

Daybreake Making Breakthroughs

BY JAMIE VAN DER MERWE
Staff Writer

“For me, it’s no problem driving to Connecticut on a Sunday morning to meet some people and run a photoshoot, because I really love it,” said Sacred Heart University alumnus Thomas Remmen.

Remmen is one of the founders of Daybreake, an apparel company that focuses on Greek Life merchandise and custom designs. On Apr. 12, they hosted a photo shoot in the Frank & Marisa Martire Center for the Liberal Arts, featuring fraternity and sorority members from across the SHU campus.

“This semester at Sacred Heart, things have been taken to a whole other level. We’ve worked with almost every single fraternal and sorority organization,” said Remmen. “To see, one by one, students from all these different organizations put their name on the sign-up sheet, walk in, be excited to sit there, post pictures and join the link, I can’t explain how much that really means to me.”

To produce Greek Life merchandise for sale, a license is required, making it a unique niche that Daybreake fills for SHU.

“We first got involved with Greek Life because Tom had a conversation with a friend in Delta Zeta (DZ) about the custom apparel we did for some small organizations over the summer, as well as pop up stands. From there we had a stand at a DZ event in the fall of 2024, leading to the idea of making their merchandise. After that, we knew we could do something in the industry,” said Jack Ryan, Daybreake co-founder and senior at Long Island University.

“Tom and his team were very helpful and creative when it came to working with me for designing the merch. They were patient and were flexible with adjusting our order as needed,” said junior Lauren Rauso, an Alpha Delta Phi



Attributed by Thomas Remmen, '25

A table at a market featuring Daybreake's merchandise and branding member.

Daybreake operates as the umbrella brand for both of their companies: Daybreake, which operates as the retailer, and DBKE Originals, which handles custom designs.

“The design process is done super closely with whoever we are designing for. We start with an ask for a basic idea of what the vision is, we start mocking up some designs and we send them back-and-forth until it’s absolutely perfect for our customer,” said sophomore Kaylie Luciano, a Daybreake employee.

Daybreake works with other organizations at SHU as well, having provided the merchandise for the SHU Lemon Club, as well as being the primary supplier of apparel for the Jack Welch College of Business and Technology.

“Tom has done our T-shirts for all of our student employment positions, he makes special limited-edition swag for us to use in giveaways and prizes, and he creates our senior gifts every spring with the help of our Marketing team. It’s a great opportunity for our marketing students to get real-world experience working with a company like

that,” said Cooper Rothman, director of Welch Experience at the Jack Welch College of Business and Technology.

Daybreake was founded in the spring of 2024, while Remmen was still a student at SHU. Remmen and Ryan both had the drive to simply create something, regardless of what it was.

Daybreake physically sells their merchandise at CiaoBella Boutique, located at 1551 Post Rd in Fairfield. They primarily sell on their website, daybreakeclothing.com.

Prices on their website go from around \$30 to \$60 on average. They also offer discounts on several items in the “Breake Room” section of their online store.

“Sky’s the limit for Daybreake. As time has gone on, the passion grows stronger through all the chaos and the systems get more efficient. I’d like to take it as far as possible,” said Ryan.

“I think we’ve only scratched the surface of what this could become,” said Remmen.

Women in Sports Symposium Preview

BY SOFIA PAZ
Staff Writer

WOMEN IN SPORTS SYMPOSIUM

APRIL 23, 2026 5-8PM

Contributed by Catarina Da Rocha

The flyer promotes the Women in Sports Symposium that will be held on Thursday, April 23, at Loris Forum, where Lauren Demayo will speak about her experience in the sports industry.

On Thursday, Apr. 23, from 5 to 8 p.m., the Women in Sports Symposium will take place in the Lois Forum at the Martire Center for Liberal Arts.

The symposium will be hosted by Sacred Heart University (SHU) alumna Morgan Bedard, who graduated with a master’s degree in Sports Communication and Media (SCM) in 2022. The keynote speaker will be Lauren DeMayo, an associate producer at ESPN’s SportsCenter.

“I think it is very important to highlight women in sports, especially those in college, because they are the next generation to join the industry. Inspiring other women within sports on any level is incredibly important,” said Catarina Da Rocha, SCM graduate assistant.

The event is held at Sacred Heart every year, bringing different speakers and new voices to the conversation on women in sports.

