



THE CHOATE NEWS

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CHOATE TAKES GLOBAL STAGE AT G30 CONFERENCE

By **Nick Aston '28**
Copy Editor

From April 26 to May 3, the Choate community put its best foot forward as it welcomed members of the G30 Schools Organization for their annual conference. The Organization was founded in 2006 by Sir Anthony Seldon, the Head of Wellington College, UK, and David Wylde, the Head of St Andrew's College, South Africa. Comprised of heads of schools from across the globe — including New Zealand, Kenya, and China — who travel to the United States, the G30 Organization aims to convene educational leaders “to learn about the country, its culture, and about the school ... to learn from each other,” Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis said. As students and faculty prepared to welcome members to campus, the school community spent time organizing programming to allow members to experience all that Choate has to offer.

Choate was chosen for its unique location, innovation, and programs that differ from those of peer schools. After gathering in New York City, G30 members arrived on campus on Tuesday, April 28, and began the conference with in-depth tours of Choate's campus, followed by panels and information sessions held in Carr Hall, which remained the group's central meeting location for the remainder of the week. The Admission Office continued



Photo courtesy of Ms. Alison Cady

Dr. Curtis poses alongside fellow members of the G30 Schools Organization.

its involvement in the conference the following day, on Wednesday, April 29, as Gold Key ambassadors were paired with G30 members for an informal lunch in the dining hall. Ms. Charlotte Peterson, an Admissions Officer and head of the Gold Key Ambassador Program, noted that Choate's central location and progressive approach to balancing tradition and innovation stood out to G30 members as a central aspect of the Choate experience. “Something that is very unique in comparison to other schools is definitely our innovative approach. I'd say a

lot of the schools here have been around for a while, with traditions like uniforms, houses, and stuff, kind of like in Harry Potter. But Choate is definitely on the spectrum of traditional and innovative, more towards that innovative side, while also balancing that history,” Ms. Peterson said.

Hosting the conference at Choate was a particularly large undertaking, as most conferences involve multiple G30 schools from the area working together to host events. Choate nonetheless rose to the occasion, showcasing its Gold and Blue spirit through its programming and

special events. “I wanted them to actually see us,” Dr. Curtis said, as he reflected on his goal of showcasing Choate's authentic culture. “We wanted to put our best foot forward and show them who we are, genuinely.” To that end, a highlight for Dr. Curtis was the School Meeting attended by G30 members on Wednesday April 29, where he felt that the energy of the meeting reflected how “people love being here, and understand the school's values,” and that “people feel this ownership of the school, that this was where they feel comfortable, like they're at home,” Dr. Curtis said.

Iganico Granda '27, who showed members of the G30 around the Kohler Environmental Center (KEC), noted that interacting with them was an impactful experience for him, as he was able to showcase the diversity and global connections that make him proud to be a member of the Choate community. “I think it's a privilege, also an amazing opportunity to showcase what our school is all about. There's so much diversity, whether that's the student body or the curriculum, that it's awesome to be able to show-

case that to schools that hold so much importance all around the world,” Granda said.

In addition to showing members around the KEC, Granda also introduced them to the specific programming and coursework that sets the Environmental Immersion Program apart from other areas of study on campus. More specifically, he noted that he connected with Head of School of Northfield Mount Hermon Mr. Brian Hargrove with whom he discussed students' experiences at the KEC. “I think they were definitely impressed by what we had to offer, and especially by the Environmental Immersion Program,” Granda said. “They're really excited and curious to learn how we navigate our daily lives in a different environment that is not traditional to the school curriculum.”

Hosting the G30 group at Choate was an opportunity to showcase the values and beliefs that shape the environment we live in, and to recognize that everyone plays a part. “Our guests were deeply impressed by Choate, by the quality of the programs, the campus, and the remarkable things happening across the School,” Dr. Curtis said. “I was enormously proud of the way the Choate community represented itself throughout the week.”

Nick Aston may be reached at naston28@choate.edu.

Female Identity in Focus at Final Community Conversation

By **Taeyoung Kim '28**
Reporter

What does it mean to take up space, and to be made to feel you shouldn't? That question embodied a recurring theme at Choate's final Community Conversation of the school year. On April 23, students and faculty gathered in Colony Hall to discuss “Everything You Wanted to Know, But Were Afraid to Ask About

... Female Identity at Choate.” Organized by the Equity and Inclusion team, the conversation invited female-identifying students and faculty to respond to anonymously submitted questions.

Like previous Community Conversations, the event began with a preselected question prompting participants to shout out female members of the community they look up to. Norah Wang '27 found the

preselected question especially meaningful. She described it as a “really nice, warm moment” where students and faculty could highlight people whose kindness and accomplishments might otherwise go unnoticed. Beginning with a question that was more accessible set the tone for more personal responses as the meeting progressed.

Many students emphasized the importance of con-

fidence and self-advocacy, particularly in spaces where they might feel judged or overlooked. Wang, who had not initially planned to speak, found herself contributing after an interaction on her way to Colony Hall in which she chose to walk directly through a group of boys playing hacky sack rather than stepping aside. She connected it to a broader idea of how women are “expected to take the back seat.” “It is important for [women] to not just take up space in an academic setting, but also take up space in life,” she said.

Speakers also focused on how expectations and biases for women shape everyday interactions. Maya Abeles '28 was compelled to speak when the conversation turned to assumptions about female students. She described how traits such as being outspoken or energetic can be perceived differently depending on gender. “This makes me shrink myself down to be [more] demure and more palatable,” she said, noting that characteristics often encouraged in boys can be criticized in girls. While the conversation acknowledged moments of comparison among students, what stood out to Abeles most was “the support that women and girls gave to one another... [for instance] when two friends shouted out each other as role models.”

From a faculty standpoint, Spanish teacher Ms. Amanda

Arcand noted that the Community Conversation prompted her to speak publicly for the first time. Although she described speaking in front of a large crowd as “quite unnerving,” she felt compelled to “[speak] up on behalf of female students to ask that the community check any unconscious bias.” Ms. Arcand emphasized that discussions like these “helped shed light on ways we as a school and as individuals might do an even better job of showing our female students that we value them equally.”

For many observers, listening to these experiences was eye-opening and thought-provoking. Some were also surprised by the sheer number of students who chose to speak openly about their personal experiences. As a third-form student, Gaby Yeung '29, found the advice shared by upperclassmen impactful. “It feels really empowering to hear other women act,” she said, adding that these perspectives helped her rethink how she might respond in similar situations. She pointed to the hacky sack story as powerful, calling it “really brave” and something she would “never have the guts to do.”

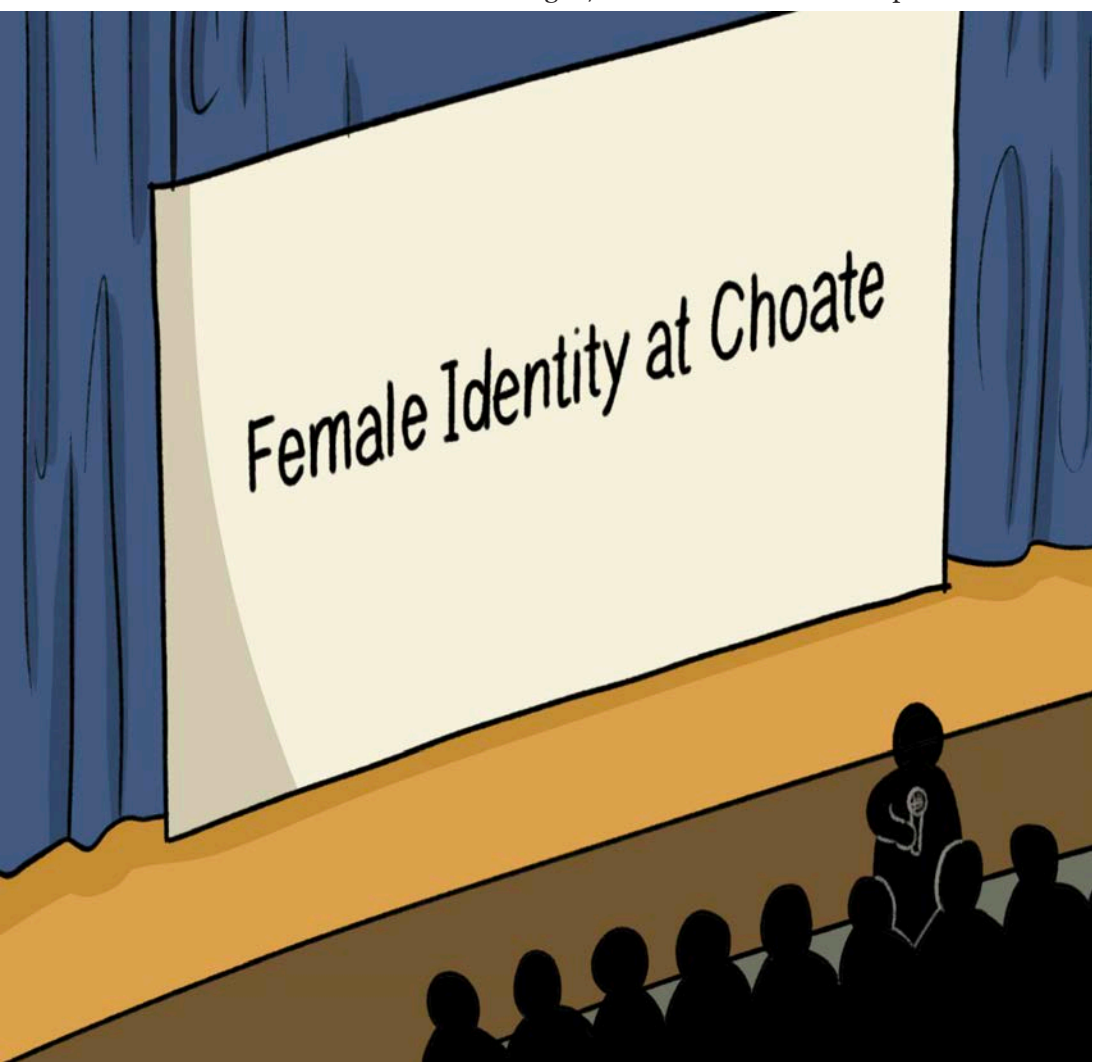
At the same time, the discussion prompted reflection from students, including male-identifying students, with different perspectives. Dylan Kim '26 said the experience allowed him to hear viewpoints he had not previously

considered. “There are stories that I have never heard before,” he said, noting that the conversation offered insight into how some female-identifying members perceive daily interactions. He acknowledged that certain moments were difficult to hear, particularly when students suggested negative intentions behind male-identifying students' actions, which he considered unintentional. Still, he emphasized the importance of the space, and said it is “important for us as a community to hear what is going on and try to help.”

As the final Community Conversation of the academic year, the discussion represented the diversity of experiences within Choate and the significance of creating space to share them. While perspectives varied, the common theme of the value of listening, reflecting, and supporting one another persisted. As Yeung said, bringing these experiences into an open forum “can have real effects on the community.”

As Abeles emphasized the importance of “building each other up, especially at a competitive place like Choate,” the conversation ultimately wasn't just about female-identifying students speaking up, but how we choose to listen to what was said and carry it forward. Where we go from here is up to the community.

Taeyoung Kim may be reached at tkim28@choate.edu.



