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College mandates two week furlough for all employees

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Allegheny College faces financial hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The senior administration and the Board of Trustees held a meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 28 to discuss the costs associated with college operations during the pandemic. The college requested that information disclosed at the meeting remain confidential, however, several members of the senior administration offered to discuss some of the information with the Campus.

"Yes we have (seen an increase in cost associated with running the college)," said Chief Financial Officer Linda Wetsell. "The impact of (COVID-19) can also be seen in our revenues. As you know, we offered a discount in housing due to the shortened semester and we have less room and board due to students learning remotely so there has been additional impact on our bottom line because of (COVID-19) from the revenue standpoint."

Wetsell mentioned that the college has run deficits before, however, due to the pandemic the deficit is larger than it has been in years prior. The college requested the deficit amount be withheld from the public until they have more conclusive data regarding the operational costs and revenue for the academic year.

"One other reason that I do not want to disclose the amount is because we still have the spring semester ahead of us," Wetsell said. "Right now, it is just a projection and there are a lot of different things that could happen that could change that. I do not mean to make it sound like a secret, but it is more of an operating projection at this time."

The deficit amount is a projection for the academic year that may change as more students opt to learn in person for the spring semester, Wetsell clarified.

"For context, us and every other school in the country has a deficit this year due to the costs of the pandemic," said Provost and Dean of College Ron Cole.

Wetsell outlined some of the changes to the college's budget to remain in operation during COVID-19.

"We repurposed some of our budget line items," Wetsell said. "There were a lot of expenditures that we did not have this year such as international travel and events so we were able to shift those budget lines to address testing and reopening and for some other expenses."

Link also acknowledged that the college had the opportunity to reopen and remain open for the duration of the fall semester so they decided to do that.

"We could not run summer programs either so there have been many things that we were unable to do," President Hilary Link said. "To (Wetsell's) point, that also counts towards revenue. We did a very comprehensive health and safety process system between (COVID-19) testing, providing top medical assistants to care for our students and quarantine. We have done a tremendous job, quite frankly. … We have watched school after school fail at trying to do exactly what we are succeeding in doing, but there are costs to that and we knew that going into; this was an investment that we made a very clear decision on. We knew that we had not budgeted for (reopening costs), but we felt that we had a unique opportunity to open and stay open."

Cole further explained that the investment was made for the students.

"We invested for the student experience," Cole said. "The fact that the students would very much like to be on campus was driving (Link) by pure force of will to get us to this point. I do not want to underestimate the importance of that … We believe that this was absolutely the right thing to do to maintain the educational experience of the students, which is why we all are here."

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ELECTION DAY

CPP holds Election Day events on campus

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SAMI MIRZA/THE CAMPUS

Top: The school bus provided to take students to the polls parks in front of Brooks Walk on Tuesday Nov. 3, 2020.
Bottom: CPP holds booth with Election Day activities at front of Brooks Walk on Tuesday Nov. 3.

Students express concern about move out

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All students are required to move out of their residence halls by Saturday, Nov. 21 at 12 p.m. All student belongings must be removed from the dormitory; no belongings are permitted to be left in the student's room.

Like many students, California resident Crystal Hernandez, '23, questioned the reasoning behind requiring students to move their belongings.

"All of our things stayed in our dorms over break last year — the only thing we had to worry about was removing perishable items," Hernandez said. "To be quite honest, I am not entirely sure why we have to move our stuff, but my best guess is that hopefully, they will be sanitizing the rooms so that everything is clean for us when we get back."

According to Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students April Thompson, the requirement was made to ensure that students had access to their belongings if they wanted them over the break, after last spring's belongings concerns and the evolving situation with COVID-19.

"After last spring, we learned the hard way that the atmosphere and expectations of the county and the state for (COVID-19) change rapidly," Thompson said. "We expected students to be able to go home for Spring Break and have an extra week and then come back and get their belongings, but what we found was that students were not able to do that. We were not able to allow students to get their belongings because Crawford County remained red for months and for the students to be separated from their belongings was an incredible hardship for the students and their families."

Students are to take all of their belongings home with them to avoid this situation occurring again, Thompson clarified.

"We out of just precaution do not want that to happen again in any way," Thompson said. "The environment, now, is so uncertain and we are seeing a rise in cases in the county. We feared that students would not be able to come back in the spring and we would again have student belongings on campus and no way for the students to get them. So we have asked students to take their belongings home because whether it be personal circumstances, county circumstances or college circumstances, they change, and we did not want to be in that situation again."

The college had a challenging time working with different moving companies while sorting belongings and addressing concerns from both students, especially roommates, and their families, Thompson said.

"When three or four people lived in an apartment, we had trouble sorting out which belongings were whose," Thompson said. "Items got damaged and there were some very important and sentimental items that the college really does not want to be responsible for because they are precious items for individuals. With all of that considered and after talking to other colleges and universities, we asked that students please take their belongings home before break and pack light."

Typically, students are able to leave their belongings in their room until the spring semester, however due to the complications with COVID-19, that is not an option.

"We have always allowed students to keep their belongings in their rooms (over breaks)," Thompson said. "We certainly wanted to do that again, but after last spring, we saw that it was difficult for students to not have access to their most precious belongings for months and months. We just do not want that to happen again for anybody."

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Can Die Hard be the next classic Christmas movie?

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Tom Brady continues his legacy on the field as a part of the Buccaneers.

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FRIDAY
H: 66° L: 45°
Rain: 10%
Sunrise: 6:59 a.m.
Sunset: 5:08 p.m.

SATURDAY
H: 67° L: 44°
Rain: 10%
Sunrise: 7:00 a.m.
Sunset: 5:07 p.m.

SUNDAY
H: 68° L: 49°
Rain: 10%
Sunrise: 7:01 a.m.
Sunset: 5:06 p.m.

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Cole added that the college acknowledges the difficulties faced by students and faculty this semester and that it has not been the typical college experience.

Despite the financial strains caused by the pandemic, Link added that she is very optimistic about the college's potential for growth.

At the beginning of the college's financial response to the pandemic, employee retirement contributions were paused. According to Wetsell, this change was based on the finances of the college.

"After we have taken the year pause that we implemented back in the summer, we fully intend to return to a retirement contribution," Link said. "We made that decision early on because it seemed like a way we could address some of our costs without having an immediate impact."

The college's administration also recognized that this was a significant decision.

"Our decision making is steeped in trying to maintain our moral and ethical responsibilities to our employees to the best that we can, while also keeping people employed," Cole said. "Other schools were laying people off last spring and over the summer, and we did not do that."

Link's message to those who are concerned about the viability of college was that we are in a better position than other many institutions. Another result of the financial stability concerns are the mandatory two-week furloughs for all employees between Dec. 14, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

"(COVID-19) has thrown a financial wrench in the plans of every college and university — not just in our country, but also abroad," Link said. "We are really fortunate because of the wonderful financial management of (Wetsell) and our (Board of Trustees) that we have a very manageable deficit to address."

She clarified that the two week furlough was taken as a measure to address the costs associated with COVID-19.

"We recognize that this is on one level a difficult cut — the two week furlough — we did it in a very humane way," Link said.

The college has provided the employees with the opportunity to decide when to take the furlough and this would not impact the student experience. Employees are allowed to choose the weeks they are furloughed, and will work with their supervisors to ensure that there is little interruption to the services provided to students, Link clarified. There is also the opportunity for employees to be furloughed in nonconsecutive weeks. Furlough affects all employees at the college, and they can apply for unemployment benefits during the two week furlough.

The administration envisioned that allowing employees to work with supervisors will allow for both a minimization in interruption to student services and furloughs that work at times best for employees.

"All of the furlough arrangements are done by supervisors," said Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students April Thompson. "There are times that students are not on campus and do not have high levels of personal need, so those will be the times that Student Life staff, for example, will be taking furloughs."

For employees, the ability to work with supervisors and spread it out is intended to soften the effect of the furlough while also enabling the college to address financial concerns, Link said. For faculty, this furlough will occur during periods that students are not in session to ensure that no class time or access to faculty will be lost during the semester.

"There is a follow up to faculty that outlines weeks that are not a part of the active semester, which will be eligible for faculty to select those weeks for furlough," Cole said.

While the college has had to take measures to address budgetary concerns, Link is optimistic about how the college can move forward after setbacks.

"I was hired 16 months ago with a very clear vision of how this college can move forward to be recognized as the amazing institution it is, but has not been recognized as for far too long," Link said. "We do have to make these hard decisions, but they are in service of the bright future that the college is heading towards."

Both the furlough and the pause in retirement contributions are meant to affect all employees of Allegheny equally.

"Nobody planned for (COVID-19)," Link said. "In reality, we have all had to learn how to manage (COVID-19). … We had to make these smaller decisions. Both with the furlough and retirement pause, is that the whole idea is that it impacts all of us — from the person who earns the most at this institution to the people who earn the least; it is a shared percentage of whatever people make. There is a shared sense that we are all in this together and we are all sacrificing together."

Video interview rooms to be added to Pelletier Library

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Bruce R. Thompson, an Allegheny alumnus from the class of 1986 and Vice Chairman at Bank of America, offered to fund the addition of video interview equipment at Allegheny College. During a visit to the Darden School of Management at the University of Virginia, of which he is also an alumnus and trustee, he was shown their video interview rooms, including all of their state-of-the-art equipment and setups. Shortly thereafter, near the beginning of January 2020, he contacted the Career Education Office and offered the funding needed for the College to have similar rooms.

"(Thompson) had given a gift to the college to completely outfit three rooms in Pelletier to be video interview rooms," Jim Fitch, Director of Career Education said. "We had no idea that this was coming … He basically gave us a blank check and said, 'Create the rooms. I will pay whatever it costs.'"

Fitch also noted that the retrofitting was to take place in March, shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States prior to the nationwide shutdown. The rooms are now set to be available for students to reserve by the end of the coming week.

The video interview rooms are set up in spaces that were going largely unused in recent years. The rooms include a conference room located in the Gateway, a room previously used for on-campus interviews, and a study space with no windows and brightly colored walls. The first of these has a long table, a projector and screen, a camera and the essentials for video interviews, including audio and visual equipment. This one has been designated as the overflow room, to be used primarily when the other two rooms are occupied. The repurposed on-campus interview room is fitted with all new audio and visual equipment valued at roughly $6,000 and an all-new display. This room also has a camera that moves as it follows sound around the room.