“When we launched the SCM graduate program about a dozen years ago, we incorporated an annual Women in Sports event into the curriculum. The intent is to foster and celebrate the growth of women in the sports media industry and to provide an opportunity for students to develop event production skills,” said Dr. Andrew Miller, director of the SCM graduate program.

In addition to DeMayo, there will be an alumni panel hosted by Da Rocha.

“I will be asking questions based on their Sacred Heart and professional journey. Sharing their journeys allows other women to understand the industry from a similar perspective and shines a light on the challenges and triumphs along the way,” said Da Rocha.

Prof. Lauren Baker is also involved in planning the event.

“It is important to host these events to showcase the importance of women working in sports. It’s not just for the boys. And it inspires young women. If you can see her, you can be her,” said Baker.

The symposium will cover topics such as what it is like to work in sports as a woman, how their experiences at SHU have helped the panelists in their current roles, the challenges and rewards of the industry, and how the women on the panel got into sports.

“Working in a male-dominated field as a woman can be scary. If you hear about other women’s experiences, and you follow in their footsteps, you can also get advice,” said Baker.

“Growing up as a dancer, I always felt like the role for women in sports was limited, especially on the collegiate level, with all of the funding cuts happening to women’s sports,” said senior Toniann Agatone. “But events like this are so important, especially to address these issues and how women can combat these problems and come up with solutions.”

The longstanding event emphasizes important aspects of women’s work and participation in sports. As well as a focus on the issues that arise as women move through their careers in the sports media industry.

“I think it’s important to host events like this to bring diversification across sports. We have women from production and television, to social media and marketing,” said Da Rocha.

“Topics such as empowerment, personal development, visibility, representation, networking, community building, and inspiring the next generation are what make this event important,” said Miller.

All SHU students, faculty, and staff are invited to attend the symposium to hear from the women on the panel and network with them afterward. A reception will follow the event.

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is “Playing for a Cause”

News

Automatic Selective Service System

BY BROOKE LUGO
Staff Writer

What would you do if you were drafted? For many college-aged men, that question has felt very distant until recently, as a new federal policy has brought it back into conversation.

Beginning in December, the federal government will automatically register eligible men ages 18 to 26 for the Selective Service System, replacing the current requirement that individuals sign up on their own. The change was included in a recent national defense policy bill and is intended to standardize how registration is handled across the country.

“Registration was already required, this just makes it automatic instead of voluntary,” said Prof. Kathleen O’Gara, professor of political science and global affairs.

The Selective Service System maintains a database of individuals who could be called upon in the event of a military draft. Although the United States has not used a draft since 1973, men have been legally required to register since then, with possible penalties for failing to do so.

Dr. Gary Rose, professor and scholar-in-residence of political science and global affairs, pointed to the system’s role in national defense planning.

“The change has been implemented to have a better personnel database from which to draft males in the event a draft is enacted,” said Rose.

Under the current system, registration depends on individuals taking action themselves, which can lead to gaps in the database. The new policy aims to address that by relying on existing government data to automatically enroll eligible individuals.

“The reason is to have a more standardized and truly national personnel database, which right now is slightly fragmented and incomplete,” said Rose.

The change also reflects a larger effort to restructure federal processes and reduce the need for promotional efforts that have previously encouraged registration.

While the update changes how individuals are entered into the system, it does not change the requirements for initiating a draft. Any return to a draft would still require approval from both Congress and the president.

“I see this as an administrative reform, rather than having any direct impact on those who are eligible for the draft,” said Rose.

National reporting has emphasized this distinction. As quoted in the New York Times, Lindsay P. Cohn, a professor at the U.S. Naval War College, said, “The Selective Service System is about management of manpower, more than simply just generating manpower.”

Coverage of this change has also pointed out that the move is intended to improve compliance and efficiency rather than respond directly to a specific conflict.

O’Gara addressed how the timing of the policy may be interpreted, particularly as the United States remains involved in a conflict with Iran.

“I wouldn’t read it that way. This kind of policy is often formed over several years and not in response to a single conflict,” said O’Gara.

Still, the policy has gained attention as global tensions increase, with some reports noting that it comes during a period when concerns about military involvement abroad are rising. According to CNN, “the Trump administration has declined to rule out the possibility of putting US troops on the ground, and the war has led to renewed attention on the draft policy.”

Among students, reactions to the policy varied.

