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THE saratogafalcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

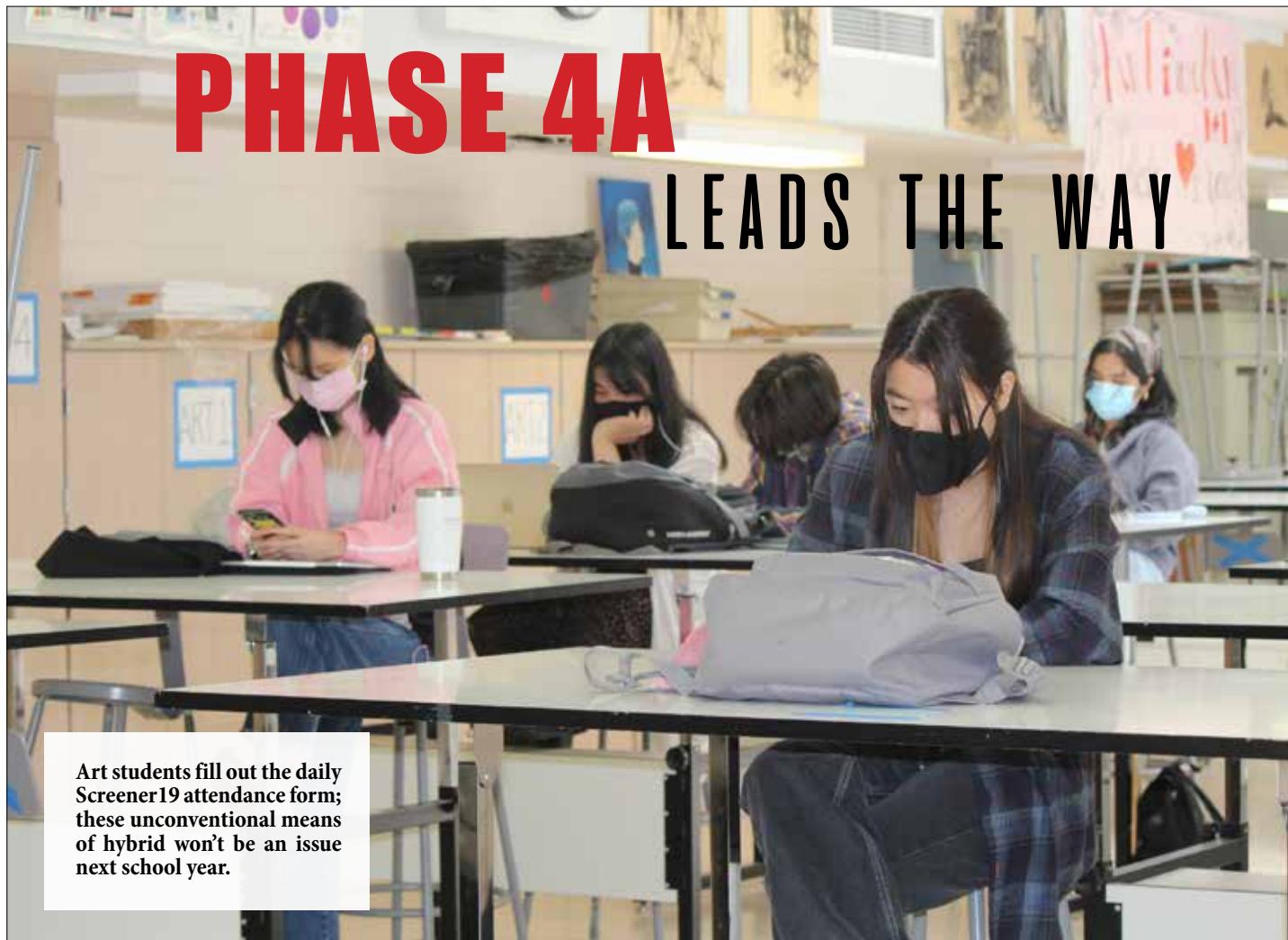


Friday, May 21, 2021

Saratoga High School | Saratoga, CA

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PHASE 4A LEADS THE WAY



Art students fill out the daily Screener19 attendance form; these unconventional means of hybrid won't be an issue next school year.

FALCON // SELINA CHEN

SHS holds 2021 hybrid AP Exams

BY Harshini Velchamy

Students began taking AP Exams in the week of May 3 and will continue taking them until June 11.

The tests fall in three different administration periods this year, and it is the first hybrid version of the AP tests.

Administration 1, including Physics I and Chinese exams, held in-person paper tests. Administration 2, which contains the bulk of the AP tests, will start the week of May 18 and continue until May 27. Administration 2 will offer digital tests that students can take at home through the College Board app and paper exams being taken at school.

Due to space restrictions at school, the main online tests taken on campus will be language tests: AP Spanish, AP French and AP Chinese. Administration 2 will also hold all the math AP exams on paper to prevent cheating.

The final administration will take place the week of June 1 and will be in digital form at home. Each of the 20 AP courses the school offers will conduct tests in at least two administrations to accommodate students with conflicts.

In order to prepare for students coming on campus to take the tests, guidance secretary Kathy Sheridan, who is coordinating the tests, has to take into account both COVID-19 guidelines and the College Board's rules. With the intent of discouraging cheating, College Board has allowed students to test only at specific times. Because of rigidity with the testing schedule, it was difficult to find an adequate number of testing spaces for each test, causing most of the tests to occur in the same rooms at different times.

"[Finding testing rooms] was probably our biggest obstacle," Sheridan said. "On some of the days, we have a morning exam that gets over at noon and then an afternoon exam which starts at 12:30 p.m."

In addition to sanitizing testing centers between AP exams, students must complete the Screener19 ID checklist and proctors must go through a similar health scanner. All of the proctors who are volunteering must also get fingerprinted and also passed a tuberculosis test.

While this is the first time the district is administering hybrid AP tests, Sheridan is optimistic that things will run smoother than they did last year, when tests were purely online. ♦

Students expect to return in the fall

BY Selina Chen

The district will give students a limited online learning alternative that combines Saratoga and Los Gatos HS students in the fall but hopes almost all students will be sitting in classrooms on Aug. 12, according to principal Greg Louie.

Considering the uncertainties of the pandemic, the district is anticipating that a few students may be anxious about coming back to campus for medical or social reasons, he said.

"Pre-pandemic, we basically had compulsory in-person education, but because we don't know what three months from now is going to look like, it would be a little bit foolhardy to say that not coming

back to school will mark you a truant," Louie said.

The district's survey, disclosed at a board meeting on May 11, shows that 94.1 percent of SHS students will be coming back.

A similar sentiment is reflected in a student Facebook poll in which out of 60 respondents, 55 anticipated in-person learning, four were undecided and one voted to remain remote.

But unlike the current situation in Phase 4A, in the fall, the district does not anticipate offering simulcasting of in-person classes. While students who choose the online alternative next fall will have academic instruction and support, they may not have access to all the "bells

and whistles" that come with a full high school experience, Louie said.

Sophomore Risha Desai voted for remote learning on the Facebook poll. She said, "Learning is easier without the distraction of other students in the classroom and because it's really nice to not dress up for school."

However, upon learning that remote students will lose access to certain aspects of the high school experience, she said she would rather be in person.

"There haven't been enough final details," Louie said, "but the idea is to provide what [remote-learning students] need to earn a high school diploma, but they wouldn't get anything else like clubs, extracurriculars, sports and dances." ♦

Plans for graduation develop

BY Selina Chen

Unlike the Class of 2020's drive-through graduation in the front parking lot, this year's ceremony is set to take place in-person on the football field on June 3 at 10 a.m., according to assistant principal Matthew Torrens.

While the basic framework for the ceremony has been set, details remain up in the air due to the county's restrictions and other uncertainties.

On June 3, graduates will walk single-file onto the field while wearing face masks and maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other, Torrens said. The ceremony will

retain traditions such as speeches, the handing out diplomas (perhaps with an elbow-bump instead of a handshake) and professional photos of the graduates.

What school officials are aiming to prevent is a celebration with intermingling; for this reason, the graduates and audience members will enter and exit through designated entrances. Additionally, a ticketing system might be implemented to limit the size of the audience.

To maximize the number of audience members allowed while accommodating

>> **GRAD** on pg. 3

Students criticize the district's handling of sexual assault cases in NBC Bay Area report

by Harshini Velchamy & Anouk Yeh

"People always say, 'I don't know how you shared your story so quickly.' But I just don't know how people keep it inside for so long."

Mia Lozoya, former student at Los Gatos High School, shared these words during the "NBC: We Investigate" special, along with her sexual assault story in a two-part report aired on April 29. Along with Lozoya, another former LGHS student Lyssa Broomfield also spoke during the special, saying the school didn't provide a safe space for survivors. This toxic environment resulted in both Broomfield and Lozoya leaving the school.

The special explored the sexual assault allegations in the district has dealt with in its two schools.

Reporter Candice Nguyen, the lead investigator for the NBC story and a multiple-time Emmy and Murrow awards winner, told The Falcon that she began looking into the story last fall when a member of the NBC Bay Area team shared a documentary created by LGHS students.

In the aftermath of the LGHS #MeToo movement, the administration has hired a Title IX coordinator.

"Someone said, 'Hey, have you seen this documentary?' It was a student-produced documentary on Instagram," Nguyen said. "It stuck out right away and the subject matter was — and is — disturbing."

The documentary led Nguyen to @metoolsgatos, formerly @metoolghs, Instagram account. After looking through the page, Nguyen began digging deeper.

Sheila Pott, Audrie Pott's mother, also spoke to NBC about how the school district handled her daughter's case "terribly" and how it set a precedent for how consequences for sexual assault were dealt with.

"It was a terrible example letting the boys stay on campus," Pott said in the report.

In the aftermath of the LGHS #MeToo Movement, the administration has hired a Title IX coordinator, Megan Farrell. Nguyen said that, despite top district officials declining an on-camera interview with NBC, they stayed the same way at 25? And 35? It kept me up at night," Nguyen said.

To make sure that the students who were a part of the broadcast weren't being forced or pressured into sharing their stories, Nguyen made "dozens of calls and texts"

The district did release a pre-recorded

Administration begins Academic Integrity campaign

WIDESPREAD CHEATING DURING ONLINE LEARNING LEADS ADMINISTRATORS TO CREATE PSA VIDEO SERIES

by Stephanie Sun

In response to complaints of rampant cheating in online learning this year, the administration has launched a campaign to encourage students to ponder the effects of their actions and make better choices. It began with a slide deck students went through during the asynchronous advisory period on May 4.

"Sometimes, people just need a reminder to be their best selves."

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL Kerry Mohnike

"This is not so much about catching cheaters as it is about educating students on the value of being honest in their work

it has a "subsequent impact at school."

Nguyen's research led her to contact the Los Gatos Police for information regarding Los Gatos sexual assault cases and also 50 other Bay Area school districts to figure out if the way that Los Gatos High handled its sexual assault cases is an anomaly.

She learned that while the policies differ for many of the K-12 schools in the Bay Area, most have similar regulations to LG-SUHSD, citing California's Education Code, which states that "schools can only discipline students for school-related misconduct."

The NBC special also sheds light on the controversial way the district handled sexual misconduct allegations, with many claiming that the district didn't hold the alleged assailants fully accountable.

After reporting her assault to officials, the administration didn't punish the boy Lozoya said assaulted her; instead, they changed Lozoya's schedule so that she no longer had classes with him. But it wasn't enough.

"It just got to a point where I started to see him too often," Lozoya said. "It was too hard to be there."

Eventually, Nguyen's reporting led her to see parallels between the #MeTooLGHs movement and Audrie Pott's sexual assault and subsequent suicide in 2012.

Pott was a sophomore at Saratoga High School who committed suicide after being sexually assaulted by three SHS students who took pictures of her naked body while she was passed out and spread them around school. The three assaulters were not suspended or expelled from SHS.

Paul Robinson was principal at that time and was the interim principal at Los Gatos High this year.

"As journalists, we felt that the family of Audrie Pott had very valid concerns about his handling of the investigation," Nguyen said.

Sheila Pott, Audrie Pott's mother, also spoke to NBC about how the school district handled her daughter's case "terribly" and how it set a precedent for how consequences for sexual assault were dealt with.

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Courtesy of NBC Bay Area

In the NBC report that aired on April 29, former Los Gatos student Mia Lozoya shares her experience with how the district inappropriately responded to her report of sexual assault.

video with Farrell speaking on the NBC special addressed to students and parents, stating that they aimed to be "transparent with the public while fulfilling [their] legal and ethical obligations to protect [their] students' privacy."

Nguyen said the most challenging part of investigating the issue was that it dealt with sexual assault, especially with minors. While investigating and putting the story together, Nguyen was constantly thinking about the long-term impact that broadcasting the story would have on students involved.

"We know that the NBC report from last night highlighting our district caused concern among members of our community. We want to provide students with the chance to meet and discuss the impact of last night's episodes," he said.

The discussion groups, led by Restorative Justice consultants Duke Fisher and Toni McMurphy, were established to allow students to voice their opinions on the matter and "move forward in healing our community."

The district has also taken action by launching independent inquiries, adding a tip line and expanding counseling services for survivors.

"The truth is we take the issue of sexual assault and sexual harassment very seriously," Farrell said in the video to the community. "For that reason, we have invested and will continue to invest in resources and educational efforts that allow our students to stay safe and empowered."

The district did release a pre-recorded

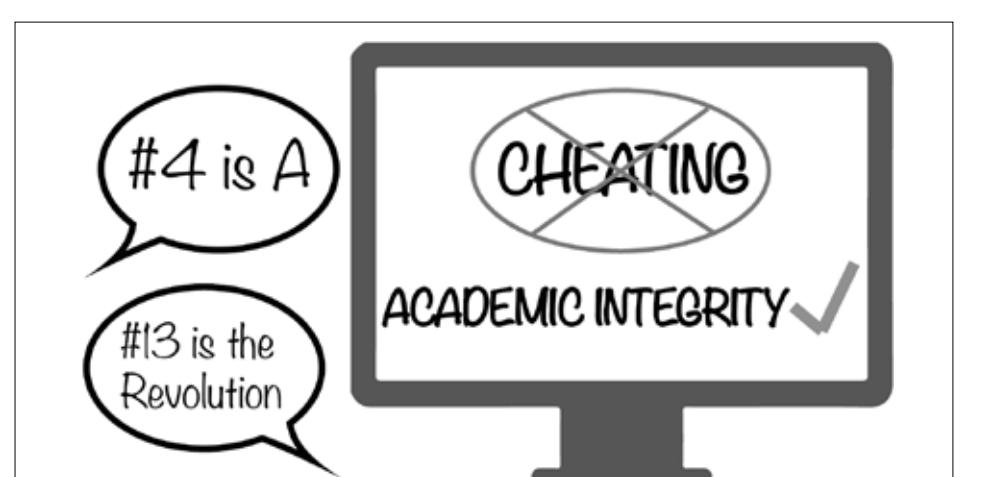
"I wanted to make sure they wanted to tell their stories. We want them to be ready."

REPORTER Candice Nguyen

"It was important that we shine a light on this issue, but this is dealing with real people, real girls who were only 16 years old at the time. They may feel one way [about having their story out there] now, but will they feel the same way at 25? And 35? It kept me up at night," Nguyen said.

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students who may think that everyone is doing it, and who don't understand why a little cheat sheet, a second device to look up answers or sharing screenshots of test questions with friends is such a big deal," Mohnike said.

According to Mohnike, the biggest problem regarding academic integrity during remote learning is the fact that many students are tempted to cheat via the internet and/or with their peers.

"Despite these temptations for students to cheat while taking tests at home, Mohnike

is optimistic that the campaign can be effective in encouraging them to make the right choices and veer away from cheating in the future.

"I think most students are honest and use the utmost integrity in their work," Mohnike said.

"Sometimes, people just need a reminder to be their best selves."

This campaign is mostly directed at the

Empowerment coach creates Life Launch program in order to inspire and increase students' self-confidence

BY Kaasha Minocha

After watching her own children undergo the pressures and anxieties while attending Saratoga High, Jill Avery Henderson, a life strategist, empowerment coach and certified hypnotherapist, knew she wanted to find a way to help.

In August 2019, Henderson launched a program called Life Launch, a center in downtown Saratoga which seeks to help young people ages 13 to 24 find their footing, catch their breath and begin to embrace the journey of developing a relationship with the most important person in their lives: themselves.

Henderson said that she enjoys having Life Launch right near the school because it is convenient for students to come and hang out before the session begins.

She said she has also loved seeing teens' self-confidence and overall health — emotional, mental and physical — improve, as well as receiving deep gratitude from their parents.

"The students are so different, yet they all share the same overlapping issues," Henderson said. "That's why I love seeing these kids evolve. It's just amazing."

For senior Nina Hawley, joining Life Launch has positively impacted her life. Two years ago, she was struggling with depression and a concussion. She had been going to therapy for many years, but nothing was helping her mentally and emotionally.

When Hawley's mom told her about Life Launch after hearing about it through Henderson, Hawley was hesitant because she thought it would be similar to group therapy. However, when she tried it out, she found the sessions felt less clinical, and Hawley was eventually able to become more confident in building a positive relationship

that weren't discussed by families and the community. Henderson realizes that people are often afraid of addressing problems as society may deem them as "weak." Because of this mental health crisis, Henderson was inspired to create a space where students can "just breathe." After starting Life Launch, Henderson spoke at local Saratoga, Los Gatos and Cupertino libraries to advertise the program to high school students.

