

Leading With Heart

BY BELLA MAZZILLI
Staff Writer

Orientation Leaders play a key role at Sacred Heart University. The position offers an opportunity for current full-time undergraduate students looking to be involved in a leadership role on campus.

An Orientation Leader (OL) supports new students during their transition to campus. The role involves welcoming students and their families on move-in day and serving as a student resource in the First-Year-Experience (FYE) required course.

The applications to become an OL went live on Monday, Feb 16. Tori Vacca, associate director of first year programs, oversees the OL recruitment and application process. There are requirements outlined in the application such as GPA qualifications and letters of recommendation. Then candidates go through an interview process.

The same process occurs each year. Applications close on March 9 and selected students are on campus in June training to be an OL. There is also virtual communication throughout the summer.

“I went into the experience looking at it from a work perspective, but I had so much more fun than I thought I would,” said senior and OL Zach Martin.

Students receive an email about becoming an OL, and the applications are available on Blackboard.

“I would say the biggest part of being an OL is you have to have a passion for Sacred Heart and you have to have a passion for assisting students,” said Vacca.

Martin says being an OL requires a large time commitment.

“The time commitment was around 17 days, pretty much all day, with a little break if we were lucky,” said Martin.

Junior James Grillo said the commitment is worthwhile.

“The time commitment is definitely significant, especially with summer training, but it’s 100% worth it,” said Grillo.

OLs also serve as FYE assistants. This class is held until mid-October, therefore students who are in this role



Daniel Passapera, Sacred Heart University

Sacred Heart University hosts its Kick-Off for the Class of 2029 during Welcome Weekend on the Chapel Quad, Saturday Aug. 23, 2025, at the Park Ave Campus.

cannot study abroad that fall semester.

The application requires one letter of recommendation from a Sacred Heart faculty or staff member.

“It should be someone that knows you well enough to speak to who you are as a Sacred Heart student,” said Vacca.

The orientation leaders create a sense of community among themselves, but also with the Office of First-Year-Programs.

“I really enjoyed becoming friends with my peers and I stay in touch with a lot of them today. I was also able to form connections with staff whom I would’ve never been able to if I hadn’t become an OL,” said Martin.

The Office of First-Year-Programs as well as the Student Life Office maintain close relationships with

the OLs.

“We really do our best to bond the orientation leaders together,” said Vacca.

Grillo said his experience at orientation as an incoming freshmen played a large role in why he wanted to become an OL.

“My orientation leader was amazing and made my transition feel welcoming and less overwhelming,” said Grillo.

There are about 40 OLs each year and they live in the residence halls on campus during orientation.

“The main thing this experience taught me was to be comfortable in my own skin. I was exposed to such a different group of people than what I’m used to, and I felt at first I had to act a certain way, but this experience taught me to find contentment in being myself always,” said Martin.

“Chipping Away at the Stained Glass Ceiling”

BY JAMIE VAN DER MERWE
Staff Writer

Dr. Mary Kate Holman, a professor at Fairfield University, came to Sacred Heart University to host “Chipping Away at the Stained Glass Ceiling” on Feb. 11, in the Michelle C. Loris Forum.

The colloquium primarily focused on the barriers women encountered at the second Vatican council and on the role they played in shaping the policies instated there.

“I think that history, especially recent history, is really important for understanding where we are now,” said Holman.

She wanted the discussion to draw on history and theology in order to reflect on present day questions.

In addition to teaching, Holman has also written a book, entitled *Marie-Dominique Chenu: Catholic Theology for a Changing World*. She also researches feminist ecclesiology as a way of looking at the divide between what the Catholic Church is and what it could be through the specific lens of patriarchal issues.

“It usually starts from things that bother me or things I’m curious about,” said Holman. “For the last five or ten years, this idea that history can help us understand the present has been important for me.”

“I do not know Dr. Holman personally, but I do know about the important theological work she is doing, trying to address the many social and doctrinal issues confronting a post-post Vatican II Church,” said Dr. June-Ann Greeley, a professor of English and practicing Catholic.

Holman got her start in the field when she was an undergraduate. Having taken several theology courses, she had to reconcile what she learned with her experience having been raised a Catholic.

“I was trying to make sense of how the Church was both the place where I was the most spiritually anchored, but also as a woman, it was the place where the thing my parents told me, ‘you can be whatever you want to be when you grow up,’ wasn’t actually true,” said Holman.

Historically, near the beginning of the Church’s life, women had very prominent roles, acting as deacons and leaders. However, this changed in the fifth

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News

“Chipping Away at the Stained Glass Ceiling”

BY JAMIE VAN DER MERWE
Staff Writer

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century.

“The role of the female diaconate was discontinued by an all-male Council, and that coincided with an increasingly patriarchal tone among the male leaders and within the treatises of the male theologians,” said Greeley.

Holman also discussed how several woman-led organizations are pushing for change within the Church. Additionally, she mentioned how women have obtained more representation, having the right to sit in and vote in the Synod of Bishops.

Junior Grace Baranosky did not know much about Vatican II before the colloquium, nor did she know about women’s role in the council.

“As a woman member of the Church, it’s great to hear that people care about this and that it’s a conversation that’s happening,” said Baranosky.

As for sophomore Jenna Massaro, she found the colloquium eye opening.

