

SHU Professor Aims to Tackle Global Education Crisis

BY JAKE CALANNI
Staff Writer

Maureen Ruby, endowed chair and associate professor in the Farrington College of Education & Human Development (FCEHD), has taken a leadership role in addressing a global education crisis through her involvement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Alliance on the Science of Learning.

UNESCO promotes peace and security through international cooperation in education, communication, culture, information and sciences. Ruby's work is focused on improving literacy and educational outcomes through evidence-based practices founded on the science of learning.

Ruby's journey began when she attended the International Mind, Brain and Education Society (IMBES) conference in Belgium last summer. This conference brought together a variety of different researchers and educators around the world to focus on core educational challenges, specifically the need for universal literacy in solving educational disparities.

"Being in the company of these really dedicated,

passionate, and knowledgeable brokers and feeling a sense of global commitment collaborating on trying to find ways to remove the barriers to educational opportunities for all children was really inspiring and hopeful," Ruby said.

She will continue to work hard alongside some of the best in the world to tackle this global education crisis.

"It's an ongoing thing. It's not a one-and-done. We'll meet once a year, and we do other work in between. In addition to my work with UNESCO, I'm now collaborating with a researcher in Australia," Ruby said.

She explained that the biggest takeaways from this experience were the importance of networking when getting your name out, knowing how to meet people and holding good relationships.

"I think that's a part of the SHU mission and the SHU culture," Ruby said.

Following her endowment, she was authorized to present with fellow Sacred Heart University professor, Kim Hellerich, at the conference in Belgium.

"Having the opportunity to co-present with Dr. Ruby was an amazing experience. Partnering with Dr. Ruby to include a thread of neuroscience within the advanced curriculum course of our Educational Leadership Preparation Program was a unique opportunity," Hellerich said. "It was amazing to share our work with an international group of educators."

"I am so blessed to have this support from the Isabelle Farrington estate. It has allowed me to take advantage of opportunities that we would not have had the funds for otherwise," said Ruby, in a recent Sacred Heart press release.

After her trip to Belgium, Ruby continued on to Paris. Here, she claimed that one of her



Maureen Ruby, Endowed Chair and Associate Professor of the College of Education & Human Dev. Prof. Ruby's view of the UNESCO headquarters.

biggest takeaways surrounded hope for the future.

"I'm hoping that through the networking, we'll be able to bring more global opportunities for research, and I have something in the works right now with a colleague I met," Ruby said.

Ruby emphasized that possessing strong literacy skills paves the way for greater opportunities and overall success.

"Literacy skills are gateway skills to everything else in life. Literacy is even more of an important gateway skill now than it was before," Ruby said.

Ruby's work calls attention to the global impact of SHU's faculty in hopes of inspiring and influencing future educational leaders.

"Her work not only highlights the global impact of our faculty, but also contributes significantly to the advancement of education worldwide," FCEHD Dean Mel Horton told the university.



Maureen Ruby, Endowed Chair and Associate Professor of the College of Education & Human Dev. Country flags outside UNESCO's headquarters in Paris.

Students Accepted into Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles

BY MADELINE MEDEIROS
Staff Writer

Seniors Samantha Cunniff, Madison Tuke and 2024 graduate Rylee Turner are three illustration students who were accepted to the Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles (SILA) West 63rd National Juried Student Competition. These three were selected from 450 artists in 26 countries, with close to 1,200 entries this year.

SILA is a professional art entity in California whose mission is to promote and encourage interest in illustration. SILA's Illustration West is an annual competition highlighting the year's best illustration from all over the world, according to their website.

This year the selection committee was made up of nine judges and one show chair, all of whom are professional illustrators.

Prof. Jack DeGraffenried teaches illustration at SHU and entered the students into the contest in the fall of 2024.

"I, as the illustration instructor, submit student entries each year. Then I wait to see what [the judges] are drawn to," DeGraffenried said.

DeGraffenried has been entering his students since the '90s. Before there were digital submissions to the SILA and the Society of Illustrators of New York, he had to "photograph everything, get them reproduced as slides and label each one individually, which became a real process, so for a few years I

stepped away. In 2004, I became aware that we could enter traditionally rendered pieces digitally...it was a lot easier," he said.

This year's winners' artwork will be displayed online on the SILA website in March and will be up for display in the Hawley Lounge hallway at SHU in the future, according to DeGraffenried.

Cunniff, a studio art major, began work on her piece "George Harrison" in the spring of 2024 for a celebrity portrait assignment and finished it within a month using graphite pencil. It features a mustached Harrison staring ahead. Her focus while creating the piece was a range of values in shadow of Harrison's distinct facial features.

See STUDENTS ACCEPTED INTO SOCIETY OF ILLUSTRATORS OF LA
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News

SCMA Professor Receives Global Service Award

BY THEODORE WEISMANN
Staff Writer

In November 2024, Dr. Mark Congdon, a professor in the School of Communication, Media and the Arts (SCMA), accompanied by alumna Keresha Donaldson, attended the V Global Symposium Uniservitate in Rome. There, Congdon received the 2024 Uniservitate Global Service Award for his work in creating the Uniting Hearts initiative back in 2021.