Life Launch offers one-on-one empowerment, hypnotherapy (a method of relaxation) and life skills sessions, which consist of five different courses, each running for six weeks. The weekly 2-hour life skills sessions are split into small groups, ranging from eight to 10 students due to COVID-19 guidelines. The session schedule mimics the calendar of Saratoga High and Los Gatos High, starting in August and ending in late May.

The courses cover topics like communication as well as people and self-management skills. The sessions often include guest speakers who have faced adversity with tenacity, allowing them to have breakthroughs like senior Nakul Desai, who shared his own struggles and triumphs throughout his life.

Similar to the school year sessions, Henderson's summer sessions cover a condensed version of the life skill sessions, emphasizing topics like relationships and manners.

"The skills are timeless. Your child doesn't need to be crashing and burning

to come to Life Launch because sometimes they're too far gone and need different help," Henderson said. "This is a place that should be working in tandem, and they should have a place like Life Launch somewhere in their life that focuses on them and essential life skills."

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with herself and her peers.

Along with Hawley, LGHS junior Arjun Kapoor said that Life Launch has helped him learn that learning self-care is not indulgent or difficult.

"I think too many people think of self-care as face masks and bubble baths. I think self-care is hard, and you have to really challenge yourself," Kapoor said.

For senior Nora Sherman, the most important lessons she has learned through the program are about gaining perspective and confidence. She said she has learned that looking at different viewpoints allows for empathy and the ability to approach situations and problems from a different light.

"You need to have the confidence to know what you need and what you're worth. You need to value yourself and get that message across," Sherman said. "And it can apply to every aspect of your life because you have the confidence and are able to work through issues in a safe and comfortable setting."

Henderson added that she is proud of how Sherman and her other students have grown and changed their mindsets over the last two years.

"I think students meeting each other and sharing stories and perspectives has absolutely given them a whole new landscape of perspective and new tools to use when they feel like 'crashing and burning,'" Henderson said. "Sharing stories is probably one of the most powerful things we can do as humans because we all have one that is ever changing and evolving."

Book Club officers seek to spread their love of literature

BY Christina Chang

Sophomore Anastasia Ramirez had just finished the last page of her favorite book "Looking for Alaska" by John Green in December when she texted her friends to recommend the novel. She enjoyed how Green's writing was satirical yet intimate in the way it captured the characters' actions and feelings. Realizing that they all enjoyed reading and recommending books, Ramirez suggested the idea of bringing back a book club in hopes of getting her peers off their devices and back into reading.

"We all love to spend hours reading books from John Green to the classics so we decided to spread the love of imagination and reading to our peers," said Ramirez, now the secretary for the book club. "People can be so caught up in their phones and online that they forget there are a million different worlds and imaginations waiting to be explored just by picking up a small item filled with mysteries, love stories and adventure."

Ramirez said her favorite part of the club are the projects to bring literature to different areas. For example, the club is holding a book drive for students at Bella Haven Elementary School in Menlo Park and a pen-pal project partnership with Strive2Thrive Edu to write letters to students in Bangladesh.

"I am so excited for this project because I know how much these students will appreciate a handwritten letter from a high school student," Ramirez said. "Letters are so intimate and personal and will really brighten their days."

Book club disbanded after the 2018-19 school year, but has recently been renewed by Ramirez, Avani Kongetira (president), Arielle Landau (vice president) and Afsoon Modiri (treasurer), all of whom are sophomores. The club aims to spread the love of literature, not only to the community, but also around the world, especially to low-income areas.

Typical meetings start with an icebreaker to encourage club member participation, then transition into a book discussion, an introduction of a project or a guest speaker.

"We ultimately want our club members to read our books but also go beyond that — to give back," Ramirez said. "Although we are just starting, we are already making an impact."

In terms of class assignments, students work on reflections and reading recipes in preparation for future dishes, and Crase-Delp observes and supports them as necessary.

In remote learning, Crase-

a less stressful environment compared to a classroom setting.

Phalke said her most memorable experience with the club was getting first place in a Kahoot! game about one of the books they'd read.

This year, the club has read "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" by Robert Louis Stevenson and "Born a Crime" by Trevor Noah. The next book they will read is "Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury. In addition to reading and discussing books, the club hosted guest speaker Kate Simonian, an award-winning poet and novelist,

who spoke on her writing career and past works in the meeting on April 16.

SHS Book Club

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Ramirez said they plan to do more fundraisers and book drives for low-income schools and expand the pen-pal programs to other countries. Along with growing the club, the officers' primary focus is to reach out to underprivileged students who have limited access to literature.

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"We're having too much fun."

Health and cooking class offers an enjoyable experience for students

BY Anjali Pai

FOURTH PERIOD
STAFF POLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Hermann Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070. Due to the pandemic, The Falcon is publishing 7 issues instead of 12 this year. This is the first of two new editors' issues. Views expressed in The Falcon are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

MISSION STATEMENT

The staff of The Saratoga Falcon is committed to objectively and accurately representing the diverse talents, cultures and viewpoints of the Saratoga High School community.

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Drop AP classes, remove weighted GPA

By Shaan Sridhar

credit for their work in order to graduate earlier.

In 1955, the College Board began to run the program. The tests eventually expanded to students of all ages, with over 1.2 million students in the national class of 2020 taking AP tests.

The abundance of AP students has led to students feeling pressured to stuff their course offerings with AP classes. But despite the popularity of these classes, the pace and difficulty of AP courses and tests has not fizzled. Rather than providing enrichment opportunities to high school seniors, AP courses have turned many high-achieving schools like ours into mini colleges.

The program has demanded continuous sacrifice, forcing students to pull all-nighters and disregard non-academic passions such as music and sports. And despite the allure of supposed benefits, the program might not help students more than regular classes.

The huge number of AP students in high schools across the country has led to watered down classes. It's to the point that many colleges don't fully accept AP credit. According to the Progressive Policy Institute, 86 percent of the top 153 universities in the U.S. restrict the awarding of AP credit.

To date, no effective solutions have been proposed, let alone implemented. So here's a simple yet radical way to address the issue: Remove AP classes from course offerings and discontinue the use of weighted GPA.

Before balking at the idea, take the time to hear the argument.

While almost everyone agrees that an overly competitive academic environment is detrimental to students' mental health, solutions are often a point of controversy. The most commonly proposed solution to problems concerning academic pressure and worsened mental health is to tell students to stop taking so many AP and honors classes.

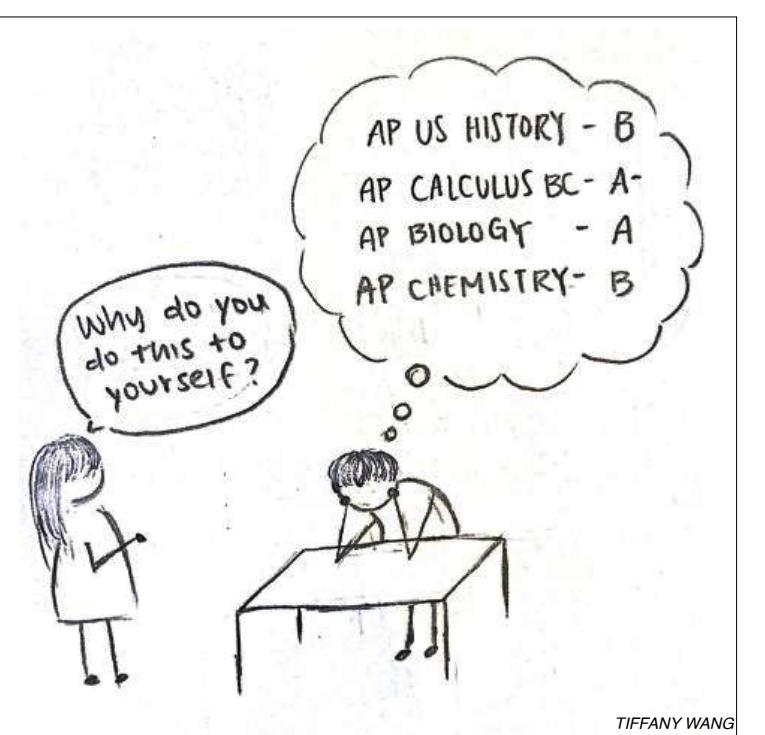
But let's be real. The race to get into the most elite colleges is out of control and ambitious students feel compelled to not lag behind. Any opportunity to take harder classes or achieve a higher GPA is considered an advantage, leading many students to take honors and AP classes they're not particularly interested in.

The practice has created a grades-over-learning mentality.

The school isn't forcing students to take hard classes, but rather students are inflicting the pain on themselves out of a perceived need to keep up. There will always be many students who overestimate their capabilities and there's nothing the school can do to prevent that.

What the school can do is relieve some of this academic pressure. The academic culture pushes many students to take classes they shouldn't and overwork themselves, leading to deteriorated mental health. And this culture — largely dominated by AP and Honors classes — is within the control of the school.

Alternatives to the AP path
The AP program was initially created by a committee of elite high schools and Ivy League universities that recommended allowing high school seniors to take college-level courses and receive



TIFFANY WANG

promoting rote memorization over creative and collaborative teaching methods.

Removing AP classes wouldn't deprive advanced students of opportunities to challenge themselves. Honors classes would still be available and new ones could replace AP classes. Instead, students would be relieved of unnecessary pressure and teachers would be given freedom to improve and adapt their classes.

End the use of the weighted GPA.

To students, one of the major benefits of honors and AP courses is the 5.0 GPA point. While standard classes are graded on the standard 4.0 scale, qualifying advanced classes are worth up to 5.0 points on the difficulty-weighted scale. During the college admissions process, the school reports both weighted and unweighted GPAs.

Predictably, students want their GPA to be as high as possible — even if their unweighted GPA remains unaffected. This leads to students prioritizing a superficial number over their academic interests and — of course — mental health problems.

According to guidance counselor Eileen Allen, far more students take English 11 Honors than standard English 11 — there are seven sections of the Honors class and two sections of the standard class this year. Despite this, only a small minority plans on majoring in a subject in college that is remotely related to English. It's safe to infer that some students are not taking English 11 Honors because they love the subject (though many do), but mainly to get the GPA boost. The same goes for many other AP and Honors classes.

The district must consider these options to solve our mental health crisis.

The school is facing a mental health crisis and the district must take real action to solve it. The ideas in this article — in tandem or alone — will help address and reduce the problem.

The district should create an exploratory committee to see if these solutions are practical for our schools and study the effects of such changes in-depth. This will seem like an outlandish idea to some, but this kind of conversation is long overdue — the possible benefits are too important to ignore.

The district should reach out to schools who have made big changes like this for the sake of students' mental health and ask them how the change has helped or worsened the problem. They should seek input from teachers and students. If the district finds these solutions to be effective at solving the mental health crisis, they should implement them no matter the opposition. ♦

The reality is that students' chances at getting into colleges will be virtually unchanged. Most colleges recalculate GPA due to discrepancies in GPA calculation between schools. For example, UC Berkeley disregards freshman grades. The University of Wash-



By Kaitlyn Tsai

I lucked out with Harvard, the only top 20 I would've been accepted to would have been Rice University and UCLA.

And regardless of whether this method works, it's still a terrible way to approach college apps. It's exhausting, but actually researching the schools I wanted to apply to — through poring over their different webpages for hours, watching student day-in-the-life videos on YouTube, attending info sessions or (virtually) visiting the school — has been one of the smartest decisions I made while I was applying to college.

Looking at the location, size, programs, student organizations, research opportunities, quirky traditions and the general campus atmosphere of each school helped me eliminate colleges that I thought I wanted to attend simply because they were "elite" but really wouldn't fit me one way or another.

These are just some among the plethora of other factors that could go into an acceptance, deferral, waitlist or rejection, and no one can possibly account for them. Most importantly, none of them say anything about who you are as a student or as a person.

Yes, accepting that college admissions isn't meritocratic means that you can't take full credit for positive outcomes either. As with your negative results, there will always be a degree of luck, a fortunate alignment of your hard work and the aforementioned uncontrollable factors, involved in your acceptances.

Naturally, this entire process has been disillusioning, to say the least, but because of that, it's also been incredibly rewarding. Here are five of the common myths about college apps and why I think they're terribly wrong.

"In order to get into x school, you have to get 5s on 10+ APs, start your own non-profit, win national and international awards, write about this in your essays and"

Let me save you some pain and anxiety: No, you don't.

There is no single formula that gets someone into a school. Of course, there are probably certain degrees of "requirements" colleges like to see, such as "academic rigor," but there are no instructions for meeting any of those criteria. Academic rigor, for example, can look very different for different people, depending on their access to opportunities and resources, their socioeconomic or family circumstances, how much time they're investing in other pursuits, etc.

By the time I graduate, for example, I will have taken nine APs — certainly a high number, but also one that's lower than that for many other high-achieving Saratoga/Bay Area students or Harvard applicants who were rejected. I've received some regional awards for my writing and a national one, but none would have made me substantially stand out from many other Bay Area students or Harvard applicants. And my essays weren't bad, but certainly were nothing the admissions officer hadn't seen before.

There's also the fact that overall ranking isn't the only determining factor of a school's "prestige." When it comes to computer science, UC Berkeley's program is better than the one at Yale, a school more focused on the social sciences and humanities.

And despite what many may think, there's no guarantee that someone who gets into, say, Harvard can get into any UC they apply to. I'm not an admissions officer, but I can testify to this: UC admissions are, like at any other institution, unpredictable.

Several of my very high-achieving friends were either waitlisted or rejected by Irvine, Berkeley and UCLA. Those same friends, however, were accepted by more traditionally prestigious schools. And this phenomenon isn't new; I know plenty of alumni who currently attend more "prestigious" universities and also faced rejections or were waitlisted by the UCs.

So don't underestimate the UCs. If you're looking for safeties, stick to state schools.

"I'm just going to apply to every top 20 school; I'm bound to get into at least one, right?"

Not necessarily. As I mentioned earlier, college admissions really are wildly unpredictable, and you can't simply rely on the laws of probability to guarantee you a spot in a top school. I've certainly heard horror stories of students being rejected or waitlisted by all of their top colleges. Had I not

Perhaps they don't see that student as a good "fit" for their school — a word admissions officers commonly throw around whose criteria no one really knows — or maybe they've already decided to admit someone who seems similar to the applicant, or maybe your admissions officer just happened to connect more with another student. I remember attending a UChicago information session, for example, in which an admissions officer recounted how she really related to a student who wrote about working with children because the admissions officer herself has worked with a lot of children.

These are just some among the plethora of other factors that could go into an acceptance, deferral, waitlist or rejection, and no one can possibly account for them. Most importantly, none of them say anything about who you are as a student or as a person.

Yes, accepting that college admissions isn't meritocratic means that you can't take full credit for positive outcomes either. As with your negative results, there will always be a degree of luck, a fortunate alignment of your hard work and the aforementioned uncontrollable factors, involved in your acceptances.

Naturally, this entire process has been disillusioning, to say the least, but because of that, it's also been incredibly rewarding. Here are five of the common myths about college apps and why I think they're terribly wrong.

"Where you end up reflects on your past years' work and you as a person."

If the process is far from meritocratic, then of course, your results say little to nothing about how hard you've worked or who you are as a person.

No college decision can invalidate or validate your past four years of work and growth. As I awaited my results, I continually reflected on everything I've worked on the past four years, how much I've impacted the people around me and how much I've matured. Reminding myself that nothing can change or take away any of this helped me develop a high degree of acceptance to the vast majority of my college decisions — so much so that my family started to wonder what was wrong with me.

On the other end of the spectrum, going to your top-choice school doesn't suddenly make your efforts worth far more than they are either.

College admissions is not a meritocracy, and for the sake of your mental health, it's smart not to treat it like one.

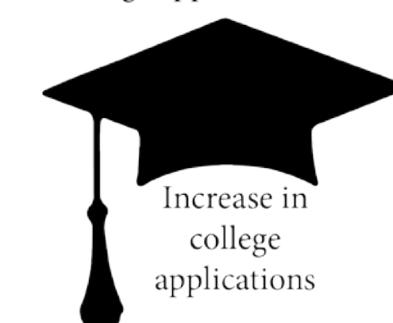
For me, I know that I didn't do everything I did in high school because I wanted to use them for getting into college; I did them because they were genuinely meaningful to me. Schools recognizing my efforts ultimately didn't do much to add to my sense of accomplishment.

Of course, you deserve to and should celebrate good results — after all, like I mentioned, it is a synergy of luck and merit — but don't let it get to your head. In the end, there's very little you can do to control this mess of a process. So all you can do is not sweat it.