"If there were three students interviewing, the camera will adjust to whoever is speaking," Fitch said.

The final room, which Fitch called Video Interview Suite No. 1, has been completely refurbished, complete with sound-proofing and new lighting. It has the same high-quality equipment as the previously mentioned room, as well as a side space for students to take breaks in and a mirror, which they hope to be able to put in every room.

"This is the one we will try to steer students toward the most," Fitch said.

In addition, there will be an armoire in this room where there will be blazers for students to utilize for their interviews.

"We understand that 48-72 hours may not be enough time for students to go home and get interview attire," Fitch said. "With part of (Thompson's) gift, we purchased six blazers…We bought three, in three different sizes, that were technically (masculine) appropriate and (feminine) appropriate, so that if a student is in a pinch, if they either cannot afford or do not have access to interview attire, we have it here in Pelletier and they can use it while they are here."

These blazers will be dry-cleaned regularly for sanitary purposes and will be available to students using any of the interview rooms, although they are being stored in Video Interview Suite No. 1. Additionally, Thompson gave a substantial gift for students to purchase interview attire. This money can be accessed by students by submitting a request for a Gator Success Grant through the Dean of Students Office, for which the application can be found on Allegheny's website. Given the nature of a Gator Success Grant, this funding is intended for long-term, off-site interviews.

Students will be able to reserve rooms for video interviews on the Handshake app, available for both Apple and Android devices.

"If you are on Handshake, and you click 'Schedule Appointment,' one of the appointments types that (you will be able to) schedule is 'Video Interview,'" Fitch said. "Currently, we only have one of the rooms set up. I am in the process of adding the other two rooms."

Fitch went on to explain that, in the Handshake app, a student can network with major corporations for both internships and potential jobs. On the app, a corporation can send a student a link and give them an average of 24-72 hours to complete the video interview. Most of the interviews are automated, meaning there is not going to be someone asking the interviewee questions live. When a student receives one of these emails, they can then go to a different section of the app and immediately reserve a room in which they can conduct their video interview.

Students are able to reserve their room at any time of day, regardless of whether or not the library is presently open or the Gateway faculty are present in Pelletier. Once a student schedules an appointment, they receive a confirmation email with links to instructional videos on topics such as how to best utilize the video interview rooms and properly clean surfaces before leaving the room.

Fitch said that there will be a grand opening hopefully very soon, although students are already able to reserve the rooms via the Handshake app and start utilizing the rooms today. The rooms are available for student use as first priority, with faculty occasionally being permitted to conduct important lectures and seminars in them.

"The No. 1 priority is that this supports students who are invited to do video interviews," Fitch said.

Forums held for post-election thoughts and feelings

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On Wednesday, Nov. 4, Kristin Dukes, dean for institutional diversity, and the Law and Policy Program hosted post-Election conversations for students and faculty.

Dukes' forum was both in-person, in front of the Campus Center, and via Zoom, and was more geared toward providing a space for those who need support during tense times. The forums continue on Thursday, Nov. 4, and Friday, Nov. 6, 12:45 to 1:30 p.m.

Robert G. Seddig Chair in Political Science and Political Science Professor Brian Harward hosted the Town Hall for the L&P program, and there were about 10 or more attendees, both students and faculty. The participants were split evenly from those in-person in the Quigley Auditorium and on Google Meet.

The discussion was informal and wide-ranging, and Harward drafted up six to seven main points that led the conversation before opening the forum up for broader conversation.

First, Harward started with the projection of record turnout for this Election, with the Washington Post citing over 70% of the eligible voting population turning out to the polls, which would be the highest since the year 1900.

"There was record turnout, just under 67%," Harward began. "That's a big deal. Some are saying this is a good day for Democracy. I don't know if I'd go that far, but it's worth mentioning that we had record turnout."

He noted the efforts of the Center for Political Participation for registering students, assisting with mail-in ballots and the all-day ride to the polls.

"Voting went pretty smoothly from all reports that I've seen in terms of the voting process itself," Harward added. "The counting will continue for sometime."

Alex Yarkosky, '21, served as an election judge in Washington County, Pennsylvania.

"There was a long line when we opened, but after it was just a steady flow," he said. "472 in-person votes (were) cast yesterday. 55 (votes) for Biden, one for Jo Jorgenson and the rest for Trump … Biden supporters chose to not turn out and vote by mail-in instead."

Across the country, as reported by NPR, vote-counting protests are taking place.

Locally, Erie County United and Crawford County United are two groups that organize communities around crucial political issues. Both groups have hosted protests to "Count Every Vote."

To win the presidency, a candidate needs to secure 270 electoral votes. Election officials suggest that mail-in and provisional ballots could be tallied by Friday, and these ballots may favor Democrats because the party made significant efforts to encourage absentee ballots. But thus far, Harward notes that some of the key states for a presidential candidate to win are Joe Biden victories.

As it stands, Biden has sealed Wisconsin and Michigan, with 86% to 88% reporting. Arizona is being called as a Biden victory and results are pending, favoring Biden for Nevada.

Harward denotes that the results from other battleground states like Pennsylvania, Georgia and North Carolina would not matter if Biden seals the 270 from the states cited above.

"Those of you who went to bed last night, you probably woke up this morning feeling differently now," Harward said.

Assistant Professor Jon Wiebel was critical of a campaign strategy geared toward securing electoral votes.

"With the last two national elections, we potentially see a strategy going forward where candidates run a campaign where there is no concern for the popular vote," Wiebel re-clarified in an email. "This is overly reductive, but given how close races are in the Great Lakes States, the strategy becomes focusing on Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania to get to 270 no matter what the popular vote may be."

Harward discussed the "Red Mirage and Blue Shift" phenomena, where initial results may appear to be in Incumbent Donald trump's favor unofficially, but when mail-in ballots are accounted for, Biden picks up the win.

"Trump's declaration last night was totally in character," Harward said, "... but also just kind of divorced from reality. There isn't any basis for a legal challenge to recounting of ballots… you can't declare victory before the counting is done."

Harward is referring to the Trump campaign filing lawsuits in three states, demanding a recount, as reported by the Associated Press.

Another impression Harward discusses is that there has not been a "Blue Wave" of Democrats securing more seats in the House, and there is no gain for Republicans either. State legislature and Governorships remained true to their party as well.

"Democrats picked up one net Senate seat, but need to take at least three if they win the Presidency," Harward notes.

Currently, Democrats flipped 2 seats, with 1 net gain, and Republicans flipped 1 seat. In the closely watched Maine race, Incumbent Susan Collins (Rep.) declared victory against Democrat Sara Gideon on Wednesday.

Locally, Incumbent Mike Kelly (Rep.) of PA-16 Congressional District has sealed his victory over first-time candidate Kristy Gnibus. Unofficial results for the PA-6 State Representative race with current English Professor Matt Ferrence vying against Incumbent Brad Roae (Rep.), appear to favor Roae.

"The political geography is changing," Harward added, and gave the example that, "Michigan is not a reliable Democratic base anymore."

Another important note brought up was how the intersectionality of Latinx voters shaped early analyses.

"That really got that conversation going, how Cuban-Americans were linking Biden with Socialism differently than other Latino voters," Harward said. "Who are Latinx voters, how are they distinctive … How will that matter in places like Florida and Arizona … They have very different political cultures… it's not a monolith, and I think we see that now."

The topic of polling data and reliability had many participants engaged.

"Kansas and South Carolina didn't turn out like polls indicated," Harward said. "For those of us relying on polls and the averages of polls, and feel like we've been led astray… I think it's a little too early to come to that judgment … The outcomes that we are seeing are well within the parameters … We don't have outcomes to know in what ways they're systematically wrong."

The issues of polling discussed ranged from low participation rates, which has fallen in recent years, to representation of participants polled, to the reliability and usefulness of the data in predicting election results.

"I'm interested to see how we view polls as political scientists, and how the media is gonna cover them," a virtual student said.

"When pollsters ask a sample of a population and they get their response, that sample might not be reflective of the whole population," Harward said. "… in 2016 they caught the one thing that caused some of the malfunctions this time."

That malfunction, as Williams clarified, is people without college degrees, and in particular, Harward said it is white voters without college degrees.

"We have to raise a question about the fundamental logistics of polling and what has to happen if we can get a reasonable sample size," Wiebel said.

The conversation noted things like how people's expectations are getting raised in regards to polling data, and how voters use this polling for predictive value of elections.

"In terms of the electoral college, a lot of different possibilities were on the table ..." Assistant Professor Tarah Williams added via email. "What we have seen so far was well within that range, though the polls do seem to have overestimated Biden's popular vote margin. It is tough moving forward to know what to make of this and to know whether it can be fixed."

Sarah Holt, building coordinator for Quigley Hall, brought up the concern of voters who go to the polls on one issue, and namely, the relevant issue of the state mandated shutdown.

"While 'we' are surrounded by a lot of blue voters ... the red voters were so upset by the shutdown, that that was their top issue," Holt said. "'I don't want to have another shutdown,' is this feeling that was underlying that might have surprised people."

Other faculty and students chimed in.

"I think a lot of people, if they never directly experienced a problem, it's another person's problem," Associate Professor of Political Science Andrew Bloeser said, "… the growth of your 401k and opening up the economy, that was the message that resonated. Look back at 2016, the same sentiment is shared."

Bloeser added that exit polls showed Trump supporters did prioritize a reopening of the economy versus Biden supporters who prioritized taking action to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

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According to Thompson, students who fail to remove their belongings from their rooms are subject to fines that vary depending on the amount of belongings left behind.

Some students raised concerns about the lack of time provided for students to pack their belongings.

"I understand that provision because we want to be as safe as possible and we are seeing rising cases in this area so I understand the decision," Emma Godel, '21, said. "However if they are going to go through with this then they should have given at least one day where all students had zero classes. To be fair, the college did inform all students about this requirement if they choose to elect to live on campus, but we are all at the mercy of our class schedules this year."

Godel said that this year's move in was a great schedule and it limited the amount of people interacting at once on campus. Many students have classes until Friday so they will most likely leave on Saturday, which means that there will be a large number of outside individuals on campus all at once, Godel added.

"I do think the school means well, but they are assuming that a lot of their students are from Pittsburgh, Cleveland or Buffalo where they all can go home in a day and come back easily," Godel said.

Godel lives in Maine and will travel via a car as opposed to a plane due to COVID-19 concerns.

