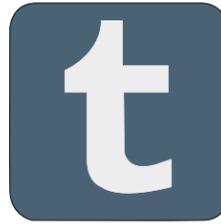




Fact or fiction?
 Reporters investigate campus myths



Tumblr serves as a creative outlet for students, celebrities alike



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GUERNAVACA EXCHANGE

Students visit from Mexico

BY Nikil Ramanathan, Akshara Sekar, & Candice Zheng

"Listas?" asks Universidad Internacional (BIU) professor German Albavera Casillas. Three girls, poised in Mexican folkloric dresses, lift their faces to the crowd and wait for music.

Before long, Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex and his fifth-period AP Spanish class join the exchange students in dance during a fiesta of food, language and culture.

On Nov. 20, Rodriguex conducted his Spanish classes in the staff lounge, where his students mingled with six exchange students from Cuernavaca, Mexico.

The students and their professor, who arrived on Nov. 11 for a two-week stay, come from the BIU in Cuernavaca, Mexico, where Rodriguex has been taking students for the past 20 years.

The group consisted of five juniors, Sandy Bernal, Kevin Miranda, Andrea Rivera, Carina Corrales and Sabiel Estefania Martinez, and one senior, Alma Leticia Mendez. Their respective host students were Jennifer Rios, Stephen Cho, Joanne Sturge, Maddie Buchanan, Shireen Kaul and Elyse Berlinberg.

For the majority of their time, the exchange students followed their "brother and sisters" to all of their classes.

"[BIU is] a very cosmopolitan school. Now, my students get to know how a real American family lives here, how they behave," their teacher Casillas said. "They think that Americans don't have any tradition but they do. My students can see how they respect classes; when teachers say something, they listen."

The exchange students also enjoyed many California delights, such as visits

>> MACY'S on pg. 6

>> MEXICO on pg. 5

Macy's Parade Magic: Band shines in New York



Photos courtesy of Laura Menard and Michael Boitz

Above: On Thanksgiving Day, band director Michael Boitz waves to the audience alongside fellow band director Jonathan Pwu. Upper right: The band and Color Guard walk down Sixth Avenue, followed by Papa Smurf. Lower right: Band members proudly march through the parade while holding the school banner.



BY McKenna Galvin & Michelle Shu

Saratoga High's marching band and Color Guard performed under the bright lights of the 86th Annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade when they marched in front of 3 million on the streets of New York and 50 million watching the famed event on TV.

More than 400 students, staff, parents and chaperones traveled to New York City from Nov. 18 to 23 to attend the marching band's performance in the iconic parade.

With the conclusion of their field show season on Nov. 3, the band, led by directors Jonathan Pwu and Michael Boitz, spent the next two weeks preparing for its appearance in the parade.

For the televised portion of the parade, the school commissioned an original composition titled "American Overture," arranged by Vince Oliver. During the parade, the band played Joyce's 71st Regiment March, the Saratoga fight song and a compilation of Christmas music.

For the visual aspect of the perfor-

mance, students learned drill in a similar fashion to the process used during field season. Using a tarp painted with the Macy's star, the band practiced run throughs of the show on the field and the track.

Group enjoys sightseeing

After flying in five flight groups on Sunday, the band arrived at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers and spent the next five days exploring the city. Students, staff and chaperones

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Over 180 seniors apply early

BY Aashna Mukerji

"If there's a better chance you'll be accepted, why not apply early?" senior Jenny Guarino said. An increasing number of seniors share her attitude and aim to take advantage of higher acceptance rates for early candidates.

When seniors apply to schools early, it's usually in one of three forms:

1. Early Decision: Students commit to enrolling if accepted.
2. Early Action: Students are notified early, but admission is not binding.
3. Restrictive Early Action: Students may apply to only one school early; admission is not binding.

Some students use these early options to demonstrate interest in a school, and others simply want to receive their verdict before March. Guidance coun-

selors said 155 seniors applied early in 2011, while 181 seniors did this year, continuing the upward trend.

"If you have a top choice, then applying early decision shows dedication," Guarino said, adding that early deadlines help prevent procrastination.

"Early applications are popular because many colleges have started accepting a decently large percentage early," guidance counselor Eileen Allen said.

Columbia University acceptance rates for the class of 2016 jumped from 7.1 percent regular to 22 percent early. The early rates are higher for almost every school, with differences sometimes as high as 37 percent (Pratt Institute).

"If you are a very strong candidate, it can be viewed as an advantage to apply with the early pool," Allen said. ♦

ALUMNI

Returning to the roost

FIRST GRADUATING CLASS REUNITES AFTER 50 YEARS

BY Grace Ma & Ashwini Velchamy

On Oct. 27, 68-year-old Charlie Thomas saw his high school for the first time in 50 years.

"It's like being in an old movie," said Thomas, a member of the school's first graduating class. "I can't get over it."

The Class of 1962 held its 50th reunion the weekend of Oct. 27. Fifty members of the class met for dinner at the Bell Tower in downtown Saratoga on Oct. 26 before taking a tour of the school the next day. A formal dinner event took place at Foothill Club the evening of Oct. 27.

The school tour began with a gathering in the McAfee Center, led by assis-

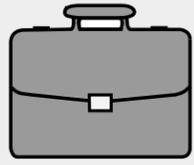
tant principal Kerry Mohnike and seniors Rohan Rajeev, Deepak Ravikumar and Joanne Sturge. Mohnike welcomed the first class and invited them to share stories and memories from high school.

Starting as the first sophomores at Saratoga High (they attended Los Gatos High School as freshmen), their class consisted of a mere 187 students.

Most couldn't believe that the Class of 2013 held around 350 students.

"Really? 350? Things have changed ... things have changed," former basketball and football player Jack Peters said, shaking his head in disbelief. Peters is a retired professor of counseling from

>> REUNION on pg. 4



news >> briefs

School introduces new web store via email

Students and parents now have an easier way to purchase school-related items rather than going to the Activities Office in person: They can simply pay for them via credit card on the new SHS WebStore.

As items such as parking permits, ASB cards, locks and P.E. clothing are posted to the store, the WebStore will notify students of the additions via email, according to the website.

After purchasing the items online, students can take their confirmation email and student ID to the Activities Office to pick up their items.

Sophomore Damee Moon enjoys the store's convenience and plans on using its features.

"In general, I think the WebStore's layout is relatively easy to follow," Moon said. "It's a lot more convenient to buy things online compared to in person."

Current bestsellers on the website include navy sweatpants and a crewneck sweatshirt, both priced at \$20.

— McKenna Galvin

District relieved with passing of Prop. 30

Educators statewide breathed a huge sigh of relief when California voters passed Proposition 30 on Nov. 6.

The school district was able to salvage more than \$1 million in cuts if Prop. 30 had not passed.

Of the two propositions that were targeted toward helping education, Prop. 30 and 38, only Proposition 30 passed by a simple majority vote.

Proposition 30, supported by Gov. Jerry Brown, is focused on helping K-14 schools. The increases in sales and use tax as well as personal income tax will be put in effect on Jan. 1, and will last until 2017 and 2019, respectively.

If Prop 30 did not pass, the burden of nearly \$6 billion in automatic spending cuts would have fallen almost entirely on public schools.

The school district supported Prop. 38 because it would have provided the district additional money. However, since Prop. 30 passed, superintendent Bob Mistele said that "we aren't getting a dime more, we just won't get cut."

On the other hand, the school is lucky that at least one of the propositions passed.

"Obviously we would [have wanted] to spend this money on our students rather than sending the money to the state," Mistele said.

— Sabrina Chen and Maya Ravichandran

Student-made art displayed in club gallery

The Art Reach Club hosted an art exhibition that displayed student-produced oil paintings, graphite sketches, photography and other mediums on Nov. 14. The newly formed club aims to spread the importance of art to the Saratoga Community.

Art Reach Club officers juniors Thomas Li, Nova Ng and Vivian Wang solicited submissions from students and displayed the works in the team room during lunch.

Sophomore Michael Ong presented his origami in front of others for the first time.

"It made me feel happy that people enjoy and appreciate it and that I'm not just wasting my time," Ong said. "I felt good that people came to see my origami."

Junior Jessica Pham thought the exhibition was impressive, especially since it was the club's first gallery.

"I thought it was really good," Pham said. "I loved the artwork that was displayed."

— Grace Ma

>> correction

In a story on page 19 about Bellarmine High School in the Oct. 19 edition, a reporter erroneously said that Alex Lyon attends Bellarmine High School when he really attends Harker for its computer science program.

>> upcoming events

Dec. 8 Winter Ball

Dec. 17 First day of finals

>> picturethis

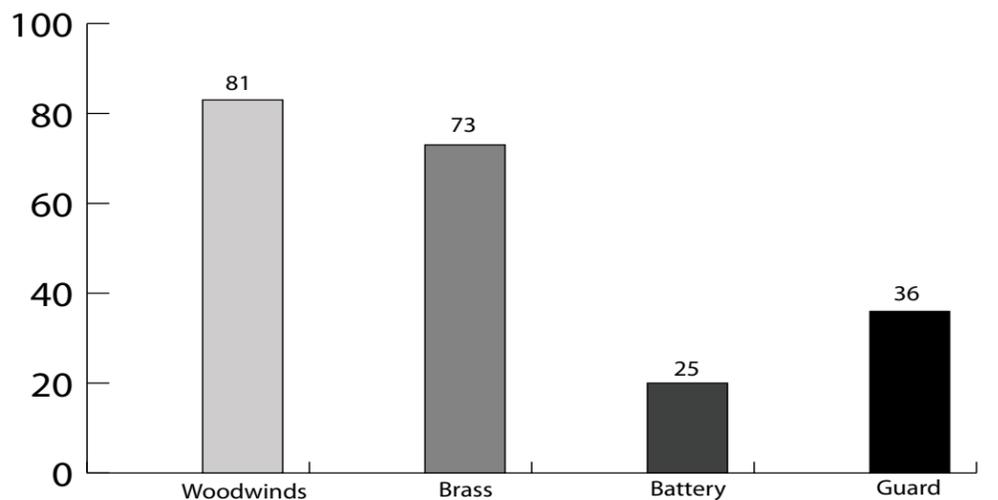


FALCON // NIKIL RAMANATHAN

GOOD-FOR-YOU GRUB >> Senior Bhavana Vadrevu passes out samples of vegetarian pizza in front of the quad steps on Nov. 16. Students sampled various samples of vegetarian food, many of which are being considered as possible vegetarian options to be sold in the cafeteria.

>> falconfigures

Marching Band Members in Macy's Day Parade



—Devin Zhao

SPEECH AND DEBATE

Team captains finally revealed

By Deepti Kannan & Nelson Wang

After a month-long trial period, speech and debate coach Erick Rector has finally arrived at the decision for who this year's speech and debate captains will be.

The four overall team captains will be seniors Venkat Munukutla, Ishaan Kolluri, Sujay Khandekar and Shauray Agrawal. In addition to leading their own individual events, they are responsible for overseeing the entire team and organizing logistics involved in travelling to invitational tournaments.

"Their jobs are going to consist of basic overseeing of the entire team ... in terms of making sure that all the freshmen are on board and understanding where they need to be," Rector said. "Basically, doing things that unify the team, especially not just their own specific disciplines, but making sure that everybody gets together."

Additional captains for the different events include seniors Aneesa Mazumdar and returning captain Neil Prasad for foreign extemporaneous speech; senior Sanjna Verma and junior Kush Maheshwari for domestic extemporaneous speech; returning captains Agrawal and senior Justin Chiang for parliamentary de-

bate; senior Bhavana Vadrevu for public forum debate; and Khandekar, Munukutla and junior Jason Li for individual events.

Although several of the captains were captain last year, some of them, including Li, are new to the position of captainship.

Li has advanced to the finals and semifinals in various events such as Impromptu, Original Prose and Poetry and Oratorical Interpretation; as a result, he will be helping the novices primarily with those three events.

"I want to take [the novices] to state," Li said. "I plan on leading that by example, so the best way is to show how hard-working I am ... and inspire the novices to do the same."

Also new to the position is public forum captain Vadrevu, who is the only confirmed captain of the three total captains to be selected out of 10 applicants for the position. She said she hopes to bring her leadership skills and friendly personality to the team in order to help novices improve.

"Overall, I come off as a more friendly person and a more accessible person," Vadrevu said. "Bringing that friendly face is more so what Mr. Rector employed me for. That being said, I'll do my best to also be a great resource."

Vadrevu also plans on inte-

grating more practice debates into the two hour meetings in order to give the novices more experience.

"I think what we'll do this year is hopefully have everyone doing practice debates at the same time so that kids aren't intimidated, but they can also get the practice that they need before tournaments," Vadrevu said.

For all the captains, balancing helping out the team and working on individually improving themselves can sometimes be a challenge. However, Vadrevu said that being captain is actually instrumental for her own success in debate.

"Teaching is the best way to kind of learn yourself ... By helping these students, I'm really going to have a better understanding of the arguments that might come up," Vadrevu said. "They're novices, but they have some great ideas."

With the new ideas that each captain is bringing to the team, Rector said the captains this year show great promise and dedication to the speech and debate program.

"The [captains] that we have right now are some of the most passionate and hard-working speech and debate students I've had in awhile, in terms of really knuckling down and making speech and debate their top priority," Rector said. ♦

FALL PLAY

Drama students find comfort in 'The Crucible'

BY Megana Iyer & Simi Srivastava

After working hard for over two months, the cast and crew of the fall play, Arthur Miller's classic "The Crucible," finally presented their finished masterpiece on Nov. 15-18 in the McAfee Center.

Set in the 1600s, during the Salem Witch Trials, the play is a story of identity, truth, honesty and integrity. It focuses on a small Puritan town brimming with tension. When the idea of witchcraft hits the town, citizens are willing to accuse anyone in order to survive.

The play broke the McAfee Center's record for most audience members on a Thursday and Friday night for a fall production. The production was especially relevant to many students who have taken or are currently taking English 11.

"Not only do they know the text of 'The Crucible' very well, they should be able to recognize things about character development or the themes that other people might not notice," English teacher Amy Keys said.

Some of the actors, though they had previously studied the play, found it challenging to add the passion needed to their characters in order to make their performance believable.

"I think the most [demanding] part of the process is the emotion, because it's a really emotion-heavy play," senior Laura Hannibal said.

Hannibal played the villainess of the show, Abigail Williams. Williams is a psychotic and deceiving 17-year-old girl

who uses her words to manipulate the town in her favor.

"She's awful, she indirectly kills people; she's a murderess," said Hannibal. "But she also has been severely hurt, she's had a difficult life and [lying] is the only way she's found to have control over her own situation."

Senior Sasan Saadat played protagonist John Proctor. According to Saadat, Proctor is well-intentioned, honorable and hard-working, but also full of pride and guilt and has a terrible temper. Saadat said that the most challenging part of the role was "being able to convey all the facets of his persona."

Saadat explained Proctor is supposed to be viewed as the hero and have the audience's support.

"Arthur Miller wanted him to be a true human being, complete with lots of faults," Saadat said. "So to me those are really important to balance."

Both Saadat and Hannibal read the play as juniors. Hannibal said reading and analyzing the play earlier was helpful since they have done so much character work already.

Saadat explained that teacher and director Sarah Thermond helped the actors "stay grounded and true to the text, to the emotions of the characters, and to understand the themes and values of the play as a whole."

Thermond found it exhilarating and nerve-racking to be directing her first show in the McAfee Center because of the carefully crafted lighting and scenic designs.

"It makes me feel like there is a bit



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

Seniors Shayda Roohparvar, Laura Hannibal, Karen Peterson and Sella Malin perform in the fall play. "The Crucible" ran from Nov. 15-18, and the play enjoyed large turnouts.

more pressure than with previous shows I have directed, which have mostly been in small Black Box theaters," Thermond said. "But it's also great because we were able to do so much artistically in that beautiful space."

Though the actors present the characters to the audience, this production could not be successful without the hard work and effort of the technical help and stage manager Jason Seo.

Seo, stage manager for the first time, explained that his job is challenging and different from other jobs he has done for tech crew in past productions, but just as

fulfilling.

"You don't get to be the great star nor do you get to be the head honcho building everything and setting everything up," he said. "But you're that small cog in the bigger scheme of things that needs to be there for everything else to work."

Regardless of their positions, all the participants took great pride in the play.

"I was most impressed by the acting, by the professionalism of the performance, by the general classiness from start to finish," said Keys. "It went beyond my expectations of how good it could be." ♦

COUNSELING GROUP

Finding 'Common Roots'

BY Nikhil Goel & Arman Vaziri

To some students, talking to a school counselor can be an unnerving task, especially when they don't feel comfortable at school. That's why juniors Anup Kar and My-Lan Le recently founded a student-led group called Common Roots.

Common Roots was created in late September on the observation that some students are uncomfortable about expressing themselves to adults at school. When students were asked who they would feel more comfortable talking to, adults or peers, students tended to pick peer counselors.

"It is difficult to explain to somebody in another generation how you feel, because they have no idea what you are going through," junior Gloria Liou said. "That said, I would probably talk to a student counselor because they are easier to relate to, and some of them interact with you on a daily basis and know who you truly are."

Other students concur. "If I had a problem I wanted to talk about, I would definitely feel more comfortable talking to student counselors because they can relate better," freshman Anik Joshi said.

At a school where stress can be a big obstacle, Kar and Le felt that a relaxed sub-community was necessary.

"We know that our school's environment is not always friendly," Kar said. "And really that doesn't help with stress levels and more importantly education."

In mid-October, Common Roots opened up positions for peer counseling. In order to become a counselor, a student must complete an application and be selected by Kar and Le. The application process is designed to make

sure that students from different groups are included, so that the majority, if not the whole school, is represented.

"We do strive for the group to be diverse, but they have to have certain first qualifications," said Kar. "For example, willingness to get outside of the comfort zone is one thing that we look for."

As of now, there is no set number of peer counselors, but the selected counselors will begin training on Jan. 11. Common Roots counselors will be trained by Dr. Barbara Varenhorst, who has taught many peer-to-peer groups, including ones at Gunn High School. The organization has also received funding for the peer counseling training from SHS.

"Root's peer counselors are getting trained on Jan. 11, which is really exciting," Kar said. "We will start having actual activities and meetings after that time, so things have really started to roll."

The group's philosophy is that students need a safe environment where they can communicate and be with other students without feeling self-conscious or intimidated.

"We want students who will attend meetings or seek out counseling to know that they will be in a safe environment," Le said. "We want to establish Common Roots and have people know that the peer counselors are there for them when they need it."

While there is no guarantee that peer counseling is the solution to students' problems, the leaders of the group hope it's a step in the right direction.

"We're all in a race to finish high school, but sometimes people fall down, or even worse, are pushed down," Kar said. "It's about time we stop running by and disregarding it and start helping them back on their feet." ♦

PROPOSED POLICY

P.E. change rescinded

BY McKenna Galvin & Michelle Shu

At a meeting on Nov. 13, the district board voted to suspend a policy at Saratoga High that would require all freshmen to take P.E., even if they also participate in band or athletics.

Health and P.E. will not be combined into one class, and P.E. requirements for students in athletics will remain as is in Saratoga, at least for the 2012-13 school year. Los Gatos High School will continue discussion on implementing its own proposed Freshman Transition Plan.

"I'm really happy that our school board heard the concern of all of us teachers, students and parents," music department chair Michael Boitz said.

The board will conduct further studies regarding the compliance of the current P.E. policy, specifically investigating concerns about the issuance of P.E. credit by non-credentialed staff and students who do not pass five of the six Physical Fitness Tests.

The policy, which was originally passed on June 5, was a topic of heated discussion at the Oct. 16 board meeting.

"I'm hoping that if anything, it drew some awareness that things should not happen without true transparency," Boitz said.

Board members say they will continue to communicate openly with the community about the issue to determine the future of the school's Health and P.E. programs. ♦

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Left: The class of '62, the first class to graduate from SHS, gathers around for a senior class photo by the then small redwood tree in the quad.

Right: As they stand together on the quad steps for a group photo, the class of '62 celebrates their 50th reunion, which took place on Oct. 27.



COURTESY OF LEE ANN HERNANDEZ



COURTESY OF LEE ANN HERNANDEZ

REUNION >> First graduating class brings back memories

continued from pg. 1

Ohlone College in Fremont.

Although many had returned to visit the school in the years since graduation, others who had not seen the school in decades, like Thomas, were amazed at how dramatically the campus had changed.

"[Fifty years ago,] all the trees [in the quad] had just been planted," reminisced Cliff Tedder, who had been a basketball player during high school and went on to become an engineer in Reno. "The quad was all sun because there was just no shade."

Tedder remembered how "they needed everything" when the school began. For example, the school needed more students to fill up the newly created sports teams, which was why Tedder joined basketball. On the other hand, there were no girls' sports teams whatsoever.