“I talked to the speaker afterwards and she showed me a conference that is kind of similar to this stuff, so I might attend that and further my knowledge,” said Massaro.

Holman is hopeful for the future of the Church.

“At its best, it could be a community of people who are all journeying together to get closer to God,” said Holman.



Dr. Mary Kate Holman (center) presenting the Chipping Away at the Stained Glass Ceiling colloquium in the Michelle C. Loris forum.

Jamie Van Der Merwe, Staff Writer and Photographer

Showcasing SHU Talent

BY NICHOLAS MAISANO AND MADELEINE MEDEIROS
Assistant News Editor and News Editor

The annual Academic Festival, set to be held on April 24 from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. this year, has opened up applications to the Sacred Heart University (SHU) community. The university-wide event at West Campus will be followed by an awards ceremony and reception.

Sponsored by the Committee for Student Research, the festival celebrates the work undergraduate and graduate students have been developing in classrooms, laboratories, studios and community settings. It will showcase a wide range of student work: from senior theses and faculty-mentored research projects to original artistic and design work across all colleges.

“The Academic Festival is Sacred Heart University’s annual celebration of student research, scholarship and creative achievement,” said Deana Santoro-Dillon, library academic festival manager.

Faculty members, administrators, students and guests can attend the poster session and speak with the presenters about their work. As a forum for scholarship and creativity in front of a public audience, the Academic Festival achieves a dual purpose of recognizing academic excellence and encouraging collaboration and discussion.

According to the SHU website, “[it’s] an opportunity for students to showcase their work, share their ideas and celebrate their impact with the SHU community—and beyond.”

Part of the festival will be dedicated to a student poster session. Students who have completed thesis-level work are encouraged to submit proposals for paper presentation, which will be scheduled throughout the week leading up to the poster session. Following the poster session, the university will have its awards ceremony and reception for outstanding projects.

The competition is open to undergraduate and graduate students, individually or as a team, who can submit research, scholarship, creative work or design projects. Alternatively, students can submit ideas still in progress that will be completed by the time of the festival.

Senior Allegra Simon, a molecular and cellular biology major, participated in the festival in 2025.

“I did my presentation on biology and focused on the



Sacred Heart University students studying at West Campus, where the Academic Festival will be held.

Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University

role of environmental conditions in determining plant size differences in restored and natural *Spartina alterniflora*,” said Allegra.

Simon’s presentation was based on research she started during the summer of 2024.

Participants have the option to be considered for Academic Festival Awards, which honor achievement across numerous categories. They can choose up to two categories of Academic Festival Awards; which include Best Writing, Best Multidisciplinary Research or Collaboration, Best Visuals, Most Creative, Most Scholarly Impact or Potential, and Best Technology Prototype. Winners will be announced during the awards ceremony following the poster session.

Interested students must submit their “Intent to Participate” before Friday, March 22. Students who are interested must provide a working title for their project, along with an abstract, according to the SHU website. The accepted papers will also be showcased on the University’s

newly developed Student Research Portal, an online platform created to promote student research and creative work beyond campus boundaries.

“I applied through my research professor,” said Simon. “She helped me throughout the whole process and taught me how to present to the school.”

The final papers for the competition must be turned in by Friday, April 12. However, the papers for the Best Writing Awards must be turned in on, or before, Friday, April 5. All applications will be submitted through Sacred Heart University’s Research & Academic Opportunities Hub (RAO Hub) using a student’s SHU log-in. Once accepted, students will be required to submit their final project as a poster or as a paper through the platform.

As for Santoro-Dillon, the event is more than merely presenting; it is celebrating the impact of students at Sacred Heart.

Daniel Greene and Dylan McCrudden contributed to this article.

**UPCOMING
EVENTS ON
CAMPUS**

**THURSDAY 2/19:
THE GREAT DEBATE
7 P.M. MARTIRE
CENTER LORIS
FORUM**

**FRIDAY 2/20:
AMELIE
5 P.M. MAIN ACADEMIC
BUILDING-NC
PERFORMING ARTS LOBBY**

**SATURDAY 2/21:
MEN’S ICE HOCKEY
VS HOLY CROSS
6 P.M. MARTIRE
FAMILY ARENA**

Features

Working With Wellness

BY CASEY MCGRATH
Staff Writer

The SHU FIT Center is a faculty-only gym located on the Service Level of West Campus. Since 2018, Daniel Warzoha, manager of employee wellness, has been the heart of SHU FIT. The center and Warzoha's services are a free resource that faculty and staff can use for the benefit of their physical and mental health.

"We want our faculty members, our staff members, any employee here to feel good about themselves, to feel good about where they work, to be energized when they are at work, and then to also build connections while they're here at work," said Warzoha.

Warzoha contacts employees weekly via email, notifying them of wellness programs at the center that build self-confidence and community.

"This is a unique space where everybody can step away from just work and life and focus on themselves," said Warzoha. "But then also come together in an open space where you can let your guard down a little bit, just be yourself, and be together with people."



Contributed by Daniel Warzoha, Sacred Heart University
Daniel Warzoha poses for a professional headshot.

The SHU FIT Center helps faculty and staff stay physically active, boosting their energy, resilience, and overall health. While the gym is communal, Warzoha and his staff offer personal services.

"We offer personalized exercise programs, fitness assessments where people could meet with myself or one of my staff members and go through a program tailored to them, their needs, their wants, their desires, and to get what

they want out of a fitness program," said Warzoha.