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Ashley Wu '28, Leah Han '27, Sienna Kim '28, and Getty Images.

Working on a creative project? Come to the Library!



We offer markers, colored pencils, small whiteboards, dry erase markers, compass-protractor sets, a paint marker set, Project Kits, and i.d. Lab To-Go boxes for checkout.

Annual Senior Incendium Ceremony Burns Bright

By **Ethan Zhang '26**

Managing Editor of the 119
Masthead

Smoke rose from the patio outside of the Student Activities Center (SAC) on April 30 as dozens of seniors fed various college rejection letters, failed calculus tests, and Science Research Program (SRP) review articles into the flames. Late in the evening, Choate held its annual Incendium tradition, where the sixth-form class comes together to cathartically destroy documents that have shaped their high school experience, for better or worse. Typically held in late April, Incendium kicks off the momentum for Senior Spring.

Although seniors have historically burned college rejection letters, the tradition has evolved to include a wide variety of documents. Andy Stahlman '26, for example, burned a copy of his transcript, a printed email of disciplinary warning, and "a few debate ballots that I just didn't like." Students also burned academic work from classes and signature programs: "I made sure [to include] tests, quizzes, essays, college decision letters," Dylan Kim '26 said. Alex Yuan



Photo courtesy of Reinhah Lee '26

Seniors set alight various documents at Incendium.

'26 and Chloe Lee '26, both former members of the Science Research Program, destroyed their 60-page research articles they created last spring.

However, students didn't just focus on all the difficul-

ties they faced throughout high school or simply burn documents they wanted to forget. Yuan also spent his time writing and "burning affirmations I wrote with a friend," describing it as "a request to the uni-

verse, hoping for good times to come." Kim agreed with Yuan's sentiment: "Incendium was a way to reflect on the past, whether it's good or bad ... to celebrate the work I've done by burning them."

To many, Incendium was extremely uplifting. "Throughout the entire college process, there have been ups and downs," Emma Zeng '26 said. "Being able to burn and get rid of the bad parts of the process was very

liberating." Stahlman described Incendium as a time "when we were celebrating each other and our accomplishments." However, for Kim, it was bittersweet: "I was happy to be there, but at the same time, it's sad that senior year is ending and we're all going off to different colleges," he said.

Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar, who has helped organize Incendium for the past seven years, provided insight into its planning. The facilities team organizes the pit fires, while the Director of Student Activities, Ms. Alex Long, handles logistics for planning and scheduling a date, in collaboration with the sixth-form deans.

Ms. Kazar reflected on Incendium, mentioning how "it's a great way to start the festivities [of Senior Spring] ... to let go of the stress as [seniors] head into their last month at the School." As they enjoy their last moments at the School, traditions become increasingly important to seniors. "I'm looking forward to more events like Incendium," Yuan said. "I want to make more good memories and let go of the bad ones before I leave."

Ethan Zhang may be reached at ezhang26@choate.edu.

STAHLMAN SHINES AT WORLD'S DEBATE COMPETITION

By **Elliot Sun '28**

Copy Editor

Nine minutes. One hundred forty-one people watching. More than 20 countries represented on the floor. That was the moment Andy Stahlman '26 spent four years working towards — a Grand Finals debate speech at the World Individual Debate and Public Speaking Championships (WIDPSC) in Bristol, England.

Stahlman, a four-year senior from Austin, Texas, prefect in Atwater House, and the chair of the Judicial Committee (JC), advanced to the Grand Finals in debate at WIDPSC — the largest international speech and debate competition in the world. He also reached the finals in after-dinner speaking, an event where the speaker delivers a 5 to 6 minute entertaining, original speech. Stahlman advanced to the semifinals in every single one of the tournament's categories: interpretive reading, after-dinner speaking, prepared speaking, debate, and impromptu speaking.

"When I was a younger debater, I dreamed about going to Worlds, and when I finally went as a junior, that was a really big deal to me," Stahlman reflected. "And now being able to come home with hardware and with a pretty big ranking, to me, was just super validating."

At WIDPSC, competitors are scored across all four preliminary

categories, with the combined total determining who advances. Stahlman qualified for the tournament in ISPSC, the North American international, which follows a similar structure. His Grand Finals debate prompt was "This house regrets the rise of AI therapy apps," and he learned of the resolution just 45 minutes before he was expected to deliver his speech. Competitors are isolated with their partners, unable to use any outside materials or sources, and given less than an hour to prepare for a nine-minute address to a panel of judges.

This pressure, according to those who know him best, never appeared to affect Stahlman. Choate's Head Debate Coach and Stahlman's Capstone advisor, Dr. Amber Hodge, has worked with him since freshman year and noted that composure under pressure has been a defining advantage throughout his Choate career. "He always does a really good job of handling things, finding space to center himself, and knowing what he needs," Dr. Hodge said. "He's always got it. I'm just hanging out there, and Andy does everything."

His passion for debate is what makes him such a successful speaker. "I think for me, this was sort of the culmination of four years of my life. I think I calculated 1000 hours I spent on debate last year," Stahlman said. This past year, he attended Dr. Hodge's extra help sessions almost every Tuesday night to train

for the tournament. In preparing for WIDPSC specifically, he focused more intensely on his pieces — particularly in the prepared speaking events, which required memorizing speeches in advance, while leaning on his natural flair for impromptu speaking.

Stahlman described his approach as an "appeal to emotional authority," selecting speeches that would resonate emotionally with the audience. "I picked the style I had practiced for four years, and sort of pushed it as far as I could," Stahlman said. Dr. Hodge praised the stylistic and academic development of Stahlman's growth as a debater. "He has matured so much as an intellectual, and that really helped him to think on his feet, and to bring that into the debates on the fly."

Harper Marsden-Uren '26, who is Captain of the Debate Team and one of Stahlman's closest sparring partners, said watching him grow over four years has been a genuine privilege — even through a classroom setting.

"Andy and I are known for fighting ... we had classes together, and we were at each other's throats pretty much every class. I really love to argue with him because he makes me a more thoughtful person," Marsden-Uren said. She described Stahlman as one of the most accomplished and thoughtful debaters she has ever encountered.

"He is by far the most dedicated person of our cohort to want to go to Worlds and to reach that level of success," Marsden-Uren said. "Debate is a real, driving force in his Choate experience," she added.

Dr. Hodge also emphasized his impact on the Choate Debate program. "He's also a really great mentor to younger debaters, and he does a really good job of just building a team environment," Dr. Hodge said.

For Stahlman, the trip to Bristol offered more than competition. The U.S. team dined at a Michelin-starred Indian restaurant, and the connections made across international borders remained one of the most memorable moments of the tournament experience. "Meeting all these amazing people has always been pretty much the highlight of these trips," Stahlman said.

As Stahlman prepares to graduate, Dr. Hodge admitted that next year will feel different. "Next year is going to be really weird without him," she said. "He's among a very, very good group of seniors leaving the debate team." For a student who had logged four years and thousands of hours in pursuit of a single dream, a Grand Finals appearance at WIDPSC wasn't just another box he wanted to check off. It was the culmination of his entire debate career.

Elliot Sun may be reached at esun28@choate.edu.

ALUMNI DINNER INDUCTS CLASS OF 2026



Photo courtesy of @gochoate on Instagram

Seniors smiling at the camera at Alumni Dinner.

By **Mariana Regalado '28**
Reporter

On April 14, members of the Class of 2026 attended Choate's annual Alumni Dinner in Hill House, where they caught a glimpse of their future as Choate alumni. The dinner, a longstanding tradition, brings together graduating seniors and alumni from previous class years. Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Jenny Elliott described the event as "an opportunity for our seniors to connect with a number of alums who have remained really involved with Choate and to welcome them into the Alumni Organization."

As one of many events leading up to graduation, Lois Kahu '26 reflected, "I still haven't processed that we're about to graduate." Throughout the night, members of the graduating class spent the evening reminiscing and conversing with current alumni. Seniors also received their alumni vests, marking their official entrance into the organization and their transition towards Choate alumni status. Being an alum of Choate is an "exciting and important identity to hold," said Ms. Elliott. The event also provides seniors with a sense of belonging to "something bigger than just their own class, making sure that they are welcomed into the larger alumni body that they'll be part of forever," Ms. Elliott said.

On the other hand, this dinner was not only a significant night for seniors, but also for alumni who once experienced the same milestone during their time at Choate. It was an opportunity for Alumni to stay connected with Choate and remember their own days on campus, observe how Choate has changed since, but also the

parts of the School that have stayed the same. Tom McDougal '26 and Lois Kahu '26 described the dinner as "a lot of nostalgia" while still being a "really happy dinner" reflecting both the excitement and heartache of approaching graduation.

For those who have not attended, the evening's format is simpler than one might expect. The mood is set with the vintage dining hall lamps and elegant decor. During the evening, one alumnus was paired with a table of current seniors to enjoy a sit-down dinner and conversation. These conversations often centered around personal stories of life at Choate and the future ahead. McDougal's biggest takeaway from this experience was "that you're only in high school, and even if you have an idea of what you want to do, you should try your best to explore as many options as possible, they can set you down different paths of exploration and adventure."

Similarly, Kahu emphasized how while Choate is a meaningful part of every student's life, it only represents a "small part of your existence," noting how important it is "to cherish the friendships that you made." The Alumni Dinner brings together many generations of the Choate community, making space for bonds between different classes. As McDougal puts it, he hopes to "give the other seniors a sense of ambition and inspiration of the endless possibilities when coming out of Choate." As seniors prepare to step into the next phase of their lives, the event was an introduction to how they can stay in touch with their high school community in the years to come.

Mariana Regalado may be reached at mregalado28@choate.edu.



Photo courtesy of Andy Stahlman '26

Andy Stahlman '26 poses for a picture with his award at the competition.

STATE CELLPHONE BILL SPARKS DISCUSSION AT CHOATE

By **Will Seery '28**
Reporter

On April 27, the Connecticut House of Representatives passed a bill that would require public schools across the state to limit student cellphone use during the school day, marking a significant step in the ongoing debate over technology's place in education. According to Channel 3 Eyewitness News (WFSB), the measure garnered bipartisan support and reflects growing legislative concern about the effects of smartphones on student concentration, mental health, and academic performance.

The proposed policy would not establish a uniform statewide rule. Instead, it would direct local authorities to create their own policies, often limiting or prohibiting cellphone use during instructional time. Legislators supporting the bill highlighted that phones have become a chronic distraction in classrooms, impeding students' full engagement with the material and complicating teachers' efforts to sustain attention. They also cite concerns about social media use during school hours and its link to increased anxiety among students.

Although the legislation applies directly only to public schools, its implications reach private and independent institutions such as Choate, where administrators are closely monitoring the statewide dialogue. While Choate remains

exempt from state requirements, school leaders recognize that these discussions mirror broader shifts in educators' views on technology.

Current Dean of Students and incoming Head of Student and Academic Life, Mr. Will Gilyard '98, noted that the school approaches cellphone use within a broader framework than simple classroom management. "These debates often reflect a growing consensus about the impact of phones on attention, learning, and well-being," he said. However, Mr. Gilyard emphasized that Choate's strategy must differ due to its residential environment.

Unlike public schools, Choate operates as a 24/7 community where students live, study, and socialize in the same space. "We are not just managing a school day; we are shaping a 24/7 residential community," Mr. Gilyard said. "That means our approach had to balance structure with trust and help students learn how to manage technology, not just restrict it."