Another vivid memory was the school's severe dress code. Stories included how one student was sent home for wearing a denim shirt, how the dean of girls (a position equivalent to an assistant principal) measured skirts with a ruler. According to Carol Davis, she was even sent home on the last day of senior year for wearing culottes.

Many had horror stories about the dean of girls, Enid Shepard, who, along with being extremely strict, had apparently told Erica Plevin Gilman's mother that Gilman was "too dumb to go to college." Gilman now holds a master's degree in sociology.

"She told me I shouldn't even try," Gilman said.

Others remembered their principal, Dr. Vernon Trimble, who hand-picked teachers from Los Gatos to teach at Saratoga at its beginning.

"We didn't realize at the time how important he was," Carol Lykke, the treasurer of their senior class, said.

Once the laughter and the chatter had quieted, the class that called themselves "the seniors for three years" settled down in the McAfee to listen to their old teacher Dr. Hugh Roberts, who later went on to be a lawyer after teaching at SHS and still leads the Mock Trial team on campus.

"You were that unique class," Roberts told them. "You were the first graduating class—you created the traditions, you created the desire for excellence. I can't wait to sit back and listen to you as you see the school today."

As they started on the tour, the class was asked if they wanted to split up into

smaller groups for the tour, but they immediately declared that they wanted to stick together. Multiple '62 graduates testified to how close they all were, many of whom had started kindergarten together. Ravikumar, one of the student tour guides, remembers the event as a learning experience for himself.

"At first I thought it would be a little dry since we [the tour guides] would just lead the Class of '62 around and speak a few words here and there," Ravikumar said. "But we were all surprised when we started to interact with the first graduating class. Instead of an impersonal experience, we learned about stories of what our school, our common bond, was like back then."

As the first students on campus, the class had the task of choosing the school colors and mascot. The job eventually fell to student body president Bill Sanguinetti, who was also prom king and the quarterback of the football team.

"I just loved the colors [red, navy and gray] and I had a falcon in my bedroom when I was a junior in high school," said Sanguinetti, currently living in Pebble Beach. "I'm glad to see it's all still here."

This pioneering group of students also wrote the "Fight Song," a song they would sing to cheer on the school at

sporting events. The marching band still plays the tune at football games today.

"We did choose a lot of the things that are happening for you guys," Lykke said. "We made a lot of decisions for you guys because our teachers like Mr. Hugh [Roberts] allowed us to."

Walking around the school, through hallways they last traipsed 50 years ago, the Class of '62, now mostly retired after long careers, was amazed at how much had changed; however, they were delighted to find familiar places.

"The quad is exactly the same," said Gilman, a member of the French club and former Freddie the Falcon. "I remember sitting on those very steps waiting to be picked up. And I remember walking into the lunchroom and not knowing anybody."

All things considered, the members of the first graduating class advised current students to not take high school too seriously.

"I was definitely not in the 'in crowd,'" Gilman said. "And I was miserable, and I thought, 'Everybody is having so much fun, and I'm so lonesome.' Now, I talk to people, and they all say, 'Wasn't high school hell? Didn't you always feel so insecure?' It's just so funny the way you perceive things." ♦

ONLINE EDUCATION

Internet courses offer varied learning experiences

BY Samuel Liu

Pop quiz: Where can you take college courses without having to attend college? The answer is MOOC, or Massive Open Online Courses, which are programs that offer real college classes taught by professors to anyone who has an Internet connection.

The three major online course programs, Coursera, edX and Udacity, have offered 219 college level courses online since last January, all free of charge. Currently, the courses are being taken by thousands of English speakers across the globe.

This year, senior Kabir Chandrasekhar took The Design and Analysis of Algorithms Part One, taught by Tim Roughgarden, a Stanford professor working with Coursera. Chandrasekhar said he will also take several different classes later in the year.

"I use [Coursera] for several purposes," Chandrasekhar said. "[For] subjects that I'm interested in and just want to learn more about, those of my dominant interest, and things that I have never been interested in but am taking just to broaden my horizons."

In a world where college tuition often costs upwards of \$30,000 per year, MOOCs have become more and more alluring. MOOCs try to create an online community of learners.

"[The professor gave] the exact same lectures to his classes at Stanford," Chandrasekhar said. "The unique thing about Coursera is ... that a lecture like that is offered to anyone from a high school kid wanting to learn, to a college kid preparing for exams, to an adult all the way

across the globe trying to catch up to modern standards or fill in gaps in his or her education."

For now, MOOCs do not offer college credit. Currently, there is debate over whether or not MOOCs should be allowed to give credit. According to a commentary from The Chronicle of Higher Education, it would not be surprising to slowly see small colleges accept transfer credits from MOOCs, as MOOCs generally offer credible education.

Already, students can get transfer credits from Colorado State University (an online-only school) if they take the final for Udacity's computer-science course at an independent testing center. Additionally, according to Sebastian Thrun, CEO and Cofounder of Udacity, about 20 students have found work through Udacity's employer-connection program.

Since MOOCs are still relatively new (Udacity, edX and Coursera were all launched in 2012), it is difficult to foresee what changes will occur.

MOOCs may have damaging effects on local colleges. According to a report from Moody's Investors Service, MOOCs could harm local low-cost colleges (such as West Valley College) because they target roughly the same demographic. The fear is that if MOOCs can offer credit, small for-profit colleges may be in financial danger.

Given the relatively nascent nature of MOOCs, it is difficult to determine the credibility of the programs, and how much students actually learn. While the handpicked professors come from accredited universities, the distractions of

MOOC	UDACITY	COURSERA	EDX
LAUNCHED	January 2012	April 2012	May 2012
SCHOOL TIES	Co-founded by a former Stanford professor	33 colleges including Princeton, Penn, Duke and Stanford	MIT and Harvard have been joined by the University of Texas and UC Berkeley
NUMBER OF COURSES CURRENTLY OFFERED	14	198	7
COURSES INCLUDE	Introduction to Statistics, Software Debugging, Applied Cryptography	Fundamentals of Electrical Engineering, Introduction to Guitar, Greek and Roman Mythology	Introduction to Computer Science, Circuits, Electronics, and Artificial Intelligence
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	400,000	1.4 million	350,000

Adapted from TIME.COM

the Internet may be difficult to overcome for students.

According to Time Magazine, only 1 in 10 of those enrolled in a Udacity class typically finishes the course.

But the question of sustainability still looms for online education. According to Thrun, Udacity is not making a profit, which means that the site may have to charge a very low fee in the future.

Assistant principal Brian Safine said MOOCs will likely have more of an impact on the college level.

However, Safine also said that, depending on the how many students use MOOCs, the school may also make changes. ♦

"[We would have to] analyze the way students use the classes and maybe supplement [classes] with online tools," Safine said. "[We would have to evaluate] the validity of how students are learning, and how to assess what they're learning... if we were to give official student credit."

Still, Safine expressed excitement for the rising trend in free education.

"Access to information is inherently a good thing," he said. "It's really exciting for students to learn about a course that's not offered. It's very powerful to access ... [it's] beyond the walls of classroom, and beyond the constraints of GPA and credit." ♦

MEXICO >> Exchange students experience SHS

continued from pg. 1

to San Francisco and Facebook headquarters as well as shopping for American brands.

In order to ensure the trip's success, Casillas faced multiple challenges, including obtaining visas for all of his students and convincing their parents that the trip would be worthwhile and safe.

Nonetheless, he hopes to continue such exchange trips in the future, maybe as early as next year.

"We already have students here volunteering to host our students next year," Casillas said.

On Nov. 16, the Falcon conducted a Q&A session with the exchange students.

Q: What have you liked about America so far?

Estefania: It was such a nice surprise when they [the hosts] came to pick us up at the airport. It was a wonderful surprise that they liked me as well.

Andrea: I really liked the bagels of [Sturge's] mom. Here there are a lot more students than in Mexico, and I like that.

Kevin: I wanted to come because I like America, it's my first time. I like rap music and American food. It's delicious. I like the people; it's very cute. I like American girls.

Q: What was your favorite event?

Kevin: My favorite activity so far was visiting the Golden Gate Bridge. I really enjoyed it. I also would like to go and see an NBA game.

Sandy: I really liked going shopping,

and I also enjoyed visiting the city of San Francisco.

Estefania: When we went to the mall, it was very fun. Also San Francisco had buildings much larger than those in Mexico.

Q: What are some things you would like to do before you leave?

Sandy: I want to see a basketball game here, and I want to see the football game. I hope to learn English well and practice my English here. I want to be here in Thanksgiving.

Andrea: I love to go shopping. I want to learn about different cultures and how the people live here. I want to meet many people and maybe go more shopping.

Q: What do you hope to learn from this experience?

Carrina: All the things that we did are amazing and so exciting for us, and we are so excited to be here. I hope to learn a lot from this experience, because it's important to travel with my friends and learn more about the cultures, as well as English.

Estefania: I want to make friends with everyone who goes to this school.

Q: How is BIU different from Saratoga High?

Sandy: Here there are more people and the classes are different. In Saratoga you can choose classes, and in BIU you can't.

Kevin: My school back in Mexico is a small school with less students than Saratoga. There are a lot of students here. In Mexico the classes start at 7 a.m. and end at 2:30 p.m. every day. ♦



Courtesy of JOANNE STURGE

TOP: Mexican exchange students juniors Kevin Miranda, Carina Corrales and Sabiel Estefania Martinez, senior Alma Leticia Mendez, BIU professor German Albavera Casillas, and juniors Sandy Bernal and Andrea Rivera pose at Fisherman's Wharf at Pier 35 during their trip to San Francisco the week of Nov. 11. The group also visited other Californian tourist sites such as the Facebook Headquarters, Sprinkles Cupcakes and Stanford University.



TALISMAN // NESSA KIM

RIGHT: Bernal dances in her traditional Mexican folk dress during the fiesta with Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodrigueux's fifth-period AP Spanish class. Bernal has danced Hawaiano and Taitiano since she was in primary school.



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SCIENCE COMPETITION

Senior named Siemens semi-finalist

BY Allison Chang

As students milled around teacher Cheryl Lenz's AP Biology classroom on Oct. 19 after finishing a lab, senior Amanda Chow received a strange phone call from a friend attending college on the East Coast. She covertly picked up and heard, "Congrats on your Siemens semi-finalist standing!"

Although she did not proceed to the next judging round, Chow was already overjoyed with her achievement.

"I actually ran out of the classroom and asked him to repeat what he said a few times before I believed him," Chow said. "His phone call made my day."

The Siemens Competition, sponsored by the Siemens Foundation and College Board, is one of the largest math, science and technology competitions in the U.S. Twenty-two hundred and fifty-five students entered the competition this year, and out of these individuals, only 322 were chosen as semifinalists and 93 as regional finalists.

Last summer Chow spent time working in a selective program at Michigan

State University called the High School Honors Science/Math/Engineering Program (HSHSP).

There, she developed and refined her project: chemically modifying a promising renewable energy source called bio-oil, a fuel derived from plant material. She hopes her project can make bio-oil a more practical form of energy.

Chow said she modified the bio-oil cells through hydrogenation in order to improve their usability as an energy source.

Hydrogenation is the process of treating another compound or element with hydrogen, usually to reduce or saturate organic compounds, such as those present in bio-oil. Each trial Chow ran took four hours, and she typically ran two trials each day.

"I finished my work a lot later than friends who were working in other labs," Chow said. "I typically got out of the lab anywhere between 7 and 10 p.m., but, surprisingly, I enjoyed my long hours in the lab because I had a very dynamic lab group with wonderful people."

Chow's passion for science also

helped her get through the long hours inside of the lab.

"I've always been fascinated by seemingly small events that happen around us," Chow said. "And this fascination just keeps me constantly wondering about these questions that always lead me back to science."

Chow attributes her decision to tackle bio-oil to her interest in chemistry and her "environmentalist streak."

The hard work that Chow put in ultimately paid off when she found out about her semi-finalist standing.

Chow is not the only Saratoga High student who has been a Siemens semi-finalist in the past few years. 2011 alumni David Eng and Alissa Zhang were both semi-finalists, and Hansen Qian was a regional finalist.

As for the future, Chow is keeping an open mind.

"I don't have definite plans for what I want to study in college but I know for sure I am going to pursue studies in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields," Chow said. ♦

MACY'S >> Band marches in NY parade

continued from pg. 1

enjoyed touring some of New York's most iconic destinations. Their day trips included the 70-story "Top of the Rock" at Rockefeller Center, the National 9/11 Memorial, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and bowling at Bowlmor Lanes in Times Square.

"There was so much to do every day. The scenery from the top of the rock was unbelievable; you could see all the way to New Jersey," freshman mellophone player Manna Okada said. "Who wouldn't love New York if they saw that?"

In addition, students enjoyed productions of the Christmas Spectacular featuring the Radio City Rockettes and a Broadway show of their choice. While most of the staff attended a showing of "Book of Mormon," students and families enjoyed productions of "Mary Poppins," "Nice Work If You Can Get It," "Wicked" and "Newsies."

"Broadway was fun because it is part of New York's tradition," senior drum major Bennett Lopez said. "Although plot lines generally are a little cheesy, hearing and watching famous actors perform live made it an unforgettable experience."

Students perform on Thanksgiving day

On Nov. 22, students, staff and chaperones gathered in the hotel ballroom to change and warm up before practicing the television segment twice on the Macy's star. The group then transferred to the parade area to line up in its spot between the Rex the Happy Dragon and Papa Smurf balloons.

"At first, it was rather nerve-racking realizing the fact that you were performing in front of so many people, not to mention The Wanted and Papa Smurf," senior drum major Michael Shang said. "But after the first mile, I started to relax and think more about doing the best I could to entertain the people watching."

Though the band had prepared for freezing temperatures, the students experienced relatively pleasant weather in the 40s and 50s throughout the whole week.

"I was expecting something like the Inaugural Parade where it was frigid, and I couldn't move my fingers to play my clarinet," junior clarinet player Robert Eng said. "I was relieved it was only mildly freezing."

After marching three miles down 6th Avenue, the band completed the parade at Macy's Herald Square, where it performed its televised segment.

"Although it took us some time to learn all of the music, drill, and sequences for the Macy's commission and panels, seeing the excitement and grandeur of the parade made everything worth it," Lopez said.

Band members celebrate holiday on dinner cruise

Returning to the hotel, the band rested for the remainder of the day before departing from Chelsea Piers on a Thanksgiving dinner cruise and dance.

"I think [music department chair Michael] Boitz did a particularly good job with the cruise," Shang said. "I can't think of any better way to spend Thanksgiving than on the Hudson River jamming to the Hip Hop top 20 with a full view of the New York skyline."

On a boat filled almost exclusively with students, families, chaperones and staff, the group enjoyed views of New York at night while enjoying music and a Thanksgiving feast.

"Being able to spend time with my friends in New York and marching in the parade was such a great experience," Okada said. "I love New York, and it's one of the greatest memories I'll ever have." ♦







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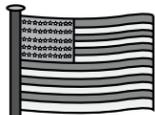
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Score	Name	School	Year
2400	Anne Sommer	Gunn	2012
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2400	Kevin Peng	Camplindo	2012
2400	Victoria L. Lin	Harbar	2012
2400	Angela Zou	Torrey Pines	2011
2400	James Chang	Mission San Jose	2011
2400	Jegan Tan	Rowland	2011
2400	Jeffrey Ling	Palo Alto	2011
2400	Kevin Wang	Westview	2011
2400	Kristin Shim	Canyon Crest Academy	2011
2400	Nathan Ho	Monte Vista	2011
2400	Patrick Nguyen	Troy	2011
2400	Sophie You	Torrey Pines	2011
2400	Sunny Lu	Torrey Pines	2011
2400	Wendy Wai	University	2011
2400	Xing Cheng Dominic Liu	University	2011
2400	Ahdiv Nathan	Irvine	2010
2400	Ansh Kumar	Rancho Bernardo	2010
2400	Bil Yeh	Irvine	2010
2400	Calvin Zang	Irvine	2010
2400	Christine Li	Westview	2010
2400	David Hu	Rancho Bernardo	2010
2400	Daviesh Rishi	Amador Valley	2010
2400	Esther Chung	Fairmont Prep.	2010
2400	Jason Gao	Mount Carmel	2010
2400	Jennifer Selzer	Mission San Jose	2010
2400	Joanna Lynn	Troy	2010
2400	Johanna Lee	Irvine	2010
2400	John Austin	Torrey Pines	2010
2400	Justin Jardin Song	Irvine	2010
2400	Kevin Chaung	Arcadia	2010
2400	Lina Vadlmani	Polytechnic	2010
2400	Michelle Xie	Canyon Crest	2010
2400	Nathan Siegel	Westview	2010
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2400	Patrick Xu	Albany	2010
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A FALCON REPORTER WHO ALSO PLAYS THE BARITONE RECORDS HIS DAILY TRAVELS IN NEW YORK CITY

Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade Journal

GRAPHIC BY GRACE MA

by Devin Zhao



>> Sunday, Nov. 18

5:25 a.m.: Forty or so members of the marching band and color guard are in the San Francisco Airport (we took about seven or eight flights to get to New York) are waiting to check in their baggage.

5:35 p.m.: Here I am, at the Sheraton Hotel on 7th Street in New York. This is my first time in the city, and the massive population here is overwhelming. The Sheraton Hotel is massive (it even has its own gym under the lobby!). It was like any top-star hotel, with its swiveling doors and multiple luxury floors.

As soon we arrived at the hotel, we were introduced to the World Projects staff, which put together the entire trip, and given a brief description of the itinerary for tomorrow. To my dismay, my room was small (literally a prison cell with a luxury bathroom, two soft beds, and a 40-inch TV).

Two of my friends and I went out to dinner on New York's jumbled metropolitan streets. We passed through stands of South Eastern food, a seafood restaurant and a two-story McDonald's packed with people. We decided on Italian food.

>> Monday, Nov. 19

1:50 p.m.: After a quick lunch, our group got onto buses and had a directed tour of the city. Our guide was a kind man named Gideon, and he quickly became notorious among my friends and me for his bad jokes (he tried to persuade us that a robber dressed as a ninja once terrorized the neighborhoods of Staten Island and Todt Hill).

At the 9/11 memorial site, we were instructed by Gideon to explore only for 15 minutes, but the memorial site was a memory I'll never forget. New skyscrapers were popping up at the site and where the Twin Towers once stood. Seeing the memorial in person not only let me observe the beauty of its construction, but also reminded me what sacrifices the city and its citizens made to make the place even grander than before.

9:25 p.m.: Afterwards, my group started on a quick tour of Grand Central Terminal, the train terminal crafted by the employees of railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt to visualize his vision of heaven. Everything was either white or gold, whether it be marble pillars or tiles, and there was a painting of all the constellations on the ceiling. The story downstairs was, according to Gideon, the home to the Whispering Columns, a perfect arch which supposedly contained the soul of the dead Cornelius Vanderbilt whispering out of the columns. Afterwards, the entire music department on the trip had a party in a bowling alley and restaurant called Bowlmor Lanes. We took a seemingly complicated group photo afterwards, reviewed the itinerary for tomorrow, and split our ways.

>> Tuesday, Nov. 20

12:34 p.m.: I have just returned from a two-hour band rehearsal in the ballroom of the Sheraton Hotel. Today, after a breakfast at Starbucks, the entire band and Color Guard had a rehearsal in the ballroom of the Sheraton Hotel at 9 a.m. Almost 20 people came late. The band and guard warmed up, reviewed drill, ran through the show a couple of times and were dismissed at 11 a.m., after a review of what would happen later today.

5:41 p.m.: About 50 of us are waiting on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art after the bus picking us up broke down. But first, a flashback: After lunch, those who did not arrive late at the rehearsal met at the ballroom for tickets to the Met Museum of Art and boarded their buses. At first, I thought that the Met would be pretty interesting. As it turned out, the Met was not as interactive as I thought it would be. It became notorious for not having many places to sit down and few water fountains to drink from. My group explored the whole museum in a little bit of over half the time allotted to us (three hours), and in addition to getting lost a couple of times, got incredibly bored. We had to wait an extra hour when our bus broke down.

11:31 p.m.: I am writing this after my curfew, so I'll try to make this quick. After the incident with the broken bus, the entire band and guard were given tickets to a Broadway show. I picked a show called "Newsies."

>> Wednesday, Nov. 21

7:55 a.m.: I have to go to sleep in a few minutes because of the parade tomorrow, so I only have time to write one journal entry. Today, the entire band and guard had another two-hour rehearsal at the Sheraton Hotel ballroom.

After a quick lunch, the band and guard went to a performance by the Rockettes concert Radio City Music Hall. The concert was appropriately labeled "Christmas Spectacular," featuring Santa Claus and the Rockettes.