"Normally on breaks, I fly home," Godel said. "Obviously, the pandemic has been an exception and I have not been on a plane since March … I am driving home with a family member and there is only so much room for boxes. I have no problem driving home, but I think that it would be great if the school would plan to add just a few more days for the students to move out without planned classes for students just to focus on packing. This is a very abnormal situation and I think that they could handled that a little bit better."

Other students expressed concern about finding and funding storage facilities in Meadville.

International Club President Dakchyata Thapa, '22, has spent the semester arranging plans for her members to have access to storage facilities.

"Most of our energy has gone into facilitating international students' storage options for break and figuring out how travel will work," Thapa said. "I know that the college is trying to do a lot for the students on campus, but I think that there should be a little more effort toward international students and even students who live far away. … I think if the college were to offer more assistance instead of just notifying us two to three months in advance that would have been nice."

Thapa is also an international student. She is from Nepal and she is concerned about providing storage for herself and her members

In an attempt to finance storage facilities for their members, the club intends to request funds for storage during their club budget hearing, International Club Treasurer Savannah Hunt, '21 announced.

While storage will not be provided to students, the college encourages students to apply for the Gator Success Grants to assist with the costs associated with storage.

"Please, fill out the (Gator Success Grant) form (to help with costs)," Thompson said. "We have already received requests from students who have hardships with housing and meals over this break as well as students needing assistance with storage. Students should certainly fill out the form if they need assistance."

Thompson advised students to rent a storage unit together if they do not need all of the space that the unit provides.

Several students have raised concerns about the lack of support for international and long distance students.

"I am very concerned about getting my stuff packed up and moved," Tiaralei Cade, '23, said. "Most of us do not have cars so I do not know how I will even get my stuff to a storage place. I have no idea where the storage facilities are located in Meadville — I know that they exist."

Cade is an international student from England and she intends to return home over the break, but she cannot bring her belongings with her.

International student Hanna Nguyen, '23, will not be returning to Vietnam over break instead, she will be staying in Washington until the spring semester. She plans to leave all of her belongings in Meadville because it is not feasible to take them across the country.

"I have to find a storage room for my stuff," Nguyen said. "The International Club has asked the college for help, but we have not heard anything yet. The International Education Office asked us to fill out a form about whether or not we needed help moving our stuff, but they would not offer storage."

Similarly, Hernandez is concerned about finding storage options in Meadville for the break.

"My biggest concern is finding a storage unit," Hernandez said. "Trying to get all of my things from here to California would not just be very expensive but very difficult because it would just be me moving all of my things … I am unaware of any resources being provided for students to fund storage or if they would even consider offering storage space. I think it is mostly us trying to find storage spaces to place our things."

Volunteers, mainly Resident Advisors, will assist students with moving their belongings to the local storage facilities, Thompson announced. The college is providing students with the option to use the vans to move their belongings to storage facilities with a volunteer driver. Thompson encouraged interested students to contact Residence Life for more information.

"We will be able to use, at the college's expense, the college motor pool to transport students and their belongings to local facilities," Thompson said. "Residence Life will help students get into contact with Gator approved drivers who will take them to the storage facility of their choice. The college is not picking the storage facility for the students; it is entirely the students' choice on what facility they would like to use."

A list of local storage facilities can be found on the Residence Life website. The college does not foresee any storage facility shortages, but Thompson said that if this occurs, there are more storage facilities outside of Meadville that students can use.

"Okay Zoomer!" a performance highlighting environmental work in the community

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"Okay Zoomer!" highlights environmental and social work at Allegheny College and in the Meadville community through performance, research and engagement.

According to the Allegheny College website, "Okay Zoomer!" is "a live online performance designed especially for Allegheny College and the Meadville community" that will take place on Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 11.

The presentation features Peterson Toscano, a comedian, performance artist and professional podcaster, as well as the research and involvement from Chaplain Jane Ellen Nickell's RELST-360 Religion and Ecology class. The performance will spotlight individuals and organizations at Allegheny and in Meadville who are tackling climate change and other environmental and social justice issues.

Nickell explained that her class has always had a service component or community engagement interwoven into it, but because of the academic changes this semester due to COVID-19, she had to adjust to make the project possible online.

Toscano, who played a major part in the production of the performance, has been creating online content since 2003 from short films to podcasts and online presentations.

"When (Toscano) sent something out in the spring (of 2020) that he was now doing online performances, I was like, that's perfect," Nickell said. "It just kind of fell into place. (The "Okay Zoomer!") performance is sort of the same approach we're taking with this class, which is, we are here in this huge moment of change, but it can be change for the good."

At first, the students did not know how the community-engaged learning component would fit into the schedule of the class, but once the project was outlined and Toscano was brought in to help, they began their research, Nickell said.

"I think that once they had an understanding of why they were doing (the project) and they were able to see how it fits in, they've really been on board," Nickell said. "Each of the students did research into a person and an organization and some (students) were able to (find) a third (person or organization."

After the research component, the students were split into two groups: one that was responsible for helping with the production of the performance and one that was responsible for promoting and advertising the performance.

Toscano said that he was impressed with the research that the students had done.

"The students did tons of research, I mean, it's amazing," Toscano said. "They unearthed the incredible work some people have been doing for decades and others who have just started."

A challenge that the class addressed, and is inherent in any online performance or presentation, is how to make the event engaging and interactive, Toscano said.

"Zoom is boring as hell, right?" Peterson said. "Like one of the things I realized is you need to switch it up every five minutes, 10 minutes at the most, so that's another element of a show. It's like a super layer cake with all these delicious layers and fillings where there might be an introduction where there's some standard comedy, then there'll be a short film, and then there might be some interaction with the audience. It goes much quicker, but it also just keeps everything fresh."

Toscano explained that adapting to digital platforms while focusing on how the audience can get involved is essential to creating interesting and engaging online content.

"One thing the students are going to help me a lot with is figuring out what kind of interactive moments we can have with the audience using the chat, surveys that you can do a poll with and other different things," Toscano said.

Having an engaging, informative online performance during a time where people are not able to come together in person is important, Toscano explained.

"We need special, bright moments (right now)," Toscano said. "We don't have parties we can go to, we don't have performances or lectures or (meetings) altogether in the same room, so it's really important to kind of recapture some of that."

Nickell stated that the "Okay Zoomer!" performance has the potential to give people hope for the future in the middle of a global pandemic and a momentous presidential election by displaying the positive work that people are doing in the community.

"The pandemic is surging and I think to really focus on the people who are doing good work, and working for a better future (gives) people some hope right now," Nickell said. "I'm hoping that we can get the word out in the community, on campus and really have a lot of people tune in and be able to say, 'wow, we're going to get to the end of this.'"

Visit the Allegheny College website to find out more about how to register for the event.

FORUM *from page 1*

Bloeser cited a Pew Research study that found the feelings of fear and anger as the main sentiments shared by voters should their opposing candidate be elected.

"What does that say about Trumpism and where we are as a country?" Harward asked.

The conversation turned to consider the loss of Trump and the state of the Republican Party.

"It'll be interesting to see where the party goes," a student attendee said. "Less government, more personal freedom, but on issues like marriage equality, it's gonna be interesting to see how the Republican party transforms itself if Trump loses, but if he wins … will we see even more Trumpism?"

Emma Godel, '21, mentioned as well the complications of a Democratic presidency with a Republican Senate.

"Trump right now is the face of the Republican Party, and with tweeting, he has the potential to ruin peoples' careers," Godel said. "I'm really curious to see how Republicans will behave now assuming that Biden will be in office."

Williams discussed the complication of incoming results.

"The overall results do paint a complicated picture," Williams stated in an email follow-up. "...In 2012, the Republican's post mortem after Romney's loss suggested that the party really needed to take seriously expanding their base ... When Trump became the nominee in 2016, that strategy seemed to fly out the window. But last night, Trump did grow the Latino constituency voting for the G.O.P. ... If Trump does not win a second term, it will be interesting to see how the party thinks about and reckons with this loss."

A student described voters who are disillusioned with both candidates as those experiencing "political homelessness."

"This is a modest loss, but not a rejection of Trumpism," Harward added, "He's still got a very strong base around the country."

CRIME BLOTTER

Editor's Note: The weekly Crime Blotter is compiled using the Daily Crime Log available on the Office of Public Safety's web page. Crimes reported may still be under investigation. Crimes listed below are collected the Thursday before publication.

Oct. 30, 2020
Alcohol Violation
Schultz Hall

Oct. 31, 2020
Alcohol Violation
Schultz Hall

Oct. 31, 2020
Act 64
North Village II

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since 1876

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Campus security in pajamas

Why Public Safety uniforms need change

By **PEYTON BRITT**
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An Oct. 9 Campus article titled "Public safety incident escalates, local police get involved" reported that the first step in Public Safety's protocol regarding use of force is to arrive at the scene of the disturbance and act as "visual deterrent."

The remainder of the article goes on to detail an incident in which Public Safety inappropriately and unjustly pinned a student to the ground for an extended period of time — this abuse of power alone should be grounds enough to serious re-evaluate the protocol that led the officers involved to believe that this was an appropriate course of action. In fact, this incident brings to light a slew of structural defects within campus security that demand imminent and radical reform.

My focus, however, is on this phrase: "visual deterrent." Stop and think about what this means: the mere physical appearance of Public Safety officers is constructed with a purpose, a purpose that is intended to evoke an emotional response strong enough to discourage students from acting in a particular way.

Considering that Public Safety officers currently frolic about in the same excessively militaristic regalia worn by your typical American cop, the concept of visual deterrence draws on the same associations as those which are attached to the police. That is deeply problematic.

In the face of an overwhelming history of ubiquitous police brutality and corruption, the symbolic role of the American police officer has become something explicitly sinister. Invoking the representational power of the police officer's uniform is an outright scare tactic — one that tends to disproportionately affect those who are historically victimized by the police.

In general, this means people of color; thus, the practice of outfitting campus security officers in cop costumes is yet another manifestation of the negligence of Allegheny administration with regard to creating a campus environment that is conducive to protecting students of color.

What's more is that Public Safety and the Meadville Police Department have a close working relationship. As Dean of Students and Vice President of Student Life April Thompson noted in her Oct. 16 letter to the Campus editors, "(i)f it appears that a person is going to engage in a physical altercation, Meadville City Police Department is notified" by Public Safety.

In this sense, the two agencies are nearly synonymous. One might think of campus security officers as neutered cops, as they have a shared mission yet thankfully are not equipped with guns or other weapons. In actuality, Public Safety officers are essentially on the same level as the rent-a-cops you might see at a shopping mall — so why on Earth have we normalized dressing them up like real cops?