My bottom-line advice to those who have yet to climb the college admissions mountain is this: You know who you are and what you're worth, so just be genuine. Regardless of where you end up, be confident that someday everything you're stressing about will seem insignificant compared to the degree you hold and the memories you've made. ♦

Class of 2021

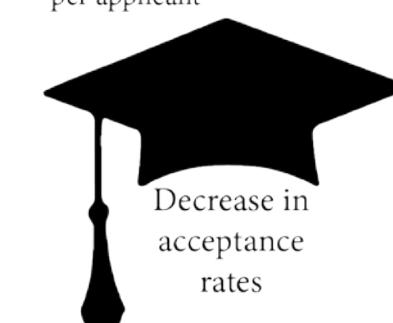
College application trends



Overall applications had increased this year by 10%, reaching 5,583,753, as of late January 2021

*16% increase in applications for UCs

*9% increase in applications per applicant



*MIT acceptance rate decreased from 7.4% in 2020 to 4.8% in 2021

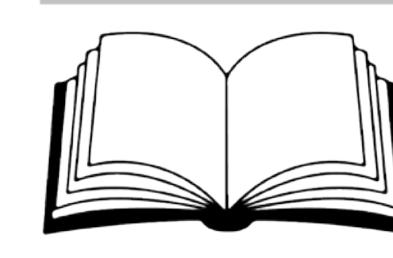
*Harvard acceptance rate decreased from 13.9% in 2020 to 7.4% in 2021



*18% decline in Chinese student applications

*28% increase in Indian student applications

*22% increase in Canada student applications



*SAT and ACT tests optional

*SAT subject test canceled

Courtesy of InGeniusPrep

Graphic by TIFFANY WANG

District must provide fair salary and increase benefits for unfilled SHS athletic trainer position

by Andy Chen, Shama Gupta & Howard Shu

After 12 years of working in two positions — the school's athletic trainer and a health/Driver's education teacher — Liz Alves decided to step down from being the athletic trainer last June. As of late March, the athletic trainer job remained unfilled even as the football season is moving forward.

Alves said she primarily stepped down because of low wages and negligible benefits. For the past few years, she advocated to the district that she was being underpaid and cited various reasons that the athletic trainer role should become a full-time job rather than an independent contractor position — her departure reveals the necessity of such demands.

When Alves began working at the school in 2008, she was the seventh athletic trainer to fill the position in the span of three years. Since then, Alves has worked as a hourly contractor in her trainer role instead of a salaried employee. The district also capped the athletic trainer position to work 1,100 hours in a school year, effectively capping her salary.

In a letter Alves wrote to the district last year to advocate for a full-time athletic trainer position, she explained that in order to stay under 1,100 hours, she didn't log the hours she spent at home doing background work such as documentation, writing and maintaining the concussion policy manual and emergency action plans and communicating with parents, athletes, coaches and other medical providers.

According to athletic director and head football coach Tim Lugo, Alves' role as athletic trainer was "the one irreplaceable part

of our staff" and was integral in keeping the sports program running. While her primary role was to manage athletes' injuries and rehab, Alves also worked behind-the-scenes on bigger issues, such as referring students to outside physical therapists and having private conversations with students suffering from eating disorders.

"At the football banquet for years, we've always joked that I can leave tomorrow and this program is going to run fine, but the fact that she's leaving — we're going to fall apart," Lugo said.

In fact, although Alves stepped down from her role as athletic trainer earlier this year in order to take care of her two children at home — one of which was recently diagnosed with autism — she continues to perform her previous duties three days a week because the athletic department wouldn't be able to run otherwise, Lugo said. She is not being paid for her work as interim-trainer, which is astonishing considering the importance of her position.

Even more appalling is the school's current offered salary for an athletic trainer: Prior to stepping down, Alves made only \$33,000 a year — which she called "not a livable income in the Bay Area" — despite working at SHS for over a decade and possessing a master's degree in Kinesiology with a focus in athletic training.

Compare that to what neighboring schools and even schools in the same district pay, and it's clear that the district needs to raise its offered salary for athletic trainers at SHS. For reference, Los Gatos High School's newly hired athletic trainer Justin Ortiz had a salary of \$62,000 last year — almost double that of Alves' own salary.

And while she said Los Gatos High claims that their athletic trainer earns more

since he works more hours with the same hourly wage, to do so would necessitate working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year in order to match the salary on Los Gatos' job advertisement.

to play, they had to forfeit, Alves said. A contributing reason for Ortiz's higher salary is that the Los Gatos High sports boosters organization pitched in money to help make the position there more enticing. When Alves had asked the Saratoga High Sports Boosters to do the same, they said they couldn't come up with the money.

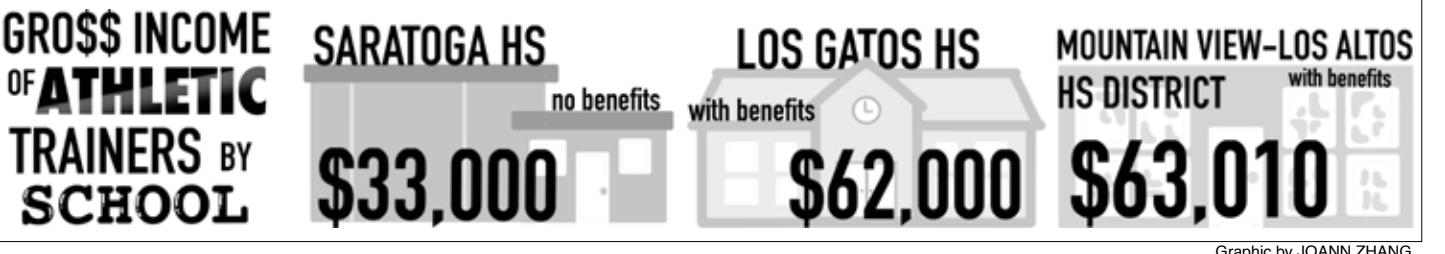
However, considering that Alves served as interim athletic trainer for half a semester while waiting to be replaced, reflecting a lack of interest in the role due to its low wages and minimal benefits, SHS Sports Boosters should prioritize the salary of athletic trainers for the safety of Falcon athletes.

According to Alves, the district also claimed that making the athletic trainer a full-time position would set a bad precedent and raise liability issues, since the school would be responsible for future trainers' potentially dangerous decisions. Because of the current absence of a dedicated athletic trainer, however, the school is arguably more liable for any injuries that may occur in ongoing Season 2 and 3 sports, as they made the decision to continue these sports despite lacking a full-time trainer.

Thus, the district has little excuse for not making the athletic trainer role a full-time position — including benefits. As an independent contractor for the district, Alves had to manage her taxes and insurance herself, but the Los Gatos athletic trainer got taxes deducted from his paycheck the way a standard employee would and was provided health insurance by the clinic.

Aside from disrespecting Alves and future athletic trainers, the district's decision to discount an official athletic trainer position may harm the school in the long term. Lugo said that compared to districts like the Fremont Union High School District, which decided to create a classified athletic trainer position with benefits three years ago, Saratoga High will have harder time hiring a highly qualified trainer.

As it stands, the district has been lucky to have Alves for so many years, and while she has expressed interest in returning as an athletic trainer, she has no plans to do so until the district finally gives the position the respect, wages and benefits it deserves. ♦



March Madness demonstrates gender issues in sports



Ben-lijhtening
Benjamin Li

WNBA average salary has increased about \$30,000 since 2019, but this justify the fact that the average NBA player makes about 70 times the amount an average WNBA player does.

This disparity in pay is primarily caused by the lack of support for the WNBA as a whole. In the 2020 season, the NBA generated around \$7.4 billion in profit compared to the WNBA's \$60 million.

This problem could be solved if viewership for the WNBA increased and if long-time NBA fans start showing support for the WNBA as well.

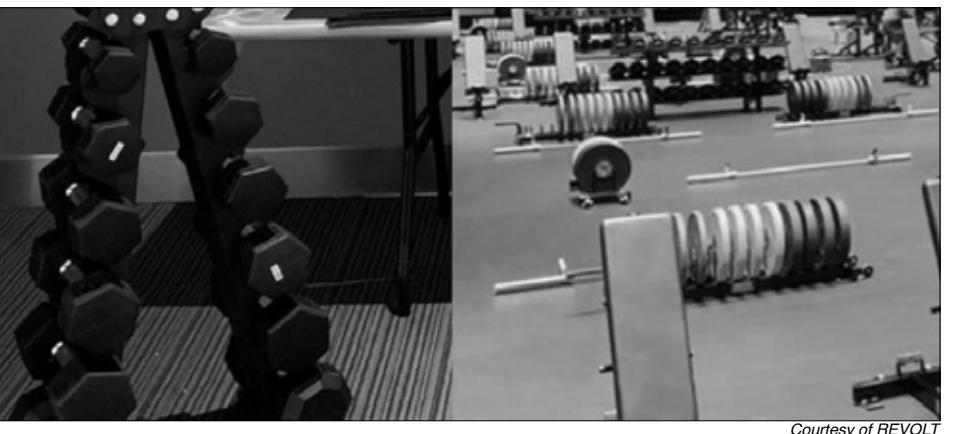
Since its establishment in 1996, the WNBA league has been operating at an average loss of \$10 million a year, with only half of the teams generating profit in 2016.

In order to increase pay for its athletes, the WNBA must first find a method to increase its viewership, which will lead to other areas of revenue such as jersey sales and sponsorships.

To distinguish itself from the NBA — which excels in some of the most exciting aspects of basketball, like dunks and three pointers — the WNBA could possibly shift its own play to become more team-oriented, rather than star-oriented like the NBA.

However, this would require the implementation of new regulations to ensure that team play is successful. This new style of play would center around passing and play-making, differentiating itself from the isolation plays in which many star NBA players specialize.

Perhaps the most salient example of this inequality is in the gender wage gap. On average, a professional women's basketball player earned just over \$100,000 in 2019, while the average NBA player earned almost \$7 million, according to Fox business. The



The contrast between women's and men's weight rooms highlights gender inequity in sports.

was able to secure equal pay for the winners in both the men and women's bracket. The effects of King's stand can be seen today: women's tennis, which has produced icons such as Serena Williams, has been the most progressive sport in achieving gender equality in pay and viewership.

However, in order to make a truly significant impact, they should enlist the help of celebrities as well as their NBA counterparts. If enough attention is drawn to these acts to boost viewership, the wage gap could very well decrease dramatically.

Although the road to equal pay and respect in sports may seem far off, the potential for progress has already been realized in recent years.

Perhaps a solution to solve the wage gap problem in sports more generally would be to walk in the footsteps of Billie Jean King, a tennis icon who made huge progress for gender equality in her sport. By threatening to boycott the US Open in 1973, she

lowering the basketball hoop — traditionally 10 feet — to nine feet to allow for more dunks, as well as moving up the three point line for easier shot attempts. There have been only 22 instances of a WNBA player dunking in its history, which will surely increase if they lower the rim.

The issue of unequal pay has been addressed many times in interviews by star WNBA players such as Sue Bird and Brittney Griner, yet little has changed. Certain NBA players have also expressed their support for the WNBA movement, but the viewership for WNBA games has not seen a noticeable increase in the past years.

Another avenue the WNBA could take is attempting to bring the flashy moves of the NBA to its own league. This would require

If public support continues to grow for gender equality, then there is a high possibility for sports to become more fair for both genders. ♦

Schools must require vaccines for students

by AllenLuo

With all Californians age 16 and older eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, many students are in the process of being vaccinated. Vaccines are also undergoing clinical testing for those aged 15 and under, and are expected to be soon OK'd for use in those 12-15.

However, considering that Alves served as interim athletic trainer for half a semester while waiting to be replaced, reflecting a lack of interest in the role due to its low wages and minimal benefits, SHS Sports Boosters should prioritize the salary of athletic trainers for the safety of Falcon athletes.

Additionally, public schools should provide students with information on how to book vaccination appointments. Because of the current high demand, information about local vaccination sites, the vaccination process and general vaccine education would benefit many students and their families.

For those who refuse to be vaccinated, an alternate form of schooling could be provided. Those staying at home could attend a separate, all-remote program so that teachers don't have to switch between remote and in-person or simulcast.

Widespread vaccination of those on campus is the surest way to prevent the spread of the virus.

This spring, there have been several cases of COVID-19

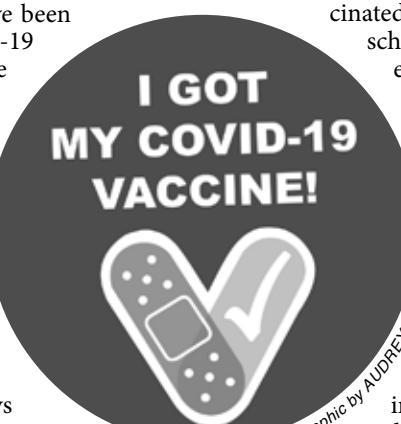
in sports cohorts alone — a number that will only rise if the whole student body is attending school in person. A full return to normalcy will require an absolute assurance that an outbreak will not occur again, and requiring vaccinations is one of the only foolproof ways to do so.

Masks, social distancing and cleaning surfaces can only do so much with more than 1,300 people on campus at once, including teachers and staff.

With mandated vaccinations, parents can also feel safe about letting their children go to school. It allows for peace of mind in a time where the shift back to an in-person environment can be hectic and stressful.

Ultimately, all students should try to vaccinate themselves as soon as possible so that safety can be ensured during the return to normal schooling. ♦

Arguments against mandatory vaccination



Graphic by AUDREY MAH

nations largely cite privacy concerns and asserts of personal liberty. For attending school, though, this is not an issue. Schools already require students to be vaccinated for multiple diseases, including tetanus, measles and polio, and show proof of it. The COVID-19 vaccine will only be another item on that list.

To allow for a smooth transition into Phase 3B and ultimately Phase 4A on May 3, the school started enforcing many COVID-19 safety measures to ensure the safety of students and staff. A mandatory health survey and checklist through an app called Screener 19 must be completed before coming to school each day, in addition to scanning into each classroom for the purpose of contact tracing.

The district's effort to maintain strict COVID-19 safety protocols has been largely effective, with only a few students and staff being exposed to the virus. The vast majority of cases so far have come from other schools during sports games.

The requirement for all students to wear masks is a standard in most schools; however, not every school has students who adhere to such policies consistently. At Saratoga High, however, upon walking through the school's hallways, students can be seen constantly wearing masks throughout the day, though social distancing isn't as easy or natural to maintain.

In addition to students contributing to the effort of maintaining solid health protocols, most teachers and staff were fully vaccinated before returning to in-person learning. On April 15, students ages 16 and older were granted eligibility for the vaccine, and with students aged 12-15 also eligible starting on May 10 — vaccines provide an even stronger layer of protection for student safety.

Additionally, those who choose not to be vaccinated should be barred from in-person club activities and sports, as interacting with others would pose a health risk to themselves and the other students around them.

Of course, students who do not get the vaccine for medical or religious reasons will be exempt, given that they can provide proof.

With mandated vaccinations, parents can also feel safe about letting their children go to school. It allows for peace of mind in a time where the shift back to an in-person environment can be hectic and stressful.

Ultimately, all students should try to vaccinate themselves as soon as possible so that safety can be ensured during the return to normal schooling. ♦

District's COVID-19 protocols are effective

by EthanLin

lines. Many teachers also require students to clean their desks and chairs with disinfecting wipes at the end of each class, thus helping maintain a clean learning environment.

For extracurricular activities — particularly sports — masks are required to be worn at all times as well. The district also requires students who play indoor sports to take COVID-19 swab tests prior to each game.

This is an important consideration, as contact sports, like basketball, have high susceptibility of spreading the virus. Because students who don't get swab tested prior to the game are not allowed to play, students who want to participate in their sport are incentivized to get tested regularly.

At Saratoga High, students can be seen wearing masks throughout the day, though social distancing isn't as easy or natural to maintain.

With students adhering to proper safety precautions and the school doing an effective job of maintaining high health standards, students and staff have, for the most part, been safe from the virus and will continue to be.

Additionally, teachers have planned their classroom layouts beforehand to accommodate for social distancing between students while still allowing students to have a clear view of the white board. This allows students to receive quality education but still adhere to COVID-19 safety guidelines.



difficult hybrid learning environment, with online students often being either ignored or too highly prioritized as the burned-out, distracted teachers play a wild game of balancing teaching what is essentially two classes at once.

Yes, students are back in classes five days a week now, but the board blundered in thinking that this version of education is an improvement. ♦

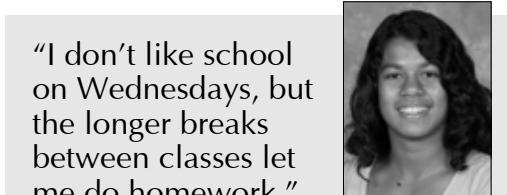
"It's nice to end school earlier, but back to back classes and awkwardly long passings is tiring."



senior Jessie Zhou

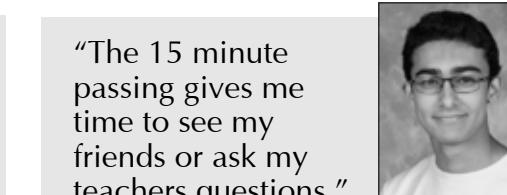
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What do you think of the 4A bell schedule?



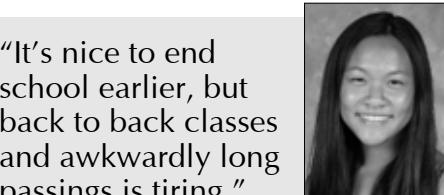
sophomore Isha Goswami

"I don't like school on Wednesdays, but the longer breaks between classes let me do homework."



junior Amitav Rawat

"The 15 minute passing gives me time to see my friends or ask my teachers questions."



senior Jessie Zhou

Seniors return in-person for last semester

by Preston Fu
& Benjamin Li

When Phase 4A hybrid education started on May 3, many seniors — many of whom traditionally use their second semester to take a break from school and relax after a stressful college application season — were so burned out by online learning that they opted to go to school in person, even if it meant not sleeping in and having to get dressed up for the day.