After that, the band and guard went to a restaurant called Carmine's, and the excuse music director Michael Boitz used was to "carboload for the big day tomorrow." The six-course dinner ranged from parmesan-covered chicken to salmon, and after an incident with a girl "accidentally" pouring half of a shaker of salt into a glass of drinks, I will never trust a glass of Coca Cola again.

>> Thursday, Nov. 22

2:30 p.m.: Today, the day of Macy's Thanksgiving Parade, I slept for a record two hours! Everything that happened between the 1:15 a.m. rehearsal until now is mostly a blur. Last night, I remember sleeping at 8:30 for two hours and lying awake for another hour before finally giving up on sleeping. Around 11:30 p.m., my roommates and I started preparing, and around an hour later, arrived at the ballroom to change.

I remember that the band and guard went down on 6th Avenue at 2 or 3 a.m. to practice our fieldshow. It was rather dark, and lights shining from the top of skyscrapers blinded and distracting me. The wind blew in gales, and I was cold, despite wearing thermals and the marching band uniform.

At around 6:30 a.m., the band and guard, after a quick buffet at Bowlmor Lanes, were waiting on the streets, waiting to get onto 6th Avenue to start the parade. When we did get on the street to perform (which was about two to three hours later), I was feeling pretty awake. I saw various celebrities like Miss America and bands such as Neon Trees.

The band and guard marched along 6th Avenue for around 40 or so minutes, but it felt much longer because I had never really marched three miles, much less in New York and in such a prestigious parade. The band and guard cycled through a total of three songs, and percussion played a cadence between each song. A lot of adults and children were cheering for us.

Before reaching the Macy's star, the band and guard was marching in a block, following the street for three miles. I could hear nothing but the band playing music and the crowd cheering, and I could feel nothing except for my arms burning, straining to lift a 15-pound marching baritone. At last, we arrived at the Macy's star and performed our 90-second fieldshow, which NBC and other networks recorded to be on TV nationally. The audience cheered wildly during the performance, and in the end, I was ecstatic and never felt so accomplished in performing a fieldshow and parade routine that we, as a band, learned literally two weeks ago. I thought that it was definitely worth traveling across the country to get on a few minutes of national TV. Before, I felt excited at being able to perform in New York, but now I feel satisfied to know that everyone did their best to represent Saratoga to the nation.

11:30 p.m.: Everyone met at the New York ballroom at 5 p.m. to go on a cruise ship around the Hudson River. We got to see the Statue of Liberty in real life and had an actual Thanksgiving dinner with turkey and other Thanksgiving foods. Another first for me was having a party of about 60 people on literally 25 square feet of dance floor. All I can remember is the stereo blasting out Top 40 hits, and various band and guard members eagerly inviting staff members to join them. After the party, everyone went back to the hotel, and the last thing I remember before falling asleep was promising to go to a party at 3:30 a.m. tomorrow.



LEFT: The flute section kneels in a visual at a rehearsal on Nov. 22 before the Macy's Parade on Thursday. The guard members stand behind them whirling their white flags.



BELOW: The marching band performs as an aerial shot of the fieldshow is taken from a building across the street.

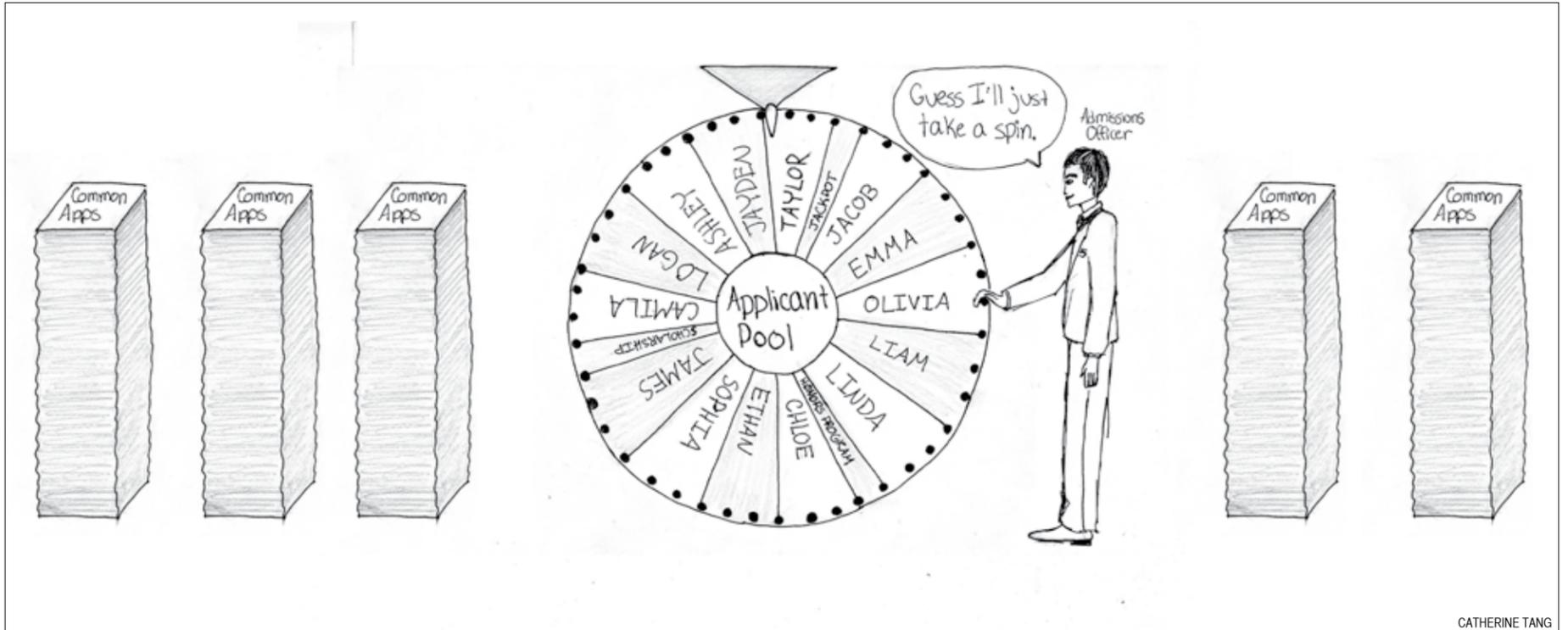
Courtesy of MICHAEL BOITZ

>> Friday, Nov. 23

11:00 p.m.: I remember waking up at 3:50 a.m., 20 minutes too late, and when I came to our meeting place, there was no one there. After 10 minutes I went back up to my room and crashed on the floor. The next thing I knew, the clock in my room read 8:45 a.m., and 15 minutes later, I arrived at the New York Ballroom in the Sheraton Hotel for the awards ceremony. I saw a lot of people that pulled all-nighters or went Black Friday shopping. There were serious awards, such as MVPs and Most Improved, and there were also silly awards, such as Most Flirtatious and Next Exotic Dancer. After the awards ceremony, the World Projects staff told us when our flights would depart.

Now safely at my house in Saratoga, I can say that the Macy's trip was among the top two tours I have ever had. I enjoyed hanging out with my friends, old and new, explored New York for the first time and just had a good time without worrying about homework.

>> candidcaricatures



CATHERINE TANG

New Common App takes wrong turn

“TOPIC OF YOUR CHOICE” TO BE REMOVED, LIMITING CREATIVE WRITING OPTIONS

BY DylanJew & SierraSmith

Most current seniors are familiar—perhaps more than they would like to be—with the Common Application, a universal online application used by over 450 colleges and universities across the nation.

The Common Application streamlines the application process by giving students the opportunity to submit their personal information to multiple colleges at once. The application is fairly straightforward, separated into different sections and finalized by an online signature.

One of the most important sections of the Common Application is the writing section. It includes a 1,000-character short response about an extracurricular activity and a 250-500 word essay, which requires students to choose one of six topics, including a topic of their choice.

With each year, more and more colleges and universities are joining the Common Application system, which has

forced it to adapt to the influx of applications by streamlining the process. Their approach? Removing the “topic of your choice” essay option next fall.

However, the “topic of your choice” is very popular, with 36 percent of Common Application users choosing it, according to Common Application Director of Outreach Scott Anderson.

The removal of the free choice topic could limit an applicant’s creativity when writing their essays. This topic previously allowed students to combine multiple topics or write about a special personal experience that did not fit into another category.

The removal of this essay choice is unnecessary and will detract from future applications.

Because the “topic of your choice” option has the same word limit as the other topics, reading these essays takes no longer than reading that of any other topic. In fact, essays that allow students to be more creative could be more interesting to read than those restricted to a mold.

Application processors already have

to review a huge volume of similar applications; now they will have to read essays about the same few topics as well.

Along with the universal portion of the Common Application, many colleges have their own unique supplemental section.

These usually contain questions only pertinent to that college, which allow colleges to personalize the application and see whether a student is a good fit for the school.

While colleges can use this section to get more creative responses than the new, restricted personal statement, there are so many different supplementals for each college that students are often overwhelmed by the sheer number of essays they are required to write.

Most applicants spend the most time on the personal statement, since it affects every college, as opposed to the individual supplement of each college.

The personal statement should be just that—personal. If students are unable to express themselves fully through one of the five restrictive topics, the essay

would not be able to represent the student as well as it could.

The Common Application’s attempts to condense the application process are justified, but they could be achieved in a different manner, without taking away from a student’s creativity.

According to the New York Times, the amount of college applications filed will possibly exceed 10 million by the end of the decade. This means that colleges are trying to make the application process as efficient as possible.

However, the possible surplus of applications should not cause students to lose opportunities to be creative in their essays.

The hope is that by the time the Common Application has to face such a large number of applications, there will be sufficient technology so the system can handle the high volume while giving applicants full liberty in their writing. In any case, colleges shouldn’t resort to restricting students’ creativity to make the admissions process easier on themselves. ♦

E-learning a viable alternative to traditional classes

BY AllisonChang

I have two high schools. Aside from Saratoga High, I also attend Stanford Online High School (OHS). OHS is by no means a conventional school. All classes are taught online through video conferences and email correspondence between teachers and students.

I started attending OHS because it had classes, such as Latin, which Saratoga High did not offer. It was incredibly convenient to be able to take a class and receive credit for it without ever having to drive anywhere.

OHS is only one program in the growing trend of online learning curriculums, known as E-learning. Khan Academy, Udacity and Coursera are others gaining popularity.

Despite the growth of E-learning, many people still question its effectiveness. However, students learning online have equal mastery of material compared to those in conventional classes.

Citing concerns over the lack of interaction between students and teachers, many critics believe that without a com-

munity of individuals collaborating face to face, courses lack the depth necessary for full comprehension. However, interaction between teachers and students is part of online learning.

At OHS, students see, hear and chat with each other on a daily basis through a video conferencing platform known as Saba Centra. They are able to collaborate with their entire class on the so-called “whiteboard,” or a video screen, interacting much more intimately than if they were restricted in a physical environment.

Nor are the teachers hidden behind a lifeless PowerPoint presentation. Videos of teachers allow students watching the lectures, even if they are not conversing in real-time, to feel an intimacy with their instructors.

The witty humor and engaging personality of Salman Khan, as he explains the complexities of finding the volume using integrals for his calculus course

and the digestive system for his biology course, are all apparent through his lectures, creating the depth and connection with his listeners that opponents of the online learning insist are not present.

Yet another concern is whether students in online courses are able to properly master the material taught without the ordinary tools of testing and homework to gauge progress. Once again, however, this argument falls short.

Udacity, an online educational program founded primarily for computer science courses, has periodic homework assignments and some classes have the option of taking a proctored final exam. These exams show that students have adequately learned the material.

OHS also gives midterm and final exams, along with other tests and quizzes administered through a proctor. Often, teachers also choose to have their students take additional exams.

Students learning online have equal mastery of material compared to those in conventional classes.

One of the founders of OHS, Raymond Ravaglia, told the New York Times, “We want legitimacy in the results and don’t want students coming to the school for the wrong reason.”

In a report synthesized by the Department of Education, researchers concluded that “instruction conducted entirely online is as effective as classroom instruction,” and that “blends of online and face-to-face instruction, on average, had stronger learning outcomes that did face-to-face instruction alone,” demonstrating the effectiveness of E-learning.

Thus, rather than being concerned about online education producing subpar levels of mastery, schools should embrace the new tools given to students for additional learning.

While Saratoga High couldn’t supply me with all the classes I wanted, or fit them all into my schedule due to size and cost restrictions, OHS provided a supplement to my regular schooling.

The boom of E-learning programs has increased the range of education for students, an achievement that should be lauded rather than doubted. ♦

THIRDPERIOD

STAFFPOLICY

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Private college counselors unnecessary for students

A Hong Kong couple recently sued college consultant Mark Zimny after their two sons were rejected from Harvard. The couple, Gerald and Lily Chow, supposedly paid Zimny more than \$2 million to ensure admission to an elite American university. Zimny promised acceptance letters, didn't deliver, and now the Chows want their money back.

It takes about 10 minutes to fill out the basic information for the Common Application. You need your name, address and various facts and figures. Seems simple enough, right? Unfortunately, more and more seniors are enlisting help from outrageously expensive college counselors to guide them through the simple process.

Students shell out anywhere from \$50 ("cheap") to \$300 per hour, and meet with counselors usually once a week for a few months. Yet these counselors, often alumni of state schools, are advising students on how to get into Ivy League universities. It's interesting that few Ivy League graduates seem to be in the business of helping high schoolers "beat the system."

Applying to college is by no means an easy task. However, paying a "certified" adult anywhere from \$4,000 to \$30,000 a year to help fill out a series of blanks is absurd. Even the less popular essay counselors, who help brainstorm and polish personal statements but don't advise students on how to fill out their applications, charge exorbitant prices for services available for

>> candidcaricatures



free anywhere, such as at school.

Additionally, even if the counselors were to provide some guaranteed formula for admission—as some claim to do—would it not be paradoxical to pay almost an entire year of private-school tuition to gain undeserving admission to a school that demands another four years of overpriced tuition? And wouldn't that be a blatant violation of integrity—to essentially pay an adult to get into college for you?

The use of college counselors to "buy" seniors' way into college detracts from the legitimacy of the admissions process. Admissions officers admit students based on what a college counselor tells their client to write, instead of basing the decision of the actual qualifications of a student.

Some students even receive services from college counselors as early as freshman year in hopes that this will increase their chances of admission. This view, however, limits the perspective of the student and contributes to a college-obsessed mind set.

A possible root of the scramble for college counselors may be fear caused by the application process. Students may feel overwhelmed with all the work required for these applications and turn to college counselors to alleviate the pressure of applying.

Perhaps the problem lies in peer pressure; students may feel that if all their friends have college counselors, they may be missing something important. College counselors are sought out and employed often out of fear of rejection—the high prices act as an insurance policy for that coveted acceptance letter.

Though it may often seem necessary to have a college counselor in order to get into a decent college, this is most certainly not the case. Students should realize that it is their own originality that will get them into the college that fits them best. ♦

>> Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editor-in-chief
Jackie Gu

Opinion Editor
Paul Jung

Reporters
Aashna Mukerji

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 23-5 that private college counselors are not necessary.



Growing trend of arts and crafts in AP curriculum not a bad idea

BY CandiceZheng

Walking into junior Vanessa Wang's fourth-period AP Biology class on a Wednesday morning, an observer would see an entire room full of students modeling cell mitosis out of colorful beads and pipe cleaner.

These types of projects are becoming more and more frequent in AP and Honors classes all over school.

But is this right? Is it appropriate for college-bound juniors and seniors to be participating in hands-on projects more often carried out by elementary school students?

The answer is that this growing trend is perfectly fine. While the words "AP" and "honors" may conjure up nightmarish images of endless studying and impossible homework loads, many teachers are trying something new by implementing more hands-on and artistic projects into their curriculums. These lessons enable students to gain a new way of interacting with the often difficult material.

Some of the classes that assign artistic projects include English 11 Honors, AP Biology and AP Environmental Science. Assignments that require a creative aspect provide a well-needed break from the traditional curriculums

and allow many students to express their individuality.

Many students feel that incorporating arts and crafts into tough courses is just a waste of time and a hassle. But honestly, would a student rather write an essay on the major symbols in "The Scarlet Letter" or create a poster board on it?

If forced to choose, many students should opt for the latter. Making an appealing, high quality display may take more time than writing an essay, but the process is a lot more interesting than squeezing one's brain dry in an attempt to create a coherent literary analysis.

Many students feel nervous or anxious about these types of assignments and projects because they feel that their grade will depend on the quality of their artwork.

Just because students are not a Van Gogh or Monet doesn't mean they cannot succeed with these projects; there is no need to be concerned over how appealing one's art is.

If a student obviously hasn't put any time into an artistic assignment, it

is completely justifiable for a teacher to dock points due to his or her lack of effort.

Ultimately, teachers grade based on the quality of the actual content that shows understanding of the topic. Artwork is at most a minor portion of the assignment that can always pale in comparison to the actual meaty portion of the work.

Arts and crafts should be treated as a welcome deviation from traditional course curriculums.

In the end, arts and crafts in AP and honors courses are not something to cry over. Just like with any other assignment, one

cannot just half-heartedly create a project and expect to get full points for it.

Arts and crafts should be treated as a welcome deviation from traditional course curriculums and serve as a breath of fresh air for some students. Letting students have more choice and individuality, artistic projects are harmless and a good choice for teachers who want to add a wide variety to their lessons.

The extra variety offered by these types of assignments allows students to express their learning in ways that essays and test can't always show. ♦



Solar panels would reap monetary benefits

BY Karen Sung

Nearby schools such as Prospect, Lynbrook and Monta Vista all share one feature that Saratoga conspicuously lacks: solar panels.

Within the last few years, schools across the state have teamed up with solar energy companies like Chevron Energy Solutions and SunPower Corporation to install solar panels on their campuses, most often in the form of parking lot canopies (a practice first started by Google in 2007, before schools caught onto the trend).

The creation of California Solar Incentive, launched by the state government, has helped spur this increase in solar technology. The program offers monetary incentives for the implementation of solar energy systems.

Apart from partnering with companies who sell electricity back to the district, schools also work with banks for low-interest loans and host fundraisers to help fund for the project.

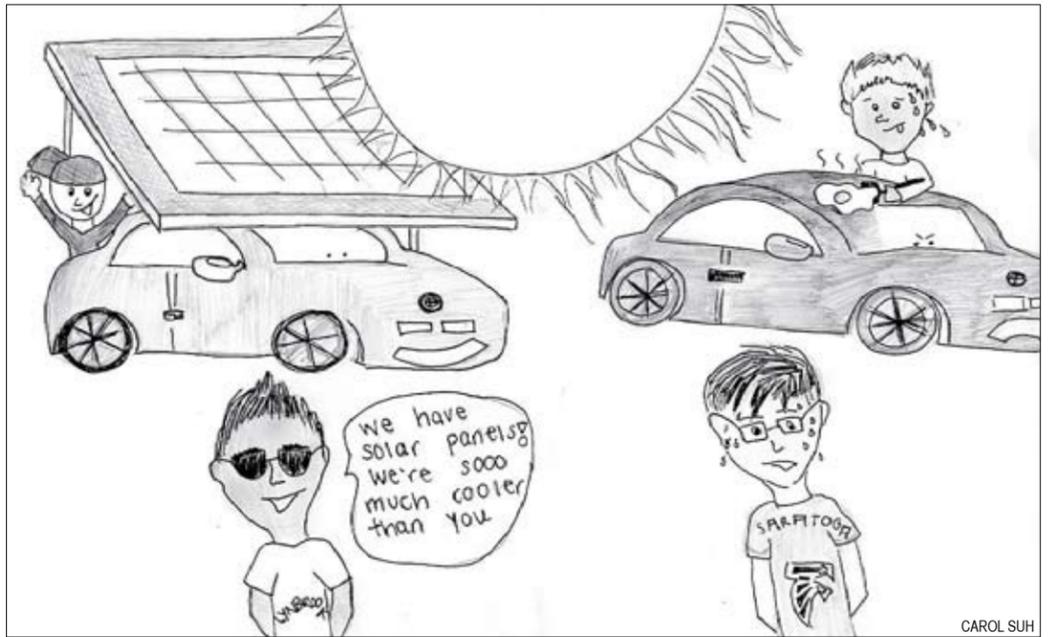
Especially during a time when school budgets are squeezed to the limit, the financial awards resulting from the use of solar panels are significant: electricity

costs are cut down per school by at least \$1.5 million in the first year, \$7.6 million in five years and \$36 million by the time the solar panels have completed their life span of around 30 years, according to Low-Tech Magazine.

It's also amazing to think that at just one school, the panels can also lower carbon emissions by 3,100 metric tons annually.