Congdon was just one of two North American educators to win the award.

During the symposium, Congdon and Donaldson also had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis directly.

"I thanked Pope Francis for the hope and inspiration he provides and for always standing up for social justice for the marginalized," Congdon said.

He presented his initiative in front of 30 award nominees from the United States and Canada at the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities conference in San Diego, Calif. prior to attending the symposium.

After being recognized for the global service award, Congdon was told he could bring one student on the trip. Donaldson played a significant role in the creation of Uniting Hearts and also spoke at the conference, making her the perfect fit.

"Keresha [Donaldson] automatically came to my mind because she was a grad student involved for multiple semesters who came back as an alum and volunteered her time," Congdon said.

Today, Donaldson remains active on campus and teaches digital design at Warren High School in Bridgeport.

"After I graduated from SHU, the service-learning aspect of the class did not end, and [Prof. Congdon] asked me if I would still help. I live right in Bridgeport, and Sacred Heart is still a part of my community. It was a no-brainer to stay engaged," Donaldson said in an interview with the Associated Press.

Before Uniting Heart's implementation, Congdon saw the opportunity to address multiple disparities in his local communities right from his classroom. He launched the initiative as a service-learning unit in his undergraduate advertising and public relations (PR) class.

Uniting Hearts gets students actively involved in social work within their campus and local community.

"We, as individuals, play an active role as well as a passive role. You not doing anything, that's still doing something," Donaldson said, explaining how most students would never get involved in the first place if it were not for Uniting Hearts.

Annie Johnson, director of the Office of Community Engagement, emphasized the importance of student engagement, especially when it's promoted in the classroom.

"I think it's important for students to see that stepping outside their comfort zone, even a little, could have a great impact on their local community," she said.

The Pope praised service-learning initiatives like Uniting Hearts, emphasizing their impacts on raising social awareness. According to the Associated Press, the pope said, "it signifies a commitment to cultivating a distinctive pedagogical style and teaching consistent with the teachings of the Gospel."



Photo courtesy of @Vatican Media
Dr. Mark Congdon (right) pictured shaking hands with Pope Francis (left) at the V Global Symposium Uniservitate in Rome.

After receiving recognition for the award, Congdon has been working towards institutionalizing Uniting Hearts in hopes of broadening its reach throughout the SCMA.

Working towards his goal, Congdon will be launching a student-integrated PR agency in the spring of 2025, called HeartFusion Media Collective Agency.

"It'll help students not just with jobs, but also really applying their liberal arts education at SHU to advance their local community," Congdon said.

"This can be something that lives beyond the Sacred Heart community. We can partner with other universities to unite," said Donaldson.

The Associated Press contributed to this article.

The Suite Life on Campus: Housing Selection for 2025-2026

BY JAYDEN ROSARIO
Staff Writer

The housing selection process for the 2025-2026 academic year is set to begin in April for all students. Incoming freshmen and rising sophomores will be required to live in on-campus housing, while rising juniors and seniors have the option to live off-campus.

Incoming freshmen will have the opportunity to live in one of seven dorms, including the new Catherine of Siena Hall and Michael McGivney Hall, which opened for the fall 2024 semester. Rising sophomores will have nine housing options, including upper quad dorms such as Elie Wiesel Hall and Pier Giorgio Frassati Hall.

"Next semester, I want to live in one of the upper quad dorms, but I know those will be the hardest to

get," said sophomore Benjamin Bajzath. "Hopefully I get a good lottery number."

Rising juniors and seniors who opt for Sacred Heart housing can live at the Ridge, Oakwood Gardens, or Pioneer Gardens, while others may opt to rent a house off campus.

"The housing options for the 2025-2026 academic year are the same as this current academic year," said Emily Grobmyer, Associate Director of Residential Life. "Pioneer Gardens will be a small change in occupancy for next year – the three-bedroom apartments will be three single bedrooms."

Pioneer Gardens previously provided two single bedrooms along with a double bedroom.

There will be mandatory information sessions for students planning to live in SHU housing, hosted on multiple days between Monday, Feb. 2 and Thursday,

Feb. 27, that will last approximately one hour, according to an email sent out by Residential Life on Jan. 24.

The information sessions will provide "an overview of the housing selection process, review the residence halls for each class year and talk about some tips and tricks on how to be successful in the housing selection process," said Grobmyer.

The selection process will be conducted using a lottery process that all students in SHU housing will be entered into, where each is assigned a random lottery number. The lower the number received, the earlier the housing selection. Groups will be represented by the student who has the lowest lottery number.

It is required that students looking to request roommates have the same number of people in their group that the specific dorm provides. If they aren't able to do so, they will meet with Grobmyer for final selection to assign the appropriate housing. Those not going in with a group can use the housing portal to match with potential roommates.

Students must all pay a \$500 housing deposit by the March 7 deadline to take part in this process.