“It falls on borderline government overreach. It takes away autonomy,” said senior Will Kurnik, a political science major. “To have it on the table is definitely a scary thought



Stephen B. Morton, AP News

Marine Corps Recruit Training, June 2023 In Parris Island, South Carolina.

sometimes.”

Senior Ryan Greene, majoring in criminal justice and minoring in law and justice, viewed the change as a practical update.

“I thought it was a good thing. I believe it is better to make it automated,” said Greene. “I feel like the majority of people don’t know where or how to sign up. A good amount of people try to get out of it.”

For junior Matthew Meaney, an economics major, the policy reflects the realities of military conflict.

“Hearing about automatic registration made me think that the administration was taking military action more seriously,” said Meaney. “This change definitely affects me personally, and I think young men should understand the reality that a military conflict poses.”

Alumni Providing Safety at SHU

BY LAUREN BUSH
Staff Writer

Sacred Heart University is welcoming back a familiar face, as Brian Rojee ’04 returns as the new director of Public Safety.

The leadership transition involves former public safety leader Gary MacNamara taking a position focused entirely on community and government relations, according to the university. Kim Swartz, director of communications, said the change reflects a strategic realignment to meet the university’s evolving needs.

“His transition opens the door for dedicated leadership in public safety under Rojee, a Sacred Heart alumnus with more than two decades of law enforcement experience and strong ties to the university,” said Swartz.

Rojee’s return to Sacred Heart marks a full-circle moment in his career. After graduating in 2004, he spent 21 years with the Milford Police Department, where he served as deputy chief of police and worked as a midnight shift supervisor. He also worked as a lead instructor for Synergy 911, providing active shooter preparedness training for schools, churches, hospitals and corporate organizations.

His experience in both law enforcement and emergency preparedness is expected to shape his approach as director. With public safety concerns growing on college campuses, his background in training and coordination may help strengthen existing protocols and introduce new strategies focused on prevention and response.



Contributed by Kimberly Swartz, Sacred Heart University

Sacred Heart alumni Brian Rojee poses for a professional headshot.

“With a new director already familiar with Sacred Heart and its community, the transition is expected to be steady and collaborative, while reinforcing a continued focus on preparedness,

communication and maintaining a safe, welcoming campus environment,” said Swartz.

As director, Rojee is expected to continue emphasizing communication and coordination across campus. Public safety departments at universities rely on strong partnerships with local law enforcement and clear communication with students and staff, especially when it comes to emergency preparedness and response.

Students have expressed confidence in the university’s current safety measures, particularly during large campus events.

As for sophomore Matthew Caliri, who attended the recent Spring Concert, held in the Martire Family Arena, the safety presence stood out. Transportation was efficient, with multiple large shuttles running, according to Caliri.

“You couldn’t have missed one if you tried,” said Caliri.

He said security at the event was highly visible, with guards positioned throughout the venue and even in elevated areas, along with police officers present. The level of preparation contributed to an overall sense of safety for Caliri.

As for his day-to-day interactions with public safety, they are limited, but generally positive. Caliri said officers are helpful with situations like unlocking dorm rooms and responding to minor issues.

On the other hand, parking remains a concern for many students.

“Parking in general is a safety protocol I’d love to see change, as I find many people with parking passes can’t find spots in their assigned lot, so it defeats the purpose of spending \$500 to bring your car to campus as underclassmen,” said Caliri.

Moreover, snow removal in parking lots is another issue he would like to see improved. Caliri said cars left in lots during snowstorms are not always addressed efficiently, which can make conditions more difficult and potentially unsafe for students navigating campus.

For sophomore Matthew Gavagan, transportation to the Spring Concert was smooth due to the number of shuttles, and the visible security presence made him feel confident in the safety of the event.

While Gavagan said he does not see a need for major changes, he hopes the department continues maintaining vigilance and prioritizing student safety moving forward.

“Public Safety always has a presence on campus whether we realize it or not, and they go to great lengths to make SHU a safe place. I feel like we don’t always realize it, but their effort has a huge impact on our experience here,” said Gavagan.