Another goal of the project is to spark student interest in the sciences, specifically in the area of renewable energy sources. As students gain direct exposure in observing the workings and advantages of alternative energy technologies, the state hopes these firsthand experiences will prompt students to eventually pursue careers in the clean energy field.

Saratoga High would profit greatly from following the footsteps of these energy-efficient schools statewide, with solar panelling providing 75 percent of the



energy needed to power each school.

Rather than feeling forced to find innovative solutions to mitigate budget reductions, Saratoga can maximize savings by minimizing its electricity bills. As soon as there's extra funding available

in its renovations budget, Saratoga High should seriously take into consideration the value of installing solar panels.

Besides, who's going to complain after they hop into their cool, shaded cars on a scorching hot day? ♦

>> togatalks

Would you like to have solar panels in the parking lot?

Yes. My car gets really hot when it's sunny outside. My car's like 120 degrees."



senior Timothy Park

No. The poles would be annoying to drive around. The parking lot is already pretty cramped."



junior Usha Raman

Yes. They're eco-friendly and they look pretty cool."



senior Timothy Chen

Armstrong disgraced but still figure of perseverance

BY Derek Sun & Jonathan Young

So far, 2012 has been a disappointing year for athletes.

Numerous picture-perfect athletes have had their reputations shattered. After an MVP start to his season, San Francisco Giant's outfielder Melky Cabrera was caught using performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) on Aug. 15. Then, a week later, Oakland A's pitcher Bartolo Colon was suspended for 50 games for the same reason.

As if that weren't enough, on Aug. 24, Hall of Fame biker Lance Armstrong was stripped of his seven Tour de France titles after allegedly using illegal performance-enhancing drugs, or doping.

Shortly after the news broke, his personal life took a hit as he stepped down as the face of Livestrong, a branch of Nike that supports cancer. This raises the question: has Armstrong, who was doing the doping that all successful cyclists were doing at the time, suffered too much of a hit?

After he lost all his biking titles and awards, Nike cut all ties to Armstrong. Armstrong gained heroic status as a cancer survivor who battled testicular cancer and came back to win seven Tour de France titles.

As it turned out, however, Armstrong wasn't the hero he appeared to be. He even persuaded teammates to dope all the while concealing this harsh reality from the public. This development has permanently destroyed Armstrong's image in the cycling world as well as in the eyes of the public.

However, the pendulum has swung too far toward destroying Armstrong's reputation. His resignation from Livestrong was absolutely pointless; he be-

came the face of Livestrong because he fought against cancer and was able to return to athletics after his ordeal.

While his lies have hurt Armstrong's legacy greatly, he was not the only cyclist doping. Many cyclists, both teammates and opposing cyclists were doping and it was a part of the culture of the sport.

Had Armstrong not doped, it would have been extremely difficult for him to stay competitive in a sport in which athletes were consistently using unfair advantages.

He was lauded because of his perseverance, not because of his athletic success upon his return. Because of this, he remained a positive figure for those struggling against cancer.

People believe that Armstrong is defined by his success, but they often forget the trials and tribulations he endured to succeed. He defeated one of the most malignant types of cancer to come back to compete in cycling.

While the use of PEDs is certainly not acceptable in athletics, there should be a line separating social life and professional career. In Lance Armstrong's case, people have muddled the two and have allowed circumstances of one to affect the other.

Armstrong was not the image of Livestrong because he attained success, but rather because of his ambition that drove him to return to competition after battling cancer. People are focusing too much on the unethical ways in which Armstrong attained his success and are forgetting that his defining characteristic is the adversity that he overcame in order to compete.

Armstrong may not be the hero we all thought, but his comeback is still one we can admire and learn lessons from. ♦

Draft registration no longer relevant, needed program

BY Aasim Naqvi

As students in the current senior class reach or near age 18, all are inevitably thinking about their future, especially with college applications and the feeling of general impatience that most seniors experience. However, male seniors will have to address one more issue: registering with the Selective Service.

Under current federal law, all male citizens are required to register with the Selective Service within 30 days of their 18th birthday, which then makes them subject to a military draft should the federal government order a conscription.

However, the current system of mandatory conscription needs to be reworked; no one should be forced to serve in the military.

The ultimate reason for this is that no individual should be forced by his or her government to put himself or herself in a potentially lethal situation. And the military is often one potentially life-threatening situation after another.

The U.S. has undoubtedly the most advanced military on the planet. In 2006, the Chinese government-sponsored "Yellow Book of International Politics" ranked the U.S. as the most powerful nation-state in the world.

With 1.5 million active personnel, the current American military has shown that it possesses more than enough firepower to fight wars on multiple fronts, as displayed most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the draft simply isn't needed anymore. And practically speaking, it just isn't feasible. The draft is one of the biggest reasons the Vietnam War

was as hated as it was. If it were to be actually instituted, the level of public outcry would be out of control.

There is simply no point in having men sign up for a program that would be completely dysfunctional if put into action.

So often the draft is associated with patriotism and devotion to the state, but in the free society of the U.S., forcing citizens to serve in the military involuntarily simply does not contribute to patriotism.

In a volunteer military, every soldier quite literally wants to "be there" and serve our nation in its military pursuits. What good does it do for the quality of the military if the government forces citizens who have no interest in fighting to potentially sacrifice their lives for causes they may or may not support?

According to the official Congressional Record, the Department of Defense issued a statement in 1993 that stated that the mandatory conscription system could be ended "with no effect on military mobilization and no measurable effect on the time it would take to mobilize, and no measurable effect on military recruitment."

More precisely, millions of dollars have been spent on a system that if ended, according to the nation's own Department of Defense, would not affect the performance of the military in any significant measurable manner.

At the end of the day, there is simply nothing to gain from having 18-year-olds invest time into signing up for a program that would only cause problems if put into action. ♦

Forcing citizens to serve in the military involuntarily simply does not contribute to patriotism.

The best burger?

EAST COAST'S FIVE GUYS DUKES IT OUT WITH WEST COAST'S IN-N-OUT

BY Ingrid Hong

A couple years ago, I heard about a new burger chain that was a serious contender for the best burger. This so-called best burger joint is Five Guys.

Originating in Virginia in 1986, Five Guys has recently exploded in popularity. The chain now has more than 770 locations in the U.S. and is scheduled to open 200 more in Southern California alone. Yes, Five Guys are invading In-N-Out's backyard.

For some reason that I've yet to understand, Five Guys is always compared to In-N-Out burger. Probably for the same reason that Chevy is compared to Ford, Apple computers are compared to PCs: to give people a place to draw a line in the sand and defend their personal choice as indisputable fact.

In-N-Out and Five Guys are similar establishments. Neither is posh; neither is tacky. Both have a kind of lean '50s charm that works.

When I first entered the Five Guys

restaurant on El Camino Real in Sunnyvale, the first thing that struck me were the colors of red and white. Hmm... wonder where I've seen that before.

There was a brief moment when I felt I was in a dream, as if I had mistakenly walked into an In-N-Out, and I was getting ready to sink my teeth into a juicy Double-Double. Unfortunately not.

The Five Guys burger comes wrapped in a foil paper wrapping, mostly to contain its heat and the juices that come with it. In-N-Out comes smiling up at you in a bag, half wrapped in paper and insulated with a napkin to soak up the loose juice.

One noticeable difference with Five Guys is its higher prices.

I'm used to getting a double-double, fries and a drink for less than \$7. At Five Guys, a double cheeseburger, large fries and a drink comes out to almost \$12. I don't mind paying \$5 for a good burger. But I do think \$4 and change for large fries is a bit much.

The Five Guys burgers come in a couple of varieties: hamburgers with



FALCON // INGRID HONG

An "all the way" Five Guys Double Cheeseburger overflows with cheese and many toppings.

two patties or "little hamburgers" with one patty. You can get your burgers with cheese and bacon for a little extra, but the restaurants are known for their plethora of free topping options including: mayo, lettuce, pickles, tomatoes, grilled onions, grilled mushrooms, ketchup, mustard, relish, raw onion, jalapeño peppers, green peppers, A1 sauce, BBQ sauce and hot sauce. I ordered mine "all the way" (which includes the first eight toppings) with cheese and bacon.

After I ordered, it was served quickly, wrapped in a signature tinfoil and delivered in a plain brown paper bag, spotted with grease from the hot fries within.

The cheeseburgers from Five Guys qualify as a beautifully messy burger. Not always pretty to look at (or photograph), but packed with delicious flavors.

The melted cheese, crisp bacon, grilled onions and mushrooms all smushed together in a merry meat mound that made

me want to maul it like a burgersaurus. Although they cook the burgers to be well done, they still manage to pull off a pretty juicy sandwich.

They use 100 percent fresh beef, but I think the flavor of the patties benefits a great deal from the toppings that they use. Although the toppings all meld together, I could tell they were fresh. The bun, however, could be stronger, for the bun disintegrated before I got done with the burger.

I think part of the reason many In-N-Out fans are disappointed by Five Guys is that they expect it to be similar to In-N-Out. To me, that just sets a burger up for failure, like expecting your Mercedes to drive like a BMW.

So instead, I ate my first Five Guys meal similar to how I watch a movie that I've seen a preview for about a year ago: I kind of know the gist of the story (it's about a burger), but I have no idea about the details or how it'll end. ♦

Five Guys



(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 116 El Camino Real, Sunnyvale

Type of Food: Fast Food

Price range: \$\$

Reporter's Favorite: Fries, bacon cheeseburger

>> togatalks

Which fast-food establishment do you prefer?

“In-n-out. Although I've never had Five Guys.”



senior Rebecca Yang

“McDonald's because it's cheap.”



junior Patrick Wang

“Carl's Jr. Their bacon cheeseburgers are really good.”



freshman Brendon Hong

Can you use a wagon instead of a backpack?

BY Nikil Ramanathan

Many students feel the heavy load of six or seven classes' worth of binders, notebooks, homework straining their backs on Mondays. While many students think the answer to the problem of the heavy backpack is a full block, I have found a better solution.

For one week I decided to test whether I could pull my stuff around in a red wagon instead of a backpack.

Even though I may have gotten a few sneers and dirty looks, the experiment was an overall success.

People who know me tend to know that one of the most startling things about me is that my backpack is "bigger than me."

While carrying around a heavy backpack has caused me some back pain for the past year and a half or so, this wagon was much more comfortable and required much less pain to move around.

I had to park my wagon right beside me during all of my classes and it caused

havoc for people who were in my row.

Even though I had to endure countless questions as well as some ridicule, I managed to enjoy every last second of the experience.

>> THE bigidea

Wagon or backpack?

The challenge:

Bring a wagon around school with you instead of a backpack for a week.

Pros

Heavy books? No problem. Ramps are fun. Pimp my wagon!

Cons

Hallways are too crowded.

One thing I was worried about before the experiment was how I was going to be able to move the wagon up the steps of the science wing.

I found out the ramps that were there weren't just for aesthetic reasons; they provided easy flow and movement for my wagon.

A surprising aspect of my journey with the wagon was how much people wanted to play with it. After school one day, I took the wagon

over to some of my friends, who proceeded to take all my possessions out and ride it themselves.

In conclusion, for those who feel that they are carrying too much in their backpacks, I would recommend a wagon because it is a great alternative, and hey, if you ever get lazy, you can hop in and ride around yourself—but only if someone will pull you. ♦

iPad: Big price for mini changes

BY Matt Foley & Dylan Jew

Along with unveiling its new fourth generation iPad on Oct. 23, Apple also launched a smaller alternative tablet, the iPad Mini. The Mini, about 8 inches diagonally, is in between the iPhone 5, 4 inches, and the original iPad, 10 inches.

Although the Mini may seem superfluous, it does fill a gap in the line of Apple products.

It is aimed more as an e-reader than a laptop alternative, which was the role of the original iPad.

The Mini has some positive aspects, including the full web and app functionality of the original iPad, the plethora of apps available in the abundant Apple Store and its unique size, which stretches the iPhone screen to a comfortable size while maintaining a manageable level of portability.

The screen is small enough to type using only your thumbs and can fit in large pockets and handbags.

However, one shortcoming of the iPad Mini is its lack of Apple's retina display found in many of its mobile products.

The last generation iPad was outfitted with retina graphics, and the Mini was released half a year after that iPad.

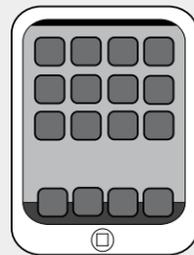
Another drawback of the Mini is its high price in comparison with competing tablets of equivalent size. The cheapest model of the Kindle Fire from Amazon costs \$159, while the iPad Mini is over \$300.

While Apple may rely on its App Store to attract customers, this disparity in pricing may be too steep.

The large price tag may be justifiable if the Mini had a retina display or was more comparable in hardware to the third-generation iPad instead of the second.

The Mini has a regular display and a fifth-generation Apple processor while Apple's newer mobile devices include the retina display and the sixth-generation Apple processor. Meanwhile, there are many competitors that can be picked up for nearly half the price and with comparable hardware specs.

On the other hand, if the App Store is something that you cannot live without, then the Mini should be considered when looking at e-reader sized tablets. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ALLISON CHANG

MYTH: Band takes less time than football

BY Devin Zhao

Which is the more time-consuming activity: marching band or football?

To answer that question, the Falcon calculated the hours associated with each during the fall:

During the fall competition, marching band practices about 18-20 hours a week, reaching a peak of 25 hours during competition season. Based on these numbers and the number of weeks in the band season, band practices 262-280 hours per season, excluding band camp, a week before school, which adds an additional 73 hours. However, this year, the band season has been extended by

Football players generally average 22 to 23 hours per week in a season.

another two weeks, or 36-40 hours, because of the Macy's Thanksgiving parade.

Senior Color Guard captain McKenna Galvin said the extra hours make her allocate her time more efficiently.

"[The extra time] does not really affect me as much; rather, it makes me more efficient," Galvin said. "If I have Guard after school, it convinces me to do my homework in the time period before guard. It's kind of weird, but I get more efficient the busier I get."

Senior drum major Bennett Lopez said that Macy's does not really affect the band's schedule.

"Around this time of the year, we would be nearing our finals competitions anyway," Lopez said. "Other than learning another 90-second show with music and drill, it does not add too much extra work."

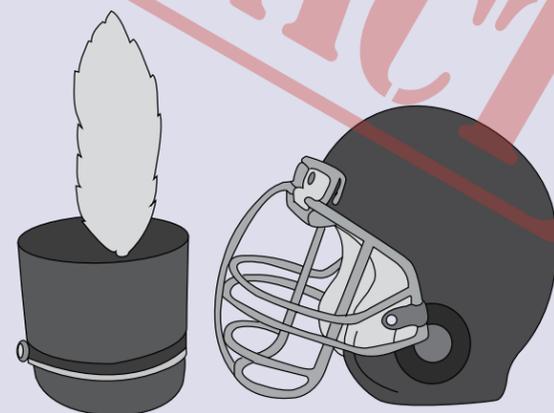
Football, on the other hand, requires more of a year-round commitment, with players training and conditioning the spring and summer before the season starts in the fall. Football players gen-

erally average 22 to 23 hours per week in season, but unlike band, they train all summer and practice in the spring.

In contrast to the extensive weekend time that band consumes, the time devoted to football is generally spread over a week. Football practices last about three hours every day from Monday to Thursday. Football games on Friday generally last for about seven hours from the end of school to 10. Lifting is for about 45 minutes on Wednesday and one hour on Saturday, in addition to watching films of opposing teams on Monday and Saturday.

Regular football season lasts for 12 weeks, or about 264-276 hours per season. However, because the team made CCS this year, the season was extended for one more week, an additional 22 hours a week.

Even with this extra time for the playoffs, Lopez believes marching band takes up more time than football because football players have more free time on Saturdays.



"Although we do not have practices every day, we have our Saturday rehearsals, which impede our time to do other activities," Lopez said. "Football only needs to dedicate a few hours for film."

Senior linebacker Henry Wei, however, thinks football and band take up about the same amount of time.

"During the week, [the football team] will take more time, and Friday is like a 2:30 to 11 commitment," said Wei. "I think that band takes more time during the weekend, so [you pick your] choice. You either lose all your weekend time or your weekday time." ♦



EXPLORING THE TRUTH BEHIND P

Myths of Sai

MYTH: MAP is easier than regular

BY Catherine Tang

In the next few years, many students will begin jobs at companies like Google or Microsoft or Facebook. In those jobs, they will usually work in small teams charged with completing specific projects such as new piece of software or an advertisement or a new product. With this reality in mind, teachers in the Media Arts Program (MAP) often focus on group work and incorporate technology into the curriculum.

But all this emphasis on group work has also brought about the perception by some that the class-

es are less than rigorous.

"MAP seems to just work on videos and animations all day while the rest of us write papers," sophomore Anisha Nagarajan said.

That mindset could not be any further from the truth, according to many MAP students. They say the program covers the same material as non-MAP counterparts.

"We do all the writing and stuff regular does," sophomore Ken Wu said, "but we also do extra media arts projects. I don't see it as more work because I think it's fun."

In addition to all the regular writing and work, MAP students

also use technology to make animations and videos.

"MAP is better because instead of making posters, we make animations and videos," junior Kevin Tran said.

Although English 9 MAP is similar to the non-MAP equivalent, students see a big jump in the use of technology starting from sophomore year when the program consists of three classes: English, social studies and a media class.

Most of these technology projects are also group projects.

"[MAP] teaches you to be a team player, whereas regular doesn't teach that. It forces you to be very team oriented," Tran said.

Some students, however, do not like group work.

"I switched from MAP to regular this year because I didn't have the extra period to take the Media Arts class and sometimes group projects aren't very fair because some people don't do any work,"

Nagarajan said.

Every year, all the MAP students go on a beginning-of-the-year field trip to a rope course in San Francisco to bond with each other for future group projects.

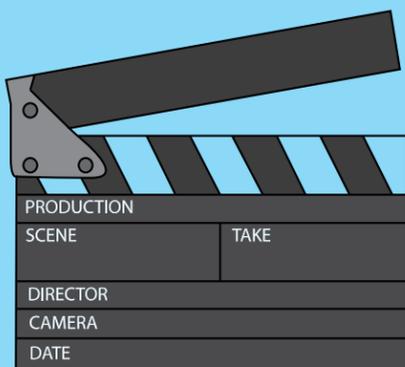
"Although I already knew most people because all my friends are also in MAP, it felt good to bond with people and be nice to everyone. Also, the rope course was really fun," Wu said.

Many new, unexpected friendships are formed throughout the course of a year of group projects.

"At the beginning of the year, I didn't like anybody in my class, but as the year progressed, everyone got chillier," Tran said.

The numerous group projects help students get to know people they otherwise would not talk to.

"I was too quick to judge them, but two semesters changed that," Tran said. "Along with everything else regular students learn, I also learned how to be a better team player." ♦



MYTH: The ACT is easier than the SAT

BY Jennifer Jin

At the end of their sophomore year, rising juniors must make a choice: prepare for the SAT or the ACT?

At Saratoga High, most students choose to take the SAT. In the class of 2012, 299 students took the SAT and 149 students took the ACT.

Geographically, the SAT tends to be more popular with students on the West and East Coast; the ACT tends to be more popular in the Midwest and the South.

However, students who took both and were interviewed for this story said the ACT is easier.

The questions on the ACT often in a more straightforward way than the ones on the SAT, although there

are more questions per minute. The ACT has a total of 215 questions in 205 minutes, while the SAT has a total of 145 questions in 225 minutes.

"I thought the SAT was more about critical thinking and the ACT was more about knowledge," senior Yifat Amir said. "In my opinion, they test totally different things. I really liked the ACT more."

Amir decided to take the ACT after being unsatisfied with her SAT scores.

"I took the SAT three times and then the ACT once," Amir said. "I decided to take the ACT because I thought that I might have better luck with it, and I did."

The main point of confusion for students planning to take the ACT is the science section, because it has the least in common with the SAT.

"This section does not really test

your knowledge of science," senior Sanjna Verma said. "It's more similar to a critical reading section, but instead of reading passages, you read graphs."

Additionally, unlike the SAT, the ACT gives no penalty for guessing. This is especially beneficial to students who spend much of their time deciding if it would be better to guess or to leave the answer blank.

Unlike the math section in the SAT, the ACT also covers trigonometry and does not provide any formulas.

"I think for those who want to do the ACT, remember to practice trig and learn to read faster," Verma said.

Amir said time management is vital with the ACT.

"The reading was by far the hardest for me," Amir said. "I should have practiced speed in that section more."

In contrast, Verma said the ACT reading section is easier than the SAT one.

"The reading actually made sense," Verma said. "The science was tough, though."