Mail Operations Supervisor Sam Gountas is among the faculty and staff who utilize the SHU FIT Center and its services. Gountas first visited the gym eight years ago and has now gone over 500 times.

"SHU FIT Center is more than just a gym," said Gountas. "It's a resource that enhances staff health, productivity and overall campus culture."

Gountas said he is pleased with the university's prioritization of faculty and staff wellness, as he feels it has personally benefited him. Through his use of the support and guidance services at the center, Gountas has gained confidence and self-awareness.

"Dan Warzoha, who runs the facility, has personally helped me with ongoing support, advice, and making sure I have access to the resources I need," said Gountas.

To reduce the stress of meeting student demands in higher education, Warzoha says employees need to be strong for themselves and each other. Warzoha directly works with faculty and staff, indirectly benefiting students.

"Yes, my job is directly to work with faculty and staff but by proxy that's working with all the students because I want the faculty and staff to be as happy and healthy and engaged as possible," said Warzoha. "And when they are doing that then they're at their best to show up for all of the students to deliver the best classes, programs, and what not so you can advance through your academic journey."

Sophomore Trey Barbieri, an exercise science major in the 3+3 Accelerated Doctor of Physical Therapy Program, recognizes the importance of prioritizing faculty and staff wellness for students.

"By encouraging our professors to be well physically and mentally, it sets a standard that students can only hope to reach as well," said Barbieri.

Currently, employees are amid the SHU FIT Winter Olympic Games. Last week, they skied on an erg, shot targets with Nerf Guns, and tossed plush snowballs.

"The SHU FIT Center is the big kid playground, and this is our recess," said Warzoha. "We need our time to step away, to be on the playground, to be with our friends."

Kasia Hanulewicz: Kicking Towards a DPT

BY BRENNAN TAUBER
Staff Writer

For most college students, balancing classes, studying, and a social life can feel overwhelming. Sophomore Kasia Hanulewicz is challenged by intense daily training as she competes at the national level for USA Taekwondo while pursuing a demanding 3+3 Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree.

Hanulewicz has practiced Taekwondo for nearly 14 years, and her dedication to the sport continues to shape her daily routine.

"A typical day starts early with classes in the morning, followed by studying or homework in between, then training for several hours at night," said Hanulewicz. "Some days, I'm in class for most of the day, then I go straight to practice, and by the time I'm done, I still have assignments to finish."

Her training schedule includes strength conditioning, flexibility work, sparring drills, and technical practice, all of which require both physical stamina and mental focus. Despite the long hours, Hanulewicz remains committed to excelling in both her academic and athletic goals.

"Balancing being a full-time student and athlete definitely takes discipline," said Hanulewicz. "I rely heavily on planning ahead, time management, and staying organized. If I don't stay on top of my work, everything can fall apart pretty quickly."

Competing at the national level also means frequent travel, which adds another layer of difficulty. Hanulewicz often flies across the country for tournaments, sometimes missing class days and facing tight academic deadlines.

"I do travel to compete pretty often, especially during competition season," said Hanulewicz. "It can be stressful because I'm usually doing homework in airports, on planes, or in hotel rooms. I communicate with my professors ahead of time and plan out my assignments so I don't fall behind."

Maintaining such a demanding lifestyle requires sacrifice. Hanulewicz admitted that she has had to give up much of the traditional college experience in order to stay fully committed.

"I don't get as much free time as most students," said Hanulewicz. "I'll miss out on social events here and there, and even simple things like relaxing after class. But I know what I'm working toward, and that makes the sacrifices worth it."

Despite her dedication, there are moments when the pressure becomes overwhelming. Balancing intense physical training with heavy academic workloads can be mentally and emotionally exhausting.

"There are definitely times when I feel overwhelmed," said Hanulewicz. "When that happens, I remind myself why I started and what my long-term goals are. Sometimes I just take things one step at a time and focus on getting through the next task."



Contributed by Kasia Hanulewicz
Kasia Hanulewicz sporting her medals and the American flag.

What keeps her motivated during stressful weeks is her love for Taekwondo and her passion for becoming a physical therapist.

"Taekwondo has taught me discipline, perseverance, and confidence," said Hanulewicz. "Knowing that I'm working toward my dream career in physical therapy also keeps me going. I want to help athletes recover from injuries someday, and I think my experiences will make me better at that."

As Hanulewicz continues her journey at Sacred Heart, she hopes her story can inspire others to chase ambitious goals, even when the path is challenging.

"If you truly love what you're doing, the hard days become manageable," said Hanulewicz. "It's about staying committed and believing in yourself."