"I think the biggest thing is to be flexible and to be prepared," said Grobmyer. "This means talking in advance with your roommate group about your different options and how you will adjust as residence halls become unavailable during the selection process."

Students seeking accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility, where they can go through the Disability Housing Accommodations process. The student's request will be reviewed, but accommodations are not guaranteed. The deadline to apply for accommodations is Feb. 21.

Information regarding how to complete housing registration along with roommate matching will be sent out in mid-March, given that the housing deposit was paid on time. Sophomore housing selection will take place in early April over the span of a week, while juniors and seniors will have their housing selection in mid-April over the course of a day.

"While I know students have preferred residence halls, ultimately, it's about who you live with, not where you live," said Grobmyer.



All Site Media, Sacred Heart University

Aerial photo of Elie Wiesel Hall and Pier Giorgio Frassati Hall in Pioneer Village that houses over 200 sophomore students.

**UPCOMING
SPORTS
EVENTS ON
CAMPUS**

**THURSDAY 2/6:
MEN'S BASKETBALL
VS. RIDER
PITT CENTER
AT 7:00 P.M.**

**FRIDAY 2/7:
WOMEN'S LACROSSE
VS. BRYANT
CAMPUS FIELD
AT 2:00 P.M.**

**SATURDAY 2/8:
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
VS. FAIRFIELD
PITT CENTER
AT 2:00 P.M.**

Features

Take Care of Your Body and Mind with Move To Heal



BY ALEXA BORNER
Staff Writer



Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University

Students, faculty, and staff pictured during a Move to Heal program hosted in the Bergoglio Hall Gym in 2024.

Move to Heal (MTH), a free wellness program on campus, is held every Thursday from 4-5 p.m. in the Jorge Bergoglio Hall Gym. It offers a unique blend of a 30-minute workout followed by an hour-long support session focusing on mental health.

MTH sessions are offered to Sacred Heart students, faculty, and staff. Individuals are encouraged to connect physically through workouts, as well as emotionally, during safe-space meetings.

Julia Barrows, a university Mental Health Counselor and Co-Facilitator of Move to Heal, said the program aims to offer a sense of community where people can connect and support others.

“Any student can join whether they are full-time, part-time, undergrad, or a grad student,” said Barrows. “I think this is important to emphasize because the main goal is to increase accessibility for students, especially since, through the counseling center, we can only provide services to our full-time undergrad students.”

Barrows said that their sessions start with an icebreaker, during which participants go around the circle and share their first name and their answer. After that, members do a bodyweight warmup and then begin their workout.

“Typically, the structure of the group exercise is about 15 minutes, and you do as many rounds as possible of whatever workouts are on the board. Move to Heal itself offers free work with a registered dietician if you attend at least two meetings a month,” said Barrows.

Barrows said meetings include conversation-based discussion questions, creating

an environment encouraging participants to speak, but not forcing them to.

“Then we will get into the discussion question of the day, which could be, ‘How do you stay consistent with your small habits that bring you joy?’” said Barrows. “If they feel like they just want to listen for that day, that is totally ok.”

James Geisler, Executive Director of Wellness Services, said MTH works to promote positive mental health by bridging emotional wellness with physical activity.

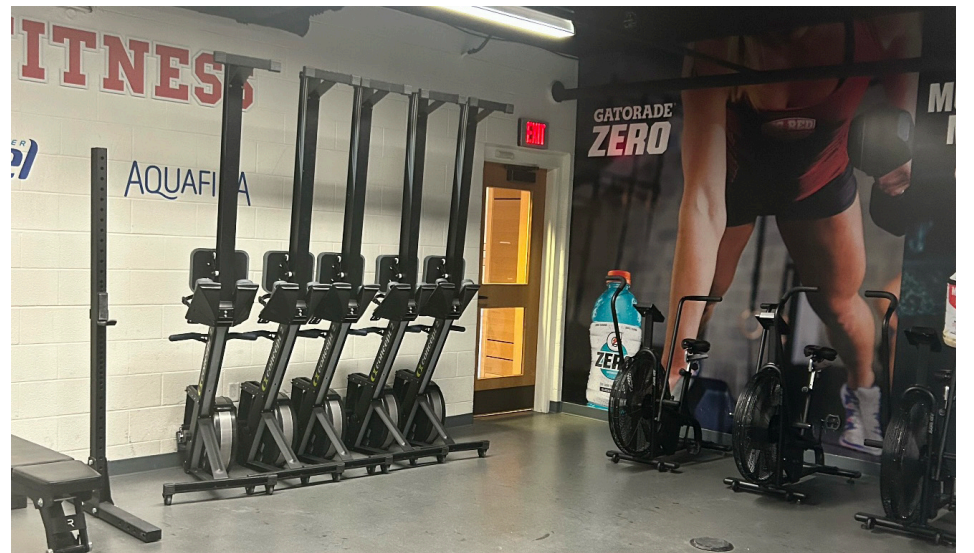
“Mental health has a holistic foundation, where physical wellness and social connection are just two aspects that contribute to positive mental health. Move to Heal creates those two fundamental aspects which support overall well-being,” said Geisler.