The reading section on the ACT does not specifically test vocabulary,

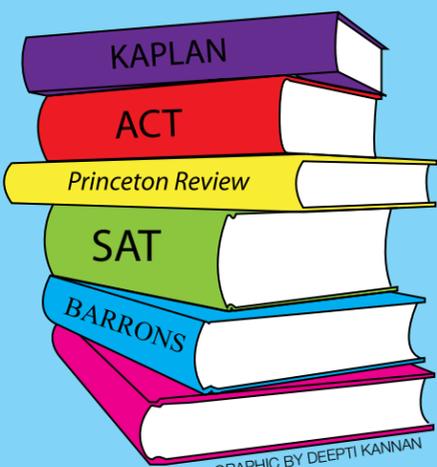
although having a strong vocabulary is helpful for comprehending passages.

All colleges accept both the ACT and the SAT and evaluate them equally. Additionally, most colleges that accept ACT scores don't require SAT subject tests, although it is still recommended to take them.

With all these benefits, there is no reason to avoid the ACT. However, if reading speed and science are a student's weaker points, it may be a better idea to stick with the SAT.

Whether a student decides to take the ACT or the SAT, preparation is key.

"I suggest to start preparing at least a month ahead of time," Amir said. "As long as you prepare and practice, you should be able to improve your score." ♦



GRAPHIC BY DEEPTI KANNAN

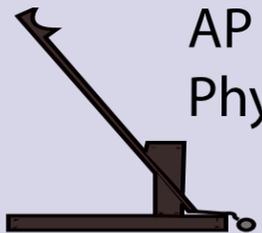
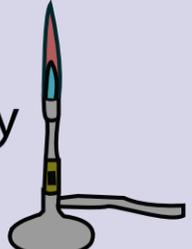


POPULAR BELIEFS AROUND CAMPUS

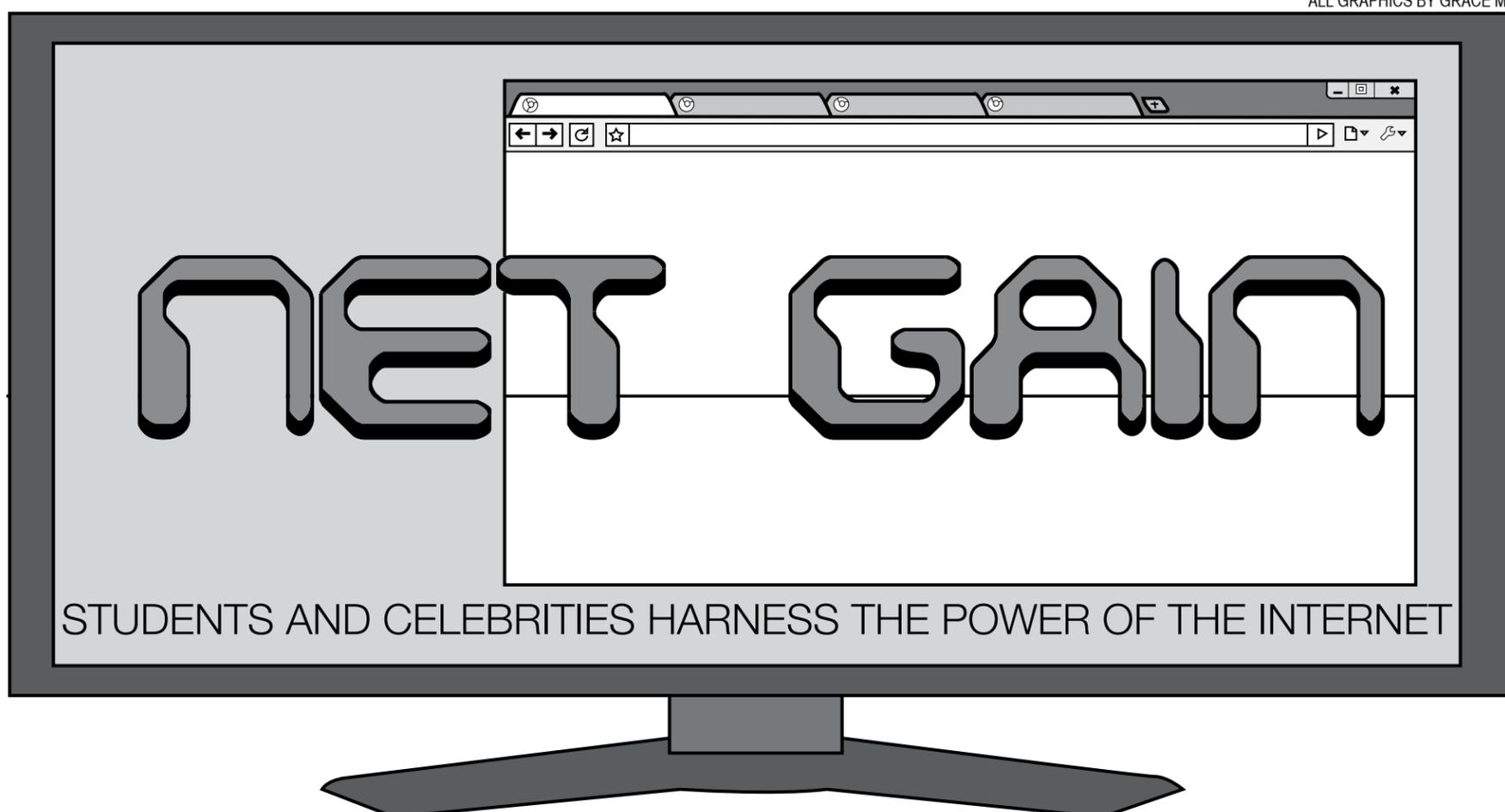
Saratoga High

GRAPHICS BY GRACE MA

MYTH: AP Biology is the hardest science

 <p>AP Physics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on math and concepts - Need to be good at trig to be good at physics - Homework load is bearable - Memorization of laws - Practical problems - Relateable to life - Hands on experience - Lots of demonstrations - Tests structured like AP tests 	 <p>AP Biology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Memorization based - Focus on concepts - Minimal amount of math - Very hands-on - Emphasis on labs and models - New curriculum - AP Test changed from 100 multiple choice questions to 63 questions - Emphasis on depth over breadth - New curriculum makes class easier 	 <p>AP Chemistry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on memorizing rules and exceptions - Emphasis on chemical formulas - Not related to most other classes - Review of Chem Honors while diving deeper into information - Few new concepts - Curriculum unchanged from previous years
<p>GRAPHIC BY DEREK SUN</p>		

ALL GRAPHICS BY GRACE MA



topten

CELEBRITY TWEETS OF THE YEAR

- 10 **"Robert I'm getting a lot of heat for saying you should dump Kristen- but I'm right. If you saw the Miss Universe girls you would reconsider"**
@realDonaldTrump (American businessman, host of "The Apprentice")
- 9 **Ever hear the one about trees getting married? I'd tell it to ya, but it's just too sappy.**
@JimPovolo (member of the American musical theater production company, member of the American musical theater production company Team Starkid)
- 8 **"I swear, if I don't win an Oscar this year, it'll be like every other year."**
@SteveMartinToGo (Actor, Inspector Clouseau in "The Pink Panther")
- 7 **"I don't believe in beating my kids. So I make them wear a Justin Bieber shirt and Crocs to school so the other kids will do it for me."**
@AdamSandlerFun (American actor, comedian)
- 6 **McDonald's being the official restaurant of the Olympics is like smoking being the official medicine of cancer.**
@RobertJrDownney (American actor, Tony Stark in "Iron Man")
- 5 **"Pretty proud to say I'm probably the only kid that ever hugged Lord Voldemort. Even if it was awkward #voldemorthuggedme"**
@Tomfelton (British actor, Draco Malfoy in the "Harry Potter" movie series)
- 4 **"Twilight's like soccer. They run around for two hours, nobody scores, and its billion fans insist you just don't understand."**
@Bretterlich (American producer and writer, host of the comedic news show "infoMania")
- 3 **"You can't always walk a straight line, especially if the line is crooked."**
@ryanlochte (Olympic swimmer, 11-time Olympic medalist)
- 2 **"So many peasants."**
@ScottDisick (runs various vitamin/supplement companies, reality TV star on "Keeping up with the Kardashians")
- 1 **"Kim doesn't understand what a blessing I am to her."**
@kanyewest (American musician, currently dating reality TV star Kim Kardashian)

>> Grace Ma and Simi Srivastava

Lochte: Tweety bird gone wrong

BY SherrilynLing
& KarenSung

"Always reach for the moon cuz if u slip u will still be a star! #JEAH," reads one tweet from July 31. "Rock, paper, scissors.....," is another, written on July 24.

American swimmer Ryan Lochte may have gained fame through his success in the Olympic pool (especially his victory over longtime friend Michael Phelps in the 400-meter individual medley), but he's also drawn attention for his nonsensical and error-prone tweets.

Lochte's Twitter has caught the eyes of many for a variety of reasons; his tweets range from oversharing ("...can't shave my back help me out!") to inspirational sayings with his own twist.

"The greatest athletes suffer the Hardest defeats before the biggest and best moments of your life.... God has a plan for everyone :)#jeah," he tweeted on July 30.

"I start cracking up every time I read them," junior Joyce Kao said, referring to Lochte's tweets. "He tweets about the weirdest things. And why does he al-

ways use #jeah'?"

Undoubtedly, Lochte has encouraged countless fans to reach for their goals and has guaranteed success with his failure-proof advice: "How do u make your dreams come true? By the mirror on the wall! #jeah," he wrote on July 14. Another one — "U can't always walk a straight line, especially if the line is crooked." Thank you, Ryan.

This all sums to up to form a very endearing image of Lochte, and it sure doesn't hurt that he's a great swimmer (and pretty easy on the eyes, too).

"He's so hot, so it doesn't matter that he's not the sharpest pencil in the box," junior Katherine Sun said. "His body makes up for his pointless and random tweets."

He's not the only celebrity whose Twitter account has brought amusement to eager people of the Twittersphere. Comedian Rainn Wilson, best known for playing the egocentric Dwight Schrute on the NBC's hit comedy "The Office," frequently updates his account with priceless tweets.

Wilson often baffles many who fol-

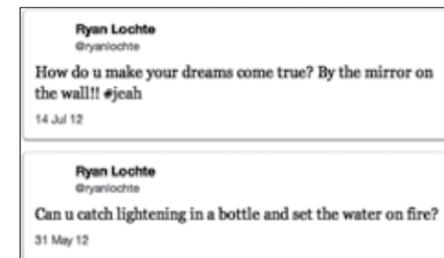
low him by tweeting odd things like "I dance like cherries taste," written on Sept. 26, or "I'm ranch flavored," from Oct. 15, both tweets spurring numerous responses from confused fans.

He often "live tweets" public events, making serious occasions or newscasts a lot more humorous. During the first presidential debate this year he tweeted, "To liven things up, Obama should go to the next debate dressed as Big Bird," shortly after Romney's mentioning of his plans to end the subsidy to PBS.

While Wilson's Twitter is well-known for his witty jokes, 66-year-old Grammy Award-winning singer Cher has a Twitter account that is popular for her obvious cluelessness with technology and incapability to use it properly.

"Lamfoo What's that mean," sent on June 8, 2011, and "Don't know how to utube!" are great examples of tweets that display Cher's dumbfounded state when it comes to anything related to electronics.

While all of Cher's tweets are confusing, some are completely incomprehensible. On June 9, 2011 she wrote, "Ok



SOURCE: TWITTER.COM

Olympic medalist and swimmer Ryan Lochte posts some weird tweets. #jeah

"Ok don't know quite how my tweets r a challenge??? But Challenges rock! 'U want some cheese with that whine' U babies?" Another time, she said, "Problem 4 me with pointy teeth hrs?! Give wrong answers, don't care bout?! Wii game suffers! Haha," leaving thousands of fans stumped.

So next time you're in need of a good laugh (or want to feel better about your writing skills), make sure to browse through some choice celebrity tweets. As Lochte once said, "Wake up and smell the gardens." ♦

Sprouse twin rockets to Internet fame

BY NIKIL RAMANATHAN

Actor Cole Sprouse, typically associated with his DisneyChannel show "The Suite Life of Zack and Cody," has moved on to bigger and better things. While Sprouse played boy genius twin Cody Martin on the show, he has since achieved immense popularity over the Internet with his entertaining Instagram profile and Tumblr blog.

Now majoring in humanities and archaeology at New York University, Sprouse's Instagram page, entitled "Camera Duels," has gained massive popularity.

"This Instagram is dedicated to the people out there who secretly take photos of me, and how I take photos of them first. May the fastest camera win," Sprouse said in the description of his Instagram.

When Sprouse sees someone trying to secretly take a picture of him, he gets out his own camera and snaps a photo of them in the process.

Sprouse's page already has over 58,000 followers.

Along with his Instagram, Sprouse also has a popular Tumblr page named "Coleture Concept."

His description of the blog reads, "I'm a young student focusing on Archaeology, Anthropology, Journalism,

& Photography. Lets try and find greatness in absence."

With this blog, Sprouse shows that he is no inflated "superstar," instead just a kid like any other college student.

On his Tumblr, Sprouse posts everything from philosophical musings to photos he finds amusing. Examples include various selfies of himself, as well as humorous GIFs and memes.

The former child star not only shows his true side on these different sites, but he also connects with his fans on the blog, thanking them for their reposts and support.

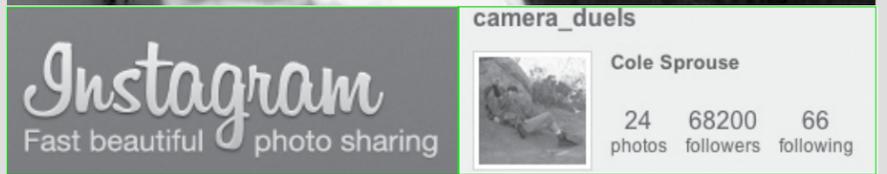
Junior Lauren Lin said, "It's refreshing to see a Disney star who grew up to aspire to be something that's not a celebrity. As someone who used to watch 'The Suite Life of Zack and Cody,' it's nice to see that he has turned into an intelligent, deep, hilarious blogger."

Aside from school, Tumblr, and Instagram, Sprouse also spends his time on photography, displayed at www.colesprousephotography.com. He also has a Twitter account called @OleKingCole in which he tweets about his everyday life.

While you may consider yourself too old for "The Suite Life," never fear — you can always check out Cole Sprouse on Twitter, Tumblr or Instagram. ♦



SOURCE: TUMBLR.COM



SOURCE: INSTAGRAM.COM

Sprouse frequently posts webcam pictures of himself (sporting a new ponytail) on his blog, coletureconcept.tumblr.com. His Instagram, [camera_duels](https://www.instagram.com/camera_duels), is also popular.

A new perspective

PHOTOGRAPHER KRISTEN ZUNG POSTS PICTURES ON HER TUMBLR PHOTOBLOG

BY SIERRA SMITH

The view out an airplane window, a young girl holding her nose in a pool, a pair of glasses on the kitchen table—everyday objects become works of art on senior Kristen Zung's Tumblr photo blog.

Zung uses Tumblr, a blogging platform, to create a gallery for her photos. She started her blog as a way to document her life in Taiwan. Zung, who was born in Singapore, moved to Taiwan with her family when she was 4 and to the United States at the beginning of her junior year.

"Every picture comes with certain memories, sounds and feelings associated with the moments captured," Zung said. "I'm a really forgetful person, so this is my way of remembering my old friends and my hometown."

The blog's plain black background makes the photos, arranged in two columns in the center, jump off the screen. Zung's photos represent a large range of subjects from plants to sinks to people and display a variety of colors.

"As a photographer, Kristen is really creative," said Todd Nguyen, who is also well known for his skill as a photographer. "She just sees a lot of things that other people wouldn't normally see."

Zung's passion for photography and desire to share with others how she sees the world have encouraged her to keep her blog going even after her family returned to the United States.

"I hope people can scroll through this blog and know that each picture they see represents a little part of me, what I see and how I see it," Zung said.

Zung's blog, which is public on Tumblr, has 132 followers according to Tumblr, many of whom are her peers.

"Ever since I saw her posting photos on Facebook and Tumblr I have been captivated by her adept ability

to brilliantly capture photographs of people and places," senior Cody Cai said. "I really like the different angles and perspective she uses in her photography and how each photo has a clear, effective and passionate focus."

Zung's friends in Taiwan also follow her blog and use it as a way to stay connected to their old friend.

"I hope they see themselves on my blog and know how much I miss them," Zung said. Zung's interest in photography began when she was 13,

and she got her first camera in eighth grade. She admires the ability of photography to break language and cultural barriers.

"Unlike words, photography is a common language, like music," Zung said. "No matter what language we speak, anyone can understand the feelings that stem from what we see in a photo."

Zung has taken her photography skills and started her own photography business, Frosty Photography, named after her cat Frosty.

While Zung enjoys the opportunity to use her photography skills for entrepreneurial purposes, her love for photography is independent of monetary gain. "So far I've done concerts, celebrations and personal portraits," Zung said.

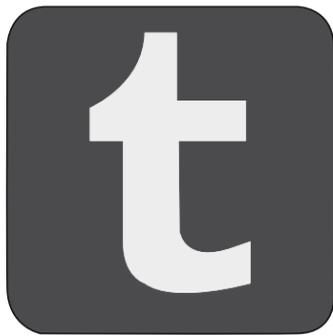
She plans to pursue her passion even beyond high school.

"As long as cute babies and puppies continue to exist, I will always be there to photograph them, whether or not I'm being paid to do so," Zung said. ♦

"I hope people can scroll through this blog and know that each picture they see represents a little part of me."



senior Kristen Zung



Students peek into celebrity lifestyles

FAMOUS PEOPLE ENJOY USING TUMBLR

BY AASIM NAQVI

"I love the food, the cocktails, and particularly the clothes. Why? Because not only are the suits and clothes just super sharp, but Japanese clothes are actually made with small framed men such as myself in mind. None of this, 'Well sir... maybe you could try an XL in boys?' talk in Japan."

Above is an example of a post that senior Bhavana Vadrevu has enjoyed reading from Aziz Ansari, a stand-up comedian and actor popular for his role on the show "Parks and Recreation," whom she follows on Tumblr.

"I really like [Ansari's blog] because almost everything he posts is funny," Vadrevu said. "He has a wacky sense of humor, so it's always worth it to check his page because there's always something interesting."

Vadrevu said that Tumblr, perhaps even more so than Twitter, is a means for fans to get a sneak peek into their favorite celebrities' personal lives.

"I like all of the random videos he puts up," Vadrevu said. "Some are of his

over-the-top interviews, and sometimes he posts videos and pictures of all the interesting food he makes."

Meanwhile, senior Jaya Narasimhan is busy clicking through the blog of actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt.

Like many female students her age, Narasimhan is more than appreciative of Gordon-Levitt's decision to unveil details of his personal life to the general public.

"A little while ago, I remember him

posting a picture of himself with the band Mumford and Sons before he hosted 'Saturday Night Live,'" Narasimhan said. "It was interesting to see two uncommon celebrities meeting each other, and the only reason fans found out about it was through Tumblr. That's why I like him; he's a fun celebrity that posts pictures and detailed updates about his life."

On a more general note, Narasimhan cited the ability of Tumblr to communicate a broader level of content because of its focus on multimedia.

"On Tumblr, you can post videos, pictures and text a lot more easily than on other social networking sites," Narasimhan said. "The 'bloggy' format of Tumblr is probably its best feature because you can keep up with whoever you want, however you want."

Gordon-Levitt's more recent celebrity may have contributed to his joining the relatively new Tumblr craze; however, veteran singer Beyoncé also created her own blog on the site in early 2012. Senior Shireen Kaul took an immediate liking to the blog because of its candid and personal nature.

"She posts pictures of herself traveling with friends, hanging out with [husband] Jay-Z, and doing various charity work," Kaul said. "It's interesting because this is someone willingly putting up pictures of her private life that no one would be able to see otherwise."

Kaul related a specific example of the singing superstar posting an intimate photo of her then-baby daughter Blue Ivy Carter, which was the first photo released after the baby's birth.

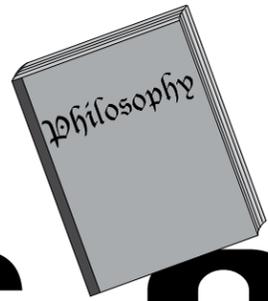
"The whole thing just made me feel jealous of how awesome [the baby's] parents are," Kaul said. "For me, it was just a really powerful example of how closely Tumblr can connect celebrities and their loyal fans." ♦



Vadrevu

Rooms of

REPORTERS UNCOVER THE SECRETS OF
LESSER-KNOWN LOCATIONS ON CAMPUS



Behind closed doors: a look into the copy room

BY Akshara Sekar

"No students allowed. Please knock for assistance."