It is almost hilarious that their presence is intended to serve as a "visual deterrent" to criminal activity on campus. I say "almost" because it is actually not funny in the slightest that Public Safety operates under the assumption that students will view them with fear and apprehension rather than as the agents of safety and protection as they are purported to be.

To rely on the imagery of the police officer in order to make up for a lack of actual power is to call forth in students' minds the ugly compendium of atrocities contained within the history of American police brutality, something which has been foundational to the existence of policing in the United States since its very conception.

Let us not forget that the first form of policing implemented in the United States was created to capture and return runaway slaves. It is no surprise that something which arose in the form of a slave patrol has evolved to continue to perpetuate racist ideology and contribute to the disproportionate surveillance of people of color.

Taking all of the above into consideration, I am appalled by the implications of Public Safety using their presence to act as a "visual deterrent."

I am also appalled by April Thompson's suggestion that the information her letter to the editors provided regarding Public Safety protocol would give "some reassurance to the campus community that Public Safety is working to provide a safe and supportive environment for all members of our community and their guests."

In light of all of this information, I believe that some revisions to Public Safety uniforms are in order. More specifically, I propose that officers should conduct their duties in pajamas.

How many of us students have had the misfortune of having to interact with Public Safety officers at inconvenient times, such as late at night, when we are cozied up in our dorms, wearing pajamas and relaxing? I am willing to wager that if I were to poll the student body, the numbers would reflect that I am right to assume that I am not the only one who has had multiple interactions like this; therefore officers should level with us in terms of presenting themselves as we may be forced to present ourselves.

If I am not allowed or able to taunt and intimidate campus security officers with my appearance, I would not like for them to do so to me. Moreover, they should not have the right to try to scare students by calling upon the generational trauma instilled in marginalized groups by police.

Let us put an end to this facade of militarization and professionalism behind which campus security officers are permitted to abuse their authority. Let the disabling of fire alarms, the unlocking of accidentally-locked doors, the corralling of harmless but intoxicated students and all other Public Safety duties fall on the shoulders of "officers" in plaid pajama pants, fuzzy bunny slippers and cozy sweatshirts.

If Public Safety has any hopes of restoring a positive relationship with Allegheny students, then they must acknowledge that they must first abandon their dependence on the oppressive brutality underlying the attire of the police officer.

Letter to the editors

By **SHULA BRONNER**
Contributing writer
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> "The workers of St. Moritz are essential to creating and upholding the vision presented in this statement."
>
> —SHULA BRONNER
> Class of 2022

Dear Campus editors,

We are writing to express student support for the workers of St. Moritz in their upcoming contract negotiations. These workers play a vital role as part of our community, are essential to the operation of Allegheny College, and are crucial to a healthy living environment. Without the work of St. Moritz workers, the academic, residential and administrative buildings that the Allegheny community relies upon would be unable to function. While we often take clean spaces for granted, the workers of St. Moritz work daily to ensure that all members of our community have access to a quality learning environment. As recent events have shown us, public health is essential for the proper functioning of a residential educational community, and Allegheny College has a commitment to ensuring the health of students.

A vital part of keeping the student body healthy is the clean environment that St. Moritz workers provide for us daily. It is important to recognize the value of these contributions to the well-being of our community. Likewise, it is important to ensure the well-being of the workers who make these contributions through improved compensation for their work.

We are a community that values treating everyone with respect and fairness. Our Statement of Community says, "Allegheny students and employees are committed to creating an inclusive, respectful and safe residential learning community." The workers of St. Moritz are essential to creating and upholding the vision presented in this statement. Because of this, we expect Allegheny College to uphold this vision through its actions involving the companies with which it contracts.

While we understand that Allegheny cannot directly intervene in a union contract negotiation, students believe that the companies contracted to do work for the college should align with the type of community we want to be. Workers, like the housekeepers, make up a vital and a valued part of our campus community and we believe that the college, as an institution, should be mindful of how companies treat their workers when deciding which companies receive future contracts from the college.

As students, we are committed to upholding the values of our community and we will be watching the contract negotiations closely to ensure that the workers of St. Moritz are respected and fairly compensated for their contributions to the Allegheny College community.

Over our time at Allegheny, the workers of St. Moritz have made important contributions to our community and well-being.

During this contract negotiation, workers will be pushing for increased wages, benefits and the possibility of increased hazard pay. While these issues may seem disconnected from daily student life, they are not. This is because the workers of St. Moritz are not just custodial workers, but a part of our community. We see them everyday and the work they do is important to ensuring the quality of our learning. When students work to advocate for the needs of those in our community, we can work towards building a more equitable and resilient community that looks after each other. In these stressful and hard times we find ourselves disconnected from each other. Through providing student support for workers we can show that we are in this together. We talk a lot about an "Allegheny College Community," but this is a real opportunity to make this community mean something. Now more than ever, we need to stand up and advocate not only for ourselves and those like us, but those who we rely upon to live healthy and safe lives.

Additionally, these workers played a key role in our return to campus with increased cleanings. Without their work, there would be no guarantee of a safe living environment for students as well as the ability to use academic buildings for in-person classes. These workers have been a bedrock of our return to campus, and a way students can support and show thanks to the workers is through supporting them during contract negotiations. The term "essential worker" has become common over the past eight months, and there is no more appropriate use of the term when discussing the workers of St. Moritz. They are essential to our health, quality of education and function as an institution. As such, their needs should also be treated as essential. Students should stand up in support of these workers because when we needed them they went above and beyond.

To start to take action and stay in the loop, please follow @alleghenycoalitionforlabor on Instagram and message alleghenycoalitionforlabor@gmail.com with any questions.

We should live up to the values expressed in the Statement of Community and make sure that everyone on campus is treated fairly and with respect.

What happens when we all grow too fearful to speak?

By **BREE GRAY**
News Editor
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What happens when we all grow too fearful to speak?

The powerful will reign. Injustice will reign. Secrecy will reign.

The people will be shackled, enslaved and deceived by those who seek to silence them. The power of the truth lies within journalism and it far exceeds the power that lies in governing bodies — be it an administration, be it a government or be it the tyranny of the majority.

To what extent do we allow the people in power to determine what constitutes free speech? Is it really "free" if we must alter the truth out of fear of retaliation? Is it really "free" if we cannot speak without consultation?

How long will it take before any sentiment of free speech has been eradicated?

A voiceless journalist has become a fixture at this college and in the nation. We save face before we inform our people. We save reputations before we ever place a pen to paper. We save relationships before we ever speak out against those in power. For what? For our people? For those in power? For relationships that are nothing more than a figment of our imagination?

> "The power of the truth lies within journalism and it far exceeds the power that lies in governing bodies — be it an administration, be it a government or be it the tyranny of the majority."
>
> —BREE GRAY
> Class of 2023

If I cannot speak and if I cannot share the truth without fearing what might happen next, free speech has been damned — journalism has died.

Question anyone that tells you to blindly believe those in power. Question anyone who places relationships above integrity. Question anyone who tries to silence a journalist, a student, a voice.

How long do you really think free speech has if those who try to use it are coerced into silence? Silence is deafening and it reveals more than any story ever could. Be mindful of the moments when a journalist fails to speak or when a story feels empty. If it is too quiet then someone, somewhere has something to hide, and the truth has been compromised. Silence will only suffice for so long before people demand answers. Who will be there to give them?

People have the right to know what directly impacts them. People have the right to question those in power. People have the right to speak out against tyranny. Yet, here I am, selective with my words as not to offend, to challenge, or to grow too bold. Here I am, being mindful of a relationship that never should have existed before telling a story that needs to be heard. Here I am, advised to be mindful of my words in a story and be selective of my details for they may tarnish a relationship or upset those we are told to appease. How is that journalism? How is that free speech?

When did we all become so fearful?

We seek to be transparent, but only so much so as not to elicit too much attention. We seek to be beacons of truth, but only so much so as not to overstep our superiors. We seek to be the voice of those unheard, but only so much so as not to speak too loudly.

The powerful can only maintain their power so long as we allow it. Our voices could resonate far beyond this campus, this nation, or this continent if only we would just speak. Fear is far more powerful than the drive to tell the truth, especially on a college campus. Coercion will always triumph if we continue to perceive those in power as superior to us and our fundamental liberties. What happened to "for the people"?

We say that we stand for every liberty a student could have, but only so much so as not to encroach upon our own self-interest. We say that we want to be a transparent institution, but only so much so as not to allow the students to be too informed. We say that we care, but only so much so to avoid exposing our flaws.

These are just observations from a student's perspective. While this holds true for one individual, it might not for the next — a reality that must not be overlooked. One's words may be powerful and full of promise and reassurance, but one's actions dictate how the people perceive them.

"Ask this, not that." "Include only this, not that." "Tell the truth here, but not there." An altered truth is still fabrication. A framed truth is still fabrication. An omission is still fabrication.

When did the powerful dictate the press? When did the press grow so timid? When did telling the truth become so controversial?

Was it when we allowed a relationship to muddle our integrity? Or maybe it was when we allowed ourselves to be bullied into submission out of fear of retaliation.

Within you is power. Within you is liberty. Within you is hope. If we choose to only present half of the facts then we have enslaved ourselves, our people and our progress. I encourage you to speak loudly, boldly and fearlessly as not to become a puppet of the powerful. Nothing worse can happen to you than to lose the power within your own voice.

Do not let free speech die, for with it goes hope.

Allegheny fall International programing faces major changes

International Education Week and International Bazaar faces changes due to shortened semester

By **BREE GRAY**
News Editor
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International Education Week has been altered due to COVID-19 and academic calendar changes.

"Events will be more virtual with a global focus," Director of International Education Lucinda Morgan said. "We will not be able to host the International Bazaar this year. This is also the week before most students are leaving campus so we also realize that events need to be shorter and not a distraction from students trying to finish up work and pack before leaving campus."

Morgan acknowledged that students may be tired of attending events on Zoom. So she does not expect nearly as large a turnout as last year, but still encouraged students to attend in order to learn more about international education and different cultures.

"The whole world is going through so much right now and it is really hard for people to even focus on academics and still find time to take out for themselves," International Club President Dakchyata Thapa, '22, said.

The International Club collaborates with the International Education Office to host events during International Education Week, including the International Fashion Show and the International Bazaar.