CampusLife

Saying Hello to Spring Break

BY WILL MORGAN, AND THEO WEISMANN
Audrey's Corner Editor, Campus Life Editor

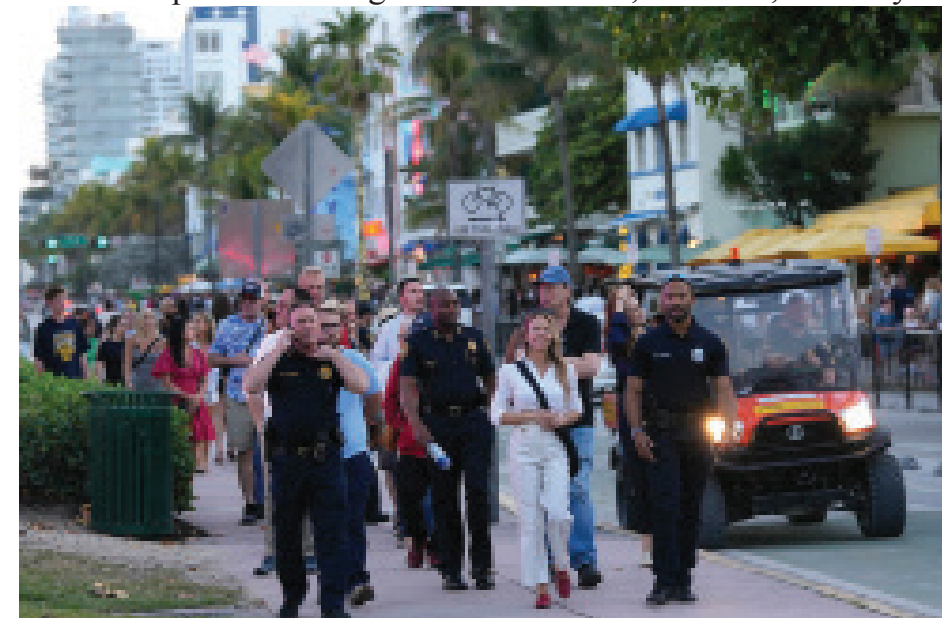
As we approach the first week of March, group chats titled “SPRING BREAK 2026” have only been ramping up as most students finalize their flights and book their Airbnbs. Long before the first syllabi were handed out, the countdown had already begun.

“Spring break is all I’ve been thinking about since the last semester began,” said sophomore Blake Mattesitch. “My boys and I have been planning a Punta Cana getaway since April last year. I feel like Spring Break is just a great opportunity to live life to the fullest.”

What was once a simple getaway for students at Sacred Heart University has evolved into a fully coordinated event inspired by travel influencers on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, and the pressure to make the most memories possible in only a single week off.

“We won’t have a spring break all our lives once we get jobs in the real world. You gotta take advantage of what you have while you have it,” said Mattesitch.

The price for living life to the fullest, however, can vary.



Lynne Sladky, AP Photo

City of Miami Beach police officers patrol along Ocean Drive during spring break Thursday, March 13, 2025, in Miami Beach, Fla.

“The amount of money I’m spending on punta would make Scrooge McDuck blush. We’ve saved up for a full year for this, summer and winter break jobs, Christmas money. I think altogether our group budget is \$8000. Some of the guys got some money from their parents, too. We each spent like \$350 on the plane, and \$1200 on the Airbnb,” said Mattesitch.

Although the same extreme planning process can’t be said for all of SHU students. “I planned my spring break trip pretty last-minute, actually,” said senior Liana Haggerty. “I planned my destination based on price because flights were much cheaper to Tampa than many other destinations in Florida.”

Not every SHU student has their heart set on a warm destination, though, as senior Ayden Giacomelli plans to fly west to ski at Breckenridge, CO. “I’ve been told by my family that Breckenridge is a really good time and has some unreal powder for skiing,” said Giacomelli.

While some students have the means to live spring break with seemingly no limit on their credit cards, others try their best to “ball on a budget.”

“We’re going as cheap as possible,” said sophomore Alek Rencurrel. “We booked a motel, and we’re doing 4 guys in a room, splitting the cost of everything and flying Spirit Airlines.”

With so many different destinations in mind, it is interesting to hear from students, “What defines a successful spring break?”

“I would define a ‘successful’ break as getting to relax and forget about classes for a little bit while enjoying a new place,” said Giacomelli.