Sophomore Juliana Strippoli said she thinks working out is a great way of reducing your stress and making you feel less anxious. Strippoli said having programs such as MTH on campus can be a great resource for students or faculty.

“I’m not a part of Move to Heal but it sounds like it is a valuable program for us to have on campus,” said Strippoli.

Barrows said that they’re looking at ways to expand Move to Heal across campus by getting connected with other departments with similar values. In the future, Barrows said that they hope to go beyond discussion questions and incorporate skill-building for students, like guided meditations.

To learn more about MTH, visit <http://www.movetohealct.org>, or their Instagram at [@movetoheal.ct](https://www.instagram.com/movetoheal.ct).



Salome Pizon, Staff Photographer/Writer

A look at the Jorge Bergoglio Hall Gym that offers a free wellness program every Thursday. It’s open to all students, faculty, and staff.

Spend Your Spring Semester with SET

BY JESSICA KELLY
Staff Writer

Ready, SET, go! From bingo to Spring Fest, the Student Events Team (SET) is gearing up for a fun and engaging semester.

SET kicked off the semester with a fan-favorite event, bingo, on Jan. 29.

“Students can look forward to a semester packed with exciting events, including some of the best bingo prizes yet, Spring Fest, themed weeks, and more,” said junior Victoria Ben-David, the bingo chair for SET.

SET President, junior Isabella DeFrancesco, said that while Spring Fest, which is SET’s annual end-of-semester celebration filled with carnival rides, food trucks, and more, is her favorite event on campus, there are plenty of other fun activities coming up for students to look forward to.

“We have our classic Hearts week back with fun Valentine’s Day based events! Our favorites are Stuff-a-Heart, stuffed conversation heart pushes, Bouquets and

Lemonade, and so much more,” said DeFrancesco. “Towards the end of the month, we have a Late-Night Pancake Bar, Pennant Making and Refreshers, and an air-dry clay event to look forward to!”

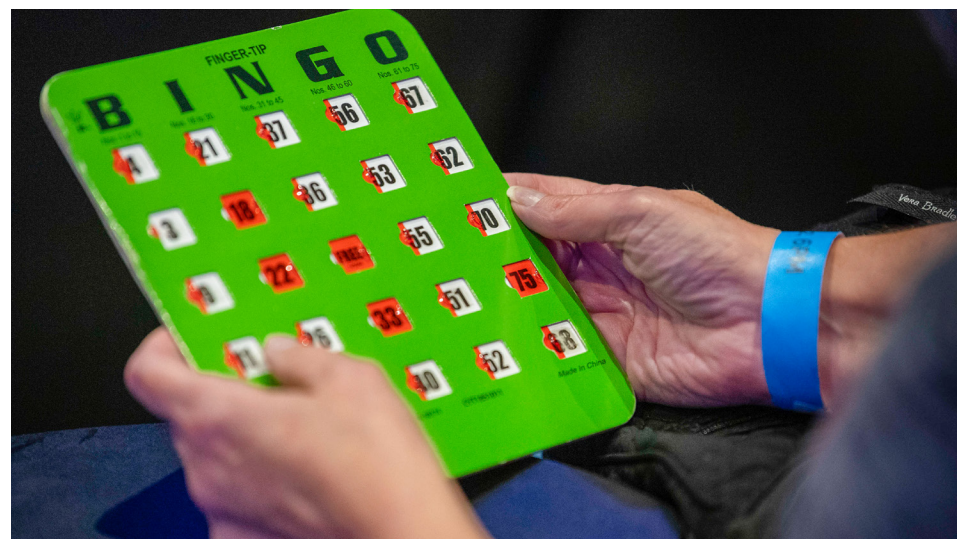
SET Communications Chair, junior Catherine Kowalsky said she loves getting to work alongside the other members of the executive board and seeing their creative visions become reality.

“We are such a close group of girls, and they are some of my favorite people,” said Kowalsky. “Though I am Communications



Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University

Members of the Student Events Team (SET) at the Just SHU It Fair last year.



Mark F. Conrad, Sacred Heart University

Photo from the Annual Family Weekend Bingo, hosted by SET, in 2021.

Chair, and my job is more of a supporting role in terms of planning, getting to see everyone’s creative ideas and hard work come to life at our events – seeing so many members of the SHU community engage with them week after week – is so special!”

Whether students attend events or contribute behind-the-scenes to their planning, SET offers students a multitude of opportunities get involved on campus.

“What keeps me in SET, and what is my favorite thing, is the impact SET has on the SHU community. I love seeing people’s faces when they attend an event they love,” said DeFrancesco. “That’s why SET does what it does. We not only want to make events that we enjoy, but also the events our community wants to see. I love the creativity and passion that comes from planning events for others!”

For students looking to get involved, SET holds general member meetings every other Monday at 8 p.m. in HC 104. The next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 10.

To stay up to date with SET’s events, follow them on Instagram and TikTok [@shu_set](https://www.instagram.com/shu_set).

