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Opinion

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COMIC BY COSETTE ELLIS, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Keep making movies, even if they’re awful

by Alexander Renzulli
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When I was a wee young lad, full of whimsy, wonder and naivety, I received quite possibly the greatest Christmas present a boy in the early 2010s could receive: a beautifully metallic, oddly slippery iPod Touch. Oh, the holy grail of all presents! It was definitely the catalyst of some brainrotting activity, but that did not matter to the mind of a child who had just learned what Angry Birds was. With the rudimentary iPhone, I had access to the world: video games, a camera and text messages. Most importantly to my sister and me, though, we had a little app called iMovie. The backyard became a stage for great, glorious, miscellaneous adventure, as we paired cheesy wipe cuts with whatever song was topping the Billboard Hot 100. We made film after film, music video after music video, as if we were Christopher Nolan cooking up “Interstellar.” And we did this all day, every day, until suddenly it seemed like being corny and original was shameful. The iPod was replaced with an iPhone, iMovie with Instagram and creativity with the need to conform.

Truth be told, that iPod has not

been touched in years, and “Fireflies” by Owl City is definitely still queued up on iTunes, waiting to be played. I’ve spent ample time thinking about her though, and her glorious voyage throughout my childhood. So, over the past year, I went digging through the drawers of my house, pulling out ancient camcorders and splicing together movies of all varieties: documentaries of my friends, vlogs of American adventure. I felt as creative as I ever have, and I also found the key to being authentic in this era of computer-generated, monotonous slop.

The filmmaking process is very similar to drawing — something I also find many people give up as they grow into their adolescence. You take a lot of shots, draw a lot of pictures. Most of them are awful, but you tried, and so they are something wonderful and beautiful to look back on. To make a movie means to physically go out and try, and trying is something we are missing as a generation.

The other day in a class I was definitely paying attention in, a peer made a comment preaching, “AI was made to do the boring stuff; now it’s just doing the fun stuff.” This profound one-liner really had me thinking, which was novel because I really wasn’t doing that beforehand. Since

artificial intelligence (AI) came onto the scene not too long ago, it seems society has begun to cut out “the fun stuff” for the simple want of convenience. We forget as humans that the reason we derive fun from activities and ventures is because of the work we put into them. The first film you’re going to make is probably going to be rudimentary and rough around the corners, but it certainly will be fun. AI is the antithesis of authenticity, and filmmaking is as human as a medium can be.

It is imperative that people continue to fail and fall, because it is even more imperative that we, as humans, know how to get up. If at 12 years old I judged my home films to such a degree that I quit doing them all completely, I would have robbed myself of simple sheer joy. We cannot have AI steal very accessible joy from us because we are lazy, or because we simply fail to care.

When we fail to care, we fail to live. There is something about old video recording devices, like camcorders and digicams, that seem to bring out the genuine side of any person they are put in front of. Feeling the nostalgic juvenile wonder when presented with a vlog camera, my friends will always blossom open like the spring flowers after winter. Mak-



ILLUSTRATION BY COSETTE ELLIS, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

ing movies with my peers means we can deepen our bonds, and I would take that over the isolation of AI any day.

So go pick up a camera and

make yourself a film. Learn to fall in love with trying, failing and being creative all over again. If nothing else, you get some great bloopers out of it.

UConn’s Troubling Leave of Absence Policy:
Only you know what’s best for you

by Holly Thompson
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Last semester, at the end of October, I temporarily stopped attending UConn due to a medical emergency. I spent two weeks in the hospital, and I wish it could have been more. I needed more time. It was my choice to return so fast, but there were certain parts of UConn’s Leave of Absence (LOA) policy that pushed me to go back before I was ready.

I did not take a leave of absence, but I certainly learned what it was. That is why I decided not to take one.

There are several reasons a student may need to take a break from school. Family emergencies, struggles with mental illness and other crises that affect a student’s well-being and overall life can lead a student to consider a leave of absence.

Additionally, a study of university students found that a third of participants screened for depression had lower GPAs and were less satisfied with their studies. Another study conducted by Kahoot! found almost 90% of students surveyed said that mental health challenges at least occasionally disrupt their ability to study or complete assignments.

Therefore, I believe that deciding if a student can take a leave of absence based on their academic performance disregards evidence on how mental stress affects grades. This can be caused by a number of circumstances and psychological factors. Wouldn’t it be more fair for a student’s academic standing to be reevaluated through their re-admission process, instead of by their scholastic performance at their lowest point?