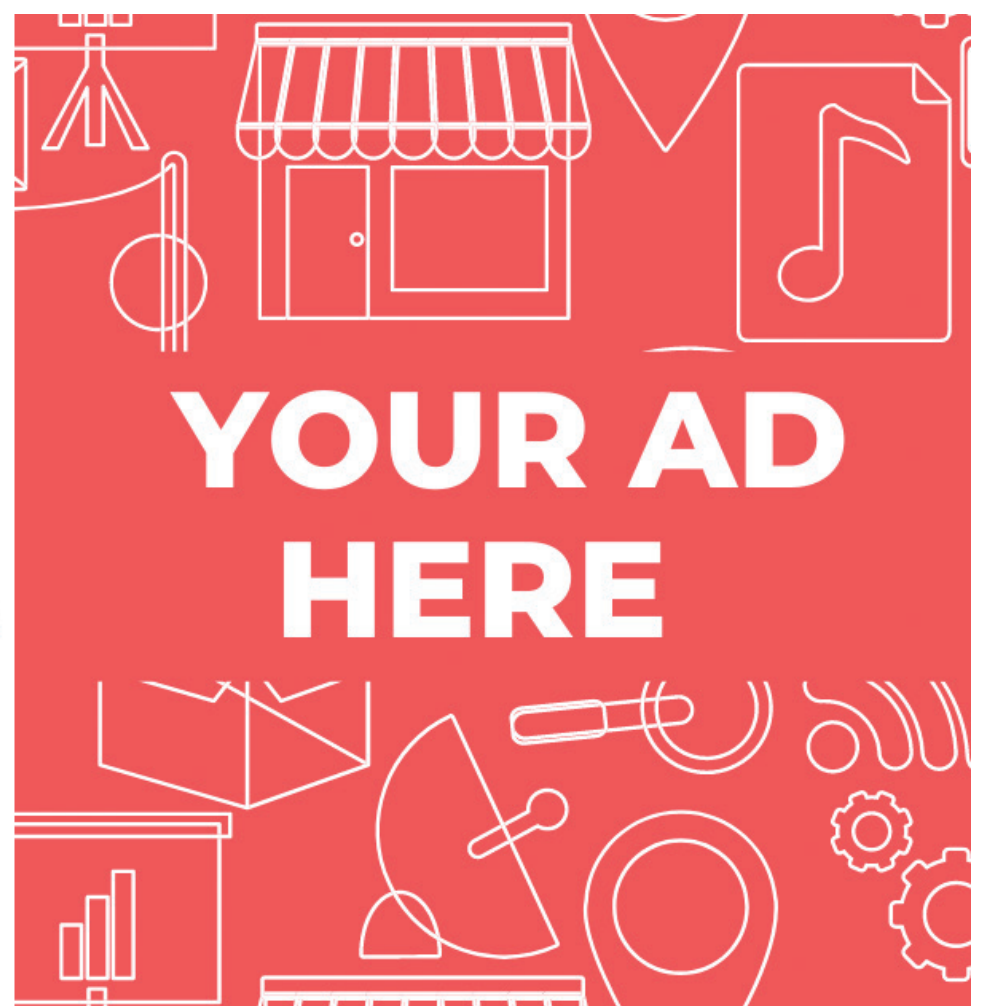
For some students, spring break is about beaches and nightlife. For others, it’s skiing, staying home, or simply catching up on rest. No matter the destination, the anticipation alone has been finding its way into campus conversations.

As the first week of March draws closer, the group chats grow louder, and the weather apps refresh more frequently, clearly counting down the days.

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CampusLife

And Goodbye to Cabin Fever

BY THEO WEISMANN
Campus Life Editor



Nicholas Bosticco, Staff Writer and Photographer

The sun sets in the distance behind JP's Diner.

By the time 5 p.m. rolls around, the Sacred Heart University campus is already dark. Students shuffle across the upper quad, bundling up in their long coats, with hands tucked deep into their pockets to escape the frigid air. It is obvious that the energy that once lingered outside during the warmer months has followed the students inside with their hibernation habits.

Sunlight stretching into the evening has given way to quick walks to class and evenings spent locking yourself in until the next meal.

"I tend to wake up later than most other people, so my days feel like a couple of hours," said senior Javier Alicea Kahn.

Although the days are gradually getting longer, many students agree that the early sunsets and cold weather still impact their moods and energy they bring into the classroom.

"I feel less motivated to do my work in the darkness, and I end up wanting to save everything until the day after, which is not good for time management," said sophomore Katherine Snyder.

As internship application deadlines and midterm exams approach despite the colder months, students say the mental adjustment can feel overwhelming.

Aside from noticeable effects on students' morale, the short

days and cold weather heavily impact the social habits for many students.

"Sometimes I want to hang out with people, but when I notice it's dark, I just want to go back to my dorm and start my nighttime routine," said Snyder. "It prevents me from being as social as I can be."

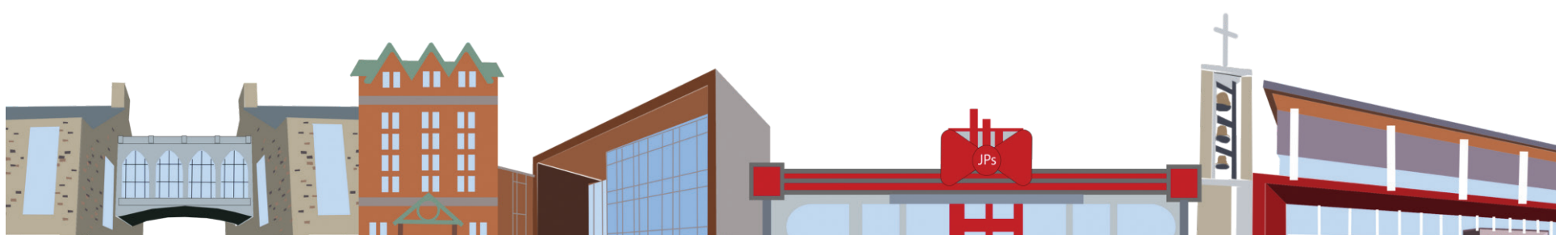
In an effort to combat these isolated feelings, often known as 'cabin fever,' many students make it a priority to stay connected with their social circles.

"Hanging out with my friends, calling my parents, or moving my body, whether it's weightlifting or yoga – really helps me stay motivated and productive," she said.

Some students take it a step further by embracing the cold weather and still making trips off campus, whether it be a train ride to New York City or a simple road trip home.

"A night out to the city with my friends works as my ideal mental reset," said Alicea Khan.

While winter may confine campus physically, students say it has not eliminated social connection, it has simply reshaped it. As daylight slowly returns throughout the semester, many continue adjusting to the quieter rhythm of late winter.