CampusLife

Cozy Cafes: The Best Spots to Warm Up Near Campus

BY EMMA RICOTTA

Assistant Campus Life Editor

It is so hard to stay motivated when the weather is below freezing. One way to try to “want” to do your assignments is going to little cafés and coffee shops near campus.

Senior Olivia Ansaldi’s favorite place to “lock in” is Last Drop Coffee Shop in Monroe, Conn. “The workers are so nice there and it’s just so cozy,” said Ansaldi. “The coffee is also amazing, so that’s a plus!”

Junior Morgan Holmes loves to go to Las Vetas Lounge in Fairfield, Conn. “It has such a cool vibe in there which makes me feel like I could be more productive,” said Holmes.

Here are some other local coffee shops that you should try out!



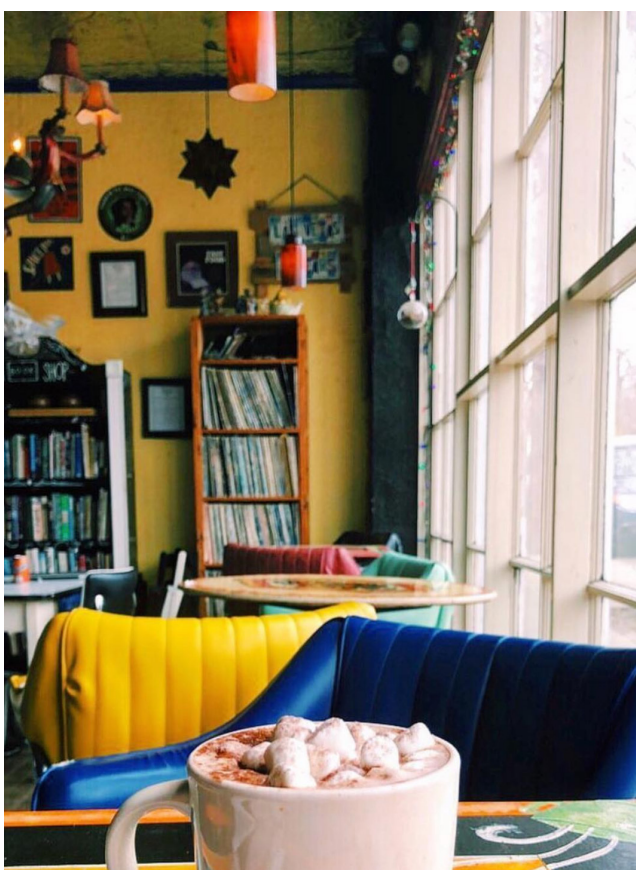
**J Bagels & Cafe -
Trumbull**

**Nick’s Diner (previously
Crown Cafe) - Bridgeport**

Chef’s Table - Fairfield

**Bagel King - Bridgeport
& Fairfield**

**Harborview Market -
Bridgeport**



A fresh hot cocoa served at Las Vetas Lounge in Fairfield, Conn. Instagram, @lasvetaslounge



Two coffees pictured in front of a mural at Last Drop Coffee Shop in Monroe, Conn. Instagram, @lastdropcoffeehop

How to make your semester aesthetic!

Start romanticizing your semester! Here are 10 tips on how to keep the chaos of your everyday life aesthetic.

1. Create the best study playlist.
2. Find a cozy spot to study and complete assignments.
3. Start your day with a morning routine! Drink some tea, journal, stretch.
4. Use a cute planner!
5. Put on an outfit that makes you feel put together.
6. Take coffee (or tea) breaks!
7. Try studying in local cafes.
8. Create a mood/vision board for your semester.
9. Take walks instead of scrolling on social media.
10. Celebrate your accomplishments, big or small!



Interested in contributing to Campus Life? Contact us at spectrum@sacredheart.edu

CampusLife

Winter Playlist

Here's what students are listening to this season to get them through the cold!



Winter Playlist



Fade Into You

Mazzy Star

4:55



champagne problems

Taylor Swift

4:04



Kiss Me

Sixpence None The Richer

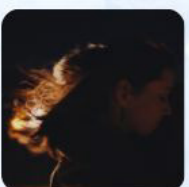
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Scott Street

Phoebe Bridgers

5:05



doomsday

Lizzy McAlpine

4:28



Robbers

The 1975

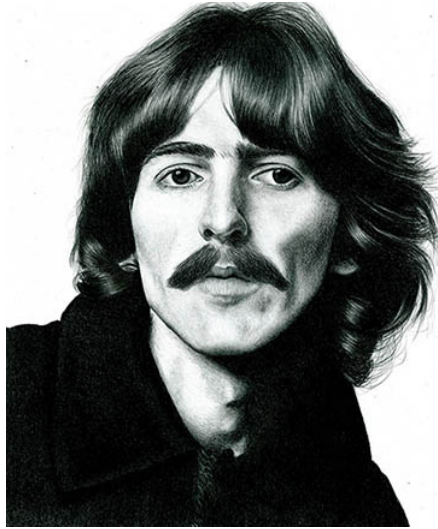
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Arts & Entertainment

Students Accepted into Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles

BY MADELEINE MEDEIROS
Staff Writer

CONTINUED FROM PG 1



John deGraffenreid, Art & Design Associate Professor
'George Harrison' by Senior Samantha Cunniff, done in graphite pencil.

