also learned a lot.”

Rathbun, who is also new to the D&D scene at Choate, joined Morris in this campaign. “I view [D&D] more as a chance to hang out with my friends [and] have a little fun ... You get to learn more about the people you play with and build connections. I think D&D is just as fun as the people you play it with, so as long as you get a good crew together, you’ll have a great time,” Rathbun said.

Whether hoping to engage in the complex world of D&D or simply connect with new people, there is no one way to play D&D for new players. Zeitlin concluded, “Whether you’re playing the game solely for the game or you’re playing the game to tell a story through the game, it is however you approach it, and there is no correct way to play D&D, [just as] there’s no correct way to tell a story either.”

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## WHAT YOUR LANPHY ORDER SAYS ABOUT YOU



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Deyi Meng ’26**  
*Copy Editor*

Stepping out of the classroom, head buzzing with integrals and derivatives from the test you just finished, you stumble into the Lanphier (Lanphy) Cafe for a much-needed pick-me-up. You turn your head and witness an array of vibrant drinks populating the counter. From the basic black coffee to the electrifying chill of a cookies and cream frappuccino, the offerings at Lanphy are as diverse as they are delightful. With this wide array of drink options in mind, we interviewed Lanphy regulars to see what your order says about you.

### Black Coffee

If you find yourself relishing in the bitter, aromatic flavors of a plain black coffee, you are a bold and strong-willed individual. You are the kind of person who thrives on stability, making to-do lists and ensuring the reliability of both your caffeine intake and your daily activities. You have a strong sense of self; you know who you are, what you want to do, and how you want to do it.

As a black coffee enthusiast, Ada Tianworn ’26 shared her fondness for the drink: “I like that it’s something simple and basic that I can have every day, and it gives me very consistent energy, and I like consistency.”

### Latte

Those who regularly sip on lattes most likely have calm and laid-back personalities. You seek a life of tranquility, relishing the simple joys that come your way. You are as honest as they come and always tell it like it is. Unlike those who gravitate to the simplicity of black coffee or the intrepid souls who seek out the most intricate espresso concoctions, you appreciate a balance in life.

Stephanie Nguyen ’26, who appreciates the balance of the latte, said, “It’s not too sweet, but it’s not too much coffee.” Another latte lover, Ana Bury ’25, said, “I feel like it reflects a more businessy side of me. Simple [and] practical.”

### Frappuccino

As glorified milkshake enthusiasts, frappuccino zealots are always down for a good time. Just as a frappuccino is more of a sugary treat than a traditional coffee drink, diverging from the basic, those who enjoy it are unique and creative individuals who do not shy away from spontaneity.

Frappuccino fanatic Elizabeth Burgstahler ’26 said, “I like caffeine, but not the taste of coffee, and I want something that’s going to [give me] energy.” These people are thirsty for adventure, even (or especially) when it comes to their Lanphy order. They seek out a broad

range of flavors, from green tea to birthday cake; frappuccino fans love to experiment.

### Caramel Macchiato

When someone’s go-to order is a caramel macchiato, you know they enjoy sophistication with the right amount of sprinkles and sweetness. This beverage, a delectable mélange of milk and espresso topped with a signature caramel drizzle, is popular for a reason.

If you are a person who likes the buzz and chatter of cafes and the hum of the coffee machine, this might be just the drink for you. Personifying the caramel macchiato, Amanda Bennet ’24 said, “It’s a very outgoing drink.”

### Chai

With an array of spices like cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves, the potent and striking taste of a chai differs from all its counterparts. If chai is your cup of tea, it’s clear you’re not the type to blend into the crowd; you stand out, and you like it that way. Any chai aficionado has a taste for the bold and the beautiful.

Lanphy has the perfect drink for you, whether you like your drinks cold or hot, bitter or sweet. So, next time you’re craving a coffee, experiment and discover what your choice says about you!

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## A HISTORY OF CHOATE’S SCHEDULES

By **Adam Fleischman ’25**  
*Reporter*

At the start of the 2023-2024 academic year, Choate adjusted its daily schedule to have shorter class lengths, longer lunch periods, and a built-in advisory block. While these changes might have seemed out of the blue (and gold), to most students, our daily schedule has undergone tens of iterations, some of which will be explored in this article.