**UPCOMING
EVENTS ON
CAMPUS**

**Thursday 4/23:
SET’S END OF YEAR
PICNIC
12 P.M. ACADEMIC
BUILDING CHAPEL QUAD**

**FRIDAY 4/24:
KAPPA DELTA - GIRL
SCOUT EVENT
5 P.M. ACADEMIC
BUILDING HC 202**

**FRIDAY 4/24:
SHU ORCHESTRA
CONCERT
8 P.M. EDGERTON
CENTER**

Features

Pickleball Springing Excitement Onto Campus

BY CHARLOTTE DOHERTY
Staff Writer

The Sports Management Club, in collaboration with the Student Government, hosted a Doubles Pickleball Tournament on Tuesday, April 14, from 2 to 6 p.m. at the pickleball courts next to Seton Hall. The event aimed to introduce the club and bring students together through a fun and competitive campus activity.

“The doubles pickleball tournament is a fun, free event on campus designed to introduce the new sports management club and attract potential members,” said sophomore Jacqueline Paradiso, president of the Sports Management Club. “We wanted to launch the club in an engaging and exciting way by using a sport that’s very popular on campus.”

Pickleball, which has rapidly gained popularity among college students in recent years, was chosen intentionally to draw interest and encourage participation. Its accessibility and fast-paced playing made it appealing to both experienced players and beginners playing in the event, which makes it feel more inclusive.

“If I had to describe the event in one word, it would be exciting,” said junior Courtney Reynolds, the club’s vice president.

Participants registered in advance through a QR code shared on Instagram and through campus-wide emails. While registrations filled up before the event, students who were unable to secure a spot were still encouraged to attend, watch and support their peers throughout the competition.

The event represented a successful return after previous attempts to host the tournament were canceled due to unpredictable weather conditions. Organizers saw this year’s tournament as a second chance to realize their vision, with improved planning and support from the Student Government.

“We actually attempted to host this event last year, but it was unfortunately canceled due to unpredictable weather, so we’re excited to bring it back even better this year, through collaboration with Student Government,” said Paradiso.

Beyond competition, the tournament emphasized the importance of student

involvement and engagement. The event allows students to connect with peers outside of their usual social life and academic pursuits, creating a strong sense of community.

“Events like this are important for students because they bring people together, build school spirit, and give students a break from academics,” said Reynolds.

One of the biggest highlights of the event was the impressive turnout and the overall atmosphere. Even students who weren’t playing stay to support their friends, which helps keep the energy up throughout the tournament.

“What stood out the most about the event was a strong turnout and the positive, energetic atmosphere throughout the tournament,” said Reynolds. “Even if people weren’t playing, they were still cheering on their friends, which was great to see.”

Prizes also added to the excitement and competitiveness of the event.

“Adding the prize of Apple watches and JBL speakers made it more fun and competitive for everyone,” said Reynolds.

The doubles pickleball tournament was considered a success, combining competition, community, and fun. With a strong turnout and positive feedback, it showed how campus events like this can bring students together in a meaningful way.

“People could expect a mix of friendly competition and high energy,” said Reynolds. “We had a total of 24 teams sign up, which was awesome.”



Nicholas Bosticco, staff writer
Students playing in Pickball Tournament outside of Merton Hall.

From Classroom to Capstone

BY VICTORIA BRENNAN
Staff Writer

What does four years of studying communications look like when it all comes together; and how do students turn everything they’ve learned into something real? For seniors in the School of Communication, Media & the Arts (SCMA), that answer takes shape through the senior project, where students turn their ideas into professional level work that reflects both their interests and future career goals.

Projects vary widely in focus, giving students the flexibility to explore topics that align with their passions, interests and even future career paths that they hope to pursue after graduation. Through the two semester sequence, CM 397 Senior Project I and CM 398 Senior Project II, students create work that highlights the skills they have developed throughout their time in the program.

“To bring this all together, I decided to create a podcast discussing how public relations heavily influenced how celebrities, movies, and influencers become famous,” said senior Alexis Barada.

Students can choose different approaches for their project, including creative production, research or multimedia based work. Some develop podcasts or websites, while others focus on analyzing media or producing visual content.

Faculty members say the structure is designed to give students flexibility while still maintaining expectations for a meaningful final product.

“We let the students decide,” said Prof. Todd Barnes, associate director of the School of Communication, Media & the Arts (SCMA). “The faculty are there to guide the process and make sure that everyone is doing a significant project.”

Senior Isabella Generazo focused her project on theatre production, working to understand how different roles contribute to a final performance.

“I have interviewed 12 different people that have been involved in different areas of production and gotten their input,” said Generazo.

As students continue developing their projects, many say the process becomes increasingly independent, requiring them to stay organized, motivated and responsible for their own progress. Without constant deadlines, staying on track and managing time effectively can become one of the most difficult parts of the experience.