This perspective highlights a key philosophical distinction. While the state bill prioritizes restrictions to enhance focus and minimize distractions, Choate stresses long-term independence and responsible decision-making. Rather than relying solely on regulations, the school seeks to help students develop healthy relationships with technology.

At the same time, the issue of cellphone usage extends beyond academics. Many ed-

ucators contend that phones shape students' social interactions, affecting communication patterns, attention spans, and the broader school culture. Restricting phone use, especially during shared or communal activities, is often seen as a way to promote face-to-face engagement and foster stronger peer relationships.

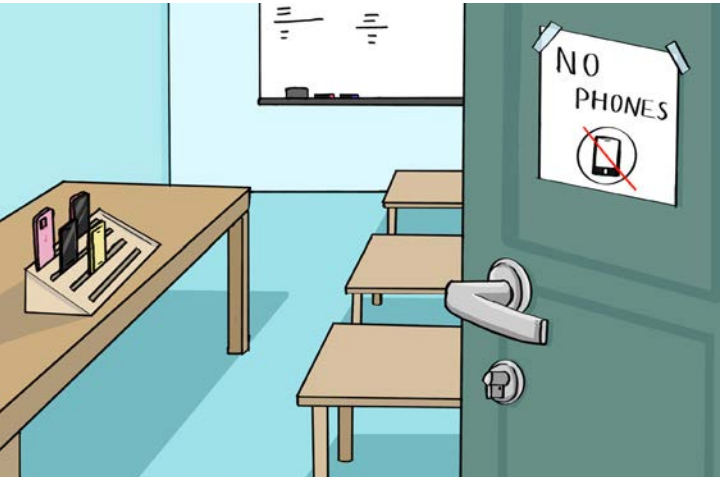
Supporters of the bill cite research indicating that reduced phone access can improve classroom behavior, increase student participation, and enhance academic performance. By limiting distractions, they argue, schools can create environments more conducive to focused learning and active engagement.

However, critics caution that enforcement could prove difficult and that policies should retain flexibility to accommodate the unique needs of individual communities. Some also express safety concerns, emphasizing that phones are vital tools during emergencies or for communication outside of school hours. Others question whether limiting phone use truly addresses the underlying issues of sustained attention and engagement.

As the bill advances through the legislative process, its outcome may shape how schools across Connecticut manage technology in the coming years. Whether implemented through statewide mandates or locally tailored policies, educators will continue to navigate the delicate balance between connectivity and connection.

Ultimately, the debate over cellphone use in schools reflects a broader challenge confronting modern education: how to navigate a world in which technology functions as both an essential tool and a powerful source of distraction, influencing not only how students learn but also how they connect with one another.

Will Seery may be reached at wseery28@choate.edu.



Graphic by Ann Ma '28/The Choate News

Seasonal Menus Arrive in Wallingford Cafés

By **Sophie Chung '27**
Staff Contributor

Every spring, something shifts in Wallingford's café scene. The pumpkin spice disappears, the weather gets warmer, and requests come in for something new. Local spots such as Half Moon Cafe, Le Jardin Cafe, and Green Kettle Coffee are leading the shift, each introducing items that reflect not only the changing weather but also the personalities behind their businesses.

At Half Moon Cafe, the approach is straightforward and ingredient-driven. The kitchen orders fish daily, and the chef builds each week's specials around what is freshest and in season. "We see what's in season at the moment, and we put it on the special menu," said Karina Velez, a staff member at Half Moon. Now, tomatoes, pineapple, and peach can be found in more of Half Moon's salads. The weekly rotation keeps the menu varied while still honoring customer favorites. "Some people get attached to something we had the week before," Velez explained, "We can always keep doing what we had the week before while adding new menus regularly."

Le Jardin, Wallingford's French café on North Main Street, takes a new approach to spring. This season, it has introduced three new mocktails — a pomegranate mocktail decorated with seeds, a smashed strawberry mocktail, and a lavender lemonade garnished with a real lavender flower and made with French lavender syrup. For food, a spinach

strawberry salad with pecans and feta cheese joins a new garden salad and a protein bowl, which draws inspiration from the owner's wife's Peruvian heritage, introducing variety to an otherwise traditionally French menu.

Moreover, Green Kettle Coffee brings the most openly experimental energy to spring menu-building. Co-owner of Green Kettle, Amanda Gillbride, said, "I feel like there's no expectations for coffee shops to have specific flavors," which allows the staff to become more creative with their menus. The team develops house-made syrups through a collaborative process — they present options, the staff taste-test, and they refine until something is ready for its place on the menu. This

spring, that process yielded a blueberry brown sugar latte and a carrot cake latte, both of which went viral on TikTok and overwhelmed the café with demand. "We couldn't keep up," staff member Haley Evans recalled.

Across all three cafes, spring menus illustrate responsiveness to customers, to seasons, and to the community. In Wallingford, café culture this spring is not just about what's on the menu, but about the ongoing conversation between small businesses and the people who walk through their doors each week, looking for something new and worth returning for.

Sophie Chung may be reached at schung27@choate.edu.



Photo by Ashley Wu '28/The Choate News

Green Kettle's seasonal menu this spring.

SPARKING UP GREEN KETTLE WITH A TOUCH OF JAZZ



Photo by Teya Tejavibulya '28/The Choate News

Members of the Jazz Ensemble takes a group picture after their performance.

By **Josie Kimball '29**
Reporter

Green Kettle, a local coffee shop in downtown Wallingford, has become a frequent spot for Choate students to do homework and to hang out with friends. Aside from their menu curated with care and originality, Green Kettle provides a cozy space for students to unwind with friends. On May 1, members of the Jazz Ensemble added a layer of soulful jazz to Green Kettle, performing various pieces that blended musicality with a shared sense of community for audiences.

The Choate Jazz Combo event not only created a peaceful ambiance inside the store but also left a lasting impression of the special night. For Bowen Jin '26, who played the trumpet, the night was the first time he fully connected with the music. During his sophomore year, he recalled feeling intimidated performing with adult musicians and less confident in his skills. However, as he was surrounded by friends, family, and other

welcoming faces at the cafe, Jin credited the setting with providing the intimate experience. "[The night was] a bucket list item that I'm really glad I got to cross off before I leave Choate," Jin said. "It's almost like painting a picture ... We were able to give [the music] to everybody, and everybody brought [warmth] to us too."

Ethan Yu '29, also playing the trumpet alongside Jin that night, reflected on his growth as an instrumentalist. "During the last song we played called 'Watermelon Man,' the second chorus I took during my solo was one of the best solos I've ever played ... the crowd really liked it," he said. Yu felt that the extended solo highlighted how jazz brought people together, describing it not just as a genre but as a medium through which he could clearly express his emotions, whether it was improvising or playing from the sheet music.

As part of the audience, Chloe Yeung '28 attended the event to support her friends and experience jazz in a more informal setting. Throughout the night, Yeung observed a strong

sense of engagement among the attendees, emphasizing that everyone supported the performers, "regardless of whether you know that person or not." She added that while students like this offer an opportunity to connect Choate with the local community, increased outreach beyond the school could help broaden the impact in the future. "I think that doing this is a good way to integrate ourselves in the community and show ourselves to the community and show [what] we have to offer," Yeung said.

Overall, according to Green Kettle Manager Ms. Haley Evans, the Choate Jazz Combo event marked the night with touching musical notes and a stirring atmosphere, elevating the experience for visitors in the café. "I think it would be fun to do a more formal jazz night where we could have a more set menu, like mocktails," Ms. Evans said. "[However,] I was very surprised by the turnout. It was very, very impressive."

Josie Kimball may be reached at jkimball29@choate.edu.

MILFORD HOSTS FOODIE FEST



Graphic by Ann Ma '28/The Choate News

By **Mary Higashi '29**
Copy Editor

For one weekend each spring, Milford hosts over 25 food trucks, a lineup of live bands, local vendors, and families during its annual Connecticut Foodie Fest. This year, on May 1 and 2 at Wasson Field, the festival brought the same fresh energy into towns, celebrating Connecticut's growing food culture.

The festival, despite its name, is more than just food: it features music, pizza-eating competitions, and family-friendly activities such as crafts, bounce houses, and tug-of-war. With ticket prices as low as \$5 and free admission for children under 5, the event was designed to be accessible, drawing in both local families and visitors from nearby and out-of-state areas.

At its core, the CT Foodie Fest brought people together with food as the common thread. Vendors offer a wide range of options, from pizza and barbecue to cuisines from around the

world, including Latin American and Asian dishes. For vendors and small businesses, the festival was the perfect place to sell their products and meet new customers in person.

Walnut Beach Creamery, a Milford-based ice cream shop, was one of the 25 vendors this year. Having worked with the Downtown Milford Business Association (DMBA) previously, Owner Ms. Christina Sollitto emphasized the value of the event for local businesses as she called it a "no-brainer to join the event that day as they always draw in great crowds." Throughout the weekend, Walnut Beach Creamery served their signature seasonal flavors, including Banana Bread and Black Knight, which consists of white chocolate ice cream, black raspberry swirl, and white chocolate chunks. Among them, Sollitto noted that the flavors Sandi Annie (a blue vanilla flavor) and Cookie Butter Crunch (a swirl of brown butter and cookie butter) were crowd favorites at the festival.

Aside from ice cream, Cousins Maine Lobster and Paradise

Island Food Truck offered a variety of dishes. Cousins Maine Lobster included chilled Maine-style lobster and lobster bisque, while Paradise Island Food Truck catered Puerto Rican cuisine, serving various arroz (rice) dishes with add-ons, such as Gandules (pigeon peas) and Salsichita (spanish sausage).

Looking ahead, vendors are already anticipating the return of their food trucks at the festival next year. Walnut Beach Creamery echoed this sentiment, as Ms. Sollitto said, "We will definitely be attending again next year." She also expressed her excitement on the festival's expansion: "I look forward to seeing how the DMBA grows this festival each year."

While CT Foodie Fest was primarily about food, it brought forth something more: an opportunity for residents to engage with their community, support local businesses, and take part in Connecticut's growing culture of community events.

Mary Higashi may be reached at mhigashi29@choate.edu.

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Maia A. Shah '27
Editor-in-Chief

Rachel R. Fan '27
Managing Editor

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Website

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Lauren Bellissimo '27
Mary Higashi '29

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Ms. Courtney DeStefano

Staff Contributors

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Kaylin Lam '27
Suyeong Hahn '27

Eliza O'Neill '27
Sophie Chung '27

Bridget Rivard '28
Drew Wolfson '27
Olivia Mancha '28

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A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A response to "No Fever, No Excuse?" by Jinx Hartong '27 (April 27, 2026: Vol. CXX, Issue 2, Page 4):

By **Mr. Will Gilyard '98**
Dean of Students

Thank you for raising an important conversation about student health and the experience of visiting the Health Center. We all share the same goal: ensuring that students feel supported, cared for, and able to thrive.

I want to be clear about one foundational point. Our Health Center staff is deeply committed to the care of every student who walks through their doors. Their priority is, and always will be, the well-being of each child. The suggestion that decisions are made based solely on the presence or absence of a fever does not reflect the professional judgment, training, and care that our nurses bring to their work each day, nor

does it reflect the clinical realities of individual students and the care rendered. Our Health Center's providers evaluate the full picture of a student's condition and make thoughtful decisions grounded in experience and medical expertise.