If you thought your weeks were busy, imagine if you had school on Saturdays too! Like many other boarding schools, Choate had many Academic Saturdays throughout the year, which existed up until 2008. Saturday classes were half-days like our current Wednesdays, and unlike Saturday classes during Parents Weekend, Academic Saturdays were extra days of class on top of a whole week of classes. With around 15 of these Saturdays per academic year, Choate kept their students busy.

As crazy as having Saturday classes may seem, this practice wasn’t too unconventional or demanding. Science teacher Ms. Fran O’Donoghue, who has been at Choate since 1984, said, “There were almost zero outside-of-Choate commitments and activities that students had or participated in, so there were practically no conflicts.”

Today, many students compete in club sports or do community service beyond Choate’s campus and schedule, which would have made these Academic Saturdays quite strenuous. Even so, this tradition still exists in many New England private schools. Three of Choate’s peer schools — the Hotchkiss School, the Lawrenceville School, and St. Paul’s School — continue to have regular Saturday classes.

Nevertheless, there was still backlash to these Academic Saturdays from Choate students. They argued that it limited their free time and increased stress and workload. In 1998, Choate student Lauren Hoss ’00 argued that “Teachers should not be allowed to give tests or collect papers on Academic Saturdays” and suggested that the School enact policies to re-

strict the amount of work that could be assigned for the sixth day of the school week. From 1997 to 1999, Choate employed the rotating “Blue” and “Gold” schedules. Every week was either a “Blue” or a “Gold” week, and each day contained seven 40-minute periods and one 55-minute period, except for Wednesdays, which contained four 55-minute blocks.

Similarly to Wednesdays, Saturday classes ran from 8:00 a.m. to 12:50 p.m. with four 55-minute classes and one 30-minute meeting period. Throughout each week, there were four 30-minute meeting periods as well. With very short blocks, teachers wanted longer class periods, leading the School to adopt a standard one-week schedule containing seven 50-minute class periods per class day in the following years.

Another big change was the implementation and subsequent removal of Community Lunches. Current Choate students are familiar with the hustle and bustle of the dining hall and the struggle to find a seat during lunch, but former Choate students did not have to deal with this daily dilemma. From 2005 to 2017, students had Community Lunch twice per week, where they were required to sit at assigned tables and get to know their classmates and teachers better.

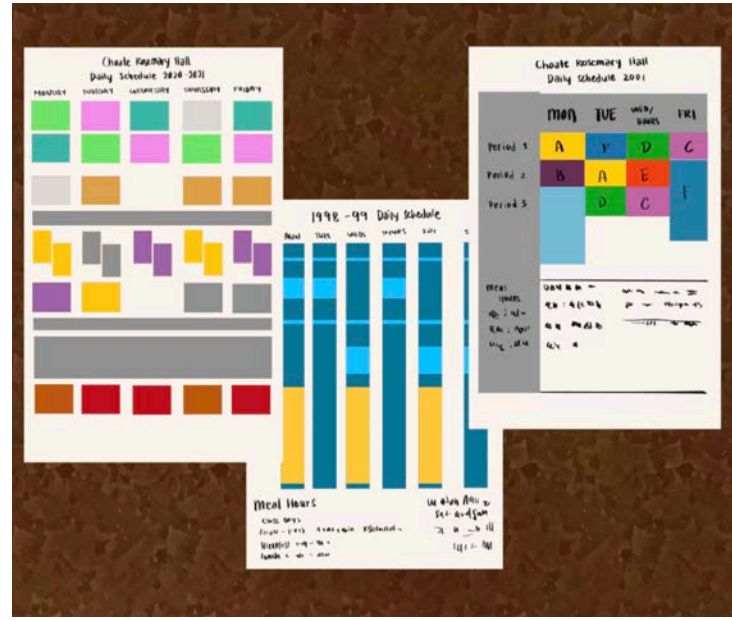
The seating requirements did not sit well with students, who wanted to have lunch with their friends, resulting in a protest early on in its existence.

In 2007, the “March on Arch” took place, with 125 students demonstrating against Community Lunches. Although the Administration was adamant on not making any modifications, Community Lunch was reduced to only once per week.