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

Arts & Entertainment

Put on Your Dancing SHUs

BY NORA DELEHANTY
Staff Writer

On Feb. 6-8, the dance program hosted a residency weekend for the Inception Dance Crew and Rhythm Tap Crew, where students had the opportunity to learn new pieces from professional guest choreographers from New York City in the dance studios of the John and Sabina Petillo Center of Performing Arts.

To be a member of either the Inception Dance Crew or Rhythm Tap Crew, dancers must go through a vigorous audition process.

“They’re essentially their own kind of company,” said Director of Dance Ashley Newman. “If you’re a part of it, you commit to the rehearsals and the classes, and to be at the tech rehearsals and performances.”

The Inception Dance Crew hosted choreographer Iman Brooks and was assisted by Dominique Russo. Newman was familiar with their strong training in hip-hop and pop-street style dance, which is what the crew primarily focuses on.

Inception Dance Crew President senior Morgan Holmes said she is grateful to have learned from Brooks and is excited to perform the piece they learned in



Instagram, @sacredheartuniversitydance
SHU's Rhythm Tap Crew enjoys a fun weekend of learning new pieces from professional choreographer, Nicole Messina.

the program's upcoming spring performances.

“Learning a four-minute piece in not even two full days is a lot, but definitely worth it,” said Holmes. “It’s also a good learning experience for us if any of us want to dance professionally.”

The Rhythm Tap Crew hosted Nicole Messina to choreograph a tap dance on the crew. Messina was requested by the dancers as they are familiar with her work from her large social media presence.

Junior Genevieve Seanor, a member of the tap crew, felt that she gained a lot from the residency.

“I learned a lot about that experience and how to compartmentalize choreography,” said Seanor. “By the end of the day, it all came together.”

For students who are interested in dancing professionally post-graduation, it is important for them to build connections with professional choreographers to network.

“It’s really nice to have someone new set completely different choreography on us to get their outlook and their advice as professional dancers in the world of auditioning,” said Holmes.

Newman feels that these residency weekends are significant for students in the dance program as they foster connections.

“The dance world is all connected,” said Newman. “Students feel like they are part of something by being in this dance program, and I’m hoping to continue to cultivate that sense of community and grow it even more.”

One of the strongest assets of the robust program is the opportunity for dancers to build the skill of choreographing their own pieces. Students who may be interested in pursuing a professional career in dance, choreography or teaching benefit from learning from guest professionals throughout the residencies.

“Nicole is an amazing choreographer,” said Seanor. “Learning her style and how she teaches and observing other people’s teaching styles is always something that I am interested in.”

The Inception Dance Crew and Rhythm Tap Crew will perform the pieces they learned at “SHU SLAM” on March 20 and “Tap Showcase” on April 23 in the Edgerton Center for the Performing Arts.

“As a dance program, we’re looking at ways that we can create more opportunities for performance so that these residencies don’t just go away after one performance,” said Newman.

Halftime Hype

BY AMELIA SALADINO
Staff Writer

The 60th Super Bowl on Feb. 8 in Santa Clara, California, drew an in-person audience of more than 70,000 fans. For many viewers at home, the halftime show and commercials became the highlight of the night.

Bad Bunny's halftime performance sparked conversations about culture, diversity and representation. Freshman Julia Valdez said the performance carried a meaningful message and highlighted representation.

“It was the first halftime show that I thought had a meaning and a message, which is especially important during today’s time period,” said Valdez. “There is so much division between all of us, and I felt that this performance brought many kinds of people together.”

Valdez said the performance highlighted both American culture and Latino heritage.

“It was really refreshing to see,” said Valdez. “It felt familiar, but positive and inclusive, and it made me rethink how our country’s media represents different cultures.”

Viewers were so engaged in the performance that many remained in front of their screens, resulting in unexpected real-world effects. According to the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, water usage dropped during the halftime show and surged immediately afterward.

In a post on X, NYC Water reported, “NYC saw a significant reduction in water usage throughout the five boroughs during the Super Bowl’s Bad Bunny halftime show yesterday, but in the 15 minutes right after the show ended, there was a spike in usage equivalent to 761,719 toilets flushing across town.”

Celebrity involvement in the Super Bowl plays a major role in attracting viewers. This was evident in both the halftime show and commercials from brands such as Dunkin’, Pringles and Budweiser.

Dr. Nikki Wingate, marketing professor at the Jack Welch College of Business & Technology, emphasized the value of the Super Bowl as an advertising platform.

“It is one of those opportunities where an advertiser can be exposed to millions of people to create either the brand’s existence or to reinforce the brand message,” said Wingate. “For that reason, the 30-second spot commercials go at prices upward of \$10 million.”

Established brands can experiment with creative advertisements and celebrity cameos due to strong brand recognition. Freshman Vincent Palazzo said a Dunkin’ commercial featuring actor Jason Alexander caught his attention.



Instagram, @lifewithchris
Bad Bunny gives his Grammy award to a young boy, representing the future and the past.

“I love ‘Seinfeld,’ so when I saw Jason Alexander in the Dunkin’ Donuts commercial, it honestly made me want to go get a Brown Sugar Shaken Espresso,” said Palazzo. “As a New Englander, Dunkin’ is life. Using these TV show stars for marketing is brilliant.”