"I was super unmotivated after being online for so long, so I decided to come back at first for Phase 3B and now for 4A to get out of the house and force myself into a routine," said senior Riya Jain. "I ended up really preferring being in-person to interact with my classmates and teachers, so I gave up the comforts of 15 minutes of extra sleep to come in person."

This increased interaction is what Jain and other like-minded seniors say they were missing from their high school experience in the past year. She pointed to her AP English Literature and Composition class as an example of online learning challenges, where Socratic seminars on Zoom often had

full minutes of silence or students awkwardly talking over each other.

The first time I worked with a group of students in-person in AP Lit was mind-blowing because I forgot how naturally conversations can happen and how much I actually benefited from getting to bounce ideas off of other people," Jain said.

Senior Dylan Overby also found online learning draining. Coming to campus allowed him to better engage.

"When I'm at home staring at my computer, I end up just looking out the window a lot of the time," Overby said. "I don't really pay attention to Zoom because listening to a teacher talk through a screen for hours is boring."

Overby also found that the learning environment is much more immersive in a classroom than it is at home. As part of the end-of-the-year review in AP Physics, teacher Matt Welander has done many demonstrations to illustrate key concepts. Overby found it easier to grasp the concepts in-person compared to watching on a shared screen.

The benefits of in-person learning extend beyond the classroom, senior Cameron King said. In addition to being able to con-

centrate better in a real learning environment as opposed to his room, he missed the human interaction of simply being around others.

"The obvious advantage to going in-person is being able to interact with and see friends, but it also gives me a chance to talk to my teachers about random things going on in our lives that aren't related to school," King said.

Now that about half the senior class has returned to school, they can converse and joke with friends face-to-face for the first time in months. Friend groups can now be found hanging around outside their favorite classes or in old meeting spots.

Despite all of these benefits, a drawback of hybrid learning, according to Overby, is the divide of teachers' attention between their in-person and online students in the current simulcasting model.

In some classes, where groups consist of a mix of both online and in-person students, there have been difficulties collaborating between students. The continued use of laptops in classes even in person came as a surprise to Overby, who had assumed that in-person students would be doing separate activities than those on Zoom. However, this was not the case, and led to frequent communication issues between those who

were in person and those who were at home.

Still, many seniors returning to school for the last few weeks of high school said that the benefits of in-person learning, including higher engagement, and more social interaction far outweighed some of the disadvantages.

"I am glad to see the enthusiasm of my teachers and how excited they are to see people come to their classes in person," King said.

"I know we'll be able to go back to normal soon." ♦



New SHS teachers navigate campus for hybrid

BY Minsu Tang

"Hey, do you know where Mr. Davey's room is?"

Those words came from new English teacher Marcos Cortez earlier this spring as he stopped a nearby student and asked for directions to the classroom of his partnering Media Arts Program teacher Mike Davey. Cortez had met with Davey dozens of times online, but never in Davey's classroom.

Since the start of phase 3B, panicking freshmen and new-to-campus teachers and staff have been orienting themselves as they would have done in August in an ordinary year. Despite the school year coming to an end, many on campus still struggle to get to their classes on time, including teachers.

Cortez, a longtime educator who had taught at Los Gatos in recent years, described his experience coming to campus as "sort of like going on a field trip" because he is still working and surrounded by people he has known for a long time, but in a whole different environment.

"I was excited, I was anxious, and I was nervous," Cortez said. "It was such a unique feeling to have spent so much time with my students and know them really well, but

have only been in my physical classroom [a few times]."

While preparing himself for hybrid learning, Cortez tried to tone down expectations. He was surprised to see the level of engagement that was increased by those staying online, despite his initial concerns that he was going to "lose" them with students learning in the classroom.

To keep both the online and in-person students engaged, Cortez flips his laptop's camera so it captures the majority of the classroom, allowing himself to walk around while teaching instead of sitting down for 75 minutes straight.

For Bryan Ringsted, a first-year drama teacher, coming back on campus drastically changes how students prepare themselves for his classes.

While working on the production of "The Addams Family," Ringsted has started his classes with an in-person improvisational theater game to loosen students up before rehearsing for final projects. One of his biggest problems is attempting to manage the tech when matching the remote and in-person group, though he is fairly confident in his abilities to adapt to this challenge.

"I've been teaching multiple sections in

the same class for years, so differentiation of instruction is old hat," Ringsted said. "It's good to be back. As a theater teacher, my art form is, by definition, live, something that is drained from online classes."

With students coming back to school, surprises are frequent. For example, Cortez was startled at how different students looked in person rather than on-screen; some appeared to be taller than expected, while some were unrecognizable because Cortez could only see a portion of their forehead in online classes.

"I think it was really funny how some of the same stereotypical student behaviors in class, like students sitting in the back, came right back," Cortez said.

Cortez found himself struggling with audio issues on Zoom while also teaching in-person. It's hard for students online to hear when an in-person student speaks up in class. To mitigate this issue, he is getting a new microphone which he will place in the center of the classroom, in hopes that it will transmit students' voices better.

For the remainder of this school year, Cortez prefers to keep the hybrid model as it gives him an opportunity to interact with some of his students. ♦

"I think the social component is important at this moment," Cortez said. "The hybrid model is great for social and emotional support, but it is not the most effective for [students] to learn."

However, if he had to teach with one model indefinitely, he would choose either completely remote or completely in-person, with part of the reason being because hybrid teaching is "exhausting and one of the most challenging teaching environments" he has ever taught.

This level of challenge reminded him of his experience teaching on a ship several years ago. He was a humanities teacher and would voyage with his students for six weeks to the Eastern Caribbean. Students were required to take their normal classes while learning how to operate the ship with the professional crew, which Cortez was part of. The entire process was described as extremely physically and emotionally challenging, similar to hybrid teaching, but rewarding as well.

"The moment when I felt blessed, really, was the first time that I heard laughter in class," Cortez said about his return to in-class teaching. ♦

togatalks

How would you describe simulcasting in hybrid?

"It's multitasking on steroids, like trying to walk a tightrope and play racquetball at the same time."

teacher Todd Dwyer

"Describing it in 5 words: insanely challenging, mind-blowing multi-tasking craziness."

teacher Kristen Hamilton

"I would rather teach the class twice every day than teach it to bilocated students simultaneously."

teacher Elaine Haggerty

All Graphics by CAROLYN WANG

SCHOOL SCOPE | Students discuss pros and cons of Middle College

BY Christina Chang

Junior Joshua Fang logged onto his psychology class at West Valley College and quickly found himself in the midst of a philosophical discussion about the relationship between empirical data and evidence and logical a priori thoughts.

Fang, who is enrolled in the Middle College program at West Valley College, said he enjoys being able to build his own schedule, allowing for more flexibility compared to Saratoga High's more rigid class structure.

"We often also have different professors to choose from, so I can choose the one who best fits my style of learning," Fang said.

Middle College offers high school juniors and seniors in the Campbell Union High School District and Los Gatos Saratoga Union High School District an alternative school pathway to take community college courses and gain college credits free of charge. Approximately 100 students enroll in Middle College each year, and the Los Gatos-Saratoga district typically has 12 to 20 students enrolled per grade level, said Mary Carol Bernal, the Middle College counselor for LGSUHSD students.

Despite the social and academic challenges many students have faced during the pandemic, the incentive to attend Middle College remains largely the same: a chance to explore a diverse list of courses and get an early taste of the college experience.

Fang originally chose to take Middle College because of the lack of high school classes that interested him.

"Middle College seems to offer everything that Saratoga High has academically, but more," Fang said. His schedule this semester includes psychology, philosophy and physics mechanics, along with required courses U.S. History and English 11.

Fang said the most difficult part of attending Middle College is learning self-control and taking the initiative to get the help he needs. Since Middle College instructors

don't monitor their students to stay on top of their work or give the same number of exams or quizzes, Fang realized that it is easier to stop paying attention and fall behind than it is in high school.

Fang takes five West Valley Middle College classes per week consisting of both synchronous and asynchronous sessions; however, he has found that remote learning during the pandemic has worsened the experience.

"I really hoped to study in the same room with college professors and other adults, especially for class discussions," Fang said. "Many of my classes, especially those in the winter and summer, which are optional, have turned completely into pre-recorded video lectures followed by quizzes and tests.

Also, many labs have just turned into us watching the professor do experiments on video, which is quite disappointing."

Social connections are also more difficult to create during the pandemic. However, Fang said taking Middle College during the pandemic has not compromised his relationships with peers: he also participates in clubs such as Model UN and Aspiring to Create English at SHS, a choice that has allowed him to keep in touch with his high school friends.

From an academic standpoint, Fang has enjoyed Middle College courses more than the ones he took at SHS, especially competitive ones like honors and Advanced Placement courses. He said that at the high school level, classes tend to be more goal oriented, utilitarian and focused on preparing to score high on the AP test. Without an AP test as a goal, college professors at Middle College have more liberty in designing their curriculum and the topics they cover.

"I need to make friends, which will be challenging since it has been announced that the fall semester will be online," Pai said. "I don't expect it to be easy to meet new people over Zoom as I am already a quiet and shy person. I will also miss my friends at school, and it's sad that I won't get to see them every day."

Still, she is ready for her new path.

"Although I'm going to miss being a regular student at SHS, I'm super excited for the opportunity to have this unique experience at Middle College where I can meet new people and make more connections," Pai said. ♦

Senior recounts experience running YouTube channel

ROHAN KUMAR GROWS HIS STEM-FOCUSED CHANNEL "CARARRA" TO OVER 5K SUBSCRIBERS IN TWO YEARS

BY Oliver Ye

APhO (physics), and AMC (math).

"I kept the channel secret initially, and then I got some all-caps, very confused texts from my friends who found it by searching up 'Last minute F=MA tips' or 'USACO,'" Rohan said. "Earlier this year, during the first CS club meeting, a freshman yelled out, 'Wait, you're Cararra!' so I guess middle schoolers watch my videos too. It turns out that basically everyone in the middle school math club knows about my channel now."

Rohan is unsure whether he will continue the channel to its current extent at UC Berkeley, where he will be studying Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering, noting that it does take a significant portion of his week to create and upload videos regularly.

He records his videos using a Nikon DSLR and edits his videos using Premiere Pro.

According to Rohan, since the average video takes around one hour to record and two hours to edit, he usually tries to record on the weekends and upload videos twice a week.

Still, the positive feedback he's received means that he hopes to maintain the channel while he focuses on college.

He's curious how much he can grow it. At the moment, Rohan is exploring the option of starting livestreams and AP Crash Courses.

For many students, Carrara has become a valuable resource for Olympiad prep.

While many are surprised by Rohan's teaching proficiency, he chalks it up to hard work and practice.

"I've been doing math and science competitions since middle school, so I've self-studied and learned a lot of advanced

concepts in math, computer science, biology, physics and chemistry," Rohan said. "In terms of teaching, even though I did have the knowledge, I was really, really bad at explaining at first. Only after about a year of making videos, I learned how to slow down, enunciate, and actually make my teaching understanding and entertaining."

For Rohan, the biggest surprise out of his YouTube journey has been how little money he made: around \$200 monthly for nearly 30 hours of work.

Though he doesn't make videos for the sake of money, the amount was still shocking.

"I didn't know it would be that little, but I will take less than minimum wage over

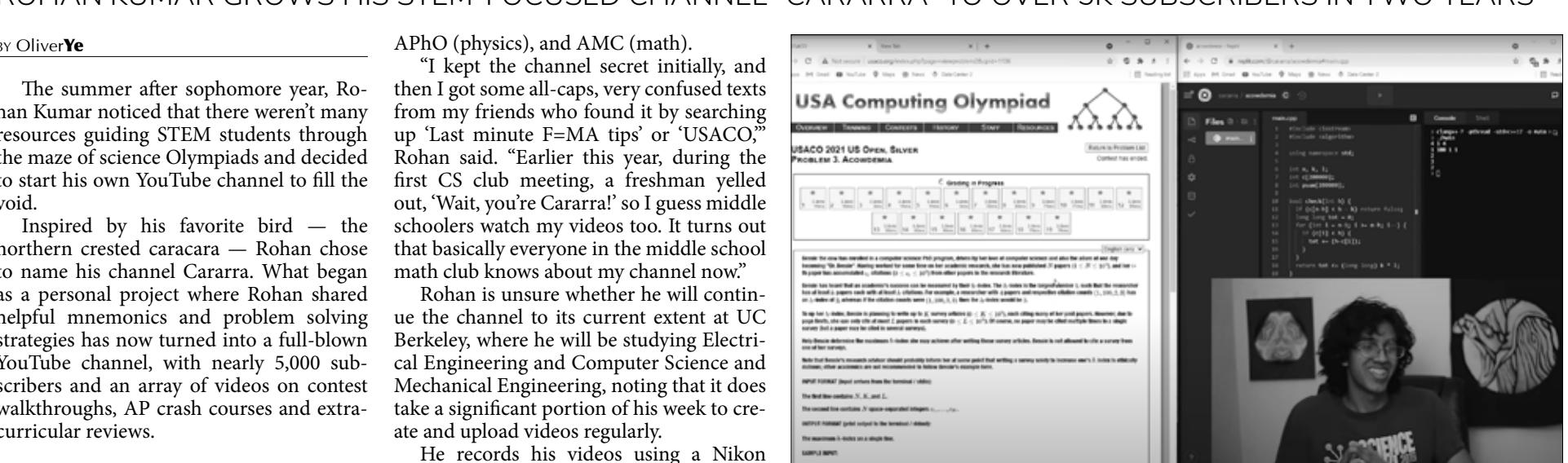
nothing any day of the week," Rohan said.

One side benefit of the endeavor has been an improvement in his public speaking.

"You can quite literally see the improvement just by comparing my videos from a year ago to now," he said.

Rohan said that he's not naturally entertaining, but creating videos regularly, trying to appeal to an audience and finding ways to create a community has taught him how to inflect, tell jokes and present in an interesting way.

"I'm now super comfortable presenting at club meetings and talking to people. Running this channel has turned me into an all-around better presenter and less awkward person," Rohan said. ♦



Courtesy of ROHAN KUMAR

Pandemic gratitude: reflecting on it all

pandemic g-lee

Hannah Lee

I still vividly remember that Friday last March when we were told that we'd have an extra week off of spring break. More than a year later, as I stood in line to get my COVID-19 vaccine on my 16th birthday, I began to reflect on how my life has changed during the pandemic.

As social distancing protocols escalated with the beginning of quarantine, I found myself doing and discovering a multitude of things I had never dedicated time to before.

Needless to say, transitioning from a packed daily routine to a slow but productive day was a sudden, yet much appreciated change.

I wasn't as lethargic or drained by the end of the day as I was during in-person school, and had enough energy to be productive until bedtime. In fact, through my productive journey, I became hooked on ambience videos to help me relax and study. Videos like "Sitting in a rainy cafe" to "Beachside in Greece".

Another pastime I was able to immerse myself in was music. My Spotify screen time shot up as I spent hours exploring a plethora of genres, from soft rock to the ultra-nostalgic hits. I would also spend months endlessly fangirling over my favorite musicians like The Japanese House, Men I Trust, Bruno Major — even holding mini concerts for my audience of stuffed animals.

I also ventured into podcasts thanks to my extra free time, spending hours listening to soothing, comforting advice to dark horror stories of lore. Some of my favorite discoveries

helped me picture myself traveling anywhere I wanted from the comfort of my own room.

Spending more time at home also meant more valuable time with family, and I grew closer to my older brother and sister during the summer before they left for college.

My sister and I made a routine of doing something fun and safe every week to make the most of our free time. One week, we drove around the neighborhood with the windows down, and the next we'd go on endless boba runs and sit at the park for an aesthetic picnic.

Not only did we get closer, but being quarantined with my siblings rarely made my days boring. Although I'm a complete introvert, it was still nice to try a new recipe or go on a Target run with my sister as a break from sitting at my desk for school all day. Looking back, I can say that those interactions were truly the most healing moments of my quarantine months.

The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter Movement, an increase in AAPI hate crimes, political debates and more made me more aware of underlying problems in the world that I hadn't fully understood before.

And while it may seem that I had a ton of fun staying at home during the pandemic, with the influx of negative stories in the news, I also felt as though my sanity was slowly withering away. In addition, it was tough to see my close friends and family members struggle with mental health issues of their own. ♦

I'm not being useless, I'm just saving my energy!

(mi) chael salad

Michael Fok

"Young teen becomes a millionaire off of pandemic hobby..."

The Reddit news feed blurs as an unexplainable tear forms in the corner of my one open eye at 8 a.m. Noticing the time, I consider getting out of bed and showering for my first class, but it's a red day and I

don't need to have my camera on for my first class, so I give up on attempting cleanliness and continue scrolling to the tune of Tom Jones' "It's Not Unusual" playing in my head.

Since the beginning of quarantine in March 2020, success stories of kids transforming their passions into businesses or starting Mother Teresa-like nonprofits have filled the news. For the vast majority of the population, however, the story has been the opposite — we can hardly get out of bed every day.