More recently, schedule changes had to be made during the Covid-19 pandemic, when students took to Zoom for their classes. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the class day was divided into two parts: five class periods in the morning from 8:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. and another two periods in the evening, blocks H and I, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:40 p.m. These changes were made to accommodate the time zone differences as many international students had returned home during the pandemic. Interestingly, the colors for each block shifted to accommodate the new schedule; while we may associate some blocks with specific colors, such as C block with red or D block with yellow, with the addition of blocks H and I, these blocks shifted colors to pink and peach, respectively.

Choate’s schedule has been evolving since its inception, and over the past century, our school day has drastically changed. It’s fascinating to observe how our schedule has changed over the years to suit the School’s needs and interests, as well as the wants of students and the Choate community.

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# THE 2024 DANCE CONCERT: FROM PREPARATION TO PERFORMANCE

By **Eliana Li '26**  
*Copy Editor*

“It’s my favorite time of the year,” Kaho Hoshi ’25 said. From March 22-24, Choate held its annual Dance Concert, showcasing the culmination of a year’s worth of hard work and dedication. This year’s concert featured 16 pieces choreographed by both students and dance faculty, as well as performances by members of Dance Company, Step Squad, Hip-Hop Club, and SYNK.

The Dance Concert had been in the works since Dance Company rehearsals began in the fall. The club rehearsed from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. every Sunday. During each 40-minute segment, choreographers taught dancers fragments of their pieces and provided feedback.

When asked about her artistic process, Dance teacher and choreographer Ms. Angharad Davies said, “Every choreographer will have a different way of teaching, but I will often give a task to the dancer and ... have the student improvise with that task.” Head of Dance, Dance teacher, and a faculty advisor to Dance Company Ms. Pamela Newell added, “I love to do more experimentation in the early process, letting the dancers play with some images and letting them create little movement sequences. But once we start to form what’s gonna happen, rehearsal becomes a



Photo by Dana Tan '25/The Choate News

Hip-Hop Club dancers bring the hype on stage! combination of putting together those specific ideas.”

On the other hand, Step Squad Captain Athena Robinson ’24 outlined her group’s rehearsal process. “The whole club comes together in the Black Box, and it’s essentially just sheet-teaching steps or dances,” she said.

Choreographers put in considerable effort outside of running rehearsals to organize the concert successfully. “On stage, all of my props looked perfect and good as new, but they were breaking every day and were held together by superglue,” choreographer Kay Lee ’25 said. “Every night, I would go back into my room, superglue my fans, and dry them in all sorts of weird angles, but that’s just part of the role of being a choreographer.”

The choreographers of the various pieces walked away from the

experience with invaluable knowledge. “I’ve learned to adapt and also just to have fun, letting people have their own personal touch,” Robinson said. Choreographer Nao Murata ’25 agreed, saying, “I’ve learned how to keep my rehearsals fun because at the end of the day, I want my dancers to enjoy dancing.”

Rehearsals continued until the week leading up to the concert, when Tech Week (March 17-22) officially began. Tech Week “is all about getting on stage and seeing the pieces on stage,” Robinson said. Every day that week from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., the dancers ran through their pieces on stage and made corrections to certain steps and formations.

Choreographers also had separate meetings to ensure the lighting and sound matched their vision. “At first, it was really scary, doing



Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Dancers performing a student-choreographed piece.

whatever pieces you’re in for the first time on stage in front of everyone else in Dance ... There were lots of mistakes on that first day, and it was a little daunting,” Dance Company Co-President Marissa Jacobs ’24 said. Hoshi agreed, “It was definitely hectic and a lot of work, but I think all the dancers agreed that it paid off in the end.”

The culmination of their hard work officially began on Friday, March 22: the opening night of the Dance Concert. The dancers and choreographers began getting ready for their performances two hours before showtime, and the atmosphere in the dressing rooms was electric; dancers were filled with excitement and anticipation. “Before every show, we all collectively got ready in the dressing rooms. I would bring my speaker, and we would play some really fun

music like Beyoncé and Rihanna,” Lee said. “We were always taking pictures, making TikToks, doing each other’s makeup and hair,” Murata added. Right before the curtains rose, the dancers gathered together to do “The Shakedown,” a warm-up in which dancers shook their bodies to loosen up and get rid of their nerves.

During the concert, backstage was lively and full of camaraderie. Whether it was helping another dancer put on a costume or fixing hair and makeup, “We’re always trying to help support each other,” Robinson said. “People would be in the wings, cheering really loud and watching each other on the monitor screen,” dancer and choreographer Laya Raj ’24 shared.