This year, International Education Week is scheduled from Nov. 16 to Nov. 20 — concluding one day before students must leave campus. Neither Morgan nor the International Club intends to host large events due to the new changes from COVID-19 and the time requirement.

"I do not think that we will try to do anything big with the remainder of this semester (for International Education Week)," Thapa said. "We do not want to stress our members out and we do not know how to integrate our members that are not on campus right now."

Even if the events must be altered due to COVID-19, it is still possible and important for students to have the opportunity outside of drop-in hours to learn more about international education opportunities, Morgan said.

> "We do not want to stress our members out and we do not know how to integrate our members that are not on campus right now."
>
> —DAKCHYATA THAPA
> Class of 2022

"I think it is more important than ever (for students to be exposed to the global perspective)," Morgan said. "With the (COVID-19) pandemic, we realize how globally connected we are through an unfortunate situation. I think it is really important for us since we cannot go physically to places now to continue to learn and be concerned about how we in our small location understand how we fit into the world. This helps us understand people better, history better and conflict better, which allows us to think about what we can do to collaborate more in the future."

Morgan acknowledged that students will may have a different experience with International Education Week this year due to the changes.

"I am not going to say that it is going to be the same experience, but I think any events we hold will still bring an awareness and energy to want to learn more about it," Morgan said.

Last year, International Education Week events began on Monday, Nov. 18 and lasted until Sunday, Nov. 24. Events ranged from guest appearances from the Allegany River Dancers to the International Club Fashion Show. The events were in person and required a lot of interaction between attendees. This year's events have been altered to abide by the new rules for COVID-19, Morgan explained.

"Over the summer we started talking about what we would be able to do with this school year," Morgan said. "(The International Club) held a talent show early because of the weather changes predicted for November. Normally, that would take place as a fashion show during International Education Week. They have transitioned some of the events that they like to do to be sooner and online — hoping to keep the spirit alive, but knowing that it will be a different format."

The grand finale of the International Education Week was the International Bazaar. The International Club annually hosts the International Bazaar for the campus community in November. This event takes place during the International Education Week. Due to schedule changes this year and COVID-19, the International Bazaar has been canceled.

"The last two years, the International Bazaar has been one of my best experiences on campus," Thapa said. "I am a little bit sad because this event is one of the events that presidents love — getting to experience all of that stress, but all of that excitement as well."

> I am not going to say that it is going to be the same experience, but I think any events we hold will still bring an awareness and energy to want to learn more about it."
>
> —LUCINDA MORGAN
> Director of International Education, Allegheny College

Fellow International Club board member Tiaralei Cade, '23, agreed that not having the International Bazaar is a disappointment. Cade is the International Club's secretary for 2020-21.

"My favorite event was the International Bazaar last year," Cade said. "I understand that we will not have it because it is not entirely sanitary due to COVID-19, but it does suck because that is the event that I looked forward to this year."

Last year, the International Bazaar occurred on Nov. 24, and over 350 students, faculty and community members attended the event. Students prepared the meals and the event represented over 35 countries from around the world.

"The International Bazaar was absolutely amazing even if it was a lot of hard work," Thapa said. "This year puts more pressure on the International Club board because last year the International Club was able to achieve so much and our expectations are so much higher than they were last year to do better, at least, for me. It has been a dream to be able to be president of the International Club, but having the pressure to do better, especially during this time, is hard."

The club has considered alternative ways that the students could safely experience the International Bazaar such as exploring a partnership opportunity with Parkhurst, having them dedicate a dish to a certain country at dinner over the span of a few days.

Thapa acknowledged that the cuisine would not be as authentic as if a student from that country were making the dish, but she expressed gratitude to the Parkhurst staff for being willing to do that for the students.

Webinars place Celtic Culture on display

By **ROMAN HLADIO**
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On Oct. 24, the University of Pittsburgh's International Education department hosted a series of Webinars connected to Celtic culture and their Nationality Rooms Program in the Cathedral of Learning.

Each room is modeled in the style of a school room from their respective nation, with key characteristics explained throughout the presentations.

Three Celtic nations were represented: Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Each room's respective department had about two hours to present on their nation's culture, history, modern occurrences and more.

The Irish portion primarily discussed the architecture, saints and farming practices of northern Ireland.

Jack Webber, chair of the Irish Nationality Room at the University of Pittsburgh, presented a slideshow tour of the room and provided a general history of Ireland.

"The earliest timeline of the Celts existing was 2000 (BC)," Webber said during the presentation. "The first Irish in about 500 (BC)."

Webber described the various architectural motifs as Romanesque, as they follow a similar theme of arches and pillars.

In addition to Webber's slideshow, various videos were presented revolving around history and farming.

One such video came from David Livingston, an Irish farmer. Livingston primarily works with cows and other livestock. After the video, Livingston was present on Zoom to answer questions primarily revolving around COVID-19 and the current state of farming from attendees.

> The earliest timeline of the Celts existing was 2000 (BC) ... The first Irish in about 500 (BC)."
>
> —Jack Webber
> Chair of the Irish Nationality Room, University of Pittsburgh

"It's difficult to work through (the pandemic)," Livingston said. "Milk prices dropped initially, but things are starting to look up and we're going to get through it."

The webinar came to a close after a presentation from a student describing the scholarship opportunities for those looking to study away in Ireland.

The Welsh room was the last Celtic room added to the cathedral of learning and the topic of the second webinar, according to Dale Richards, chairman of the Welsh Nationality Room.

Jessica Davies, a Welsh committee member, hosted a virtual tour of the Welsh room, and provided an explanation of the room's origins.

"If you open the door where the pews are facing, it reveals a blackboard," Davies said. "And on the right side is actually a pulpit. So this was actually a multipurpose room."

Davies explained how Welsh as a language was almost killed off during the Tudor's rule, as it was seen as lesser in comparison to English. Recently it has been on the rise again with 25% of Welsh citizens able to speak fluently.

Committee member Bob Williams then presented a video puppet show of a classic Welsh tale, and both Williams and Davies read Welsh poems. Other videos on quilting and Welsh folk tales were also presented.

Scotland was the last Celtic nation to receive a webinar.

The webinar once more opened with a virtual tour of the Scottish Nationality Room, much like the others. A lecture ensued about Scotland's clans and clan culture, presented by Paul Thompson, president of the Saint Andrew's Society of Pittsburgh.

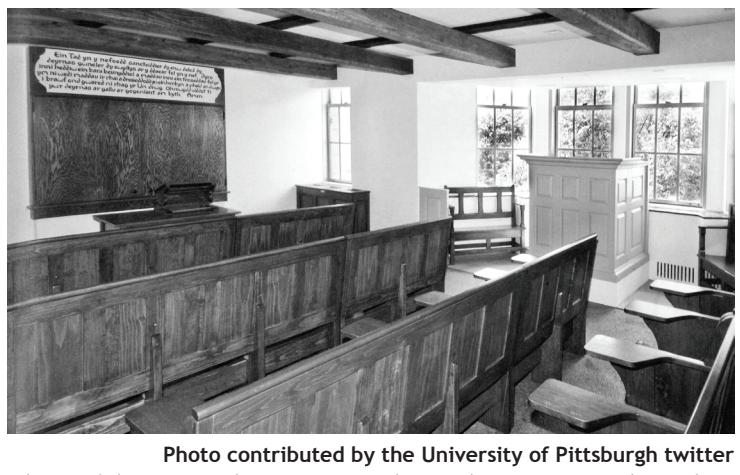

Photo contributed by the University of Pittsburgh twitter

The Welsh Nationality room, with a pulpit on one side and a lectern in the front representative of the dual nature of Welsh Schoolhouses

The lecture served as a general history for Scotland and the connections between it and Britain. It also discussed the commonalities between modern day Scottish governing and the clan mentality that dominated the region hundreds of years ago. A Q&A session followed.

Other members of the panel, Jim Hunter and Fiona McGrath, presented poems and sang songs of Scottish origin respectively.

George Balderose played songs on the smallpipes, a type of bagpipe which is played by squeezing a bag of air that sits near your elbow instead of blowing into it. Other songs were played by Sue Borowski on violin.

Also, a brief presentation and recipe for ginger biscuits was provided by Bill McShane.

The program ended with a story fit for the Halloween season and a traditional Scottish toast made by Arthur McAra.

Christmas at Nakatomi Plaza

By **CHRISTOPHER WAKIM**
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Here we are again. That strange purgatory between Halloween and Christmas. And yes, Thanksgiving is tossed somewhere in the middle of this mix. I would implore you to find a proper Thanksgiving movie if you have trouble getting in the 'thankful' spirit. However it is almost time for Christmas — and therefore it is yet again the proper time for Christmas movies. When thinking about Christmas films, the mind instantly jumps to the orthodox classics — "Polar Express," "A Christmas Story," or even perhaps the Griswolds from "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation." I must admit, dear reader, I have never felt any more festive with such cliche titles. Let's instead explore Bruce Willis' heroic role as the savior of Nakatomi Plaza in John McTiernan's classic: "Die Hard."

Before we proceed I must confess — I have let myself, and likely you, down as well, dear reader. Twenty-two years I have scoured the earth for interesting media and examples of proper American cinema, and yet it has never occurred to me to watch this film. All of the components that routinely peak my interest are all present — a righteous hero, a duty and even obligation to challenge all odds to fight evil, and of course, automatic weapons.

John McClane, played by Bruce Willis, flys out of New York to Los Angeles in an attempt to find lost love in his dear spouse. It seems the Christmas cards and fruit baskets aren't getting delivered in a timely enough fashion. On the plane, a passenger notices John Mclane's nervous demeanor and implores him to go to his intended destination, remove his shoes and socks, and make "fists with yer toes" — advice I will have to verify and report back before I can testify to the efficacy of such behavior.

Once in the airport, a rookie limo driver going under the name Argyle (yes, like the sweater pattern) picks him up and almost immediately explains John's entire backstory with remarkable accuracy. The story according to Argyle is as follows - A NYPD cop flying out to LA to meet up with his woman who figured she wouldn't last too long in this corporate gig. John McClane reasoned 'Why even pack my stuff up'? John drew this sensible conclusion and turned out to be dead wrong, as his wife is the new Vice President of the Nakatomi corporation.

Once John McClane is on scene, Argyle asks if he has a place to crash, should this rekindling of lost love not go exactly as planned. John asserts that he will find a place, but this does not satisfy Argyle. Argyle instead says he will wait for him in the parking garage, and either way John can make a phone call in a while and let him know. Certainly above-average chauffeur service at its finest.