Senior Madeline Mangione is creating a beauty-based blog that focuses on maintaining creativity while developing content that stays aligned with a clear purpose and message.

“The most challenging part has been making the blog and keeping creativity throughout while making sure it all connects back to the purpose,” said Mangione.

Despite these challenges, students say the project has helped them better understand their abilities and interests. It gives them the chance to create something they are proud of while reflecting on how much they have grown.

For many, the final product becomes more than just an assignment, serving as a portfolio piece they can carry into their future careers and potentially share with employers or graduate programs.

“Looking back on everything, I’m most proud of the hard work, commitment and the skills that I’ve learned to develop this project,” said Barada.

Students also emphasized the importance of starting early and allowing ideas to evolve throughout the process. Many said that flexibility is key to successfully completing the project.

“My advice would be to start earlier than you think and give yourself time to make mistakes,” said Barada.

Barnes said the course is intended to help students transition from learning about communications to actively applying those skills in a real world context that reflects professional expectations. The experience reflects the type of work students may encounter after graduation.

“It’s a chance for the student to conceive and execute something significant in their own vision,” said Barnes. “They get to show off and test themselves at the same time.”



CampusLife

Students Taking On The Workplace

BY CHARLOTTE DOHERTY
Staff Writer

As the spring semester comes to a close at Sacred Heart University, students are preparing for a busy summer filled with internships, jobs, and time spent reconnecting with friends and family.

Many students secured internships months in advance, often beginning the application process during the winter and early spring semesters.

"I started applying for internships back in January because I knew how competitive it could be," said sophomore Aine Walsh. "It was a long process with multiple applications and interviews, but I'm really excited about the opportunity I ended up getting."

Walsh said she utilized both online job platforms and campus resources to find opportunities, highlighting the role of university support systems and helping students navigate the process.

Other students are returning to familiar jobs, valuing the consistency and flexibility they provide.



Jayden Hunter, Assistant Photo Editor

Jayden Hunter as he works the 2026 Milan Cortina Olympics at NBC headquarters.

"I'm going back to my summer job from last year because I already know the environment and the people," said sophomore Molly Toland. "It's something I enjoy, and it allows me to save money while still having time to relax."

Toland added that, while the job may not directly relate to her major, it offers a balance between responsibility and free time.

For some students, summer is also an opportunity to explore new rules and gain different experiences.

"I wanted to try something new this summer, so I applied to a few different places and ended up getting a job I hadn't considered before," said junior Olivia Aviles. "I think it's a good way to build skills and figure out what I like."

In addition to work and internships, students are also planning vacations and time at home after a long academic year.

Many emphasize the importance of maintaining connections with friends made during the school year and reconnecting with those from home.

"I'm definitely planning on staying in touch with my friends from school, even if we're all in different places," said Walsh. "At the same time, I'm excited to spend time with my friends from home that I don't get to see as often during the semester."

Toland shared a similar perspective, noting that summer offers a chance to balance both social circles.

"It can be hard being away from school friends, but we all make an effort to keep in touch," said Toland.

Aviles said she hopes to balance work with relaxation, making the most of her time between classes.

"I'm trying to balance working with taking some trips and just enjoying summer," said Aviles. "It is important to have that break before coming back to school."

While students' plans differ, a common theme is a desire to use the summer productively, while also taking time to recharge.

From internships secured through early applications to returning jobs and new experiences, Sacred Heart students are approaching the summer months with a mix of ambition and anticipation.

"I think summer is a good mix of working hard and enjoying time with people you don't always get to see," said Aviles. "It gives you a chance to reset before coming back to school."



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CampusLife

Commuting to Their “Home Away From Home”

BY BENJAMIN OBIENU
Staff Writer

Students at Sacred Heart University who live in dorms at various locations either live with roommates or prefer to have a room for themselves without the need for companionship. Most students who live in dorms would not understand what it's like to be a commuter student struggling to get by at SHU.

Commuters use different methods to get to class on time and to catch a ride back home.

“When I was a commuter last semester, my father would drop me off at the Meriden Train station, and from there I would either take a train or bus,” said freshman Creflo Botwe.

“I usually plan by checking traffic and giving myself extra time in case anything comes up,” said freshman Reagen Wiltsie. “I drive myself every day.”