The Dance Concert featured a variety of dance styles ranging

from hip-hop to contemporary. Some memorable pieces included “Enter...Exi(s)t,” choreographed by Ms. Newell and “Our Symphony,” choreographed by Libby Dai ’25.

“Enter...Exi(s)t” caught the eyes of many audience members with its incorporation of moving doors as a prop. “I was interested in this idea of entering and exiting or being prevented from going somewhere. Wanting to go somewhere but then having regrets afterward ... Some of the themes that we worked on were reluctance and resistance to opportunities that come up for us,” Ms. Newell said. “It was a very creative piece that I felt had a lot of meaning behind it,” dancer Emma Schwerin ’26 echoed.

“Our Symphony,” a lyrical piece, was another dance that left a lasting mark on this year’s Dance Concert viewers. Inspired by students’ journeys at Choate, “Our Symphony” was about finding family and a sense of belonging. “It makes me want to cry every time I watch it,” Robinson said.

The dancers in this year’s Dance Concert certainly succeeded in showcasing their talent, hard work, and dedication to their craft. “I was just so impressed with their dedication. To my dancers, to all of the dancers, you all amaze me,” Ms. Davies said.

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## The Tarantino Quintet Inspires Choate Musicians



Photo courtesy of @choate\_arts on Instagram

Jazz students participate in a workshop with the quintet.

By **Rachel Fan '27**  
*Copy Editor*

The Choate community welcomed the Alexa Tarantino Quintet to campus on March 27-29 to perform and hold various workshops for aspiring jazz musicians.

The visiting band was composed of five members: saxophonist and face of the band Ms. Alexa Tarantino, pianist Mr. Steven Feifke, trumpet player Ms. Nadje Noordhuis, drummer Mr. Luther S. Allison, and double bass player Ms. Liany Mateo. Ms. Tarantino has taught in 50 countries and states over the past few years, leading more than 500 workshops and inspiring over 1,000 students.

The quintet’s trip to Choate consisted of running workshops across all instruments. They first visited the Jazz Ensemble during their Thursday rehearsal, where they worked with students on the jazz piece “Cedar’s Blues,” giving musicians tips on possible improvements and playing their own rendition of the song for students to hear. Saxophone player Dameer Gay ’24 explained, “It was special because it showed the difference between what a pro team sounded like and what we sounded like, and it highlighted things we could work for in the future.”

The quintet, along with some Choate faculty, split off into sections to work with students across all fields and topics of jazz. “Some workshops we held included talking about big band versus small ensemble playing because they are two very different styles,” Ms. Mateo said.

The band also hosted masterclasses regarding combinations of different brass and percussion instruments. “I picked up some useful techniques off of those classes, which I will put into my daily routine,” Gay said.

These multifaceted workshops covered not only musical techniques but also included Q&A sessions through which students learned about the quintet’s background and each member’s personal experience working as musicians and teachers. Reflecting on his time working with the musicians, Bowen Jin ’26 said, “They went in so much depth about the tiny nuances that we student musicians have never noticed before, and it was such an eye-opening experience.”

When asked about how she developed her skills as a teacher and musician, Ms. Mateo said, “I would try to take as many notes as I can, learning about different instruments and different styles of music.” She also spoke about how her experience as a student allowed her to become the teacher she is today. “[Being a student] really informed my values and what I think is important to pass on.”

On their last day on campus, the quintet held a concert where they performed various jazz pieces for Choate students and Wallingford residents. The band played their unique interpretations of several songs and improvised solos throughout the showcase. The quintet doesn’t play any pieces as is; they remember the general direction and sound of it. The bassist and the drummer do not read off of a sheet of

music, but rather make their own rhythms and bass lines based on the chords of the piece.

“As the musicians played, I was instantly transported to a world where the music speaks to my soul,” Aureliano Applebee ’26 said. Director of the Jazz and Wind Ensemble Mr. Matt McLean also joined the band for their final piece.

The quintet has a packed schedule of performances and workshops for the next few months. “I’m going to many different states this month — from Denver to Kansas City and then from North Carolina to Seattle,” Ms. Mateo said.

As the band departs to New York City for their next showcase, aspiring jazz musicians at Choate continue to develop their musicianship with the techniques they have learned. “Although working with world-class musicians was definitely humbling, it was also extremely encouraging as I received a new sense of direction and a goal to work for,” Jin said.