The SILA isn't the first professional organization to take note of this illustration; "I got accepted into the New York Society of Illustrators in May," Cunniff said.

Tuke, also a studio art major, worked on her piece for about a year and created her own reference photos using a plastic Petco fish bag and photo editing techniques. Her piece, "Killer Whale Sale," features a captive killer whale in a pet store bag, as if it were being taken home like a goldfish. It is a commentary on SeaWorld's ethical violations concerning captive killer whales, noted by the flopped-over dorsal fin that commonly occurs in captive whales.

"I love animals. I've always been sick of what SeaWorld does," said Tuke. "I've always thought about how small their tanks are...it must feel like being a goldfish in a plastic bag."

Both students mentioned the small size of

the studio arts program, in which only three are senior studio arts majors, according to Cunniff.

For the small number of students enrolled in this program, SHU artists have seen numerous forms of recognition throughout the years, thanks to DeGraffenreid's ongoing efforts to enter his students in the contests for both the Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles and of New York, respectively. Since 2004, there have been 87 SHU illustration student acceptances into both illustration societies, according to DeGraffenreid.

"I'm just very proud of their dedication, their effort," said DeGraffenreid. "It speaks highly of what our students have been able to accomplish on a national level."



John deGraffenreid, Art & Design Associate Professor
'Petco Killer Whale Sale' by Madison Tuke in watercolor and colored pencils.

Shakespeare Gets Reimagined with the Untitled Othello Project

BY REBECCA WEINBERGER
Staff Writer

The Untitled Othello Project is back at Sacred Heart University. This project is a residency that has been periodically coming to campus since the fall of 2021. Participants collaborate through workshops and table readings as part of an active learning laboratory. These participants include students, faculty and professional actors.

The focus is on Shakespeare's work, "Othello," discussing the ethics of the show and its deep themes, performing it with professional actors and scholars reckoning with the play's racist and misogynist tropes.

According to the university's website, "Othello" is the story of a black man, a general in Venice, who marries a white woman, Desdemona. Othello's right-hand man, Iago, seeks to undermine the general by smearing him with racist remarks and inciting him into a jealous rage over Desdemona's imagined adultery, set on by Iago. Studying this play with the ensemble, students can interrogate Iago's racism and see how it is embedded in every character in the play.

"Not only are we writing a play, we are building a play. We are trying to find a deeper level of humanity from each character in our play," said Keith Cobb, actor and director.

During these seminars, each actor acts out a different character from the play while members sitting around the room participate. The actors then develop their character based on the questions they are receiving.

It is not just a play, the character development builds as the members ask more questions and as the show goes on. The actors are able to put a modern twist on characters in the original play.

"I've learned we shouldn't write things off as being a product of their time because

you can't really advance society that way, and it is important to step out of your comfort zone every once in a while," said junior Wren Campise, who is involved with the project.

The actors physically tap into their character each time they come up and talk, and there is a lot of development from the original play to the modern world.

"As a female, I think it's important that we look at this old text through a modern lens because there are not a lot of female characters in the original play, and I like that they are giving more character depth to Desdemona," said Campise. "Shakespeare is something that is not part of our time, and it is important to contextualize his play in a modern way."

The project shows Shakespeare's original work while also combining real world modern day problems and acting out how these characters would feel with these problems.

"I brought the Untitled Othello Project to Sacred Heart back in 2021. I called Keith when I was teaching Shakespeare, and he suggested we give this project a shot," said Emily Bryan, a professor in the English department at Sacred Heart. "The project is like a humanities study, in a way, it analyzes how humans behave and embodies humanity studies."

Originally the project was created as a way to talk about tough conversations. "Coming together and reading together was important to students, artists and faculty. When we all come in the room and have a common thing to talk about we aren't so divided. A lot of conversations in the world are brought into the room," said Bryan.



Rebecca Weinberg, Staff Photographer and Writer
Actor Keith Cobb explaining the "Untitled Othello Project" to students.

And the Nominees Are...This Year's Oscars Contenders

BY JESSICA BALOGH
Arts & Entertainment Editor

The 97th Academy Award nominations were released on Jan. 23, with "Emilia Pérez," "Wicked" and "The Brutalist" leading the pack. The nominations were postponed due to the Los Angeles wildfires, which have been wrecking historical levels of destruction since Jan 7.

The Oscars ceremony will be held on March 2, despite industry members calling for its cancellation due to the wildfires. Academy leaders argued for the ceremony to go on as scheduled for its economic impact on Los Angeles and as a symbol of resilience.

The nominations have sparked plenty of discussion among Sacred Heart University's students and staff regarding their thoughts on who should win each of the coveted award slots.

"I have only seen one film on the list [of Best Picture Nominations] and that is 'Dune: Part Two,'" said Prof. Keith Zdrojowy. "I'm partial to 'Dune' personally as I am a big fan of the book series, and I think the new movies do a really good job of bringing the book to life."