It is also important to note that the expectation that students attend class when the Health Center determines they are well enough to do so is not new. This has long been part of how we support both student health and student growth. Attending class when able is part of maintaining rhythm, connection, and academic continuity, all of which are important to a student's overall well-being.

The recent emphasis on noting missed commitments, including assessments, is intended to provide additional support, not pressure. We have seen, through experience, that when students

miss assessments, it can create a cycle of avoidance that ultimately increases stress and makes it more difficult to move forward. By having this information, deans and advisers are better positioned to check in, partner with students, and help them make a plan, often within a short and manageable window, so they can regain momentum. In many cases, this approach reduces anxiety rather than adds to it.

Part of our work with students is also focused on helping them build sound judgment over time. This includes learning to recognize when it is important to rest, and when persistence is appropriate. These are not always easy distinctions to make, and they are best developed with the support of adults who care for students well.

That said, it is equally important that we continue to

listen carefully to student experiences. If students feel that their concerns are not being fully heard or that they are being asked to push through when they should not, that is something we must examine closely. The strength of our community depends on our willingness to reflect, adjust, and improve.

At our best, we are a place where care and challenge coexist, where students are supported as whole people while also being guided toward responsibility and resilience. We remain committed to that balance and to working in partnership with students to ensure that their health, in all its dimensions, is respected and prioritized.

Mr. Will Gilyard is the Dean of Students. He may be reached at wgilyard@choate.edu.

If you would like to submit a Letter to the Editor to be considered for publication, email it to thechoatenews@choate.edu.

Why are Girls' Dorms so Far from the WJAC?

By **Norah Wang '27**
Opinions Writer

Step onto the athletic side of campus in the afternoon, where everything revolves, both physically and socially, around the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC), often referred to as the X. Teams move in and out, students push through tough practice drills, and games bring energy that vibrates across the entirety of campus, making the area feel inextricable from student life.

Three senior dorms are located next to the X, placed right in the middle of that environment: Edsall, Quantrell, and Spencer. Not a single one houses senior girls, a detail that becomes more noticeable the more time you spend in that space. According to Director of Residential Life Mr. Pat Dennehy, this was not intentional. He described the housing process as a "puzzle," where the dorm assignments can shift based on the size of the incoming senior class.

At a school where girls' athletics are this strong, the ubiquity of only male dorms around



Senior dorms situated close to the WJAC.

the X feels hard to justify, especially when Choate presents itself as a place that values equal opportunity and recognition across all programs.

Choate's girls' teams consistently perform at a high level. Teams like volleyball, soccer, hockey, wrestling, track, and many more all vie deep into postseason play, often against

the strongest teams in New England. Female athletes are not just participating. They are defining Choate's athletic success just as much, if not more than, the boys, contributing to the school's reputation in meaningful and visible ways. But that isn't reflected in where they live, which is where the issue becomes harder to ignore.

All senior dorms near the X are designated for boys, placing senior girls farther from the center of athletics and away from where much of the athletic energy exists. It may seem like a small detail, but it shapes daily routines. Being closer to the X means easier access to practices, physical therapy, and facilities, especially during

busy afternoons. It means being part of the constant movement and energy that defines athletics on campus.

"Living closer to the X makes a really major difference in your day-to-day routine," Varsity Track athlete Shaleen Sheth '27 said. "You're able to get to practices easier, and it reduces the hassle of going back and forth

across campus." The X is more than a location; it's a space for teams to come together and work toward the results they want, turning proximity into a real advantage for athletes.

Situating living spaces for female students near the X is not about taking space away from male athletes at Choate or disregarding their contributions to athletics. Rather, it's about balance, and whether the current setup of dormitories on campus reflects it.

While many factors make up how dorm assignments are made, gender breakdowns must be taken into consideration. Right now, one group consistently sits at the center of athletics while the other does not, creating a physical and internal gap that feels out of place at a school that prides itself on fairness and diversity. Girls have already proven their impact. The question is whether the campus reflects it.

Norah Wang is a fifth-former from Fort Lee, NJ. She may be reached at njwang27@choate.edu.

WRITING CENTER TUTORS: TEACHER NOMINATIONS AREN'T "WRITE"

By **Eliza O'Neill '27**
Opinions Writer

One of the "central qualities of a Choate education" outlined on the School's own webpage is that "self-advocacy is balanced with a commitment to serve others." Yet Choate's Writing Center, a feature meant to serve other students, denies students the personal agency to apply to be tutors by requiring teacher nominations before students can submit an application.

According to English teacher and Head of the Writing Center Dr. Stephen Siperstein, nominations are made by teachers to ensure a "holistic" approach. He said, "It's certainly not about what grades you receive necessarily ... I ask the teachers to think about who our students are who listen well and engage thoughtfully in class discussions, who are students also who can talk about writing, not just produce writing, meaning a metacognitive skill in being able to think critically about the writing process." Additionally, Dr. Siperstein noted that having teachers nominate students encourages candidates who might not otherwise have considered to apply to participate in the application process.

Despite the benefits of additional in-class insight that teacher input may provide, the process of becoming a tutor is inherently inaccessible. A nomination does not guarantee acceptance, but without one, students cannot even apply. This narrow approach limits opportunities that should be available to the whole student body rather than to just faculty discretion.

The Writing Center should be composed of students who are eager to teach, proud of their abilities, and passionate about the discipline – not simply those who happened to be noticed by their teacher or are capable in the subject. Self-nomination is essential to broaden the applicant pool and to reward those who recognize that initiative is a component of qualification. Allowing self-nomination recognizes passion and initiative in students, providing an equal playing field for candidates who are eager to contribute but may have been otherwise overlooked.

Tutors must also show patience and empathy when helping others. These are qualities that are not always as apparent in the classroom; teachers may not be the best barometer of whether a student would be a good tutor. There are some-

times limited opportunities to display such qualities in class, and merely relying on teacher nominations may not capture all candidates who exhibit these important qualities. No teacher knows a student's full potential based on just one class. Currently, the system is structured in a way that some qualified individuals remain invisible.

The system also ignores the fact that students' performance across topics is nuanced. A student who may find it difficult to write thesis-driven essays may excel at creative writing. Struggle in a particular topic.

The most concerning aspect of relying solely on teacher nominations is undoubtedly the lack of transparency to the student body. Tim Anantavich '27, a Writing Center tutor, reflected on the moment when he received his nomination, "I remember one day I got an email saying, 'you were nominated for the Writing Center,' and I never knew that that was the way that it was done." His experience is not anomalous, and it indicates that students themselves remained largely unaware of how to become a tutor. Anantavich also shared that "teachers are more lenient towards some kids and others, and there's a lot more bias in

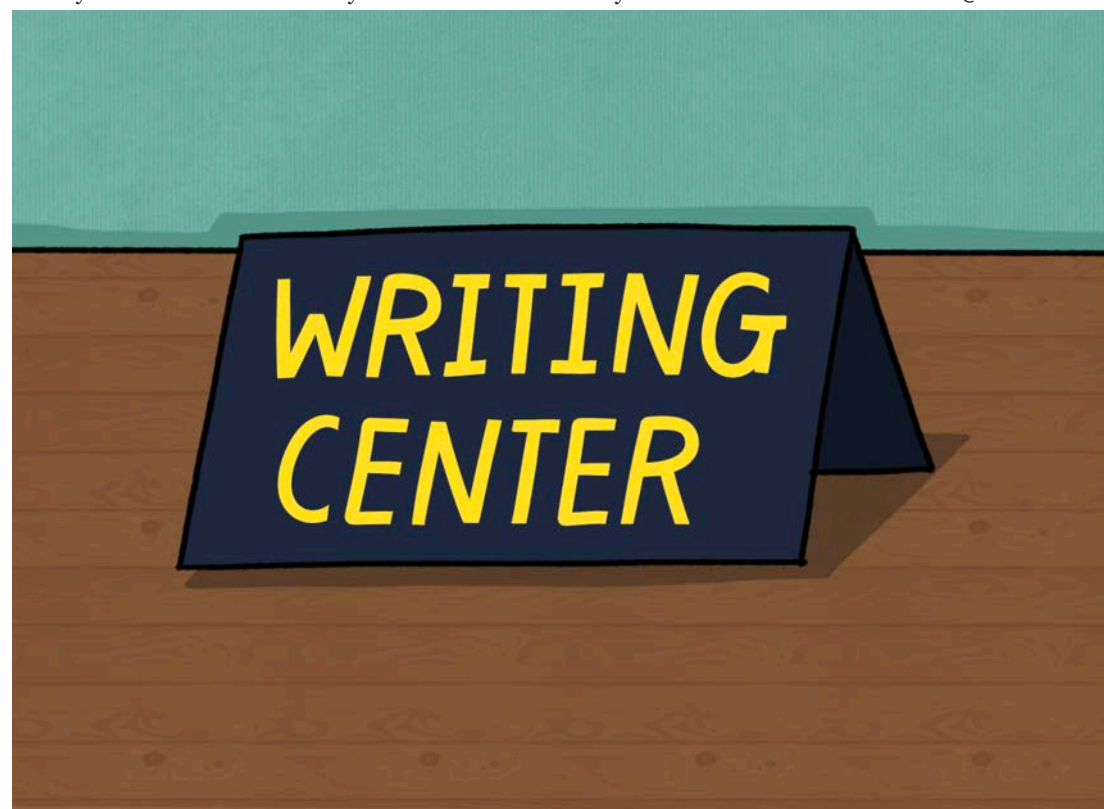
that process." In this way, the teacher-nomination system may prompt favoritism and unfairness, with some qualified students potentially being excluded due to a less favorable relationship with their teacher.

While many may assume that a self-nomination process would simply result in a flood of applications, a hybrid system of self-nomination and faculty recommendations may

ensure that all interested students are seen as qualified by their teachers before applying. Additionally, faculty can continue nominating students they believe are good candidates, encouraging participation among promising candidates. In this way, the Writing Center can avoid excluding interested, capable students from opportunities meant for the entire community.

If Choate truly values "self-advocacy," as quoted on its website, then the Writing Center should consider changing their restrictive application policies accordingly, allowing students to rely on their own initiative rather than the mandatory authority of their teachers.

Eliza O'Neill is a fifth-former from Locust Valley, NY. She may be reached at eoNeill27@choate.edu.



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

CMLNs: How China is Using a Century-Old Credit System to Affect American Livelihoods

By **Shaleen Sheth '27**
Staff Contributor

In August of 2025, the U.S. Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network dropped a bombshell: Chinese money laundering networks (CMLNs) were tied to roughly \$312 billion in suspicious transactions in American banks between 2020 and 2024. These funds, largely derived from fentanyl-related drug profits, are laundered through underground banking systems, shell companies, and real estate transactions, funneling money to cartels in Mexico without ever formally crossing borders. These networks contribute to the deaths of tens of thousands of Americans and Mexicans every year by funding the fentanyl pipeline, while Beijing claims it is not involved. Americans cannot ignore this report; we need to treat Chinese-linked money laundering as the national security threat they are.

Although the Chinese government has failed to take accountability, these networks do not appear to be accidental. This is a deliberate Chinese strategy to spread influence, flood the West with poison, and undermine American strength. While Washington debates diplomatic responses, critics contend that these financial networks are enabling the flow of dangerous drugs into the United States, posing both economic and social challenges for the American people.