“As a commuter, I would use my car to get to campus on time for all my classes and to catch a ride back home,” said graduate student Melanie Martinez.

Being a commuter student affects daily routines and schedules.

“It makes it significantly difficult to balance classes, extracurriculars, and a solid social life,” said Botwe.

“Commuting takes up extra time, so balancing a job, classes, and studying requires good time management,” said Wiltsie.

A big disadvantage of being a commuter student is that when school work gets overwhelming, a student must get everything done on top of commuting to SHU daily.

“One disadvantage is missing out on some campus activities or events, especially if they happen later in the day,” said Wiltsie.

“A big disadvantage for me would be parking being fully taken at times and the traffic to get to classes from home,” said Martinez.

“You never truly have a place to study or get work done or just take a nap if



Daniel Passapera Sacred Heart University

Sacred Heart students walking around campus at Pioneer Village.

traffic to get to classes from home,” said Martienz.

“I was heavily involved in choir and theatre, and I would stay on campus for longer than any other commuter would usually do, which made it hard to budget because of only having \$500 dining dollars,” said Botweh.

While being a commuter does come with some issues, there are some ways for students to make their experiences at SHU worth remembering.

“I would enjoy the drive to classes mostly because the view on the Merritt Parkway was nice,” said Martinez.

“I loved the fact that the cost was significantly easier to manage when working out expenses with mom and dad,” said Botweh. “If the cost were in the 5-digits, the financial burden would be extremely daunting.”

Being a commuter does come with benefits, and the great experiences are what make it count.

“Meeting other commuting students and sharing that experience made a big difference for me because it has helped me feel less like I was missing out on the traditional on-campus experience,” said Martinez.

“Some fun memories include spending time with friends between classes, getting food on campus, and making the most out of the time I am there,” said Wiltsie.

Is Yik Yak Building or Breaking Campus?

BY WILL MORGAN
Audrey's Corner Editor

The slogan for the anonymous social media site Yik Yak reads “Find your herd,” but does Yik Yak unite college campuses, or divide them?

Founded in 2013, shuttered in 2017, and relaunched in 2021, Yik Yak has gained popularity at many universities, including Sacred Heart.

Students at SHU use Yik Yak like many other university students do, sharing memes and jokes about the school, news about the latest parties, and information about classes and tests.

“I love posting on the Yak,” said sophomore Blake Mattesitch. “It's great to make jokes about our campus and the various goings on, I've gotten thousands of likes sharing memes on there.”

However, there's a dark side to anonymity. The freedom to say anything you want without identification or any trace of previous activity enables troubling content to be shared.

According to the New York Times, campuses such as the University of Missouri, Middlebury College, Virginia Tech, and Michigan State have had Yik Yak pages sharing harmful content such as racism, public shaming, and even terrorist threats. These controversies contributed to Yik Yak's first shutdown in 2017.

Since its revival in 2021, Yik Yak has put in new guidelines against such content. Their website states, “If someone bullies another person, uses hate speech, makes a threat, or in any way seriously violates the Community Guardrails or Terms of Service (TOS), they can be immediately banned from Yik Yak, One strike and you're out.”

Still, this hasn't completely dispelled these issues.

“I have seen some very alarming posts on our school's Yik Yak,” said senior Liam Conway. “There are posts that insult the cafeteria workers there, posts that demean and humiliate fellow students, as well as racist and sexist content on there. It makes me sad that there are people among our student body who feel the need to share garbage such as this.”

Yik Yak claims that TOS violations will result in immediate permanent bans; however, this is not true. They issue temporary bans of 24-48 hours, with no other consequence to the user. There is also no moderation team, meaning posts will only get taken down once they are reported.

“I once posted something that name-dropped my friend Blake, and it wasn't taken down for hours,” said sophomore Matt Butt. “When Blake did report it, it was taken down in 94 sec-

onds, and I was given a 24-hour ban. We tried this over and over again with the same 24-hour ban instituted every time.”

Gossip and falsehoods also spread rapidly.

“There was one night when that app had a million people claiming Billy Joel had died,” said sophomore Andrew Raber. “It took one Google search to disprove that, but the next day you had people believing it was true still.”

“It's scary how quickly something like that spreads. It was everywhere, and everyone discussing it was anonymous,” said sophomore Alex Parisi.

Since its revival in 2021, Yik Yak has reemerged as a fixture of college campuses, but the problems that killed it in 2017 have not fully gone away.