"Dune: Part Two" received five Oscar nominations, including Best Achievement in Cinematography and Best Sound. According to IMDB, the film follows Paul Atreides, who unites with the Fremen on a warpath against the conspirators who destroyed his family. Facing a choice between the love of his life and the fate of the universe, he endeavors to prevent a terrible future.

"'Emilia Pérez' did not deserve the most nominations. I have not heard of the movie but would like to watch it," said junior Brendan Reed, secretary of the film club.

"Emilia Pérez" is a Spanish-language, French-made Netflix film that earned 13 nominations, the most of the year. According to Netflix, the film is about a cartel boss who recruits a Mexico City lawyer for a life-changing job. It was not only nominated for Best Picture but also Best Actress for Karla Sofia Gascón, who is the first openly

transgender actor ever nominated for an Oscar.

The film, while gaining critical acclaim, has garnered a lot of public backlash due to its tonal extremes and controversial depiction of Mexican culture. It is also one of two films nominated that openly discussed its use of AI in its production.

"The Brutalist," which was nominated for ten awards, used AI in post-production to fix Adrien Brody and Felicity Jones' Hungarian pronunciation, according to Cosmopolitan. They also used GenAI to create a sequence at the end of the film, bringing the main character's architectural designs to life.

"Here is the reality check about AI in film, it is not new. Peter Jackson and his production company-built graphics for the 'Lord of the Rings' series to animate the battle scenes using AI," said Zdrojowy. "I don't really know how AI in films is going to shake out or how to feel about it. It is important that unions ensure their contracts to protect them from being replaced by AI."

The Associated Press and Alessia Catino contributed to this article.



Instagram, @emiliaperezfilm
The cast for Emilia Perez pose for a photo, with their award, at the Golden Globes



Instagram, @arianagrande
Cynthia Erivo (left) and Ariana Grande (right), actors in Wicked, pose for a photo at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

Sports

Three Consecutive Wins for Men's Volleyball



Sophomore Petr Beranek jumps for a serve in a match against Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Instagram, @trevimages

BY RYAN BRADLEY JR.
Staff Writer

The Pioneers men's volleyball team started their season 3-0, following wins over Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU), American International College (AIC) and Dominican University. For their fourth game of the season, the team fell short to Merrimack College at home, losing 4-1.

The season opener was a five-set match at FDU on Jan. 17. Going into the fourth set after being down 2-1, SHU regained their footing fast and took the set 25-23. They finished the match with a fifth set ending in 15-13.

Sophomore Jarron Popp was the standout player for the Pioneers, leading the team with sixteen kills and adding four blocks against FDU.

Head Coach Adam Niemczynowicz was proud of his team in their first game.

"We responded well to tough situations and came out on top," said Niemczynowicz.

Four days later, the Pioneers headed home to compete against their next opponent, AIC. This was the men's first game in the newly renovated William H. Pitt Athletic & Convocation Center.

Opening the first set, Sacred Heart won 25-14. This continued for the next two sets as the Pioneers took them 25-16 and 25-13, securing their second win of the season.

Sophomore Aleksa Mandic contributed to the AIC sweep with eight kills, six aces, six digs and two block assists.

This is Mandic's first season as a Pioneer. He is originally from Belgrade, Serbia and is a transfer from the University of Hawaii and Missouri Baptist University.

"That is the fun part, when you have a new player coming into your team and they gel well," said Niemczynowicz. "His attitude has only helped our team, making us and him better."

On Jan. 31, SHU swept another game at home against Dominican. After a 25-15 first set win, the men followed up with two more, taking the game and completing three straight wins.

On Feb. 1, the Pioneers lost to Merrimack at home, giving them a 3-1 record heading into conference play.

After a near-perfect start to the season, the Pioneers will now open conference play in their new league, the Eastern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association (EIVA). This conference includes teams from Pennsylvania State University, Princeton University and Harvard University.

"I am very excited to be in the EIVA, I played here as a player, and I am excited to coach in it too," said Niemczynowicz. "Our goal is to play the best volleyball. If we do that, we will have a great chance in this conference."

Sophomore Petr Beranek also talked about his excitement for the new conference.

"I want to beat as many ranked teams as we can," said Beranek.

The Pioneers will face the University of Charleston on Feb. 8 and 9 in their first conference matches of this season.

Club Hockey Goes D1

BY BRENT MCCREESH
Staff Writer

One of the four men's club hockey teams at SHU has officially made the jump from Amateur Athletic Union Division 2 (AAU D2) to Division 1 (D1).

The club hockey team started in 2021 as a way for student athletes who didn't make the SHU varsity men's hockey team to still play at a collegiate level.

"This team was founded kind of on the spot, I was just an assistant coach and was offered this job," said Head Coach Joseph Lane. "This team started at Division 3 and had just four games scheduled in their first year but since then have climbed through the ranks."