The mechanics of this money laundering system are unbelievably efficient. Chinese underground banks, known as *fēi qián*, or "flying money," can bypass formal systems entirely. The term "flying money" refers to a historical Chinese credit system from the 9th century, in which merchants used paper in-

struments to transfer funds over long distances without transporting heavy metal currency — think of a bank that accepts coins on one end, gives you a check, and you cash that check at the other end. You've effectively brought all the coins with you without the need to haul them, hence the name: flying money. Similar mechanisms are used in modern laundering schemes: a cartel leader dumps a truckload of cash in Los Angeles, while a Chinese broker, disguised as a Californian resident, uses it to buy goods or deposit it into accounts that trigger yuan transfers in China. These transactions often occur without traditional wire transfers or traceable cross-boarder movement. These same networks will handle precursor chemicals shipped from China to Mexican labs, then launder the finished fentanyl profits right back. Data from the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network of

the U.S. Treasury Dept (FinCEN) shows that over \$53 billion of these flows is directed straight into U.S. real estate. 9,000-square-foot mansions in San Francisco and luxury apartments in New York have been identified as properties for laundering funds while simultaneously embedding financial influence in major economic centers.

This is by no means a victimless crime. Fentanyl-related overdoses have surged in recent years, devastating families and communities across the United States. Fentanyl has killed more Americans in the last few years than every war since Vietnam combined. Families are being torn apart on a daily basis, as this deadly drug strengthens its hold on the tired, the vulnerable, and the heartland communities of America. Meanwhile, critics argue that policy responses have been slow and insufficient. Although hearings have been held and sanc-

tions introduced, the scale of the problem — hundreds of billions of dollars — remains difficult to address with incremental measures such as press releases.

Similar concerns have been raised internationally, including in cities like Vancouver, where Chinese laundering helped inflate housing markets and embed organized crime. Think of Australia and Europe, where Chinese linked-networks have sent real estate prices skyrocketing. Yet at home, impassioned speeches by politicians hoping to get their names in the headlines ahead of election season never translate into bills, while Beijing laughs from across the ocean.

Some argue that money laundering is a global issue and that the Chinese authorities have taken steps to address it domestically. However, questions remain about the effectiveness of these measures in addressing networks that impact

the United States. Given the Chinese government's extensive regulatory reach, critics question how such large-scale operations persist. I don't buy that coincidence. What's more, this serves Beijing's goals perfectly: weaken the United States socially and economically and smear its international reputation, while gaining leverage in our nation through dirty money flows, real estate ownership, and influence peddling. It's classic soft warfare: using non-military means to achieve strategic dominance.

This thought process led me to a four-step plan that I personally believe would be the best plan to restore deterrence and protect American lives.

First, Congress must pass aggressive legislation banning Chinese nationals and entities from purchasing U.S. residential real estate without exhaustive background checks and source-

of-funds verification. Second, further sanctions should be imposed on any Chinese bank or company found facilitated these mirror trades, with sanctions much harsher than the current ineffective patchwork, or as I like to call them, symbolic slaps on the wrist, that exist today. They must be cut off from the dollar entirely to prove that such illegal actions will not be tolerated. Third, the administration must designate major CMLNs as transnational criminal organizations and aggressively prosecute their enablers with the same vigor once used on terrorist financiers. And fourth, America must decouple strategically: end the de minimis loophole that allows cheap fentanyl to flood U.S. ports.

Many may classify this as an overreaction, perhaps even xenophobia, or describe it as a risk of aggravating China. To that end, China is already an enemy of the United States; it is merely playing a subtle long game that America has not had the foresight to pursue. Every dollar laundered adds more support to their influence operation.

The \$312 billion FinCEN report should have been a flashing red alarm to those on Capitol Hill. If Congress and the White House refuse to treat this like the hybrid attack it is, America will lose more than just money. We will sacrifice an entire generation to addiction and a hollowed-out economy. It is long past time to decisively and unapologetically utilize this nation's resources to fight back against Beijing's money laundering.

Shaleen Sheth is a fifth-former from Madrid, Spain. She may be reached at ssheth27@choate.edu.



Graphic by Elly Koo '28/The Choate News

Who Rules the Middle East Now?

By **Eli Cain '28**
Opinions Writer

Shifting alliances in the Middle East suggest that regional power is no longer organized primarily around opposition to Iran, but instead around emerging strategic partnerships among Sunni-majority states, fundamentally changing how conflicts in the region are formed and fought. In its place, a powerful new Sunni 'bloc' is emerging, consisting of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Pakistan.

Since 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran has positioned itself as the most prominent Shia-majority state in the Middle East, with roughly 90-95% of its population identifying as Shia. This made it the central political representative of Shia Islam in regional affairs. Because of Iran's ideological and sectarian differences with Sunni-majority governments, rivalries emerged between Shia-led Iran and Sunni Gulf states — mainly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These rivalries are rarely fought conventionally. Instead, they are fought through vast networks of terrorist proxies.

Iran has attempted to challenge Saudi Arabia and the UAE by supporting the Houthis movement in Yemen, a Shia-aligned group that opposes the internationally recognized Yemeni government. Since 2015, Saudi Arabia has led a military coalition conducting airstrikes in Yemen, while the UAE has supported southern separatist militias such as the Southern Transitional Council, demonstrating how external powers embed themselves in local conflicts. Consequently, both the UAE and Saudi Arabia funded opposing militias to counter Iran's influence in the Gulf and to create a buffer zone between the Houthis and Saudi territory.

In most respects, this pattern of Gulf monarchies aligning against Iran describes how international affairs were conducted between these regional actors — until recent complications. The Arab world had two unofficial, yet mutually understood blocs: Arab monarchies aligned against Iran and its proxies. Since 2023, through a series of conflicts, the Iranian "Axis of Resistance" has been degraded: the Assad Regime in Syria has faced major losses after years of civil war; Hamas has severely weakened following the Israel-Hamas war; Hezbollah has been weakened through sustained military pressure; and the Houthis have continued to face ongoing strikes and counter-offensives. These developments have reduced Iran's ability to coordinate regional partners across multiple conflicts simultaneously. Arab monarchies, such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, began to realize that Iran no longer posed as great a threat as it once had, and, as a result, they no longer needed each other to stand up to the Islamic Republic.

Instead of maintaining the unofficial Arab bloc, which had been formed as a reaction to the Iranian threat, the UAE and Saudi Arabia's foreign policies began to diverge, often leading to conflict. For example, in Sudan's civil war, the UAE has been widely reported to have connections to support networks tied to the Rapid Support Forces, while Saudi Arabia has taken a more mediation-focused diplomatic role, highlighting differing regional priorities.

Since the Saudi-UAE divergence, Saudi Arabia has aligned itself with a rising Sunni alliance, including Turkey, Qatar, and Pakistan. In almost every regional conflict, including within Syria, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen, Saudi Arabia has aligned itself with these states. This alignment is also reflected in diplomatic devel-

opments such as the 2023 Saudi-Iran normalization agreement brokered by China, which reduced direct confrontation and opened space for new regional configurations.

Meanwhile, the UAE has taken a different stance. In theaters such as Somalia, Yemen, and Sudan, the UAE has supported groups that are not aligned with those backed by the Saudi-led grouping. Instead, it has strengthened ties with the United States and Israel, as seen in the 2020 Abraham Accords, which normalized UAE-Israel relations and marked a significant shift in regional diplomacy.

The days of Iran as the central organizing force of Middle Eastern geopolitics will likely diminish. In its absence, two overlapping blocs are emerging: one loosely connected to the United States, Israel, and the UAE, and another consisting of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Pakistan. This realignment introduces a key question: will this shift away from ideologically driven alliances toward interest-based partnerships make regional conflict more manageable, or simply reshape it into new and less predictable forms of competition?

There is one key difference between the emerging system of alliances and that of the old: the rivalries of the new alignment will, for the most part, no longer be driven primarily by sectarian divisions, but rather by strategic interests. While sectarian tensions have historically contributed to instability, a system shaped more by national interests may produce different patterns of competition and cooperation. But a system of alliances and rivalries based on national interests is, generally, more stable. The Middle East faces an important turning point — and possibly an era of lessened conflict.

Eli Cain is a fourth-former from Demarest, NJ. He may be reached at ecain28@choate.edu.

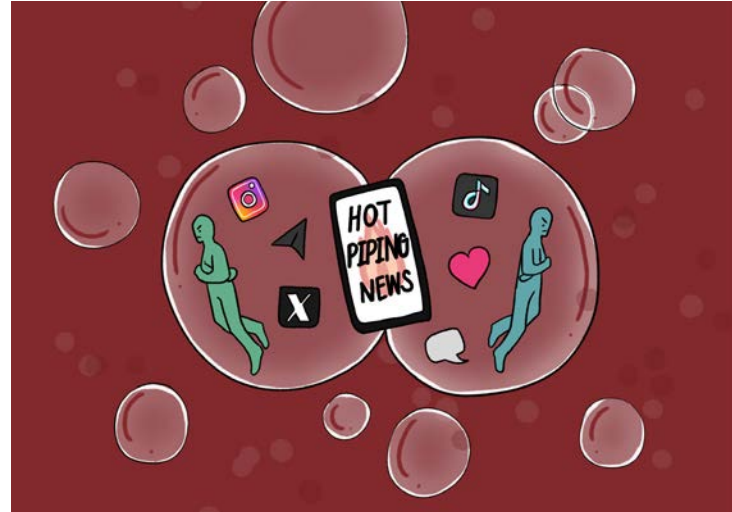
THE DISEASE OF VIRAL POLITICS

By **Leela Curry '29**
Copy Editor

Political discourse has always been a cornerstone of a functioning democracy. At its best, it invites disagreement, forces people to defend their ideas, and creates space for compromise and growth. In theory, social media should strengthen this process: it has lowered the barrier to entry for political participation, allowing teenagers, activists, and people historically excluded from traditional media to speak and be heard. According to the Pew Research Center, roughly 53% of U.S. adults in 2025 said that they at least "sometimes" get news from social media, a number that underscores just how central these platforms have become to modern civic life. Awareness is no longer confined to newspapers or cable news; anyone with a phone can engage. However, the same systems that make social media accessible also undermine the very discourse they enable.

The problem is not simply that misinformation exists; it always has, but the issue is that social media platforms are structurally designed to reward content that spreads quickly and not content that is accurate or thoughtful. Studies by institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have found that, as a result of social media, false news spreads significantly faster and reaches more people than true news, largely because it is more novel and emotionally engaging. In a system driven by likes, shares, and views, the most extreme or simplified takes often rise to the top. Nuance, which is essential for meaningful political discussion, is at a disadvantage because it is slower, more complex, and less immediately gratifying. This creates a deeper issue: the illusion of discourse without its substance.

Algorithms personalize content based on user behavior, meaning what you see largely reflects what you already believe. A user with



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

strongly progressive views will likely see more progressive content, while a conservative user will typically see more conservative content. Over time, this builds an echo chamber where opposing perspectives are filtered out or presented only in their weakest forms. Research from Scientific Reports suggests that algorithmic curation can significantly increase ideological segregation online, reinforcing pre-existing beliefs in the process. In that environment, political "discussion" becomes less about engaging with different viewpoints and more about reaffirming one's own.