Valdez also said she enjoyed the Pringles commercial featuring Sabrina Carpenter. “I enjoyed the Pringles commercial,” said Valdez. “The Pringles commercial with Sabrina Carpenter felt directly targeted at Gen Z because many of her songs are romantic, yet funny. This commercial tied into her artistry while still being entertaining.”

This year’s Super Bowl illustrated how advertising and performance can resonate with audiences when they reflect cultural identity and artistic trends.

“Seeing something that aligns with my generation and reflects the type of art I love reminded me that representation and creativity truly matter,” said Valdez.

Sports

Women's Hockey Enters the Home Stretch

BY JEREMY RODRIGUEZ MOREL
Staff Writer

After a challenging start to the season, the women's ice hockey team found their stride, winning six consecutive games to improve a 5-17-2 record to 11-17-2.

With just two regular season games remaining before the New England Women's Hockey Alliance (NEWHA) playoffs, the Pioneers are entering the postseason with confidence and momentum.

The team's early struggles were marked by losses and inconsistent play, but a shift in focus has led to their recent success.

"We played some good hockey at times all year, but now it's been consistent," said head coach Thomas O'Malley. "Scoring goals, playing some solid defense, getting that goaltending and that's driven our success."

The Pioneers defense has tightened, and the offense has capitalized on more scoring chances. This all-around improvement has been instrumental in the



Jack Cavicchi, Senior Photo Editor and Asst. Sports Editor

Sacred Heart Women's Ice Hockey celebrate a shootout win over Assumption University on Dec. 5, 2025.

team's recent success.

As for the players themselves, a big energy change within the team helped guide the win streak.

"We turned into a win mindset. It's just more focused, we're feeling more competitive," said sophomore forward Hailey Jussila.

Key players have stepped up during the streak, notably senior goalie Jillian Petruno. On Feb. 7, Petruno's 32 save shutout against Post University earned the Pios a 1-0 overtime victory and their sixth consecutive win.

"I think it has been a team effort, I don't think it has been an individual role game, I think it's just everyone working together," said Petruno.

While several players have excelled during the streak, some have stepped up in silent, yet equally important ways. For example, sophomore defenders Maddie Smith and Reese Pascucci have played pivotal roles despite not always being in the spotlight when it comes to the stat sheet.

"They might not get all the accolades or all the awards and all the spotlight, but they are steady," said O'Malley. "Olivia LaRoche is the same way, captain of the team; she goes out and leaves it all on the ice."

While their names may not always be on the scoresheet, their commitment to the team's success has been crucial in building the Pioneers' momentum.

With only two games left before the NEWHA playoffs, the pioneers are aiming to carry this momentum into the postseason. For O'Malley, the key to their success in the next few weeks is simple.

"Come out and play our game, let's run our systems, let's get our attack on right away. Good defense creates good offense; we want to play shutdown stingy defense and then take it up the far end," said O'Malley.

As the team prepares for the final stretch of the regular season, both Jussila and Petruno know what's at stake. The next few games will be critical to securing a good position in the playoffs.

"We're definitely not cocky by any means," said Julissa.

In their Feb. 13-14 series against Long Island University, the Pios extended their win streak to seven games on Friday night, before a 1-0 loss on Saturday night ended it, pushing the season record to 12-18-2.

The Pios close out the regular season with a series against Assumption University on Feb. 20-21 before kicking off the NEWHA Playoffs on Feb. 27.

Sacred Heart Athletics contributed to this article.

The Pioneers' Sold Out Game v.s. The Stags

BY NICHOLAS BOSTICCO
Staff Writer

The Pioneers took on their crosstown rival Fairfield University in men's basketball on Feb. 5 at the William H. Pitt Center, falling to the Stags by a score of 92-87. The game marked the first basketball sellout at the newly renovated Pitt Center.

After being down 47-38 against the Stags at the end of the first half, the Pioneers were able to cut the lead down to one point, but they were not able to pull off the win. For senior guard Dashon Gittens, embracing the highs and lows of the season is a crucial aspect of having a positive attitude.

"The mindset is really good. We have been on a losing streak before and turned it into a win streak. It's just a bump in the road," said Gittens. "We just get closer even when there are ups and downs and no team is perfect, and that we're always trying to be great every day."

Despite the loss against the Stags, the atmosphere was electric in the Pitt Center, with a sold-out crowd. The sold-out arena ranged from families to college students, as well as superfans.

"It's an exciting thing for players to experience something like that, but what really excites me is the campus community," said head coach Anthony Latina.

Latina was pleased to see the bleachers filled to the brim with fans, which, to him, had a massive impact on the game.

"No question, the crowd had a major impact, rattled Fairfield, and the crowd was overall a major factor in making it a close game," said Latina.

The Pioneers are slowly looking at the end of their season, with three games to go in the season and looking to clinch a spot in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament.

"The way to keep morale high is to stick to the process, the season is going to have ups and downs, the stuff you can't control you have to move on, get ready to beat the next opponents," said senior forward Anquan Hill.

The Pioneers take on the Stags once again in the Leo D. Mahoney Arena in Fairfield on Friday, Feb. 20. Fairfield University is known to have an electric crowd for their basketball games, and with their cross-town rival playing against them, they will bring the energy on their turf.

"Always a little bit of everything, always need to be fresh and clear your head, and you have to be as good as you can be, the margin is always so

small, and the difference between winning and losing is almost nothing," said Latina.