When asked how schools can improve jazz education, Ms. Mateo said, “I would like to see more of an integration between the traditional, more authentic relationship to jazz education before it was formalized. This includes playing in the community and having people come to shows.” She also values mentorship. “Not just having a teacher-student relationship, but having a mentor relationship because a mentor cares about you outside of the classroom,” she added.

Undoubtedly, the Tarantino Quintet’s work has inspired Choate’s musicians. “We learned about different ways to make your instrument sing, how to make the most out of your music, and how collaboration amongst the band can really take the piece to another level,” Jin said. Choate’s aspiring jazz musicians will hold onto the group’s teachings as they forge their own musical paths.

“Alexa and her quintet was a genuinely eye-opening experience. I’ve learned so much from these professional musicians,” Jin said. “Working with your peers, actively listening during performances, making the most out of the music.”

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## Art History: A Course Catalogue Gem

By **Dana Chung '26**  
*Reporter*

Each year, Choate students are given the opportunity to delve into various realms of art history through the Arts Department’s three art history classes: Ancient World in the fall, Sacred and Secular in the winter, and Making the Modern World in the spring.

In the Ancient World course, students explore visual art and architecture created up until the medieval period. During the winter term, the focus shifts to studying a wide range of religious and non-religious artistic traditions from around the world between the 15th and 18th centuries. Finally, in the spring, the course turns its attention to contemporary and modern art.

By examining humanity’s creative and cultural achievements from prehistory to the modern day, Choate students in the course gain a rich understanding

of art, philosophy, architecture, sculpture, and literature.

Logan Dubuc ’26, a student in the Sacred and Secular course, stated that her favorite part of the class was studying the Romantic movement. Dubuc also touched on how her teacher Mr. Bill Lustenader goes very in-depth with each subject the course tackles.

When describing what a typical class looks like, Dubuc shared, “We are in the [Paul Mellon Arts Center], Mr. Lustenader would come in, and it was a lecture-style class, so he would have a lot of slides with paintings and artists. He would go into depth about the meaning of the paintings when they were created, and what they meant.”

Through the chronological progression of exploring art movements, Choate students in the course can develop a “different sensibility they might not get with other kinds of history courses,” Mr. Lustenader explained.

Mr. Lustenader has been teaching art history at Choate since 1994, and he started as an American Art instructor for the History, Philosophy, Religion, and Social Sciences (HPRSS) Department. Since then, he has been filling in for teachers on medical leave and giving independent lectures at Choate and at three universities. When he is not teaching art history, Mr. Lustenader works as a professional artist.

One of the reasons Mr. Lustenader loves teaching art history is because it provides explicit insight into political and social history, both of which are important facets of understanding the evolution of human civilization. “You’re learning connoisseurship, how you look at art, how you interpret art, and through that, you learn the history around it, rather than just studying history,” Mr. Lusenader said.

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## GUESS THE PHRASE



Graphic by Junho Lee '24/The Choate News





# FIELD REPORT

Choate Spring Record  
25 - 11 - 0

## Varsity Games

**Girls' Softball** (2-0)  
vs. Ethel Walker, 15-0

**Boys' Golf** (2-0)  
vs. Avon, 197-208

**Girls' Tennis** (1-0)  
vs. NMH, 8-1

**Ultimate Frisbee** (2-0)  
vs. Watkinson, 13-7

**Girls' Golf** (5-0)  
vs. KO, Miss Porters, 1-0

**Boys' Volleyball** (0-2)  
vs. Exeter, 0-3

**Girls' Lacrosse** (2-2)  
vs. Hotchkiss, 9-20

**Boys' Baseball** (3-1)  
vs. Avon, 4-11

**Girls' Water Polo** (1-1)  
vs. Williston, 6-8

## J.V. Games

**Girls' Lacrosse** (2-0)  
vs. Pomfret, 7-3

**Boys' Tennis** (2-0)  
vs. Loomis, 5-2

**Boys' Lacrosse** (1-1)  
vs. Westminster, 5-6

# CHOATE SWIM MAKES WAVES AT FOUNDERS

By **Kaz Kousaka '27**  
*Reporter*

Choate's Varsity Boys' Swim Team has ended their season with a bang, winning their third consecutive title at the Founders League Swimming Championships (Founders) for the first time in the School's history. The team's achievement highlights their skills in the pool, strong bonds with one another, and tireless commitment to success.