This dynamic becomes especially consequential when applied to complex global issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. Social media reduces deeply historical, nuanced situations into short, emotionally charged posts designed to go viral. Instead of providing a comprehensive and neutral overview of events, it often encourages users to pick a side quickly, defend it aggressively, and dismiss opposing perspectives outright. Information is frequently stripped of context, and emotionally compelling narratives, whether accurate or not, are amplified far more than careful analysis.

That does not necessarily mean that social media is entirely harmful. It has undeniably brought attention to humanitarian crises, mobilized aid, and given a platform

to voices that might otherwise go unheard. Therefore, the question is not whether social media can contribute to political awareness — it clearly can — but the question is whether the type of discourse it incentivizes is ultimately productive. Right now, the answer is no.

Healthy political discourse requires friction, exposure to different viewpoints, a willingness to recognize other opinions, and an emphasis on truth over virality. Social media, by contrast, minimizes friction. It curates comfort, rewards speed over accuracy, and turns political engagement into performance. When the goal shifts from understanding to visibility, the quality of discourse inevitably declines.

If we want social media to serve as a genuine space for political conversation, users need to be more intentional about how they engage with it, seek out diverse perspectives, question emotionally charged content, and resist the urge to reduce complicated issues into shareable slogans. Otherwise, what looks like widespread engagement may be something much weaker: a fragmented, self-reinforcing system that mimics discourse without actually achieving it.

Leela Curry is a third-former from Darien, CT. She may be reached at lcurry29@choate.edu.

EXPLORE YOUR NICHE INTERESTS THROUGH NEW CLUB LIFE

By **Emma Woo '29**
Reporter

Choate offers a variety of opportunities for students to express their passions, not just in the classrooms, but through student-led clubs. The new additions to the School community explore more than hobbies — they create spaces for curiosities and connection.

Architecture Club

The Choate Architecture Club is a collaborative forum for students of all backgrounds to explore architectural design, history, and environmental impact. By providing students with a space for an underrepresented discipline, the club invites both novices and enthusiasts to engage with architecture through model building and design challenges. Vice President of the Choate Architecture Club Emma Bashwaty '28 shared that she and President Sena Wakamatsu '27 are “both beginners ourselves, so we just wanted to emphasize that this club is open to everybody as a tool to explore the path of architecture.” Looking ahead, the club aims to collaborate over several meetings to build a physical installation to display on campus.

President: Sena Wakamatsu '27, Vice President: Emma Bashwaty '28

Choate Rosemary Hall Horizons Historical Review

The Choate Rosemary Hall *Horizons Historical Review* (*Horizons*) is a Humanities, Philosophy, Religion, and Social Sciences (HPRSS) publication run by the department that showcases student research and

writing. It features primarily scholarly essays, including outstanding work from classes and original independent research. Co-Editor-in-Chief Ryan Murray '27 said, “Our club is fundamentally about taking history out of the classroom and making it something that people can discuss throughout campus.” The publication is primarily written for and by students, with faculty advisors providing final editorial guidance. *Horizons* produces a print edition each term, with plans to expand to a digital platform in the future.

Editors-in-Chief: Dana Chung '26 and Ryan Murray '27, Managing Editor: Reid Bock '27

Marine Science Club

The Marine Science Club aims to provide a space for Choate students to engage with marine science beyond the classroom. The club explores topics such as ocean conservation, climate change, and marine ecosystems through discussions and hands-on activities, responding to the growing student interest in marine science across campus. For Vice President of the Marine Science Club Sunmi Yoo '28, the club is an extension of a lifelong passion: “I’ve always loved marine biology. I’ve done a lot of clubs and classes around it.” Meetings include low-stakes discussions, occasional hands-on activities, and school-wide events designed to engage a broad range of students, open to students of all experience levels.

President: Norah Wang '27, Vice President: Sunmi Yoo '28

Choate Taps

Choate Taps provides a space for Choate students of all experience levels to pursue their interest in tap dancing. The club focuses on strengthening technical proficiency in an inclusive environment for all members. Beyond skill development, the group aims to cultivate a sense of enjoyment among participants as they collaborate to choreograph and present a featured performance for the annual Spring Dance Showcase. Vice President of Choate Taps Ava Cadett '29 shared, “I’m excited to see all the different people who are interested in tap and to be able to collaborate with them.”

President: Bea Hyatt '28, Vice President: Ava Cadett '29

Automotive Club

Automotive Club is dedicated to discussing contemporary developments in motorsports and the automotive industry. It aims to cultivate a technical understanding of vehicle engineering and the principles of automotive visual design. Members engage in hands-on projects that develop proficiency in design and 3D printing. In addition, club leader Avery Chung '28 said, “We aim to offer watch parties, have more discussions, and possibly go to car shows or maybe even go-karting.” Through its club activities and events, members are introduced to topics such as suspension geometry, aerodynamics, vehicle dynamics, and the construction of radio-controlled (RC) vehicles.

Club Leaders: Avery Chung '28, Steven Kee '27, Shaleen Sheth '27, Alexander Schul-



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

tz '27, Natalie Sun '29, Norah Wang '27, Chloe Yeung '28, Matthew Yoon '27

Geography Society Club

The Geography Society Club focuses on preparing students for geography bees, olympiads, and competitions. Meetings include mock geography tournaments and quizzes to further members’ learning. The club’s aspiration is to win titles in regional, national, and international competitions. President of the Geography Society Charlie Mosier '27 started the club because he “always had a knack for flags, capitals, and maps,” and realized that his niche interest “could be used in a team environment to accomplish good and win.”

President: Charlie Mosier '27, Vice President: Jai Midha '27, Treasurer: Josh Pan '27, Secretary: John Durbin '28

Sports Stats Club

The Sports Stats Club, founded by students passionate about athletics and analytics, aims to create a space where members can explore and debate the numbers behind their favorite teams. Co-founder and Vice President of Organization and Secretary Lead Tiosa Okundaye '29 explained that the club is “a great way for people who love sports and statistics to learn how to analyze their favorite teams or players.” The idea for the club stemmed from “a mutual love for sports and debating statistics,” Okundaye added. Members hope

to expand their reach by competing in events such as the Penn Wharton Sports Data Science Competition, hosting guest speakers, and organizing visits to industry sites such as ESPN.

President: Felix Popowitz '29, Vice President: Ethan Lee '29, Cabinet: Quincy Arnold '29, Cabinet: Tiosa Okundaye '29

From exploring architectural design and marine science to tap dancing, students’ interests shape Choate’s community. As clubs continue to proliferate and offer detailed insights, they remain a clear reflection of what Choate students care about and enjoy learning.

Emma Woo may be reached at ewoo29@choate.edu.

Backbone of The Choate News: Ms. Markman and DeStefs



Photo courtesy of DeStefs/The Choate News

Ms. Markman and Ms. DeStefs smiling in front of 1690 House.

By **Oola Breen-Ryan '29**
Copy Editor

Publishing a newspaper bi-weekly is no easy feat, but *The Choate News’* faculty advisers make it possible. English teacher Ms. Cahaley Markman and History teacher Ms. Courtney DeStefano (DeStefs) are involved in *The Choate News’* production, from each issue’s initial assignment meeting to the final round of edits. As Sports editor Kaitlyn Yu '27 said, “[The faculty advisors] play a very integral part in making *The Choate News* what it is.”

Ms. Markman and DeStefs serve many roles in publishing the newspaper. “My role as faculty adviser is kind of a little bit of everything: helping guide students ... doing copy editing, helping with layout ... and being there when students are trying to figure out the complicated stuff around journalism,” Ms. Markman said. “We also meet with writers as they are learning and growing as journalists,” DeStefs added. The faculty advisers also help generate article ideas, attend editorial meetings, fact-check pieces, and offer insight into aspects of reporting that might otherwise be overlooked. “Our faculty advisers always make sure that we’re getting every single perspective and necessary interview,” Editor-in-Chief Maia Shah '27 said. “We want to make sure that we’re not running pieces without having all the necessary facts.”

The faculty advisers also serve as mentors to the masthead members, both inside and outside of the newsroom. Shah, who has Ms. Markman as a teacher, described the relationship as especially meaningful: “I have Ms. Markman in American Studies, and she is one of the best teachers I’ve ever had ... she’s always willing to have a conversation ... she’s really become a person on campus whom I feel like I can turn to about anything.” She also added, “And I did become close with her through the newspaper, but now I see her as one of my most trusted faculty, because I think she truly cares about all of her students.”

DeStefs is also highly regarded among editors for her care and professionalism. “She’s always pushing us to attack articles from more interesting angles, to go to the archives to get to the root of the issue. She really doesn’t want us to publish sanitized versions of events,” Shah said. “She cares deeply about students at Choate and about the newspaper in general.” Outside of the newsroom, Yu had the opportunity to travel with her to Northern Ireland last March on a Choate-sponsored trip. “She is so knowledgeable and has a lot of insight into so many different things, so many aspects of HPRSS,” Yu said.

The Choate News also fosters meaningful connections between advisers and students. Ms. Markman, who is in her

fourth year of advising *The Choate News*, said, “I love working with kids who feel passionate about what they’re doing ... I think that the ability to foster an appreciation for the news and journalism in high school is so valuable.” Ms. Markman also emphasized the importance of using journalism to seek the truth. “We’re living in a time where the trust in journalistic integrity is being questioned ... The way that we can use journalism to question authority and decisions and tell these stories is really important,” she said. DeStefs agreed, emphasizing that “Journalists who report the news and what’s happening in the world around them play a really important role in our civil society, and whether that is in a micro level here at Choate or a much more macro one, the importance of journalism cannot be understated.”

Ms. Markman and DeStefs are vital to the writing, editing, and publication process of *The Choate News* and are deeply appreciated by the entire Masthead for their contributions. “I think that a lot of people don’t understand that faculty advisers really support us through every single phase of the paper,” Shah said. “The faculty advisers ... help us make it seem like we’re less alone in the publishing process.”

Oola Breen-Ryan may be reached at obreenryan29@choate.edu

WHAT’S ON CHOATE’S NIGHTSTAND?

By **James Chun '29**
Reporter

The Andrew Mellon Library at Choate is home to around 276,000 books and e-books, spanning popular genres to decades-old archives. The record of borrowed books at the Andrew Mellon Library reveals more than just reading habits; it reflects students’ thoughts, interests, and curiosities. Among the many books the library houses, a few have emerged as fan favorites among Choate students.

Currently, one of the most frequently borrowed books is not a novel; rather, it is the *Fiske Guide to Colleges 2026* by Edward B. Fiske. Teaching and Research Librarian Ms. Nicole Brothers said, “Fifth-form and sixth-form students, in particular, frequently check out this guide to gather ideas about colleges.” This trend reflects a growing emphasis on college preparation among upperclassmen, especially as application season approaches.

While college guides are popular, fiction remains equally significant in shaping student reading trends. According to Ms. Brothers, one of the most sought-after books recently was *Atmosphere* by Taylor Jenkins Reid, which follows Joan Goodwin, a physicist who becomes one of the first female space-travelers for NASA. The novel has resonated with students for its blend of

emotions and storytelling, making it stand out among recent checkouts. Elizabeth Burgstahler '26 said, “I really enjoyed it, because of her writing style, but I also thought that the relationships between the characters were really compelling and interesting, especially as someone who is really passionate about the intersection between STEM and history.”