And that's perfectly fine.

An important revelation I came to a few months into the pandemic was that it's OK to be devoid of energy, it's OK to be useless and it's OK to waste a day.

With Zoom meetings until almost 1 p.m. at least four days a week plus a never ending pile of homework, it can be difficult to finish all your schoolwork — this isn't counting the various other activities people might have to do in a day, like household chores or extracurriculars. Sure, some may have more to do than others, and sure, some tasks are harder, but what's important to keep in mind is that personal struggles should not be compared — it's OK to struggle with the "little things" that might be a big deal to you.

Not everyone can have a front-page-worthy lockdown success story that they can brag about to their friends; in fact, not everyone should have one of those, because if they did, it wouldn't be as special. Being able to say that you made it through, that you're doing just fine and that you're ready to move forward past this one miserable year is a mighty victory on its own.

In this one year (plus a smidge), we've gone from having complete separation of classrooms and home to a great soup of activities all mixed into one pot. For some, that's great, but for most, having their bedroom become the room where they take the most stressful tests of the year, the room where they get that one terrible grade back and the room where they sleep is detrimental to their mental health. The separation of school and life sometimes. ♦

As for online school, I've had my fair share of low points.

One of the downsides was the endless technical difficulties, from shattering my laptop screen to random power outages that were incredibly hard to explain to my teachers. Although I feel excited to return to normalcy, I also have quite a few concerns about what will emerge when I leave quarantine.

One of the biggest worries I have for returning back to school is adjusting to being around so many people again versus through my phone or laptop.

Even when I do simple tasks such as grocery shopping, I find myself discombobulated from the bustling environment of the public. It's definitely concerning, but I assume others feel similarly around crowds due to living in isolation for so long.

Frankly, I won't say that the pandemic has had the best outcome, but it's refreshing that I can fondly look back at a majority of the time that I spent in quarantine. Bonding with some of the most truly supportive people in my life and discovering new hobbies and pastimes that I would have never thought to explore. ♦

Oddly specific campus phenomena that you may not have realized you missed

luan-atic memories

Esther Luan

After spending more than a year in quarantine and away from campus, it's hard to leave the comfort and familiar home workspaces when you return to come back to in-person school. I've struggled with this personally — is in-person school really worth sacrificing rolling out of bed 20 seconds before online class starts? Is it worth losing the opportunity to grab a bag of chips from the pantry during an especially dull breakout room?

I've done everyone a favor and listed out some common campus life phenomena to further inform your decision — many of which are annoying yet somewhat nostalgic. Upperclassmen might have forgotten some, but y'all will remember; freshmen, you'll experience these for the first time soon. Buckle up for a hike down memory lane (or the math wing hallway).

1. Healthy Food vending machines. Adrenaline rushes through your veins as you feed it a \$5 bill and it disappears with a zip.
2. Refilling stations. You pray to all the deities, who may or may not exist, for good fortune and a return on your investment — maybe some saltless pretzels or a can of zero-sugar San Pellegrino. The invocations are futile — the machine rolls a row of allegedly nutritious snacks forward and then stops just short of dropping one.
3. English wing murals painted by past students. You occasionally take a moment to appreciate these as you walk past on the way to your next class. They are manifestations of the artistic talent and creativity that you will never possess. Also, they make the beige brick walls more bearable to look at.
4. Debating whether or not to put your earbuds in two minutes before the end of passing. "Was that the bell or is everyone just coincidentally beeling to the door at the same time?"
5. Working hand dryers in the bathrooms. I'm hoping that by adding this item I can will it into existence. Every year, at a certain point in second semester, the chances of happening upon a working hand dryer are eclipsed by that of experiencing a lightning strike.
6. Cracking your back on the blue chairs. This is still on my list of top three places to crack your back and I haven't been able to experience it in over a year.

The crystal-clear flavor of filtered, chilled H2O washes away your sorrows. Did your friend offer a breath mint for solace after the test ended? Tastes even better.

Recommended by 10 out of 10 chiropractically qualified Esthers. The plastic magically angles directly into the best part of your spine. Between me and all the Falcon readers, I would steal one of these chairs if they weren't attached to desks.

See you on campus. Maybe. ♦

Graphic by MIN SUI TANG

RETURNING To NORMALCY

10 helpful ways to ace finals

ava-needs help

Avani Kongetira

is your only hope for pulling an 85.7 up to a 90.01, you're going to want to follow this tried and true finals routine.

Step 1: Mental health is your number one priority. If this means rewatching New Girl for the tenth time since the beginning of the semester, then by all means, do what you have to do.

Step 2: Do not, and I repeat, DO NOT start preparing weeks in advance. Cramming in a semester's worth of material the night before your final keeps everything fresh in your head.

Step 3: Study sheets are for losers. There's no need to make a study guide when you can just sleep with your textbook under your pillow and rely on diffusion for the information to soak in.

Step 4: Always wait until the last minute. This way, you'll get all your work done twice as fast. Sure, the end result may not turn out that great, but this is all graded on completion. Right?

Step 5: Forget about math. No

body needs parametrics anyway. P.S. This technique helped me bring my 85 in math up to an 83.

Step 6: Some people say you should go through your old tests and redo the problems, but I say that's all balderdash. Simply throw away that quiz on which you got a 54 percent — you don't need that negativity in your life.

Step 7: Memorize, memorize. It's always better to have a hoard of facts piled up in your head than waste your time trying to understand the material.

Step 8: Practice tests are overrated. Believe me, beginner's luck does half the work on the actual final.

Step 9: Pull an all nighter. It'll make the post-test nap so much better.

Step 10: Pray. Even if you don't believe in god, a supernatural force may be the only thing that can save your grade.

Follow these steps and you'll sail right through those pesky finals, no sweat. Enjoy your well-deserved A plus. You're welcome, by the way! ♦

'Dancing with the Devil' shares singer's struggles

BY Kaasha Minocha

On July 24, 2018, Jordan Jackson, former assistant to Demi Lovato, found Lovato's body entirely blue in her eerily dark bedroom. Jackson initially believed Lovato was drunk, but when the pop singer remained lifeless, Jackson dialed 911.

That phone call saved Lovato's life. She was only five minutes away from death after overdosing on heroin and fentanyl; at the age of 25, Lovato suffered three strokes and a heart attack, leaving her with permanent brain damage and impaired vision.

From her experience as a child star on Disney Channel to her overdose, Lovato powerfully portrays her entire journey in the YouTube Original four-part documentary, "Demi Lovato: Dancing with the Devil."

Each episode is around 20 minutes, titled "losing control," "5 minutes from death" and "reclaiming power" and "rebirth." Lovato and her closest family and friends discuss what happened on the night of her overdose and the events that led up to it.

However, Lovato's story is about much

more than simply overcoming her own challenges; it also serves as a guide for students and parents to discuss relationships, different forms of drug rehabilitation and mental health treatments.

The crucial role of parental influence and effective communication in children's growth is discussed as well. Her familial struggles began at a young age with her estranged father because of his substance abuse and violence. In 2013, he died of cancer, but his time of death is unknown, as he was undiscovered for a week.

Lovato also discussed her participation in beauty pageants as a child. They contributed to her low self-esteem as she pursued the "perfect body."

"I remember actually making a pact with myself saying, 'If I don't win this pageant, I will never eat again,'" she said.

The pageants also worsened her bulimia, an eating disorder characterized by cycles of binging and purging. Her mother struggled with the same body image issues. At one point, Lovato stopped eating entirely and purged so often that she began to throw up blood. Her team had to be careful with her food to avoid relapses. Lovato described her battle with bulimia to highlight the necessity of getting help through psychotherapy and nutritional education.

Along with bulimia, Lovato was the victim of two sexual assaults: one when she was 15 and the other in adulthood.

She shared her #MeToo stories in her documentary, which inspired and empowered others to use their voices and their

platforms as well to talk about their traumas and spread awareness.

For example, actor Will Ferrell felt moved after watching Lovato's emotional Grammy performance of her song "Anyone." After watching it, he emailed her to let her know that he felt very connected.

Like most people, I was shocked to see the severity of Lovato's overdose and the hardships she experienced. Most importantly, I realized that behind the celebrities' portrayed perfection, they are vulnerable and denied the freedom to speak up as well.

I am hopeful that Lovato's story will lead to change as it empowers more people to share their own stories about #MeToo, drug abuse, domestic violence, eating disorders and mental health. Eventually, it will raise discussions and social awareness on compassionate drug treatment, kind self-talk (someone's inner voice) and how to cope with sexual trauma and violence. These conversations will allow our community to become a more inclusive place where we feel encouraged to show emotional vulnerability and seek the guidance we need. ♦



Courtesy of PITCHFORK

in-depth

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HAM RADIO

Graphic by JOANN ZHANG

OPERATORS BAND TOGETHER TO CHANNEL PASSION INTO DIFFERENT PURSUITS ADAPTING TO QUARANTINE

by Jeanette Zhou

Joseph Hooton Taylor Jr. is best known for winning the Nobel Prize in physics in 1993 with his student Russell Alan Hulse for the discovery of the first binary pulsar, an advance that provided support for Einstein's theory of general relativity.

But to the amateur radio community, the retired 80-year-old astrophysicist is better known by his callsign, KJ1JT, under which he has developed several digital modes — weak signal modes that use computer software — including FT8, WSPR and JT65 — as well as the WSJT software — used by ham radio operators to quickly receive, decode and transmit weak signals.

After it was popularized at the turn of the 20th century, amateur radio, colloquially known as ham radio, has grown a dedicated community of engineers, scientists and hobbyists across the globe.

Unlike users of citizen band (CB) radio — 40 channels between 26.965 MHz and 27.405 MHz offered to the general public for short-distance communication — Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensed amateur radio operators are allowed to use more frequencies at higher power, allowing them to communicate over much greater distances and to have the freedom to build radio transmitters.

With three levels of license classes that can be earned with tests of increasing difficulty — the Technician license, General license and the highest level amateur Extra license, hams (ham radio operators) can make contacts with people across the country, around the world and even into space through voice message, Morse code or text and images with newer computer interfaced radios.

There is a wide variety of radio set-ups, ranging from USB memory stick sized Software Defined Radios (SDR) to handheld digital mobile receivers (DMR) to entire rooms full of equipment. Nowadays, many operators have shortwave radios like the ICOM 7300, which they use to make contacts on high frequency (HF).

Ham radio operators are often relied upon during natural disasters, as they can communicate wirelessly without a cellular network or internet connection. Groups, such as the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), have been called upon to provide communication in disasters like the California wildfires.

In addition to providing a crucial vol-

untary emergency service, amateur radio operators have developed a close-knit community and passionate hobbyist culture, with some operators' interest in science and engineering leading to extraordinary developments in their fields. In fact, the second radio astronomer, Grote Reber, who built the first dish radio telescope in 1937, was a ham radio operator.

Radio science and reanalyzing the stars

Taylor told The Falcon in an email interview that he has been interested in radios since he was young, building simple radio receivers, crystal sets and one-tube radios, with his older brother before they qualified for their first amateur radio licenses. Taylor was 13 at the time and his brother Harold was 15.

"My brother and I built our equipment together — receivers, transmitters, antennas, whatever we needed," Taylor said. "One of our antennas was erected on a pole firmly attached to the main chimney of the house. A few weeks after its installation, a strong wind destroyed the antenna — and much more serious, broke off the chimney, flush with the roof. Soon afterward, my father gave the two of us boys a lesson in bricklaying, while helping us to rebuild the chimney."

This fascination with radios led Taylor to form a ham radio club with a few other licensed amateurs. By his senior year, the eight club members made up more than 15 percent of his graduating class.

His early interest in radio technology led him to major in physics at Haverford College, a small, liberal arts Quaker school located outside of Philadelphia. After receiving the Nobel Prize in physics in 1993 and later retiring as the Dean of Faculty at Princeton University, Taylor continued his passion for radio. After creating widely used FT8 and WSPR modes with his expertise in weak signal analysis, he continued to give presentations and speeches to the amateur radio community.

Senior to carry on ham radio interest

While Taylor's passion for amateur radio and electronics led him to the field of radio astronomy, senior Karen Lei (KN6NAN) has seen her passion for astronomy lead her to pursue radio science.

Quarantine changes affect interests

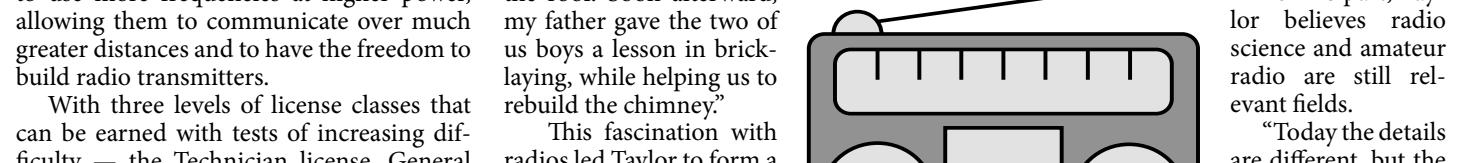
Class of 2019 alumnus Ali Lichtenberg (KM6OKT) received his technician's license in 2017, while preparing to go backpacking. Lichtenberg later joined the amateur radio club (W2SZ) at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., a month into his freshman year. The club focused on making contacts and participating in radio contests, including ones that involved mobile rover stations, RTTY Roundups and more; however, club activities were paused due to the pandemic.

While interest was soaring, radio testing centers were being shut down in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions. In response, many volunteer examiners began preparations to move the test online, including Morris Jones, head of the Silicon Valley Volunteer Examiner Group.

In a public notice, the FCC approved online remote license testing on April 30, 2020, which allowed people to test with groups across the country. Jones said each testing group is fully booked and made up of a "mishmash" of people from across the country.

Although there are difficulties faced in gaining the support of younger generations, those who are involved with amateur radio are a dedicated, albeit small, community.

"Anything you can do to keep our hobby strong in the future is what we need, because we don't want it to fade away," said McIntyre, the Apple engineer. "A lot of people say, 'well, why would I bother talking on this crazy radio stuff when I can walk around at Safeway and talk to somebody in Japan on the internet?' but to me it's like magic. For HF, you have this wire up there somewhere in the air, and you wiggle electrons on one end and they wiggle halfway around the globe; they're so weak, but somebody picks them up and understands what you said. Even the fickleness, the fact that you can't always communicate makes it more magical. It's the greatest hobby in the world." ♦



Graphic by JOANN ZHANG

a superb training ground for interested and self-motivated high school students."

classes, walking around campus and doing all these things, but they're stuck at home or in a dorm. But I think there's a message that humans are very resilient and if we look, we can find a way to cope with these problems; people who have amateur radio can cope with it, because you simply get on the radio and start talking to people."

A generation gap

While there are 105,994 licensed amateur radio operators in California, more than any other state, hams only account for about 0.2 percent of the U.S. population.

In addition, the majority of operators are in their 60s or 70s, which has prompted many organizations to attempt to bridge the generation gap to prevent amateur radio from dying out. Throughout the 20th century, many people, like both Taylor and Jones, built radios out of scrap material they found.

Around age 12, Jones joined a group of amateur radio operators in Utah. Now, Jones is the adviser to the San Jose State Ham Radio Club (W6YL), a club that dates back to the 1920s. While activities have been currently halted, Jones expects the club to come back after the pandemic.

That spirit of building is also present in many amateur radio events focused on experimentation.

Kristen McIntyre (K6WX), the Pacific Division Director of the Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL), also known as the National Association for Amateur Radio, participated in AMTech Day, a monthly event that has been canceled since 2011 after losing its location at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) National Accelerator Observatory.

In a public notice, the FCC approved online remote license testing on April 30, 2020, which allowed people to test with groups across the country. Jones said each testing group is fully booked and made up of a "mishmash" of people from across the country.

In addition to crossing off an item in their bucket list, operators have many practical reasons for getting their licenses.

Jones, who served in the Civil Air Patrol in Utah as a young man, found it easy to get a license to operate the airplane radios after getting his ham radio license.

This gave him the opportunity to often ride in planes as the communicator during search missions, and through this, he gained something much more personal: a community.

"One of the concerns I have about COVID is a lot of young people, especially students who've just come to college, all of a sudden don't have a community," Jones said. "You develop a community in your

Graphic by JOANN ZHANG

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ENTERTAINMENT

Rating system fails to curtail obscene movie content

LACK OF MEDIA REGULATION BRINGS UP THE QUESTION: DOES THE FILM INDUSTRY NEED MORE CENSORSHIP?

by Hannah Lee

Maybe Hollywood needs a little more self-censorship. That sounds a bit radical, I know, but stick with me.

Throughout the 1930s-'40s — right in the middle of what is considered Hollywood's Golden Age — parents did not have to worry about the violence, nudity or explicit scenes in the film. The content was limited because of the Hays Code of 1934, which ensured that American films were wholesome and morally intact.

As the decades went by, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) pushed for less censorship to give filmmakers more creative freedom. That led to the Hays Code disappearing in 1968, and MPAA creating a new familiar rating system that has evolved into: G, PG, PG-13, R and NC-17.

Four out of five of the films with the most profanity were released after the year 2000.

While some took the new content regulation as an opportunity to make their films more realistic and compelling, other filmmakers decided to include full-blown explicit content in their movies, often knowing it would contribute to box office success but add little or nothing artistically.