Following the game at Fairfield, the Pioneers will travel to Poughkeepsie, N.Y. to take on Marist University on Feb. 22 before returning home to conclude the regular season on Feb. 27 against Mount St. Mary's University.

Sacred Heart Athletics contributed to this article.



Nicholas Bosticco, Staff Writer and Photographer

Dashon Gittens running upcourt in front of the sold out student section during the Sacred Heart's matchup against Fairfield on Feb. 5, 2026.

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SHU Rowers Making Waves

BY ASHTON DAVIS
Staff Writer

Two members of Sacred Heart University's rowing team have earned national recognition before the spring season begins; sophomore Lily Holt and freshman Kaela Borelli were named to the For Stars Network (FSN) 2026 Watchlist.

The FSN Watchlist highlights 196 Division I women's rowing athletes, 17 coxswains and 179 rowers, nationwide, recognizing competitors who demonstrate elite performance, leadership and long-term potential. Holt and Borelli were among the 179 rowers selected.

"It's definitely one of the hardest things I've ever done," said Holt. "We get up early and take a 30-minute bus to practice there and back. A lot of cardio, teamwork and mental toughness go into it."

Rowing is often an overlooked sport on campus, but the grind behind the program is anything but easy.

"It's not really a sport seen on campus as much," said Holt. "People don't always know how much work truly goes into the rowing team."

That work ethic defined Holt's career long before college. She ended her high school career finishing in third place at the Scholastic Rowing National Championships, showing she's not a stranger to national recognition.

"It means so much, but I owe it to my teammates because I wouldn't be here without them," said Holt.

Borelli, who is in her first collegiate season, said she found out about the honor through a teammate rather than an official announcement.

"I wasn't really expecting it," said Borelli. "Seeing my name on it was pretty cool because I don't know if I ever imagined that it would be."

Borelli described rowing as both a team and mental sport, especially during the winter months when training takes place indoors.

"You're by yourself on the machines, but on the water, you're all working together for a common goal," said Borelli.

Both athletes said the fall and winter seasons laid the foundation for spring competition.

Borelli said the team's time apart during winter break made their reunion more meaningful.

"Coming back together, we're able to push each other and really see that it's not just for yourself, but for the team," said Borelli.

"The culture and the standards start from day one," said Holt. "If the culture's not tough and rock solid, then we can't compete that strong together."

Despite being an individual honor, both athletes said the recognition reflects the team as a whole.

"I've done every sport in the book, and this made me dig deeper than I ever thought I would," said Holt.

The duo agreed the team's goals remain unchanged this spring season ahead.

"We're getting national recognition, and we're working for more of that," said Borelli.

The rowing team has their first meet of the spring season on April 3, in Coventry, Conn.

Sacred Heart Athletics contributed to this article.



Instagram, @sacredheartwrow

The Sacred Heart Women's Rowing team competing at the Head of the Charles on Oct. 18, 2025.

Women Leading From The Control Room

BY JAMES SPOTO
Staff Writer

In honor of National Women and Girls in Sports Day, the Sports Communication and Media (SCM) program put together an all-female broadcast team on Feb. 7. The broadcast was aired live on ESPN+ to show the women's basketball game against Mount St. Mary's University at the Pitt Center.

SCM Graduate Assistant Cat Da Rocha, who usually works as a sideline reporter, produced the game and played a key role in crewing the fifth annual all-female broadcast.

"I'm so glad that we got to do a crew of 17 women, and even throughout the entire show, we highlighted everyone involved," said Da Rocha. "I wanted to make sure that not only we succeeded in general, but that we were being highlighted in a very positive light."

Senior Shannon Tuttle, managing editor of the Spectrum, sat alongside Da Rocha in the control room, directing the broadcast.

"Having these women come into these roles, it's really impressive for everyone across the board," said Tuttle. "I would definitely give a huge shoutout to my handheld camera operators."

Junior SCM student Lauren McQuillan worked handheld camera for the game. She praised Da Rocha and Tuttle for their ability to plan out the crew sheet and get everyone ready for the broadcast.

"I had never worked a camera for a game, let alone handheld," said McQuillan. "Now, it's something that I see myself in, and I feel like broadcasts like this give more of an opportunity to women who might be interested and want to learn."

This game was a learning opportunity as the women got to cover an overtime game in the Pitt Center.

"It's so easy to get caught up in the game and the intensity of it, but in the control room, you have to have a level of responsibility to understand that we are broadcasting a game,"



Instagram, @scmatshu

The all-female broadcast team gets together after a successful production of the Women's Basketball game on Feb. 7, 2026.

said Tuttle.

"When things come that you don't expect, it kind of turns into chaos," said Da Rocha. "With the help of my crew, everyone still stayed calm, and I think that's the biggest thing: we all communicated well and helped each other."

The women's basketball team fell 68-63, but that did not take away the joy and passion these women felt being in the crew.

"What I took out of this experience was how supportive women are for each other in the sports media industry," said senior Sami Millerick, who was technical director for the broadcast. "No matter what position or experience level, every woman in the crew supported each other, and no mistake felt like a burden."

Even after a loss, the crew shone a light on the younger generation, hoping a show like this would help bring awareness to women in the sports media industry.

"Do it. It's awesome," said McQuillan. "It's such an amazing community to be a part of now, and I can't imagine what it's going to look like in 10 to 15 years."