Another popular book is Sally Rooney’s *Normal People*, a romance that features class differences, miscommunication, and the struggle of growing up. “Once someone starts reading one of her books, they keep going and read the others as well,” Ms. Brothers explained. She added that the television adaptation may have further contributed to the book’s popularity among students.

Interest in John Green’s books has grown since he visited campus in the fall. According to Library Assistant Molly Dewey, his books have “a very universal appeal ... they tell a story that anyone can relate to. The writing is very accessible, and they’re usually a pretty quick read.”

Recently, his novel *The Fault in Our Stars* has once again become a popular title, as well as *Turtles All the Way Down*, which follows 16-year-old Aza Holmes as she navigates high school with severe OCD and anxiety. Burgstahler said, “I like how John Green writes about

illness in a way that is accessible to younger audiences. I think it’s important to destigmatize medical issues, so people understand. Just because people are living with chronic illness doesn’t mean that they’re not as much of a person as someone who isn’t.” Following his visit, students have revisited his novels, many of which similarly explore themes of illness, emotion, and human connection.

Taken together, these borrowing trends suggest that students are drawn to two central themes: preparing for the future and understanding emotional experiences through literature.

Beyond borrowing physical items, the library also provides a range of digital resources. Students can access e-books and audiobooks through the Sora app, and online research guides are also available. Additionally, the library website features a chat function that allows students to ask questions, making support more accessible outside the physical space.

From college guides to novels about disease and heartbreak, the Andrew Mellon Library’s borrowing record suggests that Choate students are not just studying; they are searching for meaning, direction, and connection through the books they choose to read.

James Chun may be reached at jchun29@choate.edu.



Photo by Harry Kim '28/The Choate News

Collection of the Most-Checked Out books from the Andrew Mellon Library.

Concert Orchestra & Wind Ensemble Shine at Carnegie Hall



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Ashlee Hyatt

By **Sophie Chang '29**
Reporter

As the stagelights cast a warm glow onto the Stern Auditorium stage, a performance by Choate musicians echoed through one of the nation's most prestigious concert halls. On April 19, members of Choate's Wind Ensemble and Concert Orchestra took a trip to New York City to perform at Carnegie Hall, alongside musicians from Saint Margaret's Episcopal School in San Juan Capistrano, California. While the directors of the two schools met virtually multiple times to discuss the performance repertoire and plan details, the two performing groups didn't actually meet in person until the dress rehearsal on the concert day. "We took videos of our groups rehearsing and sent them to one another so that each of the group could hear each other," Instrumental Ensembles Director and conductor for the Carnegie Hall performance Mr. Gene Wie said, explaining how the two ensembles worked together before meeting in person in New York.

Mr. Wie emphasized that the reason for the Carnegie Hall trip was to provide musicians in Concert Orchestra and Wind Ensembles opportunities to perform outside of Choate and collaborate with other musicians. Mr. Wie explained that for Choate's

Symphony Orchestra, "the importance of international travel performances, and the ability to develop intensive and collegial relations between musicians between all musicians as they experience these things together" is a priority. "I felt like our Concert Orchestra and our Wind Ensemble ... sometimes get ignored in this whole [performance] process," he added.

When Mr. Wie started teaching at Choate, the Concert Orchestra, then called the String Orchestra, did not perform in the fall instrumental concert. Instead, the group had a separate Sunday recital. "The bringing of primarily members of the Concert Orchestra [and Wind Ensemble] to Carnegie Hall for this collaboration is my small effort to start shifting the scales," Mr. Wie said, explaining how he hopes to provide "musical excellence" and "new opportunities" for all student musicians at Choate.

To prepare for the performance, the group met outside of normal rehearsal times. "We had one hour rehearsals on the Monday and Thursday before the [Carnegie] performance," Damond Boatwright '29 said. "A big challenge was that the people we were performing with we met the day of, and we only had one practice day [together] before the concert."

On the day of the performance, students awoke early for

a bus ride to New York City. "We had to wake up pretty early in the morning to get into the city. But as soon as we got to Carnegie Hall, we could feel the energy coming back. I think that all of us were just really excited to perform at such a big hall," Edward Rim '28 said. Rim added that he was especially thankful for the opportunity to perform in a new environment alongside musicians he had never met before. "I was just really grateful for Choate to provide such an opportunity to go all the way to Carnegie Hall and actually perform with other schools, too," he said.

"Carnegie Hall was my dream stage," Aristo Shim '28 said. "I thought it was great that we could represent Choate as a part of the orchestra." The groups performed multiple pieces together, including modern songs like "Golden" from Netflix's *K-Pop Demon Hunters* in addition to more famous, older works like Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

The Concert Orchestra and Wind Ensemble's performance at Carnegie Hall provided a unique performance experience and opportunity to work with other musicians, representing Choate on a world-renowned stage.

Sophie Chang may be reached at schang29@choate.edu.

WHERE ART AND EDUCATION INTERSECT

By **Julie Ha '28**
Reporter

Many students at Choate are artistically inclined, but what about the faculty who teach and inspire them? For many faculty members, visual arts, including painting, woodworking, and pottery, is not just a hobby — it is a vital part of their personal and professional identities.

Faculty members use the arts to decompress and find peace after long school days. Math teacher Mx. Athira Sanal finds solace in using color to draw or doodle. "I just pick up a piece of paper and scribble something. It's not always an art piece, but I use it to relax," they said. Mx. Sanal has several papers in their home, filled with vibrant gradations, which they use to meditate, as the colors bring them a sense of calm and mental clarity.

In addition to helping them relax outside their busy schedules, art is an easy way for teachers to build relationships. Language and English teacher and woodworker Dr. Scott Davis uses his craft to bond with others, particularly his father. Having learned woodworking from him at a young age, Dr. Davis recalls his father as "very introverted and reserved." However, woodworking projects gave them a shared "task" and a common language, allowing them to "talk a lot more and bond."

Recently, Dr. Davis has been leaning more into the design side of woodworking. "Before I do any woodworking, I like to



Photo by Ben Lee '27/The Choate News

Dr. Davis poses in his home next to his bookcase. design it in a 3D architecture program ... I make a lot of designs of things that I may not necessarily make, but it's fun," Dr. Davis said. Often, he makes furniture pieces and bookcases.

English teacher Ms. Liza Wolf and HPRSS teacher Ms. Beatrice Voorhees have recently gotten involved in visual arts. In the fall of 2025, they took a pottery class together. "I definitely enjoy crafting [and] artsy things," Ms. Wolf said, as she reflected on her love for hands-on activities. "It was really relaxing to get to be there, and [to] be really focused on what you're doing in that moment, and making something with your hands," she added. Ms. Wolf enjoyed the practical uses of the pottery she made in the class. "There's something really fun and satisfying about the process of making it, and then glazing it, and then actually getting to do something with it," she said.

At Choate, faculty members' love for the arts extends far beyond their personal lives, and

is even integrated into their respective coursework. Dr. Davis, for example, integrates aesthetics and visual elements into his Latin classes. He agrees that his "sort of obsession with design and formatting shows up in [his] teaching," and mentioned that art shapes his interpretation of ancient philosophy and literary criticism. Dr. Davis specifically creates his courses by including "visual elements or aesthetic elements, thinking about how cultures thought about beauty and good literature over time."

Art is a crucial piece of the lives of Choate faculty, serving not only as a medium for teaching in the classroom but also as a method to unwind from a busy school day and forge meaningful connections. Cultivating artistic pursuits is essential, as it can unveil undiscovered passions and new dimensions of one's own identity.

Julie Ha may be reached at jha28@choate.edu.

INAUGURAL FILM FESTIVAL CELEBRATES STUDENT CINEMA

By **Anna Park '29**
Copy Editor

Film festivals, such as the well-known Cannes Film Festival and Sundance Film Festival, have long served as a stage for filmmakers to share their work and inspire new audiences. This spring, Choate's own film festival was held on May 8. The film festival was spearheaded by Visual Arts teacher Mr. Matt Kelsey and Arts Department Head Mr. Matthew McLean. Chiamaka Eke '26 and Nila Rajan '26 also helped organize the festival as student committee members with an interest in the film field. Just under 20 films were submitted to the open call, with 14 selected for the final program.

Mr. Kelsey focused on balance when deciding the order of the selected films. "The average length of the movies is probably around four minutes ... some of them are a little bit longer, but I think it should keep things going pretty easily, and the whole [festival] will be about an hour long." The festival provided a platform for students passionate about filmmaking to showcase their work, with a criterion used to select the final films. "We're looking at story and concepts, craft and execution, creativity and voice, cohesion and impact, [and] program fit. The sixth one is use of original material," Mr. Kelsey said.

The festival aimed to be welcoming to all, inviting students to either submit their own work or appreciate the films of other students. Videos from academic



Graphic by Sienna Kim '28/The Choate News

classes, documentary projects, theatrical pieces, social media videos for athletics, or films made just for fun were all represented at the festival, demonstrating that the festival is not limited to any particular genre of film.

"We even had one that was a documentary about an ecological project that was happening in Thailand; [it] was taken in Thailand. So that was really exciting to see as well," Mr. Kelsey said. "It was a really fascinating way to see all the really exciting, interesting things that people are doing on campus. We have such a diverse campus, diverse student body, with so many different forms of talent and interest ... to be able to have a little window into all those parts of the students' lives that we don't always get a chance to see is really, really cool."

Because the film festival's concept was developed in the middle of the school year, promotion proved one of the festival's early challenges. "Being able to have word of

mouth going for a full year, I think, is going to be really helpful," Mr. Kelsey said. The high turnout for the open call indicated the festival's success, exceeding expectations for the film's inaugural year.

Mr. Kelsey was pleased with both the volume and quality of submissions. "I like how high the quality of all this work is. It's not just a lot of participation, but also really, really strong work," he said. Mr. Kelsey added that he hoped the festival encouraged all aspiring filmmakers at Choate to put forth their work. "It's been really important for me to have all facets of filmmaking be represented in the festival ... to have it really be something that's open to the entire community," he said, emphasizing how Choate's film festivals will continue to celebrate the wide variety of student perspectives in the film space.

Anna Park may be reached at apark29@choate.edu.

Choate Theater Takes Twelfth Night to the Stage in Maguire Gym

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Copy Editor

Of the various acclaimed works of Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* has emerged as a distinct romantic comedy centered around a complicated love triangle between Duke Orsino, Viola, who is disguised as a man Cesario, and Countess Olivia. This year, Choate's musical adaptation of the *Twelfth Night* is preparing to hit an unconventional stage — Maguire Gym — marking the efforts of a theater community that has assembled a performable show without the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC), which is currently under renovation. Through the preparing for the musical, students learned to lean into their character roles, growing as performers.

Selecting a performance location proved to be difficult, as noted by Director and Theater teacher Ms. Deighna DeRiu. Ms. DeRiu noted that the team had not yet confirmed Maguire Gym as their venue when they began selecting the show. "We just wanted to find something that we could do in pretty much any space," she said.

Cast member Benoit Bracey '28 acknowledged the initial challenges of lacking a traditional stage. "You would think that'd

be the worst thing ever. How are you supposed to put on a show without no theater?" Bracey said. "Originally, that [did] pose some challenges. But the way all of us have been ... getting through it has been great."

Throughout rehearsals, students got to know their characters and learned how to best embody them. Bracey plays Duke Orsino, who is caught in a love triangle that serves as the primary plot of the musical. "[Orsino's] basically really in love with the Countess Olivia ... but I sort of see [that] he also kind of has a thing for his servant boy Cesario, but [since] he's a boy, he can't really get into that," Bracey said.