The men make up the first club hockey team at SHU to skate in the AAU Division 1 Empire Collegiate Hockey Conference. They will now face off against familiar neighbors, including Fairfield University and Quinnipiac University.

"Reputation and recognition is a big plus for SHU," said Lane. "The level of competition will get tougher and be a lot harder, but it's nothing the guys can't handle."

Senior and assistant captain AJ Gerace has been on the team for the past four years.

"I think the move up to D1 is something our team is ready for and will thrive in," said Gerace. "Every year our schedule gets more challenging as our team gets more skilled, especially this year. I think it has given us an extra boost of confidence that we needed and has shown in our first couple games back since break."

Along with representing SHU at a higher division, the men will also wear the university's crest at nationals in Jacksonville, Fla.

"Nationals is a big deal for our team and is an important opportunity for us to prove ourselves on a national level," said Gerace.

After nationals and looking ahead to their 2025-2026 season, the Pioneers will face a full schedule of Division 1 competition.

"We're excited. I'm hoping to take these guys to the next level. We're here to compete and we're ready," said Lane.



Jack Cavicchi, Assistant Photo Editor and Web Manager.

Sophomore Jake Calanni celebrates after scoring in SHU's 5-4 victory against the University of Central Florida on Jan. 26, 2025.

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The Double-Edged Sword of Social Media: The Impact on Teens

BY BEATRICE LOVATO
Journalism & Media Production Graduate Student

Social media has become a significant part of teenagers' lives, influencing the way they communicate, form relationships, and view themselves. While the positive aspects are often highlighted, the negative effects are becoming more evident. Understanding both sides is crucial as experts continue to study social media's impact on adolescents.

Despite concerns about its effects, social media offers benefits for teens. Firstly, it enables them to stay connected with friends and make new connections based on shared interests. For teens in marginalized communities, such as LGBTQ+ youth, social media can be especially valuable in providing support, fostering a sense of belonging, and helping them explore their identities in a safe space.

Another benefit of social media is that it allows teens to express themselves creatively. Online platforms provide opportunities to share music, artwork, and personal stories, giving teens a platform to showcase their talents and passions. Similarly, these platforms can play a role in increasing civic engagement. Teenagers can raise awareness, participate in activism, and support causes they care about online.

However, social media can also have detrimental impacts. One of its most concerning effects is the impact on attention span. The constant stream of content provided makes it difficult for teens to focus on tasks requiring prolonged concentration, such as studying or reading. Research from the National Institutes of Health shows that teens who spend more than two hours a day on screens perform worse academically. A 2023 Gallup survey found that U.S. teens spend an average of 4.8 hours per day on social media, further highlighting the distraction it causes.

Social media is also addictive. Like gambling and drugs, it taps into the brain's reward system, providing immediate gratification through likes, comments, and shares. This cycle of instant gratification keeps teens coming back for more, fostering dependence. Some experts warn that this addiction is especially concerning during adolescence, a time when the brain is still developing and more vulnerable to forming lasting habits.

The connection between social media use and mental health is one of the most troubling of all. Studies have shown a strong link between heavy social media use and increased rates of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. In 2023, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued an advisory warning that social media could harm teenagers' mental health, stressing concerns over the amount of time spent online, the content consumed, and its disruption of sleep and physical activity.

A study by the Berkeley Institute for the Future of Young Americans found that anxiety rates among college students doubled since 2008, correlating with increased social media use. Students who spent over 20 hours a week on social media were 53% more likely to suffer from anxiety compared to those who spent less than five hours online.

In addition to anxiety, social media often exacerbates body image issues. Teens may compare themselves to the idealized images they see online, leading to feelings of inadequacy. Richard Scheffler, a lead researcher on the subject, noted, "People post things that make them look good, so others get a biased view and think they're doing less well." This distorted perception of others' lives can significantly harm teens' self-esteem.

The impacts of social media extend beyond mental health to social development. While it provides an easy way for teens to communicate, it can hinder the development of essential social skills. Face-to-face interactions help teens develop empathy, understand emotional cues, and navigate complex social situations -- skills that are harder to practice through digital communication. As teens spend more time online, they risk losing the ability to engage in meaningful, real-world conversations.

One particularly concerning trend is the rise of "ghosting," where individuals abruptly cut off contact with someone, often without explanation. Ghosting can cause confusion and emotional pain, leaving the victim with feelings of rejection. The term "ghosting" was added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary in 2017, highlighting how ingrained this behavior has become in modern relationships. Teens who communicate primarily online may also struggle with the emotional complexity of breakups, which are now often conducted via text or social media rather than in person.

While the negative effects of social media are concerning, experts argue that the key lies in moderation and education. Adolescence is a time of significant brain development, and teens are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of social media.

Parents can assist by setting healthy boundaries around screen time and encouraging offline activities like exercise, face-to-face socializing, or hobbies that foster creativity. Schools can implement digital literacy programs to help students critically evaluate the content they encounter online and understand the potential impact of their digital interactions.

With guidance, teens can learn to balance their online interactions with real-world relationships, ensuring that social media remains a positive influence in their lives.

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