John has entered the Nakatomi plaza and finds that his wife has abandoned the last name McClane and has instead chosen to go by her maiden name. This upsets John, but he decides not to retreat to Argyle despite this troublesome news. "They are at the Christmas party on the 30th floor" the security guard / door man tells him. "Take the express elevator."

Once John gets up there, Japanese CEO Takagi introduces himself and says he will take him to his wife's, Holly Gennero McClane, office. Takagi explains some pretense that she is currently occupied attending to some miscellaneous corporate nonsense. Amusingly, when they enter her office, Ellis another corporate deal closer, played by Hart Bochner, is going skiing. Yes, it was snowing on that mirror on the desk, the razor blades are clearly to trim Ellis's excellent beard. Not much doubt about that.

Bruce shakes his hand, and tosses "you missed some," right at Ellis who quickly sniffs the remaining powder up his nostril. Holly Gennero McClane, played by Bonnie Bedelia, is suddenly on scene. For some strange reason they end up in Ellis's private bathroom and begin talking. John asks Holly about the name, which she kind of dodges before she gets pulled to give another corporate speech at a Christmas party. John takes this moment of privacy to "make fists with his toes." But little did he expect, German terrorists are already on scene.

In a flash, machine guns begin going off and John McClane is now a shoeless cop and heavily outnumbered. All members of the Nakatomi corporation are held hostage but John manages to slip away. All phone lines are cut, all exits are sealed and the only communication with the outside world is done through walkie-talkie radios, as well as hurling deceased German terrorists onto police cars who suspect absolutely nothing with a completely sealed up corporate building with an entire parking garage filled with cars.

Speaking of a completely filled and sealed parking garage, Argyle is still down there. For what is likely 3-4 hours he suspects nothing is awry whatsoever, and is often shown as having a real bang-up time drinking complementary shots and hanging out with John's apology bear. It's a form of comedic relief from the often intense and close calls a shoeless John McClane is facing trying to deal with these German terrorists on this filthy Christmas eve.

The police, and later the FBI, show up and do absolutely nothing to help other than crash vehicles into the building and generally misjudge every single thing John tries to tell them. It is a classic tale of one man's spirit making him triumphant against all forces of evil. It's about an hour and a half of machine guns, explosives, general mayhem and profound confusion. Most importantly, it's still a Christmas movie. Yippee Ki yay! M**********!…Chris' Classic

9.5/10

•••• Comedy Column ••••

When life gives you gators, make Gatorade

By **KALEEL VAN VOORHEES**
Editorial Cartoonist
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For Kim Kardashian's 40th birthday, Kanye West gifted his wife a hologram of her father, Robert Kardashian (who passed away back in 2003 due to cancer). The hologram went on to praise Kim for success, her decision to become a lawyer, and her union with Kanye ("You married the most most most most most most genius man in the whole world. Kanye West [sic]"). In other news, most Americans have reported that they are, in fact, still poor. And single. And all alone.

In Russia, "The Sausage King" (pseudo named Vladimir Marugov), was attacked by masked assassins and murdered in his home sauna with a crossbow. The attack occurred when Marugov and his wife were relaxing in their country residence, where then Marugov was tied up in his bathhouse, and held for ransom. Marugov's wife escaped through a window, and was able to alert officials. Despite the fact that this took place in Russia and sounds more like a James Bond plot than a real-life event, you could say that Marugov's wife had an 'arrow escape'.

In Madagascar, scientists have rediscovered a rare and thought-to-be extinct chameleon known as the Furcifer voeltzkowi chameleon. F. voeltzkowi chameleons have relatively short life spans, living only a few months after they hatch. Female F. voeltzkowi chameleons (which have never been documented before) have very distinct and colorful patterns when they become stressed, pregnant, or encounter males. Honestly girl, same.

Known as the 16 Psyche, a rare metallic asteroid currently being studied by NASA, is about the size of Massachusetts (140 miles in diameter) and has been estimated to be worth about $10,000 quadrillion (or, $10,000,000,000,000,000,000). 16 Psyche orbits between Mars and Jupiter, and stands as one of the largest objects of our solar system's main asteroid belt. Thought to be made potentially of pure iron and nickel, NASA has set out plans to build a unmanned spacecraft to study the asteroid for 2 years, hoping to gain more information about Earth's core. Hearing this, Arnold Schwarzenegger has decided to reappraise his muscles, said to also be made entirely of iron.

The alumni who call Meadville home

By **GEORGE ACKERMAN**
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> "(The) people who are here are special."
>
> —LEE SCANDINARO
> Class of 2015,
> Allegheny College

On Allegheny College's website there is a page called, "Meadville is… Home." For many students it plays the role of a temporary home, but for some alumni Meadville becomes a permanent home.

"I stuck around because I liked the ability to connect with people," said Lee Scandinaro, '15. Scandinaro is originally from outside of Pittsburgh and found that Meadville had a small-town vibe that makes life easier to digest. Also, through Allegheny College, Scandinaro found opportunities which made the transition from living in Meadville as a student to becoming a community member easier.

After school, Scandinaro worked for AmeriCorps VISTA. This enabled him to facilitate college students engaging in civic engagement opportunities.

Scandinaro also recalls how the small town can enable people to make change, and see things change quickly.

"So many cool things have happened, and it's cool to see how things can change quickly." Scandinaro said.

Scandinaro has noticed changes in Meadville, particularly in the past five years He has seen more storefronts open up in town and seen the priorities of the community shift.

While Scandinaro is not particularly concerned with new stores opening, he sees this example of rapid change as encouraging and how priorities can shift in a smaller city. According to Scandinaro, this shift has been something encouraging about Meadville.

Julie Wilson is a Communication Arts and Community and Justice Studies professor at Allegheny College. Wilson has also been involved in several aspects of the community, including the 2019 Meadville City Council campaign.

See **ALUMNI** | *page 7*

International Club celebrates twentieth anniversary

By **BREE GRAY**
News Editor
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The International Club integrates international and domestic students within the campus community. The organization is a part of the Culture Identity and Leadership Coalition. The organization is advised by the Director of International Education Lucinda Morgan.

Meetings are biweekly on Tuesday from 8-9 p.m. via Zoom or Google Meet. Typically, the International Club uses this general body meeting to discuss events and internal affairs with its members. The organization is open to any student — international or domestic.

> We wanted not only to just integrate the international students on campus but to be hands on in the admissions process for international students. This year, we want to focus on admissions and how to integrate it with the International Club to get more reach and build a more personal connection with our members."
>
> —DAKCHYATA THAPA
> Class of 2022

The organization has seen a decline in member participation in virtual meetings, but President Dakchyata Thapa, '22, said that she understands the decline due to the fact that a lot of activities have become virtual activities and that these can be tiresome for students.

"We meet biweekly because we have a big reach on campus so meeting weekly does not really work so we try to space (our meetings) out," Thapa said. "We want to take into consideration remote international students where time difference can be a very big factor. Even if they are remote, it may still be their first year or even if it is not their first year, we try to make them feel more a part of the campus. We want to make sure that their time difference works for (our meetings)."

Thapa has been affiliated with the International Club for the last three years. She has served in several positions on the board. Next semester, Thapa will not be on campus so Vice President Arigun Bayaraa, '22, will succeed her presidency.

"(Bayaraa) and I have a mission for this semester," Thapa said. "We wanted not only to just integrate the international students on campus but to be hands on in the admissions process for international students. This year, we want to focus on admissions and how to integrate it with the International Club to get more reach and build a more personal connection with our members."

Thapa acknowledged that the size of the organization makes it difficult to establish a personal connection with COVID-19 in consideration, but it is a priority for the board.

"The International Club has felt like a home to me," Thapa said. "I felt invited before I even made it to campus because everyone was so welcoming and were able to get into contact with me. I felt at home with the International Club because we all feel the same feeling of being away from home. As much as we try not to feel homesick, there is some stuff that just does not resonate well with us. For us, being able to feel the same discomfort, I think, made us feel more comfortable being a part of the club."

Some members recalled the club being a way that they could connect with different students that could relate to how they were feeling.

"The board is a combination of both international and non-international students so it is nice to be connected with different students," Secretary Tiaralei Cade, '23, said. "Most of the people that I met in the club were international students so I could connect with them, and I was able to relate to a lot of the events that the club hosted."

International Education Week is full of events sponsored by the International Education Office and the International Club. The week consisted of several events such as the International Fashion Show and the International Bazaar.

Due to COVID-19, International Education Week events must be altered to be either virtual or physically distanced therefore the International Bazaar will not occur. This week also coincides with the week of student move out for break so events will be smaller due to schedule changes.

"Due to (COVID-19) regulations, we are unable to host the (International) Bazaar this year," Event Manager Hanna Nguyen, '23, said. "My favorite events are the International Bazaar and the International Fashion Show. I understand why we had to cancel this year because with (COVID-19) we cannot get too close and have everyone gather in Shultz (Banquet Hall), but it is sad."

Nguyen mentioned that if there is an opportunity to safely host the International Bazaar in the spring, that will be one of her priorities as event coordinator. She added that safety will be considered for any International Club event that may occur in the spring semester.

"If there is a vaccine and if the school allows me to host the (International) Bazaar then as event manager, I will plan to host it for the spring," Nguyen said.

Despite challenges associated with COVID-19, the International Club has hosted a virtual talent show and T-shirt giveaway to celebrate their twentieth anniversary at the college. The organization is still giving away t-shirts. If anyone is interested, they can participate in the giveaway on Instagram.

"We had a good outcome, but it was not necessarily the same outcome that we would have received in person," Thapa said. "As a board, we have decided to keep in mind what is going on in the world right now and we want our members to feel comfortable. If our members do not feel comfortable coming in person then we want to make sure that we keep that in mind. We also need to make sure that international students who are not on campus right now do not feel excluded — that is the biggest reason why we chose to have virtual meetings and events."

This semester, the board has also focused on offering storage opportunities to their members who cannot afford the cost of storage.

"During winters in previous years, we were allowed to keep our stuff in our rooms, but this year we cannot," Thapa said. "It will be harder for international students because we are expected to move out and take everything … We are trying to figure out a way where our club could facilitate storage or be able to organize a way where all international students could get together and rent a storage unit so that they have a space for their stuff. … We have been focusing on the logistics this semester and how to deal with the new situations."