Matthew Choi '26 portrayed the town fool, Sir Toby Belch, and found the character work both enjoyable and challenging. "It's always very fun to play very clowny, zany characters. I do think comedic acting is the hardest thing to do, because it's hard to be funny and make people laugh," Choi said.

Choi started picking up the trumpet in order to play the part of Toby, just as Ryan Gosling learned piano for *La La Land*. "It's a very difficult instrument to learn, so I'd say that is also a very challenging thing," Choi said.

For Choi, a sixth-former, *Twelfth Night* represents his

growth in the arts. "Seeing where I've come from in freshman year, when I was an ensemble member of *Mamma Mia!* to ... consistently getting principal roles, is a very humbling, very shocking thing," he said. "[I love] to see how far I've come, and [where] my passion for theater ... has gone."

Stage manager Sophie Eliades '27 recognized the efforts of all cast and crew members, both on and off stage. "I'm incredibly proud of the work that [people] are putting in to make their parts the best that they can be ... and making sure this show turns out amazing, even though it's kind of an odd year."

Eliades also enjoyed the many theatrical references in *Twelfth Night*. "There's little elements that make me very happy, and they feel very classical musical theater," Eliades said.

If Ms. DeRiu could leave the future audience of *Twelfth Night* with one takeaway, she hopes it would be the impact of meaningful art. "There's so much that art brings into our lives, as creators, as makers, and as spectators. And I hope that they find something in the show that makes them feel inspired," she said.

Prudence Chen may be reached at pchen28@choate.edu.



Photo by Zahabiya Khokha '27/The Choate News

Theater students rehearse *Twelfth Night* in the Arts Annex.



FIELD REPORT

Choate Spring Record
132 - 68 - 0

Varsity Games

Girls' Softball (10-2)
vs. Suffield, 8-3

Boys' Tennis (7-1)
vs. Deerfield, 4-2

Girls' Lacrosse (8-4)
vs. Williston, 11-6

Boys' Golf (8-7)
vs. Kingswood-Oxford,
210-213

Girls' Golf (9-3)
vs. Loomis, 1.5-3.5

Boys' Volleyball (6-4)
vs. Andover, 0-3

Girls' Tennis (2-7)
vs. Exeter, 1-8

Boys' Track & Field (4-7)
vs. Deerfield, 100-35

J.V. Games

Girls' Lacrosse (6-1)
vs. Kent, 13-6

Boys' Lacrosse (5-0)
vs. Salisbury, 17-10

Girls' Golf (2-1)
vs. Taft, 0-5

Boys' Golf (7-2)
vs. Deerfield, 214-228

JORDAN OBI '20 DOMINATES IN THE WNBA

By Oola Breen-Ryan '29
Copy Editor

On April 13, Jordan Obi '20 was selected in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) draft to play for the Las Vegas Aces, a team ranked second in the WNBA as of the start of the 2025 season. After a high-scoring basketball career at Choate, Obi played at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Kentucky, where she earned a reputation as a multifaceted player with high point, rebound, and assist averages. Ultimately, Obi left a lasting legacy on Choate basketball as a whole, and her accomplishments will be remembered for years to come.

"It's a little bit of a surreal experience," Obi said in an interview with the Lexington Herald Leader, now that she is playing "in the best league in the world, playing for the best coach in the world."

Obi was the 44th pick in the third round and joined the team alongside fellow rookie Jannah Barker. She highlighted the impact of her teammates on her personal performance. "Being around such a great group of coaches and players that have won at the highest level,

and to know that everyone was hand-chosen, does a lot for your confidence," she said.

Obi's talent was first noticed by Choate's basketball program when she participated in Choate Summer Programs. "She was only twelve at the time, but she was a really talented basketball player from the very beginning," Form Dean and Health and Wellness Educator Ms. Aliya Cox, who coached Obi during her time at Choate, said: "I think she knew what she wanted pretty early."

Once she joined the Choate Girls' Varsity Basketball team, Obi was recognized for her sheer talent and determined nature. "Even though I wasn't there when she was there, I've heard of her," Girls' Varsity Basketball Captain Abby Kim '26 said. "She was a hard worker. She was very, very talented, probably one of the best." Ms. Cox agreed. "Skill-wise, [Obi] was really a blessing and [an] easy person to have around, because she knew a lot about the game and had a lot of skills," she said.

During her time at Choate, Obi was recognized twice as a New England Preparatory School Athletic Council (NEPSAC) Class A All-Star, and was a finalist in the 2017 NEPSAC Class A Girls'



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

Jordan Obi '20 poses for an official photo in her Las Vegas Aces jersey. She was also the ninth female basketball player in Choate history to score 1,000 points, which she reached during a game against the Ethel Walker School in 2020. In addition to her high stats, she was known for being a kind presence on the team. "She's a really good person beyond the athletic side of things," Ms. Cox said.

At the University of Pennsylvania, Obi continued to shine. She won All-Ivy honors three times and scored an average of

13.7 points, 1.9 assists, and 7.6 rebounds per game. After four seasons at Penn, she moved on to play as a graduate at the University of Kentucky, but was taken out of her first season with a lower leg injury. However, she was back in the game by the next season, and kicked off her University of Kentucky career with a 15-point, 15-rebound game against Morehead State.

For current Choate students, Obi's WNBA draft is especially motivational. "It's no

easy feat ... it just shows how much work and effort [she put in]," Kim said. "It's inspiring."

For Obi's former mentors, witnessing her trajectory has been equally exciting. "I'm not surprised, but I'm really happy for her," Ms. Cox said. "I hope that the community is proud, and that the alumni who shared the time and space with her are just as excited as I am."

Oola Breen-Ryan may be reached at obreenryan29@choate.edu.

Your Boar: Wrestling and Lacrosse Star Tatianna Irizarry '27

By Ethan Lee '29
Reporter

Tatianna Irizarry '27, a double-varsity wrestling and lacrosse student-athlete, is a force to be reckoned with. Through her various athletic experiences, Irizarry has strived to embody toughness and grit, and to "[bring] the same aggressive, competitive mindset from wrestling to lacrosse." Irizarry's athletic journey started earlier than most. "I started wrestling when I was three and a half," she said. Her passion for sports carried into her freshman year and beyond — Irizarry scored 49 goals and earned all-conference honors on the Varsity Lacrosse team during her first year in high school.

Irizarry's success has been a product of practice and discipline. Her father was a seasoned boxer and used boxing techniques to hone her speed and precision. Irizarry also intensely studied judo to master balance, body mechanics, and physical leverage over opponents. She is a two-time All-American wrestler and won the Prep School National Championships this past winter after pinning her opponent in 55 seconds in the final.

Irizarry credits wrestling for giving her a gritty and compet-

itive mindset. "Wrestling forces you to take all the responsibility, all the feedback yourself and build on it yourself," she said. That singular focus translates to the lacrosse field when she's scrapping — battling for critical ground balls — and locking down an opponent as a defender. "You need to be aggressive to make your own teammates better," she said.

Irizarry noted that her biggest motivation was her teammates. "I want people to know that I always give 100 per cent. I'm never slacking," she said. Irizarry also referred to her secret to success as the "goldfish mentality." She said, "I never really dwell. The ability to forget about the past and just keep grinding it out to the end ... I would say that helps me a lot."

Irizarry's training regimen includes hours of cardio, strength training, and agility work, but she points to her mental process as key. "I think a big part of my brain process is [thinking that] ... I'm going to play well," she said.

Irizarry first decided to apply to Choate when her best friend's mother told her about the lacrosse team. Ultimately, it was the encouragement of the Choate coaches and the community here that drew her to the School in her sophomore year.

"The coaches are really supportive, and the teachers are always there for us," she said.

Last season, during Head Coach Jenny Simpson's first year at the helm of Girls' Varsity Lacrosse, the team found success early. They made it to the Founders League Championship and only narrowly lost to Hotchkiss by one point. The sting of that loss remains, and the girls have their sights set on getting back to the Founders League Championship and hoisting the trophy.

Irizarry is still constantly striving to improve her athletic abilities and connect with her teammates. "For lacrosse ... every personal goal is a team goal. For wrestling, I just would like to be a good captain who's there for other people," she said. On the mat, around the field, and in the locker room, Irizarry always pushes herself to succeed: "I like having success in the things I do ... I always put in 100 percent, so I guess nothing really motivates me but the fact that I need to give my best." Whether she is pinning an opponent in 55 seconds or fighting for a ground ball, Irizarry's drive remains the same: to give everything she has, every time.

Ethan Lee may be reached at elee29@choate.edu.



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Tatianna Irizarry '27 after a wrestling match in the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC).

HACKY SACK IS BACK AT CHOATE



Photo by Angel Soto '29/The Choate News

Sixth-form students play hacky sack in Memorial Circle.

By Ava Hult-Falk '27
Staff Contributor

As temperatures rise and students anticipate summer break, one trend has made a reappearance on the Choate lawns: hacky sack. Students are grouped across campus, trying different tricks and moves to level up their passing sequence. Viral social media trends have made the game popular again, and one thing is certain: students are leaning into it.

Traditionally, the game of hacky sack is simple: Players kick a small, bean-filled sack back and forth in the air using only their feet. They try to keep the sack "alive" for as many repetitions as possible without letting it touch the ground. However, recently, games have risen to a new level. Players are incorporating other body parts, such as the back, chest, and head, into the already fast-paced game. Hacky sack has evolved from a simple lawn game into a full-on test of balance, coordination, and creativity, which many students have the privilege of either watching or participating in during passing periods and after class. "I think it's a fun way to hang out with other people and do something that's sort of silly and goofy," Chemistry teacher and hacky sack enthusiast Mr. Will Morris said.

This trend has also taken to social media. Many prep schools, including Choate, have started their own school hacky sack accounts on Instagram. Choate's account posts a Reel of the Day (ROTD) of a student-submitted sack sequence. In one reel, Kate Tortorella '26 caught the sack on her head and then slingshotted it backward to the receiver, Payton Collins '26. In another, students stood in a circle on the ice rink and passed the

sack around without slipping on the ice. Yet another video featured students flinging the sack around multiple floors of the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC).

Choate is not alone in this resurgence. Multiple other prep schools have created similar social media accounts on TikTok and Instagram. Some have even created ranking accounts that order the prep schools by creativity and skill level. These ranking accounts create graphics, similarly to how athletic teams, like lacrosse or rowing, are ranked.

While this modern resurgence is new, this is not the first time that hacky sack has taken the Choate campus by storm. HPRSS teacher Mr. James Davidson recalled its popularity during his earliest years at Choate. He shared that in the 1980s and 1990s, "[hacky sack was] very popular — the school store sold blue and gold sacks." Davidson hopes that students will continue playing hacky sack into the 2026-2027 school year.

Hacky sack is very inclusive. There's no specific cap on how many people can play, and bystanders can jump in midgame. It's competitive in the sense that players are working together to compete with gravity, not in the sense that they're trying to take down one another. This game has forged bonds across the Choate campus, creating a stronger sense of connection as students work together to keep their sack alive. The return and elevation of hacky sack exemplifies what is at the core of Choate: students coming together and elevating the ordinary, while collaborating and having fun.

Ava Hult-Falk may be reached at ahultfalk27@choate.edu.