The sign on the door of the copy room bewilders most passing students. If the school was built to provide students with educational resources, why is this room off-limits?

Senior Bhavana Vadrevu wants to know what happens behind the closed door.

"I always wonder what's going on in the copy room," Vadrevu said. "Why do we have to knock on the door, and why do teachers come out of it with fancy little chai latte cups?"

Sadly, the copy room is the not the Harry Potter-esque mystery students expect it to be. And the reason for all the secrecy is pretty mundane: Teachers don't want students having access to the tests and other papers that are copied there.

The room is lined with staff pictures along the wall, a small copy machine and a large one in the corner and a bulletin board hangs at the

side of the entrance. Other than general notifications, a bolded sign is posted to the board stating that "coffee is \$1.50 and people are watching" (presumably in cases of coffee thievery).

In reality, the copy room is also an escape for teachers away from students.

"We hear a lot of funny stories there. That's the place for the gossip to go around," Spanish department head Arnaldo Rodriguex said. "It is really a 10-minute visit."

While waiting, teachers have the chance to relax and take a break.

"They come in talk, have coffee and get away from students. It is a kind of a teachers' lounge area. We have a couch and occasionally snacks," administrative assistant Janet Verson said, who manages the copy room in the mornings.

Although the copy room may seem all enjoyable, teachers are required to

plan in advance for the stacks of handouts and worksheets they print for students. At times the copy room seems more crowded than the library during tutorial.

The teachers only have access to one machine; the other is operated by one of two copy room staff members.

"First thing in the morning, there is a line of teachers waiting to get things copied. We only have two machines and they're not allowed to use the large one," Verson said.

Although some teachers complain about the line for the copy room, others feel that their time can be optimized by not asking for copies in the last minute.

"If you get it done the day before, then you don't need to wait during the early morning hours," Spanish teacher Andrew Narva said.

While teachers wait for their print-

outs, they read the bulletin board, which can contain any updates from the teachers' union or advertisements for fundraisers.

Sometimes teachers bring in fruit from their gardens and leave ads on the board asking others to take some. However, the most helpful use of the board, according to teachers, is to distribute any information discussed during collaboration to help teachers who could not attend.

In the afternoon, Nada Macesic, who is also the textbook technician, manages the room.

"[Macesic] and [Verson] do everything. They are extremely helpful," Rodriguex said. "These two ladies are incredible; they just step up to the plate all the time."

Although some students may disagree, many believe that teachers do need this break from students.

"I think the copy room gives teachers a private place they deserve away from us," senior Shireen Kaul said. "I just wish they would let us in once in awhile." ♦



Thermond Drama Center provides an escape from stress

BY Maya Ravichandran

The black walls of the Thermond Drama Center enclose rows of straight-backed chairs and couches. Despite the gloomy description, the small theater buzzes with energy and laughter during lunch.

Senior Shayda Roohparvar and sophomore Melissa Rogan have often hung out in the Thermond Drama Center since their freshman year.

"It's amazing in here because there are fabulous people in here that I love dearly," Rogan said.

According to sophomore Conall MacFhionnlaoich, the Thermond Drama Center, formerly known as the Little Theater, is usually busy during play practice, but there is always a steady flow of students during lunch and tutorial keeping it at "equilibrium."

Students in the drama center are usually talking with each other or doing homework in small groups. Silence is rare because of the constant chatter in the background.

The drama center is usually open most of the day. Drama teacher Sarah Thermond likes to joke that people can visit her any time because she "lives in the Thermond Center." (The center was named after her mother, Cathie Thermond, a longtime volunteer who has supported drama at the school for many years.)

Typically, students are in the drama center during tutorials, lunch and after school. Around 20 kids flow in and out of the center during the specified times. During the beginning of play practice, there could be up to 35 kids in the drama

center. But since the play is nearing its performance nights, practices have been moved to the McAfee Center.

Rogan said she is in the Thermond Drama Center whenever possible. Any time she is not in a class, she can be found there lounging on the couch or chatting with Thermond.

"Sometimes, I feel like I literally spend an entire day in there," Rogan said. "I feel like it's my second home, except with a lot of my friends there."

Most of the people who are in the Thermond Drama Center on a daily basis are drama students. The group is small but very cohesive because everyone knows each other, like "a family," Roohparvar said.

Even so, Rogan said she has brought some of her non-drama friends to spend time in the drama center.

"[They thought it seemed] like a pretty cool place to hang out," Rogan said.

The first time Roohparvar really spent time in the Thermond Drama Center, she had been having some issues with her friends freshman year and decided to hang out in the theater that day.

"I remembered that [the drama students] had always been so nice to me, so I decided to walk in," Roohparvar said. "They were like 'Hey, I know you! You're in the play,' even though I was a little freshman and they were upperclassmen."

Because she got to know people well, Roohparvar said she enjoys spending time in the Thermond Drama Center talking to other students.

"We have a lot of really cool conversations about [a variety of topics]," Roohparvar said. "They can get to be re-



Sophomore Danny Kawadri, senior Karen Peterson, senior Luna Schmid and sophomore Conall MacFhionnlaoich spend their lunchtime in the Thermond Drama Center.

ally deep and meaningful."

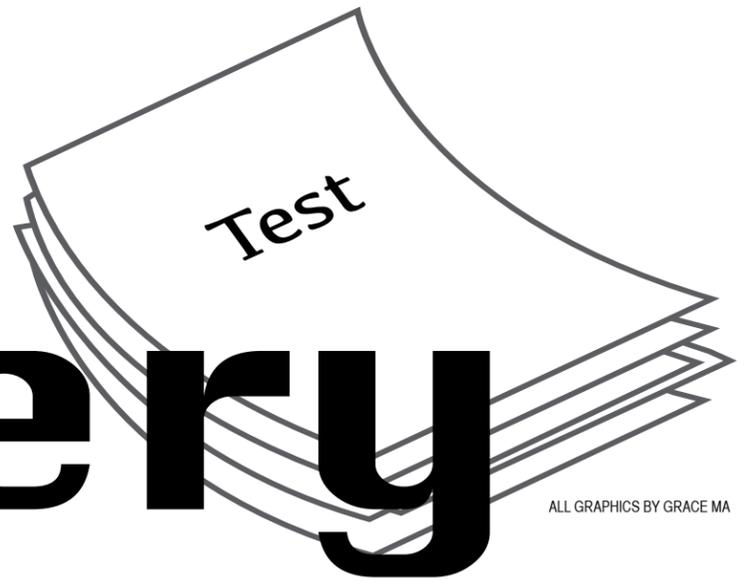
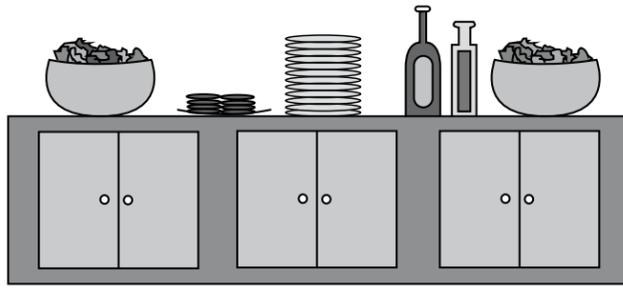
For instance, Roohparvar once had a stimulating conversation with Rogan and MacFhionnlaoich about the evils of sulfur. They were reading a philosophy book that described various subjects and laughing at how the book described sulfur as "angry, vengeful and creating disharmony."

Additionally, one of the unusual activities that occur in the drama center is a "cuddle puddle." During a cuddle puddle, people lie down in a large group on the floor to take a nap or relax.

"Cuddle puddles are literally one of the best things ever," Roohparvar said. "It's a cuddle pile, but it's spread out over the floor."

Roohparvar said that one of the main things she loves about the Thermond Drama Center is its sense of community—it is easy to talk to everyone no matter what grade level the person are in. People in the drama center are always ready to talk to newcomers.

"When I was a new freshman, people welcomed me, so I like to do the same for other people," Roohparvar said. ♦



Mystery

ALL GRAPHICS BY GRACE MA

Ceramics room houses Friday football tradition

BY Derek Sun

Of all the thousands of football players in the U.S., perhaps only a few have a hangout spot as unique as juniors Travis Stokes and Clark Rothenberg.

At the end of fourth period on fall Fridays, the bell rings and a group of varsity football players rush into ceramics teacher Leah Aguayo's room. For these athletes, spending tutorial in the ceramics room has become a part of their pre-game routine. Being there helps the football players "get psyched for the game and do homework too," Stokes said.

Since last year, Stokes and his football teammates have gone to ceramics room every Friday tutorial to avoid waiting in line to get into the library.

"As freshmen, we always raced to the library trying to get a table, but a lot of the time, we were too late and we wouldn't have anywhere to work during tutorial," Stokes said.

In an attempt to escape the chill of the fall, the players looked for a class where they would all be comfortable; they decided on Aguayo, since many of them took ceramics.

"We all really liked Ms. Aguayo's class and we have all developed strong connections to her, so picking this class

was a really easy decision," Stokes said. Besides doing homework, the football players also talk about football and watch videos on the app Hudl, which allows players to view film of their opposing teams.

"It's a semi-quiet location where we can do last-second breakdowns of the other team's offense and defense," Rothenberg said.

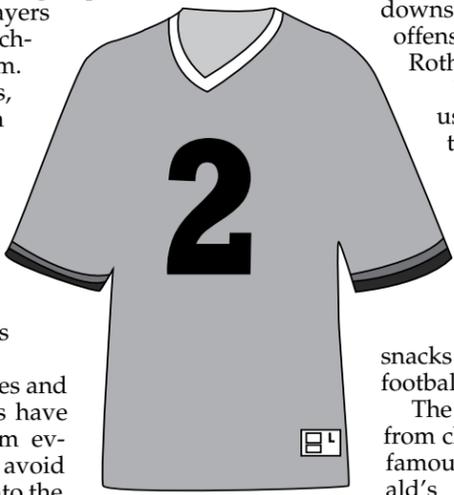
While Friday is usually a stressful time for football players, the athletes find solace in the ceramics room. Aguayo, understanding of the players' stress, leaves out snacks for the hungry football players.

The finger-foods range from chips and Aguayo's famous salsa to McDonald's breakfast sandwiches.

"It's really fun to go in knowing Ms. Aguayo will surprise us with something special. It calms the pre-game nerves we have and helps us just relax and focus," junior quarterback Jonathan Walters said.

Although it started as a coincidence, the players have embraced the warmth and comfort of the room

"We hope to carry this tradition not only through our senior year, but also to pass it down as a tradition all football players will partake in," Stokes said. ♦



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

Teachers Carolyn Bohls, Ken Nguyen and Amy Keys relax in the Palace at lunch.

Uncovering secrets of the English Palace

BY Nelson Wang

Outside the English wing, a pair of mysterious double doors display no room number. Though this room is hardly royal or ornate, it is fondly called the English Palace.

The Palace's unique name honors a former English teacher named Genevieve Palace, who retired several years ago.

"I wouldn't say it is shrouded in a veil of secrecy, but it's definitely one of the legendary things about SHS," senior Johnny Chang said.

According to English teacher Erick Rector, the Palace acts as both a storage and a meeting place for English teachers.

For example, during staff collaborations on some Wednesday mornings, the English department may meet there to discuss various subjects such as how to structure their curriculum or adhere to changing standards. English teachers often each lunch here too.

After school, it sometimes serves

as a practice room for speech and debaters. Chang said it has a "great atmosphere" for working hard.

Usually, the more experienced members of the team use the Palace while the novices receive coaching in other rooms.

"The room is very useful because it allows intense practice sessions with a ton of critique," said junior Grant Wang, a member of the speech team.

Furthermore, the Palace acts as a place for research, practice and discussion for the team members.

"We use [the English Palace] for preparing. It is useful because there are many chairs and a table, so it can be used for practice debates and discussing the topics," said junior Parth Kejriwal, one of the members of the debate team.

Most students familiar with the Palace enjoy being able to use it to work and practice.

"[The English Palace] is a really chill room with a great atmosphere," Chang said. ♦

Teachers' lounge: a hidden room with hidden history

BY Samuel Liu

Enter through the white gates guarding a hidden room, and find yourself surrounded by a secluded courtyard, with a maple tree and small white tables. Push through another door, and you're now in the teacher's lounge, a large room with a hallway leading to the cafeteria.

The teachers' lounge is one of the most obscure spots on campus, though its doors are rarely locked during school hours. According to Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex, the teachers' lounge has been at the school "since I can't remember" — a long time considering that Rodriguex has been here for more than 30 years.

"[It] served as the eating lunch place for the staff," Rodriguex said. "Once upon a time, we had a salad bar with a cafeteria lady that took care of the bar in the teachers' lounge."

That was in the '80s. According to Rodriguex, the lounge helped bring the staff together then.

"I liked that I could have a salad and

talk to my co-workers," he said. "Eating unites."

However, when the salad bar service was no longer provided, teachers stopped going there to eat. Slowly, staff members started to stay in their classrooms and department offices to eat rather than walk all the way down to the cafeteria.

"Now it's more individualized, more departmentalized," Rodriguex said. "But we can also help more kids during lunch time."

Teacher Kim Anzalone said the location of the teachers' lounge is part of the problem.

"Teachers rarely ever use the lounge because it is not very close to the classrooms — being on the front edge of campus," she said.

Recently, faculty have suggested that the teachers' lounge be moved to a location more conveniently located.

"The faculty has been asking the administration for a lounge located in the center of the school for a long, long time," Anzalone said. "We have pointed

out that the old library building would be an ideal place for a teacher lounge."

However, previous administrations have not listened to the teachers' requests for this lounge.

"All we need is just a part of the building, perhaps where some of the band practices in the front facing the quad," Anzalone said. "It would be so convenient for the faculty, and we would actually use it."

Today, the teachers' lounge is used for sporadic staff meetings and by the leadership class, headed by assistant principals Kerry Mohnike and Kevin Mount, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Its secret hallway can be used as a shortcut to the lunch line,



FALCON // SAMUEL LIU

The teacher's lounge is located to the left of the cafeteria line.

which leadership kids can bypass on the days the class meets.

It is, however, rarely used by staff. "I've been there, what, two times?" athletic director Tim Lugo said. ♦

Belgium provides global curriculum

BY MeganaIyer

Antwerp is a city located in northern Belgium, a cultural hub complete with a large cathedral and musicians playing on cobblestone streets. Taking a glance around, you'll find few cars — walking is the preferred mode of transportation.

However, behind the old-fashioned appearance of the city, Antwerp has quite the modern education system.

Sophomore Supriya Khandekar moved to Belgium in the middle of her sixth-grade year. She lived in Antwerp for two years and attended Antwerp In-

ternational School, returning to Saratoga for eighth grade at Redwood Middle School.

"School was really different in Belgium," said Khandekar. "I found myself ahead of everybody else when I moved there. It was so much more laid back."

She said that the school was very small, containing about 30 students per grade from grades kindergarten to 12th.

In addition, Belgium has a circular curriculum, in which students are taught a little of everything, instead of focusing on a single subject per year, like chemistry or biology.

"We did World History in sixth grade, which is similar to what sixth graders did here," said Khandekar.

"That's pretty much the only similarity I can find."

Both

Khandekar and her senior brother Sujay learned French while in Belgium and were required to learn a few Flemish words to communicate.

Sujay, who left as a freshman and came back at the end of his sophomore year, explained that Belgium follows the International Baccalaureate (IB) system rather than the United States' Advanced Placement (AP) system.

Unlike the AP system's five-point grading scale, the IB system uses a grading scale from 1 to 7. The IB exams consists of a 4,000-word essay and 150 hours of service or creativity hours, while the AP system has students take a final AP test at the end of their AP course.

Sujay said that though his Belgian school's curriculum was not as intensive as Saratoga's, there was an emphasis on extracurriculars.

"There were some pretty exciting opportunities with some of the extracurriculars," Sujay said. "I got to go to Sweden to compete in a competition between international schools across Europe."

His sister said she was able to travel throughout Europe as part of her track and field team.

The teachers expected students to find their own methods of studying.

"It didn't matter how you took notes. Note-taking wasn't even required," she said.

After two years at the Antwerp International School, the family headed back to California to finish the rest of high school.

"It was a little difficult to adjust," Supriya said. "But living in Belgium taught me to adjust quickly."

Supriya explained that the attitude of the students in Saratoga is extremely different, as students here tend to focus more on their studies compared to in Belgium. Sujay, on the other hand, did not find it difficult to adjust.

Both Supriya and Sujay agreed that living in Belgium was an enriching experience.

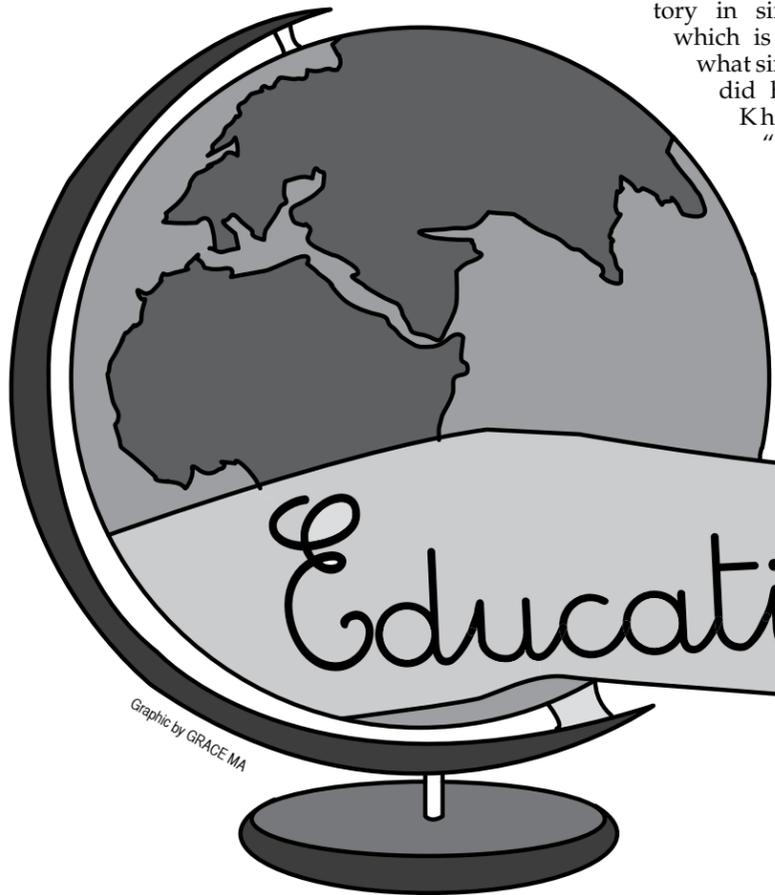
"[Living in Belgium] taught me to be a more self-reliant and independent learner," Supriya said. ♦



Sujay



Supriya



Graphic by GRACE MA

Iran's Konkoor: Meet the SAT on steroids

BY DylanJew

Though students in America constantly complain about SATs and ACTs, they should consider themselves lucky compared to what students in some other countries face. For instance, the weight of these tests pales in comparison to the importance of the Konkoor for college admission in Iran.

The Konkoor is an Iranian college entrance exam that ranks students out of the entire graduating class of the nation from "dabirestan," the equivalent of high school in Iran.

Both of junior Mostafa Rohaninejad's parents went to the University of Tehran, the best medical school in Iran, and both were accepted into the extremely selective college due to their top scores on the Konkoor.

Based on her high test scores, Dr. Mogjan Morshedi, Rohaninejad's mother, was able to study to be a doctor and spent seven years pursuing the profession in Tehran.

"The schools in Iran," she said, "are a lot more specialized compared to Ameri-

can schools."

Dabirestan students are split into three different paths based on the curriculum in their first year. There are three different versions of the Konkoor, each corresponding to one of the three high school paths: math/science, humanities and the arts.

The main purpose of high school is to prepare for the Konkoor, and acceptance into college is based solely on the results of this extremely rigorous test. Some believe that because of this, the college admissions process is less subjective compared to that of the United States.

"It's fairer than the U.S. system because the rich here can abuse the system by spending money getting into sports, extracurriculars and tutors," Rohaninejad said.

The top universities in Iran, Sharif University and University of Tehran, are

both public and offer free tuition for the top scoring students on the Konkoor.

Even though the public high schools in Iran are respectable, the private schools are the best for preparing students for the Konkoor.

High school is six days a week, and more homework is assigned for the day off. Also, Iran requires 200 school days each year, while California requires only 175 school days. Iran's GPA system is on a 20-point scale, with anything lower than a 10 resulting in a failing grade for the student.

"High school students already know what they are going to study for the rest of their lives," Morshedi said. "They can't change their path, whether they chose math, science, humanities, or art."