Along with securing the Founders title, Choate also took home four new records, including three individual and one relay award. Team member Ryan Liu '26 reflected on the exciting three-day competition. He emphasized the importance of perseverance and enjoyment to be successful in the pool. Liu said, "I will say just work constantly. Do not give up in the middle, and just enjoy the sport. Enjoy the time you spend in the water."

Liu's love for swimming has only grown stronger over the years, fueled by the unwavering support of his teammates and coaches. "The team is almost like a family every time you step on the block. You feel hype because everyone is cheering for you," Liu added, underscoring the core support



Photo courtesy of Assistant Athletic Director Mr. Nolan Silbernagel

Choate Varsity Boys' Swim wins the Founders League Championship. that drives the team to success. His dedication was rewarded when he broke Choate's record in the 100-meter Butterfly event. Liu has high hopes for the future, with his eye on the 400-meter Freestyle and 200-meter Individual Medley records next.

For team member Daneel Polakoff '25, representing Choate at Founders was the culmination of years of hard work and dedication. Despite facing alarming setbacks

such as a shoulder injury a week before the competition, Polakoff leaned on his teammates and his determination to keep going. "Choate is definitely the loudest and most hyped team at Founders, and you can definitely just feel that," Polakoff said, highlighting the team's vibrant spirit. "[You learned to] trust your coach, keep swimming, and stay motivated, because the results will eventually come if you stick with the training," Polakoff's perseverance

paid off when he broke Choate's 100-meter Breaststroke record.

Michael Xu '25, another standout swimmer, noted the significance of representing Choate at Founders. The team's strong spirit and promising future made him proud, motivating him to push his limits in pursuit of excellence. "I always remind myself that there's a goal I have to achieve and that there's no taking shortcuts," Xu shared. His dedication to

improvement through hours of practice was reflected in his achievement of breaking the Founders League record for the 100-meter Freestyle.

Boys' Swim ended the tournament on a high note with a combined effort by Liu, Polakoff, Xu, and Henry Ding '24, who together broke the Founders and Choate record for the Boys' 200-meter Medley Relay.

Despite the pressure, the team's relentless support and trust for each other proved to triumph as they displayed their shared celebration of victory. After winning the championships, everyone, including the coaches, jumped into the pool and sang the School Song. "It was a really rewarding moment," Liu said.

From overcoming injuries to maintaining motivation during grueling training sessions, their resilience and determination delivered deserving results. Looking ahead, the Boys' Swim Team remains focused on setting higher goals and pushing their boundaries. Whether breaking records or securing victories, their steadfast commitment to excellence ensures that Choate's swim team will continue to make waves in the competitive swimming arena.

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# OHIO STATE HOCKEY CHAMPION LEXINGTON SECRETO '21

By **Bella Welch '26**  
*Reporter*

From former Choate hockey player to Ohio State University national champion, Lexington Secreto '21 embodied the gold and blue spirit at the 2024 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Women's Hockey Championship. Taking place at the Whittemore Center Arena on March 24, the last eight minutes of the championship determined the outcome of a very close match, resulting in Secreto and the Ohio State Buckeyes defeating the Wisconsin Badgers with a 1-0 victory.

On the road to playing Division I Hockey in college, Secreto embraced the experiences and values instilled in her from her time at Choate. "I have learned so much about what it means to be a student-athlete, and I wouldn't have been able to adjust as quickly as I did without going to Choate," Secreto said.

The opportunity to win an NCAA National Title does not come by easily to just any hockey player. Behind the scenes, Secreto and her team made their practices more intense than the games, so the reward of winning was even more pronounced. Secreto and her team's motto states, "You have to reach the top of the mountain, and then it'll be easier on the way down."

Facing the challenges of the pandemic, Secreto's final season on the Choate Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey Team was upended. Still, as a captain, Secreto always found ways to roll with the punches. "She was the perfect goalie for that Covid-19 year. She was a really important bridge to spanning the pre-Covid-19 post-Covid-19 reality show," Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey Assistant Coach Mr. James Stanley said. Secreto's success derives from her unwavering

dedication and ability to handle demanding situations. Due to limited ice time, Secreto resorted to practicing with the Boys' Varsity Ice Hockey Team during the unique circumstances of the Covid-19 year.