Supposedly, proponents of these ratings had great belief in

the BBFC stated that

parents' ability to control what their kids would see. They couldn't have anticipated all the changes the internet would bring in the 2000s.

And then fast forward to today. On TikTok, for example, advertisements for grim horror movies like "The Green Inferno," "The Human Centipede" and "A Serbian Film" have been trending.

These films depict extremely graphic images of harming or abusing other characters for another character's enjoyment, with "no attempt to portray any of the victims in the films as anything other than objects to be brutalized, degraded and mutilated for the amusement and arousal of the central character, as well as for the pleasure of the audience," the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) said.

The clips traveling around the platform can easily pique younger viewers' curiosity, leading them to look up the movie and become traumatized by the results. Though people can and always will watch what they want, the looser the regulations become, the harder it will be to control the consequences.

Though the First Amendment guarantees freedom of speech, this freedom does not apply to obscene materials, especially when viewed by children.

Although what material is considered obscene or perverse remains strongly subjective and standards vary from state to state, several films, such as "The Green Inferno" and "A Serbian Film," unquestionably violate these exact laws.

In fact, the BBFC stated that

the "Human Centipede II" may breach the Obscene Publications Act, and "poses a real, as opposed to a fanciful, risk that harm is likely to be caused to potential viewers."

Yet "The Human Centipede" even has sequels. The warnings to avoid the movie just encouraged people to watch it.

These movies have effects beyond simply

Take the blockbuster and

globally known film "The Wolf of Wall Street," released in 2013, for example. It's an incredibly popular film that is mainstream and easy to access, containing excessive profanity. The film has the highest number of swear words in a film with an overwhelming 715 swear words in its 180-minute run. This type of behavior could make people swear more in their daily life.

In contrast, films such as "The Hate U Give," "Love Simon," and "Hidden Figures" all have somewhat progressive storylines and teach some real-life moral lessons

— all without being unnecessarily graphic or obscene. Why keep creating content with the adverse effects and encouraging others to watch it when society can't afford any more damaging content being passed around in mainstream media that's easy to access for everyone?

In fact, an Associated Press poll (2006) suggests that Americans are using and hearing profanities more often than ever before. Nearly three-fourths of poll respondents reported that they hear profanities more often than in years past and some two-thirds perceive that swearing has become more prevalent in society.

And according to a survey conducted by Buzzfeed, four out of the five films with the most profanity were released after the year 2000 — showing just how steep the decline in morality has been.

Many filmmakers are abusing their artistic freedom these days and need to be reined in or learn to rein themselves in.

If the film industry begins to change censorship regulations or implement the obscenity regulations they created in the first place, there's a higher possibility that filmmakers will start creating films with more progressive and meaningful storylines. We as consumers can also shun films we deem too graphic or crude.

This isn't to say that the film industry is going to become perfect overnight; however, the first step in the process is limiting what is

seen on the big screen and in real life.

spread effect addiction has.

To its credit, "Euphoria" accurately describes the complexities of the issue rather than glorifying the abuse. By contrast, in the movie "Project Power," those who take a drug receive five minutes of superhero powers. This representation implies that drugs are a kind of a superpower, when in reality, drugs like heroin are dangerous, deadly and have the ability to ruin lives.

That's why accurate portrayals of the increasingly prevalent problem of drug abuse are so crucial, especially for high schoolers who will have to make life-affecting choices at parties or other situations.

Besides drug use and abuse, the film industry has been swept in the tide advocating against racism generally and police brutality.

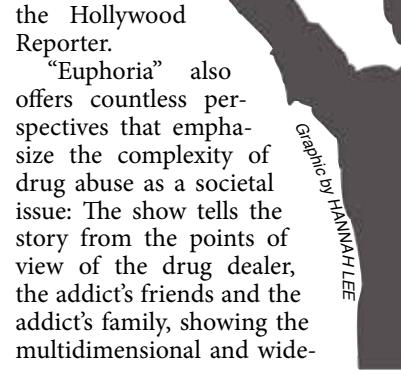
An impactful example in this category is the 2018 movie "The Hate U Give" — based on the Angie Thomas book — in which a police officer pulls over and shoots a 17-year-old Black boy named Khalil.

This movie explores the impact of Khalil's murder, and exposes the judicial bias in favor of law enforcement as the jury acquits the officer. While its main topic is police brutality, it also depicts the effect gangs have on Black communities and stereotypes used to justify their racism and violence toward African Americans.

With the Black Lives Matter movement garnering more support since the horrific and brutal death of George Floyd nearly a year ago, entertainment is one place where we can begin to understand and process the complex issues and histories of our imperfect society. ♦



Graphic by NIDHI MATHIHALLI



Graphic by HANNAH LEE

Graphic by NIDHI MATHIHALLI

The Saratoga Falcon

May 21, 2021

WHEN HISTORY IS PERSONAL

TEXTBOOKS DON'T ALWAYS CAPTURE IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCE

by CarolynWang

When junior Noora Fayad, who is Muslim, heard one of her friends call Islam "the only religion with a terrorist group" in a Zoom breakout room in December, she was heartbroken.

"I grew up with people making fun of Islamic terms like 'Allahu Akbar,' which means God is great," Fayad said. "They would say it before making a basketball shot, not with the intention of saying 'God is Great,' but rather to make fun of the phrase because they hear ISIS say it on the news before an attack."

She is one of many students who say that books they read in history and English classes sometimes don't fully reflect the lived experiences of their immigrant parents or relatives.

Fayad's mother was born in Lebanon to parents who founded a school for underprivileged kids, including refugees from Syria and Palestine. Fayad's mother endured a sporadic education because she had to move around frequently, in large part due to conflicts such as the 1982 Lebanon War. Fayad's father, on the other hand, grew up in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, often lacking basic food or water requirements. He ended up going to Russia for medical school.

Eventually, both of her parents moved to the U.S. in hopes of a better life: Fayad's dad transferred to UC Davis and her mom went to dental school.

Prior to COVID-19, Fayad



Fayad

traveled to Lebanon on a yearly basis unless there was an imminent danger of war, where she learned much of her family's history.

"Going to Lebanon, I witnessed the physical effects of the war, in the sense that I saw broken buildings with bullet holes in them or relatives with scars," Fayad said.

"It's predominantly how I learned it. It was traumatizing, but not to the extent of the trauma that my parents and aunts and uncles had gone through."

On top of family trips, Fayad also learned about her heritage while listening to the news with her parents; they would discuss their opinions on certain foreign policies by referencing the experiences of their immediate or distant relatives.

For Fayad, research and tidbits of information garnered from her grandparents also played a role in understanding her heritage. Yet when she read her history textbook's coverage of conflicts in the Middle East — specifically, Palestine — she felt unsatisfied.

"What I see from my textbooks was the Western Hemisphere's perception of the Middle East," Fayad said. "I'm not saying you cannot talk about that, but I don't see the other side of the story. I don't see history through the lens of the people — what they were and are still going through."

Missing were complete portrayals of the poverty and harsh conditions in parts of the Middle East as well as consequences of U.S. military support of countries like Israel.

"I didn't see those hardships,

but it was what I wanted to see," Fayad said. "I wanted to see kids like me getting the full picture so we can critically analyze what's truly going on during that time."

Additionally, Fayad finds difficulty combating misconceptions related to her Muslim identity.

"I see myself as the bad guy in movies that try to portray [people like] me as a terrorist," Fayad said.

I'm a Palestinian, Lebanese and Muslim girl; I'm a normal girl, but I keep seeing myself mirrored in this horrible light. Being Middle Eastern, Arab and Muslim, it's kind of a triple whammy."

JUNIOR Noora Fayad

Fayad isn't alone. In a study by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 42 percent of Muslim children reported being bullied in school, compared to 19 percent of all children nationwide.

After hearing the remark in the breakout room about Islam being the only terrorist religion, Fayad sought to help her friend understand that Islam itself means peace and that the religion is about tranquility and the belief in God. Extremists, she said, neither represent nor encompass those values. Still, Fayad wishes that whether it is religion or history, people would take the time to look at the facts from every perspective.

"Now, just compensate by filling the other side of the story. Allow students to look at primary sources detailing what natives went through," Fayad said. "Don't have the textbook elude me to draw a certain conclusion. Give me the facts and allow me to analyze them myself."

A new perspective in the U.S. After sophomore Jennifer Xiao learned about the Korean and Sino-Japanese wars in World History from the American point of view, she was intrigued.

Xiao, who moved to the U.S. in 2019 during her freshman year, grew up in mainland China. Her world history class, taught by Jerry Sheehy, was the first time she saw history from the American point of view in a lot more depth.

Xiao recalled that one of the only mentions of Asian countries during World War II in the class textbook — "California: World History: The Modern World" by Elisabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler — was how Western countries assisted China in the Sino-Japanese War after triumphing over Germany. There were some parts she saw missing in that retelling.

"One factor we as a Chinese people cared a lot about during World War II was how as a nation, we defended our territory de-

spite the fact that we weren't very industrialized and didn't have a good military," Xiao said, referring to China's defense during battles such as the invasion of Manchuria.

"It was important because the event influenced our territory, our national anthem and our pride as a whole nation."

Having traveled all across China in her youth, Xiao noted that there was a common sense of understanding between the Chinese people about topics like nationalism during World War II that people in Western countries have harder times understanding. Reading about the topic in the U.S., she saw the book omitting such details about events like the Second Sino-Japanese war.

According to the BBC, events from the Second Sino-Japanese war, such as the invasion of Manchuria and the Nanjing Massacre spurred deep anti-Japanese resentment from South Korea and China for many years since the war, all of which are briefly mentioned in the U.S. textbook.

"I think the perspective's just a little different in the U.S." Xiao said. "Having grown up in Northeastern China geographically speaking, I've had a strong impression of what went on in China during World War II [regarding invasions in the Northeast]. I can still see the leftover buildings and railroads from that era nowadays."

Despite the current tensions between the U.S. and China, Xiao believes there are ways the history curriculum can be improved. One idea she had was to have teachers research history topics using media outlets from foreign countries that normally aren't given a platform in America. Another was to play documentaries from other countries that contrast with Western media.

"Hopefully [these ideas] can make history more objective, since it's hearing voices from two different sides," Xiao said. "I think the key to history education is breaking stereotypical opinions, which would improve the learning experience for students."

Looking beyond 'good and bad' Although sophomore Petr Tupitsyn finds that AP European History and World History class's Socratic Seminars take more effort to prepare than other activities, he appreciates the school's efforts to bring in multiple perspectives on events. He recalled a project about Russian monarch Catherine the Great that required him to decide whether she was ultimately a good person or bad person. "Those conversations are very helpful because

they break the 'it's all good' or 'it's all bad' mindset," Tupitsyn said.

At the age of 6, Tupitsyn emigrated from Russia after his dad found a job here. Because the world history textbook largely focuses on Europe as a whole, he said the book covers Russia relatively well in comparison to other lesser-referenced countries and cultures in Asia and South America. In general, he finds that the textbook does its job by correctly stating facts.

By contrast, Tupitsyn has seen Americans' views of Russia to be slightly off the mark. One thing he noticed was that some people assume everyone in Russia is a communist, while others think everyone there must be anti-communist.

In reality, he said, both are "kind of true."

"One thing that's just interesting is a lot of people in Russia recognize that the Soviet Union was better because they like the idea of a 'big united thing' but at the same time, they don't want to go back because they don't like the idea of communism," Tupitsyn said. "It's a touchy topic there, but it's a perspective that's not all black and white." Nevertheless, he credits his teachers for being "pretty fair" toward communism, specifically observing that they covered communism just as in depth as other ideologies like liberalism and romanticism.

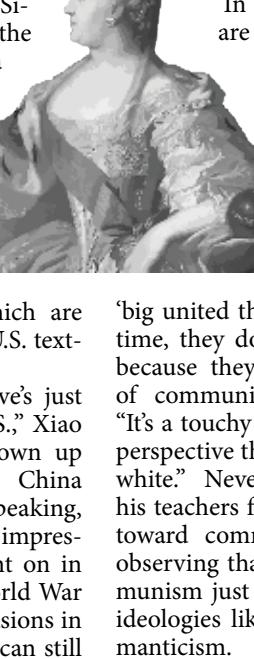
While Tupitsyn said the textbook describes the faults of Russian leaders well, he said it lacks in the description of their accomplishments, particularly when it comes to bringing the country out of poverty.

Tupitsyn agreed that most Russian leaders like the Romanovs were power-hungry and owned serfs, but said they did their fair share of developing Russia, a relatively third-world country throughout much of history, into a comparable power to Britain and France. He also pointed out that despite serfdom being emphasized as such a negative attribute of Russian history, Russia released enslaved people four years earlier than the U.S.

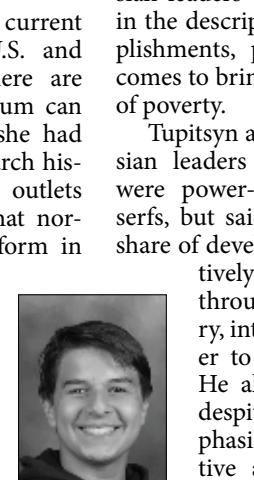
"I remember when we were going over the Romanov family and the textbook was like 'Oh yeah, the Romanovs. They were so power hungry and everyone was dying,'" Tupitsyn said. "It's certainly not inaccurate but sometimes I do feel it's a bit negative and the demonization [of certain leaders or ideologies] surprises me a little."

He acknowledges the difficulties historians face.

"In history we're taught that a primary source is better than a secondary source," Tupitsyn said. "I think those who write history textbooks should take that into account as well!"



Xiao



Tupitsyn

How are Textbooks Written and Made?

1. Textbook publishers reach out to experts like PhDs and kindergarten teachers, who write the book. The most qualified writer usually serves as the main editor.

2. The authors use primary sources and existing secondary sources to compile a draft textbook (processes vary by each publisher).

3. Publishers customize textbooks to local education standards without input from authors, resulting in different versions of the textbook per state.

4. State education panels review textbooks and provide input for change. In California, textbooks were asked to avoid the word "massacre" when describing Native American attacks on white people.

5. Publishers sell textbooks to school districts, which are often given no more than three choices.

SOURCE: NEW YORK TIMES AND SLATE

TEACHER FRIENDSHIPS

FROM TEXT MESSAGING TO MORNING RUNS, TEACHERS FIND WAYS TO STAY IN TOUCH DURING QUARANTINE

by ChristinaChang

industries, found that the pandemic has reduced workers' social connectedness, as 60 percent of respondents said their social relations became worse. Despite the generally negative trend in workplace relationships, many teachers at the school have maintained their close friendships during the pandemic.

"[Herzman and Ritchie] are kind, funny and intelligent. I admire their great teaching skill, their caring, their problem solving orientation, their integrity, their judgment and their sense of humor," Keys said. "I feel so fortunate to teach and plan with them as well as socialize with them. [Our friendship is like] family plus work plus friends — kind of ideal."

Herzman and Ritchie met in 2004 as colleagues teaching at Scotts Valley High School (SVHS) in Scotts Valley. A few years later in 2007, Herzman met Keys, who was working as a teacher mentor for the New Teacher Project in Santa Cruz County, providing one-on-one support to new teachers completing their credentials.

Through years of carpooling and other social activities, the three have formed a close friendship. The pandemic has hindered their ability to have normal get-togethers like house parties, traveling, camping and carpooling; however, the three have continued to sustain their close bond both digitally through text messaging and through walks and hikes.

Workplace friendships play a crucial role in job satisfaction and productivity. A 2018 survey conducted at Olivet Nazarene University found that 82 percent of respondents had at least one work friend and around 30 percent had a work best friend.

Since then, they have become close friends, frequently planning lessons together and discussing a range of topics: books, movies, art, family, school, travel, politics and life.

Math teachers Seema Patel and Kelly Frangieh are also close friends who keep in touch through daily text threads as well as outdoor lunches, dinners and hikes.

The two met in 2004 when the math department invited Patel to the end of year lunch celebration at BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse just after she was hired to teach for the following school year. She was seated next to Frangieh, who had been teaching at the school since 2000, and the two began to talk about Frangieh's pregnancy. Patel said their friendship has grown "leaps and bounds" since that day.

According to an article in the Houston Chronicle, having close work friends improves teamwork, collaboration and employee morale, along with employee productivity and employee retention rates.

"I struggled to fit in with my department and the school," Patel said. "When Mrs. Frangieh returned from her maternity leave, she was the person who made me feel like I belonged and mattered. To be honest, if she hadn't come

back, I don't think I would have."

Additionally, workers who have a best friend at work are more likely to be more focused during their work, according to the National Business Research Institute. Out of the employees who report having a work best friend, 56 percent are engaged in their work while 33 percent are not engaged; in contrast, among the remaining workers who do not have a work best friend, 8 percent are engaged and 63 percent are not.

Patel also said she is grateful to have colleagues who have become friends because her workload has become more manageable, as she is able to bounce ideas off other teachers who understand what she's going through on a

daily basis.

Patel added that her friendship with Frangieh serves as a support system; if she has a problem, she knows the other will have her back.

When Patel was scared to get her COVID-19 vaccine, the two went to get it together at Levi's Stadium.