The top students often enroll in Sharif or Tehran but later transfer to colleges in the U.S. Many U.S. colleges want the top

Iranian students and are more than willing to pay for their tuitions, according to Rohaninejad.

"Stanford really likes Sharif students," Rohaninejad said. "For example, if they are doing electrical engineering, [Stanford] will accept them with full scholarships."

According to a Newsweek article from August 2008, the chairman of the electrical engineering department at Stanford said that Sharif's department is the finest in the world.

Iran also practices a kind of geographic affirmative action in the college admission process. There is a quota of students for each district.

Placement on the Konkoor determines whether students will get full scholarships to premier public schools in the world or fall through the cracks and attend mediocre universities.

"The test is more important than anything else," Morshedi said. "Unlike in America, your GPA and extracurriculars don't have as much weight. If you rank in the top 100, you are going to the best universities." ♦

The main purpose of high school is to prepare for the Konkoor, and acceptance into college is based solely on the results of this test.

>> togatalks

How do you think the U.S. education system can improve?

"We should get rid of AP classes; they act as a roadblock in learning the material."



senior Rohan Cotah

"There should be more writing and less multiple choice."



history teacher Jim Chin

"Teachers should tie in how the material relates to students."



junior Casey Takahashi

Schools in Sweden focus on equality

BY GraceMa

When a curriculum includes the words “test free” and “no homework,” and applying to college only involves the click of a button, 10 years of school suddenly doesn’t seem so exhausting. In Sweden, a country where the “must-perform-better-than-neighbor” syndrome is essentially obsolete in comparison to the U.S., education focuses almost entirely on individual improvement.

This unconventional yet simple approach to education clearly pays off; the country boasts a literacy rate 16 percent higher than that of the U.S. Despite its small population of 9.5 million, Sweden even ranked above the U.S. in mathematics in the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), an international evaluation of 15-year-olds on their academic knowledge.

What makes this small country succeed? The answer lies in Sweden’s focus on equality instead of competition.

Senior Sara Pettersson, who moved from Sweden to the U.S. three years ago, said grades in Sweden rely less on numbers and more on content.

“You basically get a grade on your

overall appearance in the class,” Pettersson said. “It’s kind of the same way teachers grade essays here: They grade the essay and look for the things that would make it an A or B.”

Characterized by the “IVG-MG” system, Swedish education aims to grade students based on their achievements in class, rather than their performance on tests. MVG stands for “pass with special distinction,” VG stands for “pass with distinction,” G stands for “pass” and IG means “fail.”

Additionally, teachers do not administer tests until the eighth grade; homework is also rare because teachers prefer class work instead.

Furthermore, all students take an equal number of the identical courses (a shocking total of 12 different classes per year); honors and AP classes are not offered. There is also no such thing as a “better” school, ensuring that all students receive the same education regardless of their socioeconomic status, and school is completely free.

Swedish students graduate high school in ninth grade, when they must also select their major. At that point, they receive their first “real” standardized test, the Nation Test, which they must pass to accelerate into college.

“Some people turn out to be smarter than others, but that’s usually something that you don’t know before you choose your major after ninth grade,” Pettersson said.

Pettersson also claimed that close student-teacher relationships help the students receive more help when needed.

“Nothing ever makes you feel like you can’t do it in Sweden,” said Pettersson. “If the teacher doesn’t think that you’re doing very well, then they will tell you so in the meeting that they have with you and your parents every two months, and they will tell you what you have to do to succeed in the class. No one really fails a class.”

Swedish schools also do not have extracurricular sports or clubs.

“If you want to do a sport, you need

to do it outside of school. It works out pretty well, and most people do at least one sport because they don’t have homework or any tests to study for,” Pettersson said.

Most shocking is Sweden’s system of applying to college, which favors of a much more expedient process compared to America’s.

According to Pettersson, students in Sweden simply log onto a website set up by the school administration, where the total points gained from a student’s ninth-grade grades are tallied. The website then lists which schools the student qualifies for, the student selects as many schools as he or she wants to apply to, and that ends the process.

“Most people get their first choice unless the school already has too many students. And that’s how simple it is,” Pettersson said.

These regulations enforce the Swedish government’s goals of equality in education.

“In Sweden no one was better than another person, which I think is pretty good, because it doesn’t make anyone seem like they are less worthy than anyone else,” Pettersson said. ♦

Most people get their first choice [of college]. And that’s how simple it is.

>> senior Sara Pettersson

the World

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS OFFER VARIED EXPERIENCES THROUGH DIVERSE CURRICULUMS

Indian boarding school fosters close bonds

BY KatherineChang

Seven thousand feet above sea level, at a school on a hill, senior Sanjana Shukla first experienced the freedom and independence of attending a boarding school.

She enrolled in Kodaikanal International School located in Kodaikanal, India, where she spent her entire sophomore year.

“I chose boarding school to study abroad, have fun and learn,” she said. “I wanted to insert myself into an area with much poverty to experience that new environment and empathize with the issues surrounding poverty.”

During her stay at Kodaikanal, she was confined to the cliff on which the school was located, with no access to Western stores nearby, just the nature surrounding the school.

Shukla enjoyed Kodaikanal International School and the relationships she fostered there more so than Saratoga High.

“Boarding school gives you the opportunity to have a second family with friends,” she said. “You get healthy exposure to sisterly and brotherly relationships with friends from all different parts of the world like Korea, Ghana, Tanzania, Japan, all over India, Australia and the Netherlands.”

The relationship among students also differed, with students helping each other without competition in mind.

“Other students were comrades; we would share notes and take tutoring for free from each other,” she said. “If a classmate was struggling, people who didn’t know you would voluntarily assist you with all their heart. Competition

wasn’t ever a problem; we were all learners together.”

The strong relationships Shukla made while in Kodaikanal have stayed with her and made a strong impression, despite the K-12 holding over 400 boarding students.

“The barrier problem between friends is not there. Friends come and live with you and borrow money without paying each other back,” Shukla said. “You go everywhere together and consider each other’s families as your own family.”

Shukla said learning in the school was based on different motives than ones she has seen of students here, with students at Kodaikanal spurred by interest and intellectual curiosity. The barriers between professors and students in the schools were nonexistent, with teachers inviting students over for dinner. In comparison, the relationship between students and teachers here does not seem as close, according to Shukla.

Despite the close relationship between students and teachers, the discipline within the classroom was unrelenting.

“Teacher-child abuse in certain rural areas is still common, but my father insists that it is vital to a student’s discipline and education,” she said.

She also commented on the different nature of the education, especially in the class choices students make. While many students take advanced classes here in America, sometimes without learning the basics of a subject, Indian education focuses more on the foundation of each subject.



Senior Sanjana Shukla explores a local market in the city of Kodaikanal in 2010. While attending an international boarding school in India, Shukla immersed herself in the different culture.

“In India, kids were drilled with the very basics of a subject, often working without calculators and computers,” she said.

The difficulty of acquiring resources, like testing material, also caused inconvenience.

“I would say the resources here are better because up there we were confined to the hill,” she said. “For example, for the SAT you’d have one chance in the year to take it, and the ACT wasn’t even offered in Kodaikanal. The closest city was seven hours away by a long, windy drive down that was very treacherous.”

She has come to find that with the age

of technology becoming more and more apparent, the schooling is starting to change, especially in India.

“Indian schools are advancing, education is becoming less and less of a privilege; students are eager to learn and embrace the technological era,” Shukla said.

Shukla said that she values the experience and the diverse lifestyles she has seen.

“Cheerful village folk [were] always saying hello, even when I didn’t know their language,” she said. “They were admiring our Western ways while maintaining ancient practices.” ♦

GIRLS' TENNIS CCS

Girls fall to Menlo in quarterfinal round

BY Evaline Ju

After finishing second in the De Anza League behind the undefeated Monta Vista, the girls' tennis team entered CCS as the fifth seed. They lost 12-6 to Menlo, the fourth seed, on Nov. 9 after winning 11-7 over Palo Alto on Nov. 7.

The team had to switch up doubles teams due to the round robin CCS format of play, where each team has three singles players and three doubles teams. Each singles player on one team plays one set with regular scoring against each of the singles players on the other team. The same applies for doubles teams.

Former No. 4 singles player sophomore Arathi Sabada joined with No. 1 doubles player senior Cori Posadas to form the new No. 1 doubles team. Former No. 1 doubles player senior Amy Jan teamed up with No. 2 doubles player senior Evaline Ju for the No. 2 doubles team. The No. 3 doubles team of sophomore Sonal Pai and freshman Shaya Nikfar remained the same.

Coach Florin Marica praised the team's performance despite the coaching change in the middle of the season and the switching of doubles teams.

"We struggled in the beginning to find the right formula for the rest of the season," he said. "That was the hardest part, to find the right formula for the team. The last couple of matches, I saw [the girls] finally played together, and it came out well."

Menlo also switched around doubles players from when the two teams played on Sept. 5 in Saratoga's first match of

the season. Menlo had won 7-0. Marica believed this early loss had affected the Saratoga girls' confidence levels going into the CCS match.

"We made the mistake of going into the season with a loss of 7-0," he said. "We shouldn't play those matches at the beginning of the season. I talked to the girls, and they said, 'All right, we cannot beat them,' even on the day of the match. On the court, it was a different story. From the outside, I didn't see a big difference. We actually had a chance."

Pai and Nikfar lost a close set by two points in the tiebreaker against Menlo's No. 3 doubles team of sophomores Helena Ong and Sadie Bronk. Arathi Sabada and Posadas also lost in a tiebreaker 7-6(1) to the No. 2 doubles team of seniors Christine Kvamme and Sam Hoag. A total of four set tiebreakers were played against Menlo.

All three singles players, junior Kalyani Narayan, captain senior Niharika Bedekar and sophomore Smita Sabada, won against junior Christine Eliazio but lost to sophomore Elizabeth Yao and senior Giannina Ong.

Against Palo Alto, the singles players faced trouble against SCVAL singles winner and No. 1 player junior Aashli Budhiraja but won three sets off their No. 3 singles player junior Samantha Dewees.

The team ended the season with a league record of 10-2 and an overall record of 13-7.

"This past season was a wonderful experience," senior Kimberly Chou said. "I was able to make new friends, and



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Playing No. 1 doubles with sophomore Arathi Sabada, senior Cori Posadas lunges for the ball against Palo Alto's No. 3 doubles team in the second round of CCS on Nov. 7.

spend a lot of time making new memories with the team."

The girls fell short of matching past achievements, as Saratoga had won CCS in 2009 and 2010 and reached the finals in 2011. Yet Bedekar, who has played on

the team for four years, says the results should not be compared.

"With the team we had this year, I think we played our hearts out, and so I am very proud of the way we did," she said. ♦

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL CCS

Tourney ends against Sacred Heart Cathedral

BY Sierra Smith & Catherine Tang

The girls' volleyball team's successful season ended on Nov. 10 in a disappointing second CCS match against Sacred Heart Cathedral High, the No. 2 seed in Division 3. The girls, who started as the No. 10 seed and were proud to qualify for CCS, lost in three quick games, never scoring more than 15 points in any one game.

In their first CCS game on Nov. 7, the girls accomplished a feat in beating against Christopher High, the No. 7 seed, in Gilroy, only losing the second of four games played.

"Our first CCS game was a little rough, but coming up with the win was what really mattered," junior defensive specialist Jennifer Ho said. "Even though the second CCS game didn't go too well, just being able to play in CCS was a fun experience."

The team is disappointed that their season is over, but they're glad they got extra time together in CCS, especially since they didn't make the playoffs last year.

"I think that the team played really well together on the court, no matter who we were playing," junior setter Katelyn Mollohan said.

During the regular season, the team won second place in the El Camino League. Their final record was 8-2. The only two losses were against Cupertino High, the league champions.

For many of the players, the most memorable part of the season was their last match of the regular season against



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS

The team, pictured earlier in the season, won against Christopher High on Nov. 7.

Cupertino on Nov. 1. Even though they lost the match after winning the first two games and then losing the next three, the team left it all on the court.

"I'll remember the Cupertino game we played at home. It was the best we've ever played as a team and was a fun game," Mollohan said.

Throughout the season, the team grew in skill level and confidence and ended stronger than when they started.

"The team learned to make comebacks and not give up, even if the score wasn't too close," Ho said.

The players who will continue playing next year already have hopes of beating their longtime rivals, Cupertino.

"I'm looking forward to getting some new players next year who will make the team stronger in every way, and I'm looking forward to beating Cupertino next year," Mollohan said. ♦

BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY CCS

Sum advances to state meet; Falcons finish 4th, fall short

BY Aasim Naqvi & Derek Sun

Sophomore Steven Sum led the boys' cross country team to a strong performance at the CCS Finals at Toro Park on Nov. 10, finishing second on the 3.1 mile-course with a time of 15:32.

The team fell one spot short of qualifying for the state meet in Fresno on Nov. 24 when they finished fourth in Division 3. St. Ignatius High School placed first at the meet as a team, while senior Ryan Corvese of Sobrato High School edged out Sum with an individual time of 15:27.

Sophomores Komdean Masoumi and Andrew Harter and junior Sam Guy also finished in the top 30, coming in at 17:00, 17:03 and 17:15 respectively. Also running at the meet were juniors Will Guy and Daniel Johnston and senior co-captain David Zarrin.

Sum, the only underclassman to place in the top five, easily placed high enough to qualify individually for the state meet. In the process, he crushed his previous record for the 5k distance by 25 seconds.

"I think I ran a really good race," Sum said. "I was happy that there was competition to push me to a better time and a new personal record."

While Sum is proud of his individual performance, he was disappointed that the team fell short of going to the state meet.

"I just wished that the team could've made it to the state meet like last year," Sum said. "I'm sure we'll make it next year, though."

Sum proceeded to place 20th with a time of 15:57 at the state meet. Although the time was not a personal record, Sum finished higher than he did last year, when he placed 47th.



sophomore Steven Sum

"I was happy that there was competition to push me to a better time."

After the team qualified for CCS by finishing ninth at the league meet at Crystal Springs on Oct. 30, the team felt confident about their chances to

make it to state. However, the team agreed that the shortcoming was certainly not due to a lack of effort.

"The team worked really hard this season, and it showed in the CCS race," Zarrin said. "Next year, we can expect to win."

Zarrin, whose four-year high school cross country career ended with this race, pointed out that the young team has a bright future.

"Nearly all of our top runners this year were sophomores and juniors," Zarrin said. "Next year, the current juniors will be in their prime, and [Sum] will have a very high chance of winning the entire thing." ♦

FOOTBALL WRAP-UP

CCS starts and ends with a loss to Mariners

BY Nikil Ramanathan

The Falcons' Cinderella season came to an end on Nov. 16 with a 28-24 loss to the Aptos Mariners in the first round of CCS. The game marked the first home CCS appearance for the team since it began playing its home games on Benny Pierce Field in 2005.

Before the year started, the Falcons were underdogs in the De Anza Division, which is considered to be the best public school league in Northern California.

The Mariners took advantage of the Falcons early in the game. Running the Wing-T offense, the Mariners capped off a 6-minute drive with a rushing touchdown, the first score of the game.

A turnover cost the Falcons on their second offensive drive when the Mariners pounced on a fumble by senior running back Bryson Yates. The Mariners scored again, making the score 14-0.

The Falcon offense again stalled and were forced to punt the ball back to the Mariners. However, on this drive the Falcon defense forced a fumble that was picked up by senior safety Daniel Castronovo. The Falcons then took

advantage of their field position at the Mariners' 30-yard line and finished their drive with a short rushing touchdown by senior running back Ryan Kane, cutting the Mariners' lead to 14-7.

However, the Mariners' offense capped off another long, time-consuming drive with a rushing touchdown, extending their lead to 21-7.

The Falcons again suffered a turnover on their next offensive series, as the Mariners' defense intercepted Walters's pass intended for senior wide receiver Kyle Dozier.

The Mariners took advantage of their position at the Falcons' 17-yard line and scored rushing touchdown, giving them a 28-7 lead going into halftime.

In the second half, the Falcon defense finally figured out the Mariner offense and forced a punt on the Mariners' first offensive series of the second half.

The Falcon offense came out firing as well, and on their first offensive series of the half, moved the ball down the field and finished off the drive with a 19-yard

touchdown pass from Walters to sophomore receiver Joey Medeiros. With an extra point from senior kicker Fred Feyzi, the Falcons trailed 28-14.

The Falcon defense again stepped it up and forced a three and out for the Mariners. The Falcons drove 44 yards and finished with a short rushing touchdown by Yates, cutting the lead to 28-21.

The Falcon defense again forced the Mariners to punt and gave the ball back

to the red-hot Falcon offense. The offense drove the ball down the field but ended up settling for a Feyzi field goal, cutting the once 21-point Mariner lead to just four with 10:28 left in the fourth quarter.

On their next series, however, the offense did not move the ball well, and the Mariners caused a three and out for the Falcons.

The Mariner offense got the ball back and drove it down to the Falcon 11-yard line, but the Falcon defense stepped it up again and forced another turnover on downs, giving the ball back to the

Falcon offense with about three minutes left. Starting out deep in their own territory, the Falcons needed to score a touchdown in order to win.

With the weight of the season on their shoulders, Walters and the Falcons' receiving core moved the ball to the Mariners 3-yard line. However, officials called a holding penalty that backed the Falcons up to the Mariner 25-yard line. From there, the Falcons were unable to complete the drive, and the ball was given back to the Mariners with only seconds remaining, ending the season for the Falcons.

Senior wide receiver Kyle Dozier said that it was a game to be a part of.

"The first half wasn't very fun, but it was exciting, it reminded me a lot of Milpitas except we just didn't close it out," Dozier said.

Though the team did not do as well as it hoped to in CCS, senior safety Daniel Castronovo said that he will never forget this season.

"The season was amazing," Castronovo said. "We fought all season, and when we came up short we bounced back. In my opinion I could not have asked for any other people to play with." ♦

Officials called a holding penalty that backed up the Falcons to the Mariner 25-yard line

GIRLS' WATER POLO

Seniors end with a splash at league championships

BY Maya Ravichandran

On Nov. 2, the girls' water polo team triumphed over Harker 11-9. This victory allowed the team to tie with Harker for first place in the El Camino League and brought their total league record to 9-3. Top scorers included seniors Claire Schwartz and Stephanie Chen, junior Nikki de Roos and sophomore Mackenzie Rosenthal.

The team lost to Monta Vista 7-4 on Oct. 23, but scored big victories against Cupertino 15-1 and 22-0 on Oct. 25 and Oct. 30, respectively, rising to second place.

Although the teams were co-league champions, Saratoga was not invited to compete in CCS because teams were chosen to participate in CCS before the league tournaments.

Nevertheless, the girls said the key to their success was consistent teamwork.

"The team really came together as a family," senior goalie Maddie Buchanan said.

Additionally, team captains Buch-

anan and senior driver Seralyn Fields motivated and pushed the players to do their best.

"I make sure the team stays focused and continues to keep up our energy and drive throughout games and practice," Fields said. "Sometimes I have to play the bad guy."

As a captain, Buchanan made sure she was available if players had a problem or needed help. She also relayed messages between players and coaches.

Though the team worked hard in the pool, Fields said there were many times between tournament games when they could just relax and be themselves with each other.

"I will really miss all the team lunches and dinners, as well as all the bonding in and out of the pool," senior set Kate Belotti said.

Fields said she will miss the players the most after she graduates.

"I have some of my closest friends on the team. It's hard to know I won't see them every day next year," she said. ♦

GIRLS' CROSS COUNTRY CCS

Girls take big strides but miss state meet

BY Deepti Kannan & Sherrilyn Ling

At the CCS meet on Nov. 10 at Toro Park, the girls' cross country team finished sixth out of 13 teams in Division 3, in which Aptos won first place. Because the Falcons did not place in the top three, however, it did not make it to the state meet.

The athletes who ran at CCS included seniors Maya Nag, Caroline Chou, Courtney Schlossareck and Suzannah Osekowsky, along with sophomores Carolyn Qi, Valerie Lensch and Christine Schlossareck. The three alternates who trained with them were freshman Amanda Duong-Le, senior Maggy Liu and sophomore Michelle Luo.

These runners were chosen by taking the 10 fastest times from the two Crystal Springs meets on Oct. 9 and Oct. 30 and the Baylands meet on Oct. 16. As the only freshman to compete at CCS, Duong-Le was thrilled by how the season turned out.

"I wasn't aiming to get into CCS," Duong-Le said, "but it was shocking to be able to make it."