As team captain, many of her fellow members looked up to her. Current sixth-former on the team Ellie Bissell '24 said, "She still made an effort to talk to me and reach out to me and walk around campus with me ... Definitely a good role model."

During her time boarding at Choate, Secreto learned important life skills such as balancing academics with hockey, which shaped her success at Ohio State University. With the guidance of faculty and student mentors, she arrived at practice on time, dressed nicely for game days, and communicated extensively with her teachers and coaches. This skillset has translated well to life at Ohio

State University for Secreto as she continues to grow as a student-athlete. "Everything I am today is because of Choate," Secreto said.

By understanding her strengths and weaknesses, Secreto ensures that she is prepared for any challenges that come her way. "I need to be grounded in knowing my strengths as an athlete and as a person. Just because all the odds are stacked against you doesn't mean you necessarily have to give in to that pressure," she said.

Looking ahead, Secreto sees herself striving for more as she aspires to guard the National Championship Title and win it as many times as possible. In the meantime, Secreto looks forward to continuing her studies at Ohio State University.

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Photo courtesy of Lexington Secreto '21

Lexington Secreto '21 celebrates her NCAA Division I Women's Hockey National Championship.

# MUSLIM STUDENT-ATHLETES FAST FOR RAMADAN

By **Zahabiya Khokha '27**  
*Reporter*

The average Choate student wakes up at around 8 a.m. and walks straight to class, maybe stopping by Lanphier Cafe for a quick coffee or by the dining hall for a toasted bagel. Now, imagine waking up at 4 a.m. to eat breakfast, participating in a full day of classes and almost two hours of strenuous sports practice, and finally, ending the day with a couple of hours of homework, all while on an empty stomach. This is the daily experience of many Muslim student-athletes at Choate.

During Ramadan, the fasting period lasted around 14 hours, from suhoor, the 5 a.m. meal before fasting, to maghrib, the 7 p.m. break-fast. Despite numerous challenges, student-athletes at Choate persevered in balancing their rigorous sports schedules with their religious duties.

One of the core purposes of Ramadan is to spend time appreciating the opportunities one is given. "The whole point of this is to gain a better understanding and appreciation for what you have and understand what your life could be like if you weren't as privileged as you are," Girls' Varsity Water Polo player Zainab Khokha '24 said. With the uncomfortable effects of dehydration and low energy, Khokha pushed herself to attend practices regularly and stayed disciplined from making exceptions too frequently. "I would like to maintain my regular practices during Ramadan, just because if I let myself get out of everything, it would defeat the purpose of Ramadan," she said.

Boys' Varsity Lacrosse player Tariq El Mammann '24 reflected on his faith and how fasting has actually improved his mental state before games. "For my pregame routine, I find myself more in tune spiritually and in a calmer state of mind than [when I'm] not fasting because it's at the forefront of my mind, combined with

that fight-or-flight mentality and that adrenaline that kicks in," El Mammann said.

Boys' Varsity Volleyball player Azhar Sahadulla '25 used fasting to self-reflect and test his stamina. He said, "I think fasting itself is a big discipline, especially for 30 days straight. It's something you can lose your mind over." Sahadulla found certain strategies helpful in tackling fasting, such as thinking of the bigger picture. "I focused on the whole world a lot. I think that that's helped me."

Muslim student-athletes were faced with challenges when fasting, such as low energy and dehydration. "I'd say the biggest hardship is thirst. Of course, there is hunger and the fatigue that builds up throughout the day. But that feeling of being thirsty in the middle of a game is definitely something that I struggle with and must get through," El Mammann '24 said.

On some days, the student-athletes found the challenges fairly overwhelming for their well-being. Sahadulla recounted one of his more challenging fasting days, during which a lengthy practice session and heavy homework load compelled him to rely on his optimistic outlook. "Sometimes you can't really control how much you get, or when you have practices, stuff like that. I do feel like it is quite challenging," Sahadulla said.

Throughout Ramadan, Muslim student-athletes fulfilled their religious duties despite the myriad challenges. Honing discipline and stamina, they took advantage of their holy month to create positive growth, improving themselves mentally and spiritually. "In terms of my character, I think I've grown a lot. I think that struggle I go through every day for 30 days makes me much better," El Mammann said.

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