Moving forward, the International Club plans to hold discussions with prospective international students. Spring semester holds many potential opportunities to hold events outside, but that also depends on COVID-19, Thapa added.

CPP, Andrew Goodman Foundation hold Election Day activities

SAMI MIRZA/THE CAMPUS

Student volunteers staff a booth at the Samuel Lord Gate on Brooks Walk on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

SAMI MIRZA/THE CAMPUS

A bus waits on N. Main St. near Brooks Walk to transport students to in-person voting on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

SAMI MIRZA/THE CAMPUS

CPP fellow Emma Godel, '21, speaks to a student voter about in-person voting on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

SAMI MIRZA/THE CAMPUS

T-shirts reading, "I am democracy/Allegheny votes 2020" were handed out for free to students.

SAMI MIRZA/THE CAMPUS

A student speaks to volunteers while Matt Ferrence, a candidate for the PA-6 state house seat, takes a photo.

SAMI MIRZA/THE CAMPUS

Cookies created by Parkhurst Dining and decorated with the phrase "AC Votes" were handed out to students.

By **SAMI MIRZA**
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The Center for Political Participation and the Andrew Goodman Foundation hosted Election Day activities last Tuesday Nov. 3, including busing students to the polls, handing out t-shirts and snacks, and a watch party in Quigley Auditorium.

From 8 a.m. until 8 p.m., the two organizations ran a booth and regular busing to the polls in Meadville at the Samuel Lord Gate on the Brooks Walk. Emma Godel '21, a CPP fellow, noted that in-person turnout this year was very limited in scope.

"We (didn't have) a lot of people go on buses, and I don't think that's a bad thing," Godel said. "We've had a lot of people come to us saying, 'I've already voted by mail,' and usually we don't care where or how you vote, but with this pandemic in mind, we're really excited to see so many people take advantage of mailing in a ballot rather than voting in person."

The shift to mail-in voting is something the CPP itself was partly behind.

"We have already encouraged students to vote by mail if they can," said Olivia Brophy, '23, another CPP fellow. "We (expected) a lower turnout for voting in person than a normal election year, because of (COVID-19). I and many of my friends (had) already voted by mail, but I do know of a small number of people that (planned) to go vote in person in Meadville."

For students who did vote in person, safety measures were in place to ensure that the virus did not spread. All voters were required to wear facial coverings and bus seating was arranged to encourage social distancing.

Around 1:30 p.m., Matthew Ferrence, associate professor and chair of the English Department, visited the booth. Ferrence ran for the 6th District seat in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

"It's Election Day, and I'm on the ballot, and this is my home turf as a professor at Allegheny College," Ferrence said. "I'm not really campaigning here, I'm out here to see the energy that the Center for Political Participation (has in) doing this bipartisan work to do what we need to do every election, which is to get out and vote for the world we want."

Ferrence will most likely lose his election, with the current numbers being 74% to 26% as of Thursday Nov. 5, and likely isn't going to run again in 2022.

> We (didn't have) a lot of people go on buses, and I don't think that's a bad thing. We've had a lot of people come to us saying, 'I've already voted by mail,' and usually we don't care where or how you vote, but with this pandemic in mind, we're really excited to see so many people take advantage of mailing in a ballot rather than voting in person."
>
> —EMMA GODEL
> Class of 2021

"My ambition is not really to be a politician, my ambition is to bring representation to this district," Ferrence said. "I'm not looking at this as, 'I'll keep throwing spaghetti against the wall until it sticks.' This is the run I'm taking, it's my turn to step up, and I hope someone else will be willing to take that turn after me."

Increasing voter turnout is a major goal of the Andrew Goodman Foundation, which was created in 1966 by the parents of Andrew Goodman, a college student who was working to expand the vote for African Americans when he was murdered by the Klu Klux Klan in 1964. In addition to helping with Election Day busing, the Andrew Goodman Foundation also pushes other measures to help increase voter turnout.

"We pushed a policy for Election Day to be moved to Gator Day, and if not that, then no classes on Election Day, and it passed," said Amya Ruiz, '20, an Andrew Goodman ambassador. "Moving forward, Allegheny should not be having classes on Election Day, and that is due to the work of Andrew Goodman Foundation ambassadors."

This year, the Andrew Goodman Foundation also arranged for chaperones, drawn from the faculty and staff of Allegheny College, to accompany voters — particularly voters of color — to the polls.

"We thought it would be extremely culturally incompetent to ignore the high racial tensions with this election, and concern for danger, not feeling safe," Ruiz said. "We thought it would be really distasteful to continue busing to the polls as usual, especially with (the) many threats of violence that students have heard or seen all over the world and in America. That's why we gathered some volunteers to be able to do that for students."

Godel concurred, and noted that there have been specific incidents in the past at Meadville's polling precincts.

"I don't vote at that precinct so I've never seen these poll workers in action, but they try and question their registration status, try and invalidate their ID in some way," Godel said. "I think it's great to have some chaperones there to reinforce students who might not feel comfortable voting alone."

Prior to the election, there had been anecdotal reports of alleged voter intimidation and politically-motivated aggression, including an incident where a caravan of Trump supporters surrounded a Biden campaign bus.

"We as students are not trained and prepared to be able to de-escalate a situation, but we do have the resources to call people who are," Brophy said. "If there are any instances of voter intimidation, harassments, or anything like that at the polls, or on campus, we are fully prepared to call public safety, to call other adults who are trained in de-escalation to be able to make sure that students feel their voice is heard and that their voice is necessary."

For future elections, Brophy asked that students continue to be informed when they make their decision.

"Be educated," Brophy said. "Read up on your candidates, really know who you're voting for, because it matters. The presidential election, obviously, but your local candidates have such an impact on your community and on your life in so many ways that you don't always think about consciously, because the president and the federal elections are broadcasted way more."

With Election Day come and gone, Godel encouraged students to stay active in the political process.

"Election day, or election season, is only a select part of the year," Godel said. "(And) when there's not an active presidential campaign, you should be actively working to support down-ballot races. Get involved with your city councilor, call your state representative, you can join a campaign, you can run for an office — there are so many ways to get involved that don't involve voting."

Ruiz also encouraged students to join the Andrew Goodman Foundation, which will need new team members next year.

"All the ambassadors currently are seniors, and we will be out of here and we will need four more," Ruiz said. "If (students) cannot vote and want to be involved, they should apply to be an ambassador at the Andrew Goodman Foundation by reaching out to Professor (Andrew) Bloeser in the Political Science department."

With the results of the presidential election still up in the air and potentially challenged in the coming days or weeks, Brophy recommended that students take care of themselves mentally.

"Take advantage of the resources that are on campus that help you manage your mental health and your mental state," Brophy said. "You can reach out to the (Counseling and Personal Development Center), take a yoga class, whatever works for you to stay healthy in your mind. This is so hard for me and so hard for everyone else to deal with COVID, and the election, and classes, that I think it's really important to take care of your mental health too."

However, Ruiz pointed out that part of the solution to such high-strung politics could lie in political participation itself.

"Maybe if more people were vocal about doing the right thing, politics wouldn't have to be so high tension, or so loud, or so crazy, if people just listened," said Ruiz.

ALUMNI *from page 6*

Wilson has advised students on how to get involved in the community, and how to think about it.

"(The) first thing is just to make yourself available and show up," Wilson said when discussing how students can work to get involved in the local community.

Wilson added that interested students should focus not only on building resumes but also being humans and decentering themselves when working in the community. "What's so cool about getting involved in Meadville is it takes you out of the constant culture of personal improvement that exists at the college," Wilson said.

Autumn Vogel, '15, is another Allegheny alumnus who has become deeply involved in the Meadville community. Vogel currently sits on Meadville City Council and has worked on several projects including as the MyMeadville project coordinator and as the Year of Meadville Organizer for Allegheny's Year of Meadville theme of 2015-2016.

Like Scandinaro, Vogel is not originally from Meadville, but has resided in the city since graduating.

While Vogel was at Allegheny, she engaged in traditional civic engagement, but found something different during her senior year: a group dedicated to thinking about the kind of community that people would want to live in and then working towards making that possible.

"There was a different way of thinking, it felt different than other ways of getting involved," Vogel said.

This group was led by Wilson, and another community member and current Garden Manager for the Carr Hall Garden, Kerstin Ams.

"This group gave way to great community initiatives," Vogel said.

This allowed Vogel to meet people in town and get involved in more opportunities. Vogel was also involved in the Second Saturday community market and eventually held a job working to organize Allegheny College's year of Meadville. This allowed Autumn to use college resources to lift up what was going on in town and for Vogel to work on community-focused efforts.

Vogel also stressed the importance of understanding the community you are a part of when doing community work.

"What changed my relationship with Meadville was getting involved in a different way and meeting people where they are at," Vogel said.

Finding ways to get involved which may not be seen as traditional civic engagement opportunities for students allows for meaningful relationships with community members to be built.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has put a hold on students collaborating with the Meadville community, Vogel did have advice for students seeking opportunities to be involved in the community surrounding Allegheny College. Vogel first mentioned weekly work sessions which occur Mondays at 6:30 p.m. These sessions involve planning for community efforts and working with the activism organization PA United. While these sessions are currently happening online, they provide an opportunity for interested people to get plugged into what is happening on some community organizing efforts.

Similar to Wilson, Vogel stressed the importance of showing up consistently to opportunities. Other than the working sessions, Vogel encouraged students to email her so that she can find them something to do. Vogel's email is autumnvogel@gmail.com.

While there is both good and bad in Meadville, Scandinaro drove home that it is the community members who make this town special.

"(The) people who are here are special," Scandinaro said.

Tom Brady's NFL legacy extends off the field

By **ADAM COHEN**
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Six rings, four Super Bowl MVPs and 14 Pro Bowl selections define Tom Brady's legacy on the field. TB12 will go down as one of the greatest, if not the greatest quarterback of all time. Despite being 43 years old, Brady is still kicking around and trying to win his seventh ring with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

After spending 20 seasons with the New England Patriots, Brady shocked the football world by taking his talents down south. His deal with the Buccaneers had direct repercussions on and off the field with the team. For starters, Brady has led the Buccaneers to a 6-2 record. The Buccaneers are currently in first place in the NFC South. If the Bucs can continue their impressive 2020-21 season, they could make the playoffs for the first time since 2007.

Leaving New England and having success in Tampa Bay surprised a lot of football fans including Assistant Professor of Chemistry Matt Betush. He explained that Brady's performance with a different team has added to his legacy.