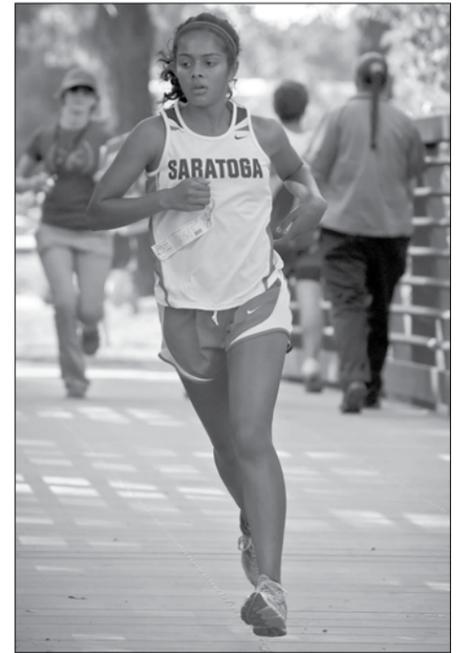
Although none of the athletes made it to state individually, Lensch, Qi and Chou achieved personal records on the 3-mile course. Schlossareck said the team ended the season with a great performance at CCS.

"It was a good race to end cross country with," Schlossareck said. "Everyone used their magic really well on the last sprint and Coach [Danny Moon] was really proud of how everyone ran!"

The girls ran their last meet together in the league meet on Oct. 30 at Crystal Springs, a 2.95-mile course that they ran for the second time this season.

Of the eight schools in the De Anza League, the frosh-soph team placed first, the JV team finished fifth and the varsity team came in fourth. Overall, 16 out of the 44 athletes who ran the meet achieved personal records.

Moon said he was proud of the girls to have accumulated so many personal records over the season, adding that personal records are bonuses to the achievement of completing the races.



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS

Senior Maya Nag, pictured in Central Park in October, led the team and finished 18th in Division III CCS in Toro Park on Nov. 10.

"When [the athletes] get a personal record, it's just like putting frosting on the cake," Moon said. "But to complete the races and do their very best at each race is the main focus."

Although several athletes have improved individually, Moon said the team did not place that high at the league meet because the team was a third division team competing against first and second division teams.

"We're the only Division 3 team in our league," Moon said. "The division is decided by the number of students that attend the school, so they have bigger teams [and] more people to pull from. That's what the difference is."

Despite all the injuries, for many who joined the team this year, the atmosphere of cross country and the exposure to the sport have been a great experience.

"Being surrounded by my friends, an encouraging coach and supporting team members had really made my experience at cross country wonderful," Duong-Le said. ♦

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FIELD HOCKEY CCS

After 2 OTs, Lancers edge Falcons in stroke-off

BY Sarah Finley
& Ingrid Hong

After tying No. 4-seeded Saint Francis in quarterfinal game play 0-0, tying them again in two 7-minute overtime periods and ending the first round of five penalty strokes 1-1 due to senior Courtney Ruppel's goal, the girls' field hockey team lost to the Saint Francis Lancers in the second penalty stroke-off when Saint Francis scored five strokes compared to Saratoga's four.

"It's heartbreaking," coach Lifon Huynh said of the Nov. 10 defeat on Lynbrook's field. "The team played really well. We just weren't lucky on some of those goals."

The team won their play-in game against Westmont 4-1 on Nov. 3 and in Round 1 of CCS, beat North Salinas on

Nov. 8 with a score of 2-0.

Huynh said though she had high expectations for the team, hoping to "make it to finals," the loss was not solely negative.

"One positive thing that came out of it was that the team started believing in their ability to win and their skill set. It showed today because we dominated by possessing the ball probably 80 percent of the time," Huynh said.

Senior captain Megan Doles said the team should be proud.

"After games like that it's really easy for us to concentrate on all the bad things and everything we could have done better, but I don't want anybody to feel they played poorly," she said.

Doles said that the girls gave the game their all.

"[We] played with so much heart,

and, as a captain, that is all I care about," Doles said. "I'm super bummed we didn't move on, but we definitely gave Saint Francis a run for their money!"

The team finished with a league record of 7-7 and overall record of 13-7 this season—an achievement to build on, Huynh said.

"I'm excited because half the varsity is returning, and then we have some young players that are going to come up [to varsity]," Huynh said. "They're going to lead the program."

Huynh said she plans to keep the program the same for next year, even with the loss of the team's 12 seniors.

"I don't think there are going to be any changes, just hopefully [the team is] going to want it and work hard in the off-season, and then for the in-season, we'll win games," Huynh said. ♦



Senior Megan Doles dodges her way past a North Salinas defender at home on Nov. 8.

BOYS' WATER POLO

Memorable season ends

BY Paul Jung

After a strong season, the Falcons finished second in the El Camino League with a stellar league record of 11-3. Though players had their eyes set on CCS this year, this spot, reserved for only the first place team in the league, went to Lynbrook.

"Although we didn't end the final game with a win, we ended the final part of the season with a strong finish," junior driver Cameron Borch said.

The team only lost three league games, all of them rival to Lynbrook.

"I think we had really good spirit going into the game," senior goalie Sean Lee said about the final game on Nov. 3 against Lynbrook, which the Falcons lost 16-13. "Neal [Siganporia] and Tyler [Tanaka] were able to get us pumped up for the game. When it came to facing Lynbrook in the pool, I think we just didn't play our best game."

Despite a disappointing end to the season, Lee felt that the season was memorable nonetheless.

"I definitely felt closer to the team this year," Lee said. "We all shared the same sense of commitment and had a common goal to become better and win leagues."

According to Borch, in order for the Falcons to succeed next season, they will need to put more focus in their practices.

"We need to start practicing really hard at the beginning and try not to goof off," said Borch.

The team received a large amount of support this season, with many students coming to watch the home games.

"Even though we lost in the Lynbrook game [in the league tournament], it was really awesome to get my friends there," Borch said. "Having a whole crowd rooting for us makes a big difference."

Though nine seniors will be leaving the team next year, the Falcons will have a solid team for the next season, with prominent talent remaining among the juniors and sophomores on the team, including junior driver Steven Cho and sophomore hole defender Kia Hosseinian.

"It would have been nice to make CCS, but I'm glad that I did water polo for all four years," Lee said. "It's been an awesome experience to play with the same group of guys." ♦

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Winter Sports Preview

BOYS' BASKETBALL



FALCON // PAUL JUNG

Senior forward Stevie Berman drives hard toward the basket at practice on Nov. 15.

Coach: Trevor Naas

2011 record: 17-9

2011 recap: Last year, the Falcons made an impressive run, finishing atop the El Camino League. They lost in the third round of CCS to Santa Cruz.

Star player: Senior forward Stevie Berman

Key additions: Junior guard Tyler Plesse and junior forward Kevin Chun

Key games: Jan. 4 and 15 vs. Los Gatos, Jan. 8 and 29 vs. Palo Alto

The team has moved up from the El Camino League into the De Anza League, where they will face strong squads like Los Gatos and Palo Alto.

"We have a good team this year," senior Stevie Berman said. "Hopefully we can take last year's success and build on it."

To be competitive in this league, the team must put an emphasis on getting back in transition in order not to give up easy buckets.

Another focus is avoiding turnovers and playing smart team basketball.

The Falcons are counting on Berman to be a primary scorer and a presence in rebounds as well. Senior guard Alex Wang will be counted on to put the ball in the bucket as well as create opportunities for other teammates.

—Jonathan Young

GIRLS' SOCCER

Coach: Ben Maxwell

2011 record: 3-8-1

2011 recap: Team finished fourth out of seven teams and did not make CCS. **Star players:** Junior center midfielder Stephanie Ho, junior forward Lindsay Webster, senior goalie Aly Nilan

Key additions: Freshmen Lauren Plesse, Kaitlyn Chen and Kimberly Chen

Key games: Dec. 7 preseason game against Palo Alto, Jan. 4 against defending CCS champion Mountain View

With new coach Ben Maxwell and many talented freshmen players, the girls' soccer team is rebuilding this year after the loss of key seniors from last year, such as graduates Kari Clark and Meghana and Antara Rao.

Although the girls have a tough season ahead of them, they hope to put away the struggles from previous years and focus their energy on opening the season with big wins. The girls will be playing in the De Anza division with schools such as Monta Vista, Los Altos, Homestead and Los Gatos.

"The image from other schools' perspective about our girls' program is that it has been a bit of a joke, and that it's not being taken seriously," Maxwell said. "We want to create something that has not yet been created which is long term. We want people to look at this as a top soccer program."

Maxwell said that he will strive to build a base from which the team can improve by ensuring consistency.

"If we finish at the bottom of our division, we would be moved down," Maxwell said. "People need to understand that for us to create something special, we have to start off consistent, and hopefully build from there."

Maxwell added that he has already set standards for himself and the team and expects all the girls to "execute the basics of soccer consistently."

As a coach for West Valley and the De Anza Force Soccer Club in the past, Maxwell said he wants to create a positive environment for the players to work hard.

"We want every player to listen and every player to try hard," Maxwell said. "We want to create this positive environment where if we work hard, we will get results."

—Sabrina Chen and Deepti Kannan

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Mike Davey

2011 record: 21-5 overall, 12-0 league

2011 recap: After finishing first and going undefeated in the El Camino League, the team moved up to the upper De Anza League this season, where they will face tougher competition. Standout players Campbell Oreglia and Talia Sisco graduated last year.

Star player: Senior power forward Hannah Johnson

Key additions: Senior point guard Bianca Zakerani

Key games: Dec. 11 vs. Fremont (first game)

With the team mostly unchanged from last year, the girls' basketball team will face stiff competition in the De Anza League.

"We didn't only move into the upper league, but also into the best public school league in the Bay Area, so it will be difficult for us," varsity coach Mike Davey said.

Senior power forward Hannah Johnson said the team is ready.

"Working really hard together, not getting mad at each other when things don't go very well and sticking together as a group are important," she said.

Along with Johnson, Davey singled out several other key players, including junior shooting guard Dharini Ramaswamy and senior guard Michelle Won. The demographics of the team have also changed since last season, with smaller and younger girls, after the tallest player, Campbell Oreglia, who stood at 6-1, graduated last year. Currently, the tallest player is Johnson at 5-11.

"We'll need to work a lot harder in the weight room to get as strong [as] the level we're playing against, because I think it will be a shock to a lot of us of how strong the girls in the other league are," Johnson said.

The girls are ready to show they belong in the upper league.

"It's going to be a challenge for us, but you will have to play with the best if you want to get better," Davey said.

—Katherine Chang and Jennifer Jin

BOYS' SOCCER

Coaches: Adam Clarke, Michael Patrick

2011-2012 record: 9-3-1

2011-2012 recap: The Falcons came in second in the De Anza League. Perhaps their biggest achievement, though, was beating Mountain View, who had been undefeated for 22 league games.

Star players: Juniors twins William and Samuel Guy, who play center back and left back respectively

Key additions: Junior right back Rohan Hardikar and junior right back and right midfielder Andrew Firth

Key games: With the promotion of Los Gatos back to the De Anza League, the Falcons will play the Wildcats twice in the season—on Jan. 16 and Feb. 8. The two league games against Mountain View on Jan. 4 and 25 will be hard-fought games.



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN

Center back junior Will Guy will be a prominent player on the team this year.

The graduation of last year's talented senior class will make the transition between years very difficult. The team lost key players such as captain Manish Raghavan, goalkeeper Kyle Clark, center midfielder Jonathan Junqua and forward Troy Doles. The only continuity of players on the team remains mostly in the defensive line, composed of juniors Nikhil Goel, the Guy twins.

Even with these key losses, however, the goal for the team will be to make CCS for the fourth year in a row and to finish at the top of the league standings. The juniors on the team want to make this goal possible.

The Falcons played their first preseason game against Harker on Nov. 20.

—Matt Foley

WRESTLING

Coach: Armando Gonzalez Jr.

2011 recap: Considering that they only had seven wrestlers, the team performed relatively well. However, the team was hurt by their inability to fill all the weight classes.

Star wrestlers: Senior Henry Wei, juniors Mike Fitzsimmons and Graham Grant, sophomore Christian Murabito

Key games: Doc Buchanan Invitational Jan. 4-5 at Clovis High, Mid Cals Tournament Jan. 18-19 at Gilroy High

With a new coach, the wrestling program looks to get back on track after last season, when the team was plagued by injuries and a lack in numbers that caused them to forfeit matches. The team anticipates more participation when football season ends.

Wrestlers are optimistic about coach Gonzalez, as he has some good experience at a high level. Gonzalez wrestled at Gilroy High, which is considered to be one of the best wrestling schools in the nation. His father was the coach at Gilroy, so he has some wrestling talent in his blood.

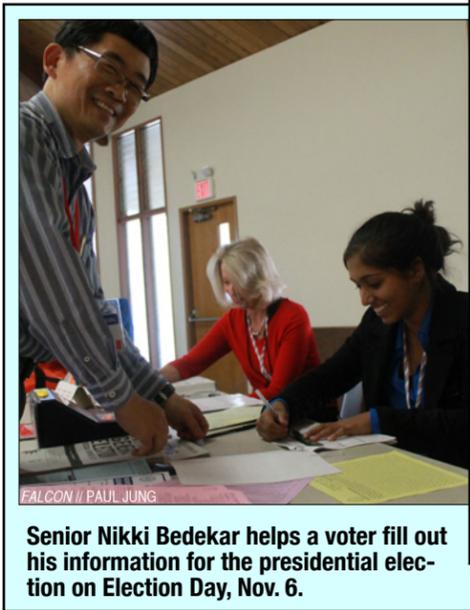
"This year, we want at least to fill up all the weight classes," senior Eric Tran said. "The new coach is still fresh and new at coaching, but he has some good moves to teach us."

Added senior Henry Wei, "I feel like we have a lot of talent on the team and a lot of wrestlers who can do well at CCS and go to State."

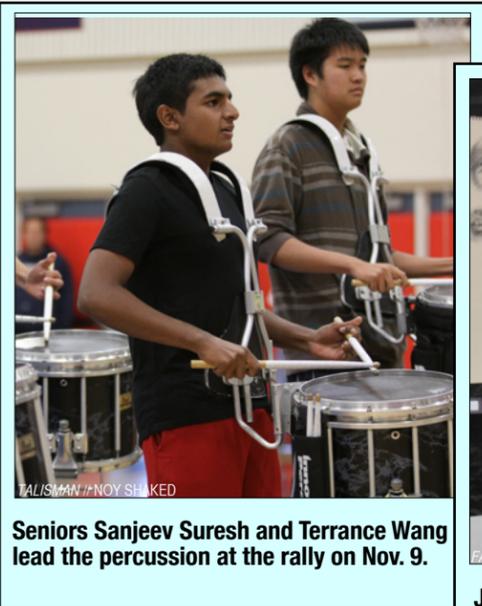
The team's El Camino League matches begin on Dec. 20 away at Lynbrook.

—Nikil Ramanathan

polaroids



Senior Nikki Bedekar helps a voter fill out his information for the presidential election on Election Day, Nov. 6.



Seniors Sanjeev Suresh and Terrance Wang lead the percussion at the rally on Nov. 9.



Junior Gloria Breck gazes at drawings in the Art Reach Gallery showcased in the Team Room on Nov. 14.



Senior Edward Dong maneuvers past sophomore Komdean Masoumi during the annual French-Spanish soccer game on Nov. 15.

Junior takes on parent-like responsibilities at age 16

It is the most beautiful sound in the world. It is best appreciated at 4 in the morning with three hours of sleep. It is the sound of a 4-month-old shrieking as he wakes up in the "morning."

On May 14, my little brother Timmy was born, and he quickly changed the way my family worked. My cram sessions are now often interrupted by a new distraction. Since I've blocked Facebook and YouTube on my computer, procrastination often comes in the form of holding Timmy while Mom goes on an errand.



SAMUEL LIU

Chicken Man

I'm proud to say that Timmy's first word was "ge," which means brother in Chinese. While others assert that this first word was mere babbling, I, as the sole witness, have complete control of the history of Timmy's first word. And believe me, he said "brother."

My parents are also especially happy

that they have Timmy because they finally have a replacement for me, or so I claim. Whenever my parents talk to each other about "your son," it's most likely about Timmy. When my parents refer to "his room," they're actually referring to my room—which is now unrecognizable due to baby paraphernalia.

I guess it's like going through the college experience two years early. Not that I mind, because the less attention I get the better. Among other benefits of having a newborn in the house, my parents haven't even thought about checking Aeries this year at all.

I've been astounded by Timmy's growth. When he first came home, his daily schedule was 1.) cry, 2.) eat, 3.) sleep and 4.) repeat with little variation. Now, at 6 months, he can lift up his head and laugh out loud.

Like any parent (or brother, whatever), I'm very proud of Timmy's abilities. Leave him on your shoulder for a while,



Six-month-old toddler Timothy Liu poses in his onesie.

and you'll be sure to find a puddle, slowly turning into a waterfall that cascades down your shirt.

Timmy has also mastered grab, which can be combined with slobber for the ultimate attack. His tiny hands will crush and destroy anything unfortunate enough to be caught by those hands, much like an anaconda. And if that object is free, it will most definitely end

up in his mouth, covered with a layer of saliva.

Timmy's weakness is the demonic cylinder: a clear plastic cylinder with tiny colored balls inside. When moved, the demonic cylinder spins and makes a loud, rattling sound. Whenever this happens, Timmy shrieks and cries like the world has ended.

But the worst of the new changes is Timmy's toy: The Demon Toy, as I call it. It's this blue, extremely obnoxious stuffed animal that has Siri-like abilities. Call out its name ("wan-bao") and it responds in its irritating high pitched voice.

Talk too loudly or incoherently, and demon toy shouts (in Chinese), "What are you guys saying? Talk to me!" After being woken up on an early Saturday morning, I threw him on a high counter above the television. To my great dismay, I realized that I forgot to turn it off first.

"Hey!" I hear. "Play with me!" ♦

buzzworthy >> Artists work in cafe

BY Sarah Finley & Carol Suh

Walking into the Big Basin Cafe, you notice the sounds of chatter lingering in the air along with the aroma of freshly ground coffee and baked goods. As you decide what to buy from an assortment of pastries, the creativity of the menu on the black chalkboard catches your attention.

The handwritten words and carefully designed border of the menu are the hard work of junior Vivian Wang. On Oct. 14, Wang decorated the menu and sideboard at the cafe in downtown Saratoga. Wang heard of this opportunity through her friends, juniors Christine Zhang and Caytie Lee Davenport, who work there.

"They knew about my notebook design business, DesignInfinity, and my overall interest in art, so they called me to ask if I would help design [the cafe's] sidewalk menu board," Wang said.

Wang said she "seized this opportunity, not because this would look good on my resume, but because of my love to design by free-hand."

Zhang asked Wang to design the sideboard, which includes the Flavor of the Month from the coffee shop; it wasn't until she started working on the designs

that she met the manager.

"After the manager told me she really liked my designs, she asked me if I could stay longer to help redesign their breakfast menu as well," Wang said.

Surprisingly, Wang has not taken any art lessons since kindergarten. Instead, Wang said she lets her "artistic skill develop on its own," using magazines, interior design galleries and modern art museums for inspiration. Along with Wang's designs in the Big Basin Cafe, senior Tiffany Lee's artwork was also displayed through the help of Zhang and Lee.

"I was walking around with my artwork when [Davenport] saw it," Lee said.

"She came up to me saying this would look great in the cafe she's working in and told me to bring it in anytime I want."

Lee put together a series of four pieces that were put on display.

"My artwork portrays how different people relate to each other," Lee said.

Lee said that she tries to bring people's emotions to life. She and Wang said they would love to design again. ♦



topten

WAYS TO BE POPULAR AT SARATOGA HIGH

- 10 Stop trying to be popular.** This alone will probably vault you further on the "cool" spectrum than anything else on this list.
- 9 Wear Uggs and shorts.** Both are necessary to win over the school's male population.
- 8 Be in band.** Fortunately, band is an automatic ticket to 600 Facebook friends and a class officer position of your choosing!
- 7 Publish weekly updates of your relationships.** Everyone should know when you two first met and how much you publicly love each other.
- 6 Take underclassmen off campus for lunch.** But then ask yourself why on earth you're trying to become popular among the underclassmen.
- 5 Always have gum.** Once people find out, though, you're going to need at least three packs to make it through every period.
- 4 Name your social group after an animal.** But don't be surprised when the only people you're popular with are the people within that very social group.
- 3 Ask what the homework is every day in Facebook groups.** Your classmates will love you, but don't expect a response; no one ever knows.
- 2 Write bandwagon statuses about (insert popular event).** "OOBAAAMA!" Each "like" you get is a split-second when someone was thinking of you, just you.
- 1 Act like you've been hacked.** Then post ridiculous things on pretty girls'/cute boys' walls and use them as shady conversation starters later.

>> Dylan Jew, Aasim Naqvi and Akshara Sekar