Frangieh also convinced Patel to have an on-campus cohort for students to

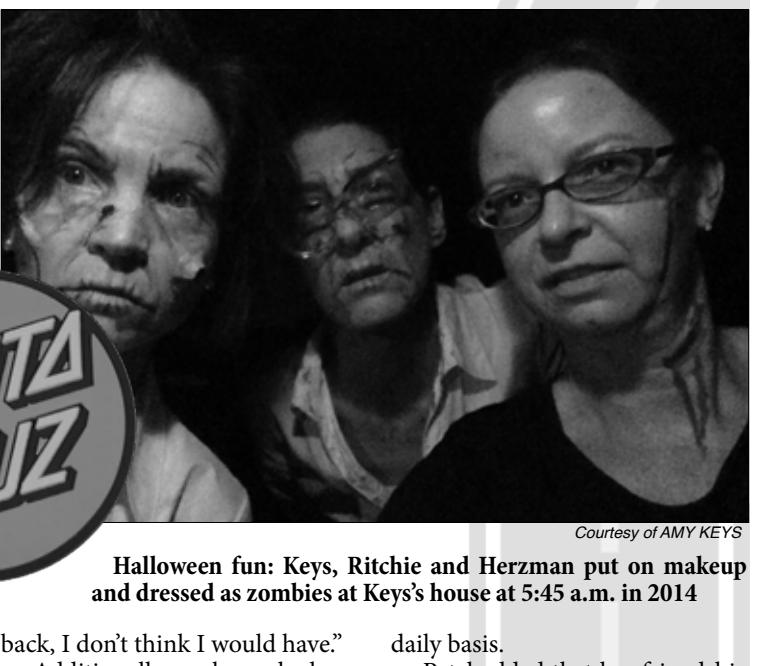
come and learn in-person back in November.

"[Patel] understands what I am going through at work. She always has my back and is not afraid to challenge me if I don't want to do something but to also support me through anything," Frangieh said. "It's really nice to have a friend at work."



Courtesy of SARAH VOORHEES

Teachers Kristen Hamilton, Sarah Voorhees and Yuko Aoki get vaccinated at Levi's Stadium



Courtesy of AMY KEYS

Halloween fun: Keys, Ritchie and Herzman put on makeup and dressed as zombies at Keys's house at 5:45 a.m. in 2014

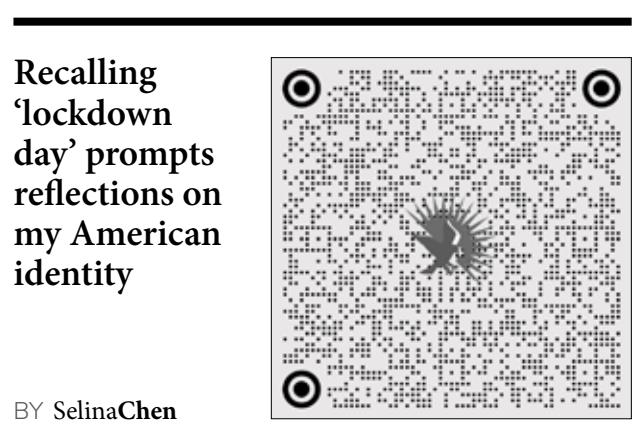
Frangieh

Patel



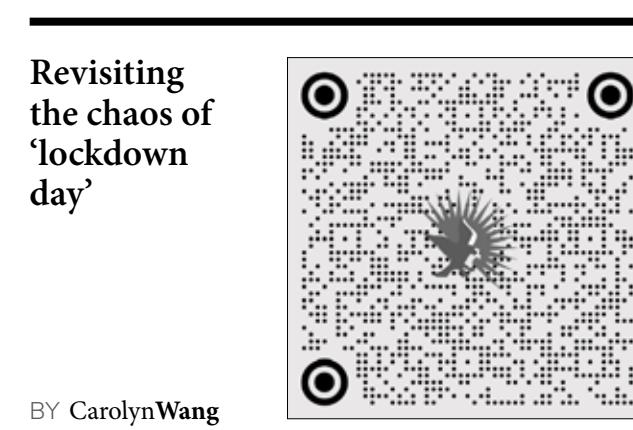
FALCON // SHAAN SRIDHAR

Teachers Lisa Ginestet-Araki, Kristen Hamilton, Seema Patel and Sarah Voorhees eat lunch by the math wing on May 10, 2021



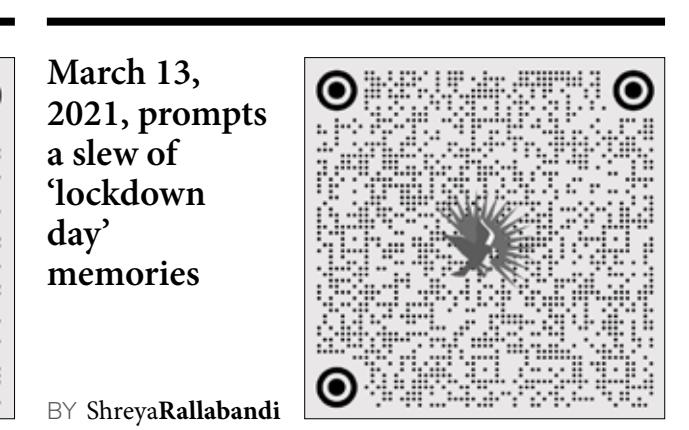
BY SelinaChen

Recalling 'lockdown day' prompts reflections on my American identity



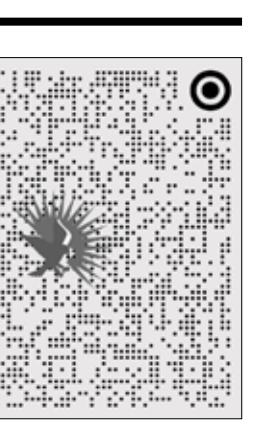
BY CarolynWang

Revisiting the chaos of 'lockdown day'



BY ShreyaRallabandi

March 13, 2021, prompts a slew of 'lockdown day' memories



All graphics by SHAAN SRIDHAR and JOANN ZHANG

Season 2 summary

Graphic by CHRISTINA CHANG

by ChristinaChang

In a year where the possibility of sports was uncertain, Season 2 sports have faced disappointments ranging from low participation to COVID-19 quarantines to a shortened season. Still, the athletes have prevailed and are satisfied with their performance.

Badminton combats small roster

Despite COVID-related challenges, the badminton team finished fourth in league with a record of 5-7.

Since many senior athletes didn't participate, the team started off each game with an eight-point deficit; junior team captain Enoch Jung said they overcame this hurdle with the positive mindset and key additions from the freshman class.

Field hockey welcomes new coach

The team, led by new coach Jatin Sharma, ended third in league with a record of 6-3. Though it is Sharma's first season coaching the team, players said they loved his excitement at their progress and his supportive nature coupled with his knowledge in the sport.

Football ends strong, despite a shortened season

The Falcons concluded their season with a 25-22 win against Fremont on April 9. Due to a positive COVID-19 test, the team went into a 10-day quarantine, forcing them to forfeit their last game vs. Westmont. Including the forfeit, they finished third in league with a 2-3 record.

Despite a shortened season, some seniors had notable achievements: Quarterback Grant Petters maintained a completion rate of over 50 percent each game and finished with a quarterback position over 100 and wide receiver Ryan Gilligan finished in the top 10 for CCS and third in the league for receiving yards.

Boys' soccer sees improved performance with new coach

Led by new coach Max Dorling, the soccer team saw great improvement from previous years and finished a 5-6 record.

Due to the team's poor record in re-

cent years, Dorling's main challenge was building up players' confidence. Throughout the season, they focused on implementing new drills to improve game performance. With a positive attitude, they seized learning opportunities given by the season and gained experiences to build upon next spring.

Girls' soccer places first in the league

Earning first place in league, the Falcons ended their season with a 10-1 record. Head coach Ben Maxwell attributes their success to a combination of their drop to the lower league, hard work and experienced athletes.

One of their star players was senior center back Michelle Lim, who is committed to play DIII soccer at Wellesley College. Other key players included freshman center back Lauren Sun and midfielders freshman Kate Oberhouser and sophomore Gabi Golko.

Girls' tennis creates new friendships

The girls' tennis team concluded their season with a 5-7 record, and athletes walked away with improvements in confidence, ability to perform under pressure, team chemistry and strong friendships with their teammates.

Senior Juhi Patel plays No. 1 singles, and junior Catherine Kan and sophomore Melody Lin play No. 1 doubles.

Girls' volleyball overcomes COVID-related challenges

The team finished fourth in league with a record of 6-4. Coach Brendan Wang, who traditionally had been the boys' volleyball coach, led the team with new plays.

The team faced challenges due to having little time to work on athletes' skills. Some players were on both the varsity and JV rosters due to low participation.

Despite challenges, players said they relished the chance to return to play. ♦

— with additional reporting from Avani Kongetira, Harshini Velchamy, Martin Xu, Minsui Tang, Selina Chen, Stephanie Sun, Tiffany Wang and Vicky Bai

Complaints force SCVAL to reverse CCS decision

by ChristinaChang
& AnjaliPai

Editor's Note: This story was written before a late-breaking reversal of the initial policy on May 14.

Senior Jane Loo, a point guard on the girls' basketball team, fondly recalled her team's annual dinners at Benihana with former head coach Danny Wallace.

Their yearly tradition was to tell the waiters that it was Wallace's birthday to get a free cake, with the girls rounding up his age between 10-15 years.

After four years of making memories, the team's seniors missed their last chance at winning championships in the Central Coast Section (CCS) playoffs due to the pandemic.

According to a CCS press release on April 26, the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) granted approval for some sports to participate in CCS playoffs, including boys' and girls' soccer,

team tennis, boys' volleyball, boys' and girls' basketball, boys' and girls' lacrosse, baseball and softball. However, after a unanimous decision by the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League (SCVAL) on April 29, these teams have been withdrawn from postseason play.

The decision to forgo CCS has caused confusion among athletes as all other leagues were cleared for a postseason, and elicited disappointment, mainly from seniors, who will miss out on their final opportunity to participate in the playoffs.

While CCS split sports into two seasons, the SCVAL split sports into three seasons. They held low risk sports in Season 1, moderate risk sports in Season 2 and high-risk sports in Season 3 to preserve athletes' chances at being able to play a season.

“We wanted to end high school basketball on a high note,” Loo said. “By taking away CCS, we don't get a chance to achieve our goal that we've worked towards these past four years.”

However, because of the conflicting CCS and SCVAL schedules in some sports, this disqualified its 14 member schools, including Saratoga High, from CCS.

According to the Mercury

News, other reasons SCVAL cited for opting out of CCS included potential Title IX issues and the fact that CCS will run until mid-June, past the end of the school year when school administrators have scheduled vacations.

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son, and elicited

disappointment, mainly from seniors, who will miss out on their final opportunity to participate in the play-offs.

“We want ed to end high school basketball on a high note,” Loo said. “By taking away CCS, we don't get a chance to achieve our goal that we've worked towards these past four years.”

Senior guard Justin Guo, who has consistently missed out on

CCS during his playing career, echoed similar frustrations. He played JV in his freshman and sophomore year, and was out with an injured elbow for his junior year, making this his last chance at partaking in the playoffs.

“Not only is this my senior year, but it would have been the first time that I would have been able to play in CCS, and obviously that would have been a special moment for me,” Guo said.

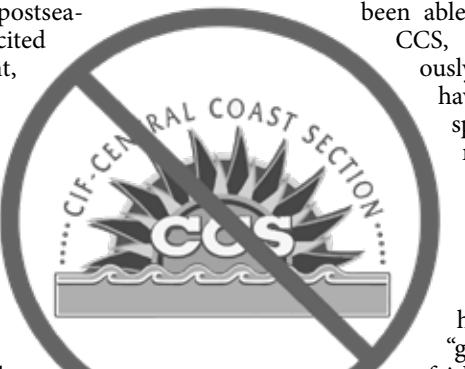
While he was disappointed, he said he “got over it fairly quickly” as the possibility of having a sports season at all was uncertain at the beginning of the year due to COVID-19.

He said reflecting on the status of the season in the fall has put the current situation into perspective, and has helped him focus on what he can control: doing his best to help his team win the rest of their league games.

Although the team cannot take part in CCS, athletes have chosen to focus on the positives of the friendships made through their sport and playing a season at all in a year when that was uncertain.

“The biggest things I’ve gotten from sports are the memories and friendships.”

SENIOR Justin Guo



Graphic by CHRISTINA CHANG

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SENIOR Justin Guo

“It’s cheesy, but the biggest thing I’ve gotten from sports is the memories and relationships with my friends,” Guo said. “More than any point I’ve scored or game we’ve won, the intangible friendships and energy and after practice hangouts are the experiences that will always stand out to me as I move on in life.” ♦

Super League proposal shows owners' greed

SMALLER CLUBS AND FANS REVOLT, IDEA REJECTEDby AtreyDesai, JasonCheng
& VinayGollamudi

In a move that ultimately failed, 12 of Europe's most famous and historically successful soccer clubs announced on April 18 that they would found an European Super League (ESL), a competition that was to take place in the middle of every week alongside their existing domestic competitions.

The proposal threatened to crumble the existing structure of European soccer. Its disregard for smaller, less famous clubs enraged their fans and many others worldwide.

The common conclusion to this whole drama was that sports team owners are even greedier than anyone imagined.

Notably missing from the group of founding members were the German Bayern Munich and French Paris Saint-Germain. German clubs have an ownership model known as 50+1, where the fans have a say in the decisions made by the club. This prevented the club from joining the ESL.

Many students, including sophomores Anirudh Iyer and Luke Wang, were among the fans who were against the proposal.

“The reason why I and millions of other fans treasure Champions League ties such as Barcelona vs. Manchester United and Chelsea vs. Real Madrid because they're rare events: an almost once-in-a-lifetime game,” Iyer said. “The ESL completely takes away this novelty and I almost don't feel like watching the game.”

Another important part of the game the ESL would have taken away is the ability for smaller clubs to defeat bigger ones and create compelling underdog storylines.

“It's ridiculous because smaller clubs with good management can still compete with big clubs,” Wang said. “Leicester City, despite its shoddy origins, the European Super League and its failure has been valuable wake-up call for fans. More are now aware of the problems that face their beloved sport, and are inspired to do something about it.” ♦



Courtesy of EARLYGAME

Photo

Courtesy of EARLYGAME

Photo

Years of training equip seniors for collegiate sports

BY Shaan Sridhar

In the summer of 2019, senior Michelle Lim sprinted 50 yards down a soccer field, her cleats digging into the field as she exerted all the energy she had. She was running to catch up with a forward from an opposing Spanish soccer team, who had the ball and was about to score.

"I never thought I was going to catch up to him," Lim said. "But I was one step behind him and I slide-tackled him. It was one of the more memorable games I've played in."

The game was just one event in her team's 10-day visit to Spain, where her team — San Jose Earthquakes DA — played against international boys' teams instead of same-gender girls' teams.

These types of games are one of many practices and competitions high schools athletes attend to improve as players in hopes of getting recruited.

The recruitment process, however, was complicated by the pandemic. Athletes usually invite colleges to watch them play at showcases, but all of these events were cancelled. Many colleges also cut sports programs.

Despite this, multiple seniors have committed to play college sports. Lim, for example, has committed to play DIII soccer at Wellesley College.

Lim first started playing soccer as a young child. She remembers being "pretty terrible" at first, but she loved playing the sport. Her

parents pushed her to continue with soccer and it eventually became her passion.

At 8, she joined her first competitive team. Prior to her freshman year, she joined a team in the Developmental Academy — the highest level of competitive girls' soccer at the time. When the league shut down due to the pandemic in May 2020, she joined a team in the Girls Academy league; her team is currently undefeated and ranked first in the nation.

Initially, Lim was fielding recruitment offers from many colleges, but due to the pandemic and an NCAA ruling allowing college seniors to play another year, many of the colleges stopped their recruitment process.

Lim said she was interested in a college that would foster both her academic and athletic aspirations. She found Wellesley to be a good fit because of its rigorous academic program and extensive network of students and alumni.

Lim said she knows multiple people on the Wellesley team and has talked to them about the school. Her familiarity with the team was a plus.

"My Wellesley coach was probably the coach that I talked to most frequently throughout quarantine," Lim said. "Interestingly enough, she has actually never seen me play in person and recruited me solely off of video and by talking to my coaches."

Lim is one of several seniors committed to play collegiate sports. Jason Chin, who fences, is



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS

Senior Michelle Lim passes the ball to a teammate in a game against Milpitas on April 14. The team won 2-0.

committed to UC San Diego for Division I fencing in August 2020.

Chin has been fencing for around six years. He said he used to play soccer and tennis, but started fencing after noticing his younger brother Julian, now a freshman, competing and making friends.

After trying the sport, he realized he enjoyed it and began training with his brother. He eventually graduated to international competitions like the Cercle des Escrimeurs Parisiens (CEP) Marathon in Paris.

Chin accepted a partial scholarship offer to attend UCSD. He said he also considered Brown University and NYU, but the former cut its varsity fencing program and the latter's coach decided not to offer him a spot.

Chin has been on the UCSD

petitions that only last one day — hence the name marathon. Because of this, Chin said, he got to meet more fencers and compete more than he usually does at competitions.

"I've met some of my closest friends at that tournament," Chin said. "And I did pretty well at it too."