Also, having to declare what

term a student will return when they choose to leave school does not account for the unpredictability of the healing process. The road to healing is not a linear path. The process is often filled with setbacks and obstacles. A student should not be expected to know their return date before they begin the process.

Setting a return date puts pressure on a student to heal at a certain rate. The culture we live in celebrates quick fixes, fast results and the idea that something broken should be repaired as fast as it can be. UConn’s LOA website itself explains that students with incomplete course grades are “encouraged to complete all course work as soon as possible” to return to the university the following semester.

I think the LOA policy should recognize that to properly support a student, you must meet

them where they are, not expect them to know what lies ahead. Healing cannot be rushed, as it requires an indeterminate amount of time to address trauma, deal with tricky emotions, learn effective coping skills and integrate these new tactics into our lives.

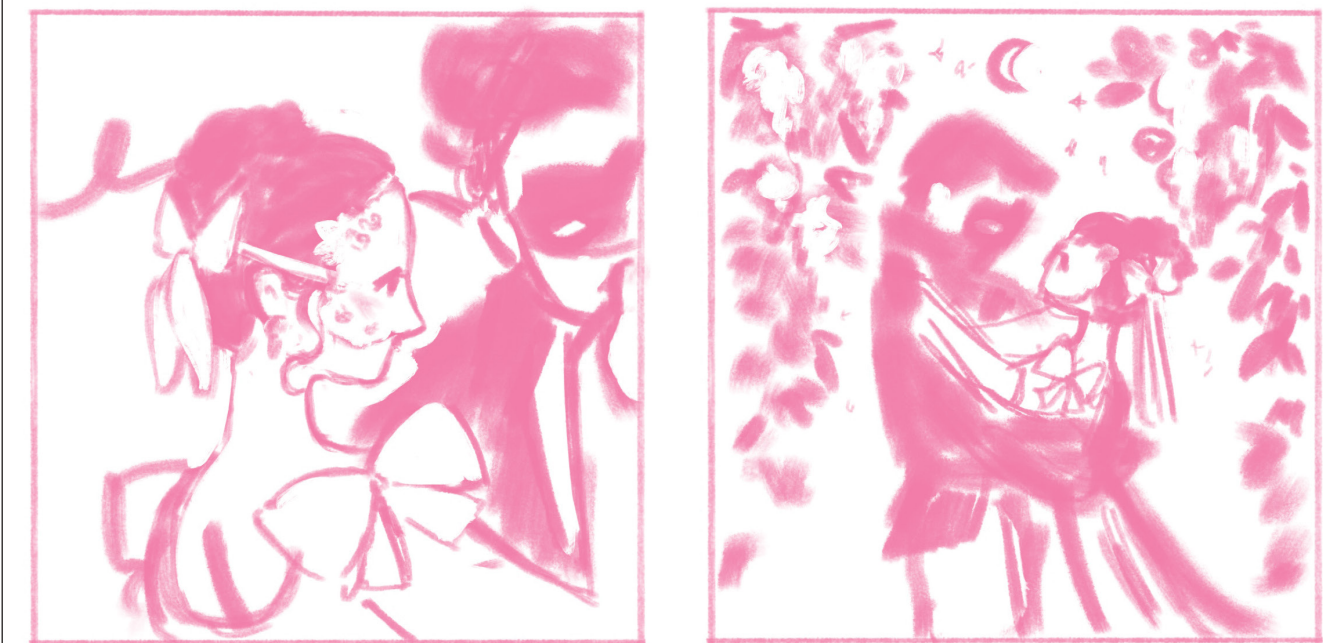
Something else that bothers me about the LOA policy is their rule for students who want to return in the spring semester. When a student takes a leave of absence, they need to reapply to return to UConn, which is stressful in and of itself. However, for a student who wants to return in the spring, they need to apply for readmission by December 1.

What if a student finally starts to feel better on December 2? Under the current policy, they wouldn’t be able to return to UConn until the following school year! Taking too much time off

can make it much harder for a student to readjust upon their return, and the more time a student is out of school, the higher the likelihood they’ll forget prior knowledge.

The purpose of this article is not to deter students from taking a leave of absence. In fact, taking some time off can help a student devote more time to recovery and self-care and feel more secure upon their return to campus.

I want students to be aware of UConn’s policies and procedures regarding LOA because of their expectation for students to be in good academic standing before taking a leave of absence, need for a set return term and reapplication dates which drastically alter the amount of time a student cannot return to school. Take care of yourself and remember to always prioritize your health and well-being above all else.



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