"I think he has been doing pretty well," Betush said. "There were a lot of questions if he would be successful out of a Bill Belicheck led club and outside of (Buccaneers) stumble in Week 1."

Photo courtesy of nesn.com

John Duron, '23, added that many fans believed that Brady was a "system" quarterback — in other words, a mediocre quarterback that can follow a coach's game plan. Belicheck has a history of signing low-drafted players who can follow his game plan and have success. While Brady was still in New England, there was a discussion about whether his success should be accredited to Belicheck. However, to Duron, Brady's accomplishments with the Buccaneers have ended the "system" quarterback debate.

"For the most part, Brady has been breaking the ("system" quarterback) stereotype," Duron said. "Throughout the season he has been doing a lot better than what the haters have been saying about him."

Brady's presence on the Buccaneers extends off the field, too. He has recruited former Patriots Rob Gronkowski and Antonio Brown. Jack Parker, '23, recognizes Gronkowski's recent impact for the Bucs.

"Apparently Gronkowski has been playing well," Parker said. "He's scored a touchdown in the last two games and is coming into his own."

As for Brown, Parker does not think too highly of him. Parker predicts that when Brown joins the Buccaneers in Week Nine, he will do more harm than good for the team.

"I think Antonio Brown's too much of a headcase," Parker said. "He's a deterrent to the team."

Marcus Wolf, '21, mentioned that it is unusual to see a NFL player successfully recruit other players. Additionally, Wolf remarked that there are few quarterbacks that have as much influence as Brady off the field.

"Brady is definitely the most influential quarterback because he's won so many Super Bowls and he's proven to be a great leader, but now players want to go play with Patrick Mahomes over in Kansas City," Wolf said. "Mahomes may not have the opportunity to (recruit players) because their cap situation is not the greatest."

Wolf later mentioned that Mahomes helped recruit Le'Veon Bell, one of the top running backs in the game. Above all, Wolf wants teams to be competitive and does not want to see dynasties such as the Patriots.

"I don't really like the idea of having these legacy teams," Wolf said. "The Patriots did a good job of having a complete unit and they never really had stars. I think that's kind of why everybody didn't like the Patriots when they were controlling the NFL for however many years Brady was there."

Without Brady on their team, the Patriots may have their first losing season since 2000. After losing 24-21 to the Buffalo Bills last weekend, the Patriots fell to 2-5. Brady's replacement and former MVP Cam Newton continues to struggle with his new team and was benched earlier this season. According to Betush, Newton can be blamed for the Patriots' shortcomings this season.

"Belicheck can still win you a football game with a mediocre quarterback," Betush said. "He showed that when Brady had to be out for whatever reason. Look at Sunday: they were in position to win that game, they were going to at the very least tie it with a field goal, and (Newton) had a fumble that handed over the game."

Many fans were hoping that Newton could lead the Patriots back to the playoffs. Newton drew a lot of attention through social media and other mainstream outlets such as Bleacher Report and House of Highlights. Duron described one video in particular that hinted at a Cam Newton resurgence.

"Everyone was hyping (Newton) up throughout the preseason," Duron said. "It was one video that really set him up for the hype. He was listening to gospel music while working out. Everybody in the comments section believed Newton was on focus mode and were surprised when he got benched."

The NFL season is not even halfway through. There still could be time for Newton and the Patriots to turn it around. Nevertheless, Brady's influence has not only helped his current team but his absence has negatively affected the Patriots too.

A look at the NFL season at its halfway point

By **TRAVIS LUXBACHER**
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With the 2020 NFL season reaching its halfway point, playoff positions are still very much undecided.

Pittsburgh Steelers are leading the way in the AFC with a record of seven wins and zero losses. Currently four teams are vying for the elusive seventh spot in the conference: the final playoff spot. Those teams include the Cleveland Browns, the Las Vegas Raiders, the Miami Dolphins and the Denver Broncos, all clinging to the possibility of sealing a trip to the postseason.

Although the Pittsburgh Steelers sit alone atop the AFC standings, there has been much debate regarding who really is the best team and who has the best chance of reaching the Super Bowl.

Dalton Dubois, '22, describes himself as a huge fan of the NFL.

"I would have to say the Chiefs are the best team at the moment," Dubois said. "Their defense isn't the best but they clearly have the most dynamic offense in the AFC and adding Le'Veon Bell only strengthens their attack."

Photo contributed by clutchpoints.com

Bell, who is a former two-time All-Pro running back for the Pittsburgh Steelers, recently joined the Kansas City Chiefs following his release from the New York Jets.

"Patrick Mahomes has so many weapons like Tyreek Hill and Mecole Hardman that just pose threats based off of pure speed," Dubois said. "A solid offensive line and a mobile quarterback that has been gunslinging since his college days is dangerous to have in the NFL's current environment, given that it is incredibly pass and matchup heavy."

Whether the Kansas City Chiefs will catch the Pittsburgh Steelers for the top spot in the AFC by the end of the season remains to be seen, but there are certainly many other teams that will challenge the best in the league as the season progresses. Dubois acknowledged the influx of young starting quarterbacks around the league and the unpredictability of the league being as high as ever.

"I would say that I knew Justin Herbert of the Los Angeles Chargers and Joe Burrow of the Cincinnati Bengals would be really good going in, but I honestly don't think Burrow is getting enough credit right now," Dubois said. "He has been getting crushed nearly every play and the Bengals are just overall a bad team, yet he still tries to compete and has been putting up pretty crazy numbers given the circumstances he was handed, being the No. 1 overall draft pick."

Other rookie quarterbacks who have been handed starts this season include the fifth overall draft pick of the Miami Dolphins, Tua Tagovailoa, and former University of Pittsburgh quarterback Ben Dinucci.

According to ESPN.com, the Baltimore Ravens, Kansas City Chiefs, New Orleans Saints or Buffalo Bills could own the best record in the NFL by the end of the season. Although all of these teams maintain winning records at this moment in time, a number of teams have outperformed their preseason rankings.

NFL fan Nolan Thompson, '22, has one team in mind that he believes has exceeded all of the expectations put on them before the season.

"For me the biggest surprise has definitely been the Pittsburgh Steelers, and to be 7-0 right now is way more than I would expect," Thompson said. "I knew the defense would be one of the best in the league, but the Steelers offense right now is sneaky good and has so many solid, viable options to play with."

Although the Steelers lost their running back in Le'Veon Bell back in 2018, and also their eight-time Pro Bowl wide receiver in Antonio Brown last year, they have been able to replace these players with a number of younger players that Thompson believes can continue to make a big difference.

"If you don't cover Chase Claypool, Juju Smith-Schuster can damage you slowly," Thompson said. "Diontae Johnson and James Washington can do the same if Juju or Claypool draw attention. With drama out of the locker room and pure heart and soul on the field, the Steelers very well could go undefeated."

In the eyes of a huge Pittsburgh Steelers fan, Jake Levit, '22, the Steelers are by and large the best team in the NFL at the moment, the team that the rest are chasing.

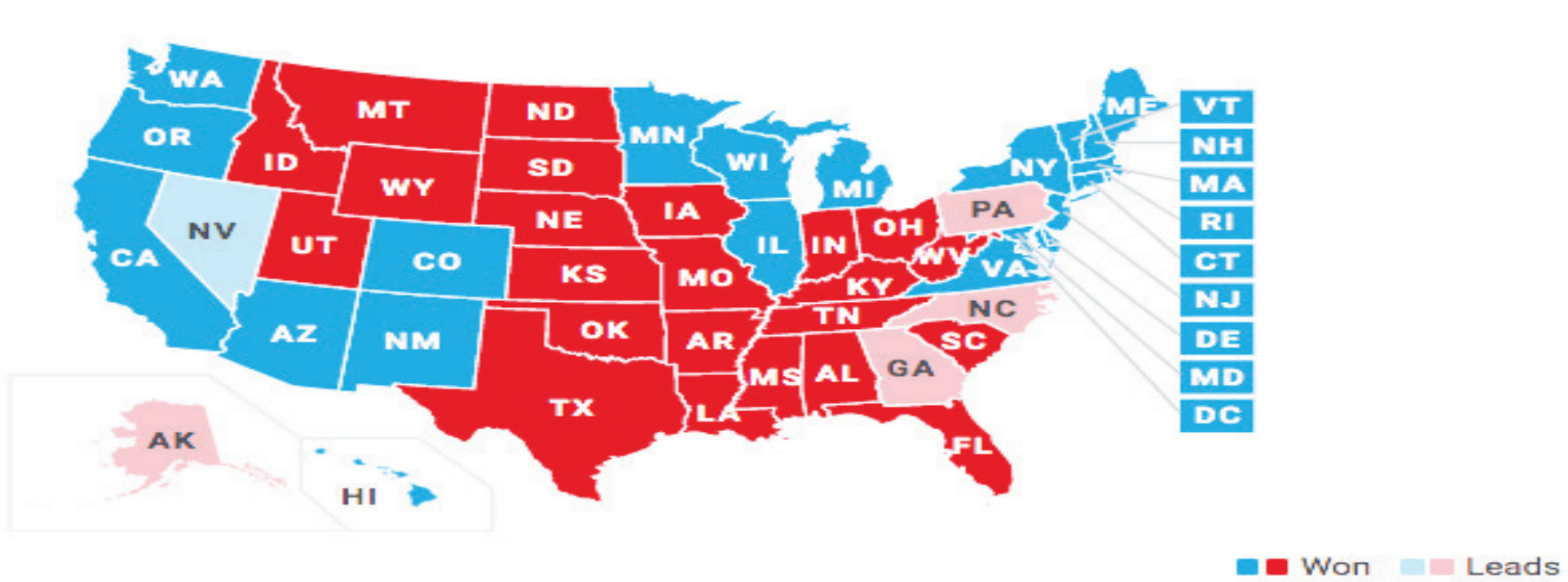
"The Steelers are the best team because they have repeatedly shown they can beat the teams that are said to be better than them," Levit said. "They beat the Baltimore Ravens and Lamar Jackson, despite injuries that would usually slow down teams."

As the NFL enters the second half of the 2020 season, these football fans will continue to follow and enjoy what Levit described as "an incredibly exciting finish" to the year.

2020 GENERAL ELECTION INFORMATION

CURRENT ELECTION RESULTS

Information provided by The Associated Press

Joe Biden 264 — 270 to win — Donald Trump 214

Updated Thursday Nov. 5 at 3:00 p.m.