The wildest dream is to go to the Olympics," Chin said with a laugh. "But I'm hoping to make the NCAA championships and get an All-American. I want to be able to rise to the top 30s in the U.S. fencing community once in my career." ♦

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Falcons demonstrate growth with new coach

BY Nilay Mishra

Leading up to the season, the girls' basketball team had to figure out a way to stay fit, continue to practice and get acquainted with new coach Jaclyn Brode after long-time coach Danny Wallace resigned the position. Over the summer, they held pre-season workouts three times a week, focusing on upper and lower body strength.

As safety regulations relaxed, the pre-season workouts morphed into in-person practices on the school's outdoor courts, eventually moving indoors. This marked the first time since quarantine that the girls were able to practice important skills, such as shooting and dribbling. To stay in shape and retain fitness, the team also ran on the school's outdoor track.

Brode believes that the pandemic-related restrictions have taken a toll on the team's ability to practice effectively, despite the Zoom workouts and outdoor practices.

"It's been like trying to learn the game with our pants on fire," Brode said.

The season started on April 20, and the girls' fitness and skills have been put to the test; the team has already played eight games. They have a record of 3-5 as of May 14, with wins against Wilcox and Santa Clara and losses to Palo Alto, Los Altos and Los Gatos. They are scheduled to play 14 regular season games.

Brode remains optimistic for the rest of the season, despite a rough start. She said the team's biggest strength is their resilience in facing various challenges; for example, the team has fewer substitutes than usual and is not able to practice as often or efficiently due to pandemic restrictions.

"Many of these girls play full games without ever getting a rest," Brode said. "They have not given up no matter how tired they are."

COACH Jaclyn Brode

BOYS' BASKETBALL



Courtesy of FRANK CHU

Senior Nathan Oh dribbles the ball against Santa Cruz players on May 8. The team lost 53-37.

Early losses drive team

BY Jonathan Li

The team's goal, according to Brode, is to build up skills and habits that will make winning a product of their hard work and dedication to the sport. Brode's expectation is that the team is self-disciplined, "pours into their teammates" and competes with a hearty spirit.

The team plays the same opponent twice a week and often sees an improvement in the score the second time around, which Brode interprets as a good sign.

Practices have changed from a typical year, however. While the team would often play scrimmages so athletes could practice reading the defense and making quick decisions, the lack of traditional off-season open gym training has made this harder to do.

Despite the challenges, Brode believes that the team has made many strides in progress and are constantly improving together.

"We challenge [athletes] on a daily basis to be better than they were the minute prior," Brode said. "From game to game, we are getting better." ♦

ers are senior small forward Cameron King and junior shooting guard Som Teymour. Due to COVID-19, the season has been condensed to six weeks.

The COVID-19 restrictions have had a negative effect on team morale, players said. According to Bhandari, the environment of an outdoor practice, which the team had to do while training, is completely different compared to an indoor one, with the lack of spectators and different court feel being the main issues.

"I personally think having a large crowd plays a huge role in making the games fun, and the lack of it has made games feel kinda dead in a way," Bhandari said.

Still, the team remains optimistic that they can finish the season strong and possibly win the league title.

"It's just great to be back on the court," Liu said. "We are all lucky for this extra opportunity, especially the seniors who have been working for this moment their entire high school career." ♦

"Our two losses to Wilcox really fuelled us up because we ended up winning three games in a row," junior point guard Chris Liu said. "Continuing off of our hot three-win-streak, we look to win the remaining seven games."

As of May 14, they had a 4-3 record, with wins against Fremont, Gunn and Los Gatos and losses to Wilcox and Fremont. Top scor-

Replays are overused in professional sports

BY Howard Shu

and an offensive foul or a blocking defensive foul.

In the NFL, the same thing can occur with generic and loosely defined penalties like illegal contact.

In these situations, instant replays aren't very helpful because they're largely nuanced judgment calls.

However, that isn't to say that instant replays should be completely eliminated.

In fact, they are quite useful in situations where a player could be ejected from a game, especially in the case of technical fouls in the NBA.

All too often, a star player gets thrown out of a game for two questionable technical fouls.

Replays should be used to analyze technical fouls because slowing down the game for a few minutes is worth it if it could prevent a player from being unrightfully ejected.

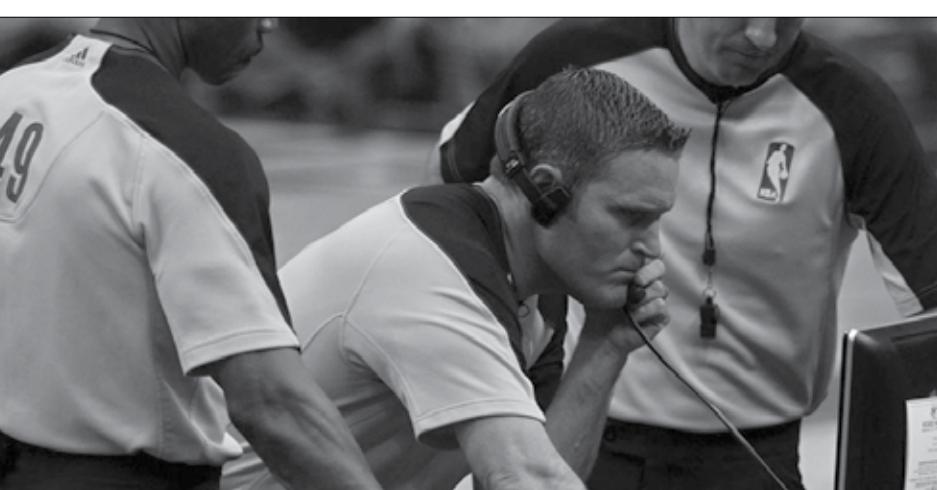
Replays should primarily be used in the last minute of games, especially when the score is close, which is often the case in most professional games.

This would ensure correct calls and won't lead to a loss of casual fans as the end of a tight game is the most exciting part.

The solution to this problem that has become common in all the major sports: Modify the coaches' challenging system and speed up the decision-making time after instant replays.

To maximize the effectiveness of this process, the coaches' challenge system should be modified in some leagues.

For example, in the NBA, officials sometimes spend several minutes looking at one play, trying to decide whether it's a charge



Courtesy of The Georgetown Voice

NBA referees stop the flow of the game to watch an instant replay from various camera angles in the hopes of ensuring a correct call and to make the right decision for the play.

times reluctant to challenge calls because of the loss of a timeout.

This rule should be modified so teams don't lose a timeout if the challenge is successful, just as in the NFL.

On top of changing the challenge system, referees should have limited time to make decisions.

Often when I'm watching games on television and the officials go into instant replay, it's already clear what the correct call is.

Even so, it can often take a few minutes before the referees finish reviewing the video and announce the call.

Referees should be given a two minute time limit to review any necessary film and judge the accuracy of any given call. If they

take longer, the play is most likely in a gray area for rulings, in which case it would be better to go forward with the initial ruling on the floor.

Instant replays in professional sports should only be used in situations where a player could be ejected in the last minute of a game or if a coach challenges a call.

This will make the number of replays more balanced, with enough to make most of the calls fair, but not so much that casual fans will stop watching games.

If fewer replays are used and faster decisions are made, the momentum of professional sports games can flow more smoothly and give fans what they are looking for: a thrilling game. ♦

Home gyms vs. actual gyms: Comparing the two experiences

BY Benjamin Li

Another aspect of the home gym that makes it superior to an actual one is the accessibility.

Not only does a home gym make social distancing easy, but it also eliminates travel time between the gym and home. Without having to account for transportation time, I was able to work out much more frequently with more flexible hours.

According to eBay sales data, dumbbell sales saw an almost 2,000 percent increase since the start of the pandemic. As a member of this wave of enthusiastic quarantine home gym seekers, I bought a set of adjustable dumbbells.

Right away, I began working out more often as the presence of the dumbbells in my living room became a daily motivation. This led to more progress in the muscle groups I had been training, which was a helpful mental boost in the draining period of social distancing.

In addition, an actual gym provides you with many machines that a simple home gym doesn't have room for.

All of this isn't to say that an actual gym can provide motivation to work out either. Still, one of the biggest drawbacks of gyms closing was not being able to interact with

other people during workouts and gain motivation for the vibe.

A workout buddy is especially useful in keeping a consistent exercise routine.

When I went to an in-person gym, working out with a friend not only encouraged me to go more consistently, but also made the workout itself more enjoyable.

In addition, an actual gym provides you with many machines that a simple home gym doesn't have room for.

Every time I went to a subscription gym, I would try out a new machine to target various muscle groups, such as the cable machines for triceps which helped develop muscle mass.

While home gyms offer heightened accessibility and a sense of privacy, actual gyms also come with many tempting benefits including a better atmosphere for focus and greater access to impressive machines.

Both approaches have their benefits and drawbacks, but the type of gym you should seek out depends on your workout style and

personality.

A home gym is better suited to those with a flexible schedule as well as those content to work out alone.

An actual gym is a better fit for those who want to push their limits using the technology offered only at that location and do so with a friend or as part of a motivated group.

However, no matter which route you choose, your own effort is the only way you'll ever see progress toward your goals.

For myself, I have chosen to mainly remain working out at home.

In doing so, I've discovered different exercises with what I have that substitute for gym equipment and am constantly helping friends that want to begin their own workout routines. My home gym is small but satisfactory. Even with my home gym, I still make time to go to sometimes go to Elite Spartans in San Jose with a friend.

Together, we can push each other and reach new limits, enjoying each other's company as we do so. ♦

Tough pandemic choices lead to missed swimming season

BY Martin Xu

Plan B: Because of the shortened swim season and diminished practice times, I could easily gain P.E. credits while slowly getting back into the groove of swimming, thereby avoiding remote P.E. classes.

Joining the swim team would give me the opportunity to get fresh air and regain my fitness while earning credits.

Sad to say, my strategic backup plan failed miserably.

The season was initially on track to start on March 8; then, during the last week of January, it was announced that swim season was going to start on Feb. 1.

I wasn't anywhere near ready. Filled with anxiety, I scrambled to arrange a physical so I could be approved to participate in swim in less than a week.

This process took forever, but I finally scheduled a physical on the day before tryouts.

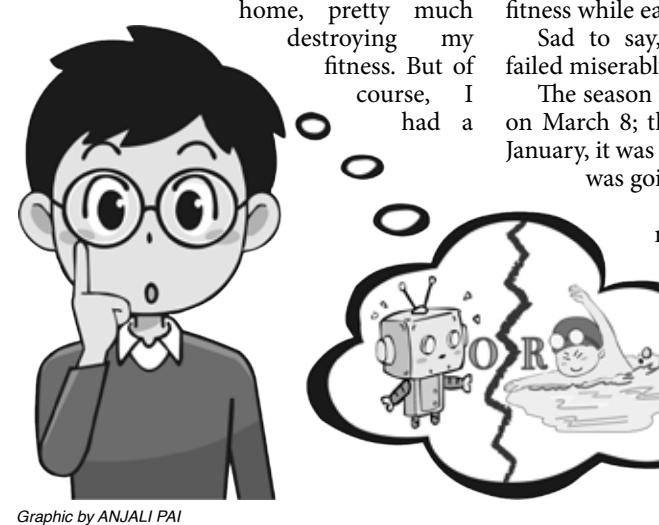
Then, at the swim informational meeting, the coaches announced that students could only participate in one cohort at a time. Since I already joined the robotics program at the start of the year, I had to choose between robotics and swim.

When I heard this news, I wanted to laugh and cry at the same time; I had missed the swim season (and my much-needed P.E. credits) for no reason. If the season had started in March, I would have been able to participate in both.

Even though this situation was unfortunate and chaotic, in hindsight, it was a funny incident with extremely poor timing.

Though I missed out on a chance to exercise and get back into the routine of swimming, I look forward to joining the De Anza Cupertino Aquatics (DACA) swim club in the summer in preparation for the swim season next spring (hopefully).

And maybe one day, I'll finally get my P.E. credits. ♦



Graphic by ANJALI PAI

The choice was not easy: joining a sport that I had practiced for many years or sticking with a commitment I made back in the fall. In the end, I chose to stick with robotics. After all I had already committed numerous hours to it and competition season was just around the corner.

snapshots



Lisa Cochrum lectures her in-person Biology class as part of Phase 4A on May 12.

Tiffany Wang (11) uses a micropipette while conducting a gel electrophoresis experiment as part of Cheryl Lenz's AP Biology class during Phase 4A on May 12.

Anika Koganti (10) blocks an incoming volleyball as Ria Purisai (12), Noor Khan (10) and Hermione Bossolina (12) get ready to receive the ball during a home game on May 9.

Kirk Davis peers over Aliza Zaman (12) and Irika Katiyar (12) as they work on creating an electromagnetic field around copper wiring in AP Physics on May 12.

FALCON // SELINA CHEN

Why milk ~~should be~~ needs to be canceled

Kav-I don't like milk



Kavita Sundaram

At age 3, I happened upon the culinary tragedy that is milk. However, after only a taste, I was smart enough to realize that milk is an absolutely terrible drink.

Its appearance is the catfish of the century: The creamy white appearance manages to look unabashedly innocent, hiding an awful taste.

I still remember the first time I eagerly tried the pearly concoction, only to later spit it out.

I would classify the flavor as a hopelessly

confused middle ground between sweet, sour and savory: an awful combination.

It boasts a terribly short shelf life, spoiling in a meager week, so that its victims end up pouring sour cottage cheese in their cereal instead of milk. (I'll save cottage cheese for another day: It's another disgusting invention.)

And then there's the texture.

The few times I've been in the unfortunate position of drinking milk, I've found a thick skin on top of the drink, which looks nearly as disgusting as it tastes.



Graphic by APURVA CHAKRAVARTHY

Or even worse, on the rare occasion when I've bought a milk carton, I've found whole chunks of suspicious, unknown solids interspersed throughout the milk.

Last 1y, there's the whole issue of being lactose intolerant.

While I myself am not, I would think that 65 percent of the world population being unable to digest dairy speaks for itself.

Why continue to drink something that we clearly are not designed to consume?

I will never understand how parents, mine included, have the audacity to lie to their kids about the benefits of drinking milk.

As a child, I was bullied into thinking that I would stay the height of a 4-year-old for the rest of my entire life if I didn't force myself to drink gag-inducing milk every day.

I'll probably never forgive my parents for that.

A big question still remains: Why and how humanity ever decided to start drinking it in the first place?

I have yet to find another example of animals drinking the milk of another species, and every time I try to justify it to myself, I draw a blank.

Milk lovers, if you still exist, please clear up my confusion. ♦

Bidding farewell to my stuffed animals after 16 loving years

Shaanye West



Shaan Sridhar

A while ago — I can't quite pinpoint the year — I went to Circus Circus in Reno with my family. There was a ring-toss game with a stuffed lobster prize I wanted very badly.

Out of sheer luck, my brother won the lobster and kindly informed me that it would not be shared with me; I rightfully threw a tantrum. Thankfully, my dad stepped in to play the game again and won another lobster.

The lobster — who I aptly named Lobster — came home to my and my brother's elaborate world of stuffed animals where each plush had a role in a fictional society we spent years creating.

Each animal had a name, voice and position on the fictional world's famous baseball team (before you judge me, remember I was very young).

But now, many years later, I no longer remember Lobster's voice nor baseball

position. And so, Lobster has found his way to a box labeled "donation."

My family is in the process of moving houses — we're staying in Saratoga, so the district doesn't need to kick me out — and I decided to go through all of my childhood toys to determine what I still wanted before packing them away. Chief among these toys were my stuffed animals. My brother and I have accumulated about 150 plush toys, and this is after we donated 100 of them five years ago.

Some of them are as old (if not older) than the two of us, and some are cheap circus toys literally held together by a thread. These stuffed animals are present in almost all of my cherished childhood home memories.

They crowded my crib and bed at night (I had to sleep with ALL of them, not just one), they were occasionally the ball when my brother and I played indoor baseball and they provided me comfort after I underwent hernia surgery.

The toys were once my entire world, but now they're little more than objects taking up space in my room.

At first, it felt weird to discard things that once held so much senti-

mental value. For years, I held on to them because I felt I had to; how could I get rid of such precious things?

But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that there was no need to keep many of them; more importantly, there was no need to cling to a past that I am rapidly growing up from.

I was able to find a balance between getting stuck in the past and running away from it. I ended up donating the large majority of my toys (like Lobster), but I'm still keeping the ones I remember vividly.

The legacy of my and my brother's fantasy world will live on through the survivors — till death (or the next Goodwill run) do us part. ♦



Graphic by SINA SALEHI

top ten

REASONS FOR TURNING YOUR ZOOM CAMERA OFF

- 10 You have to go to the bathroom.** In person or not, some things never change.
- 9 You got a bad haircut.** Make sure to wear a hoodie as proof.
- 8 Your wifi is down horrendous.** This one also works if you get cold called while spacing out.
- 7 You're eating food.** Please turn your mic off.
- 6 Your mother's yelling at you.** Please turn your mic on.
- 5 You're changing.** Alternatively, your dog is changing.
- 4 Your webcam isn't working.** Who's to say it's not?
- 3 You have a large pimple.** Your teachers will understand.
- 2 Your mic isn't working.** Bonus points if you verbally tell your teacher.
- 1 You're at school for Phase 4A.** Unlucky.

-Andy Chen and Allen Luo