Theo Weismann, Campus Life Editor

Yik Yak after returning from the shut down and relaunching as an app in 2021.

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Arts & Entertainment

Painting a Picture of Talent at SHU

BY **AMELIA SALADINO**
Staff Writer

Seniors in the art and design department displayed their work at the Senior Portfolio Showcase on April 15 at the West Campus East Theatre.

The event marked a significant departure from previous years. The department transitioned from traditional tabletop displays to dynamic, animated presentations on the theater's main screen.

"In the past, students followed a traditional format where they prepared hard-copy portfolios and stood with their materials for about four hours," said Prof. John DeGraffenreid. "This year, we introduced an animated PowerPoint format with recorded voiceovers."

The event started with students introducing themselves before showcasing their animated portfolio presentations. This led to a live discussion where a panel of professionals asked questions, shared their thoughts and gave constructive feedback.

"The event was totally revamped. The animated portfolio was a feast for the eyes on a monstrous screen," said Prof. Mary Treschitta. "This became a great prep for our seniors to get out of academics and get a job. We gave them the right tools."

The portfolios featured a wide range of media including branding, motion graphics, 2D animation and apparel design. The showcase was the culmination of a year-long process that began with students researching and sketching their initial ideas in the fall semester.

Senior Finley Dodd used the showcase to highlight a focus on concept art and cinematic storytelling.

"I really love working in greyscale because my focus isn't taken away by the color, and I can really narrow in on the composition and structure in my pieces," said Dodd. "My main goal in this showcase was to give a good representation of the wide range of skills that I have developed."

The evolution of these portfolios often required students to step outside their comfort zones. Dodd noted that the process involved learning to follow their own instincts, even if it meant reworking projects entirely.

"In my work 'Into the Forge,' I had worked on that piece for about a month, then realized I did not like the direction that it had taken," said Dodd. "I learned a lot about having to think on my feet."

Senior Ryan Scerbo used the event to bridge the gap between digital design and physical products.

"My main goals were to showcase who I am as a designer in every aspect, from my clothing designs to my motion graphics," said Scerbo. "I learned that the presentation of your work is a very big thing, no matter how small the project is. The way it's shown defines how it's understood."

As these graduating seniors prepare to enter and navigate a competitive industry, staff believes that this new format of displaying students' portfolios gives students a distinct advantage.

By moving away from traditional displays, the program aims to match the fast-paced environment these students may encounter after they graduate from Sacred Heart University.

"This event serves as a vital transitional step toward their professional careers," said DeGraffenreid. "By practicing their delivery in front of active professionals, they reach a level of 'automatic pilot' that prepares them for real-world opportunities."



James Spoto, Staff Writer and Photographer

Marcus Gomez presents his portfolio to guest panelists, Justin Girard and Andre Picard, at the Senior Portfolio Animated Showcase on April 15.

Music at the Heart of SHU

BY **ASHLEY HILLIARD**
Staff Writer

"Live symphonic music has the power to move you, lift your spirits, or send shivers down your spine," said Keith Johnston, director of Band & Orchestra. "From the conductor's expressive movements to the elegant choreography of bow strokes, a symphony performance is just as much a visual experience as an auditory one. The stage itself becomes a living, breathing work of art."

On April 24, 55 members of the Sacred Heart University Symphony Orchestra will present "Roots and Wings" at the Edgerton Center for the Performing Arts at 8 p.m.

The concert will include Franz Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony, Carl Stamitz's "Viola Concerto No. 1" featuring Dr. Gregory Williams, and John Williams' "Sound the Bells." The performance will showcase a full ensemble, including strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion.

Johnston said the orchestra began rehearsing at the start of the spring semester, first in string and woodwind sectionals and later as a full ensemble.

Jennifer Rynne, coordinator of Band and Orchestra Operations, said the

orchestra rehearses twice a week, with sectionals on Tuesdays and full ensemble rehearsals on Wednesdays. Members are also expected to practice independently.

Junior Eileen Duffy, a violinist in the orchestra, said Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony is the piece she is most excited to perform, noting that the ensemble has put in significant effort to meet its technical challenges and prepare it for performance.

"The violins help add to the upper texture," said Duffy. "We have multiple 'sweeping' passages that are very unique and a cool addition to some of the pieces."

Junior Noah Held, Winds, Brass and Percussion coordinator and principal clarinetist, described the structure of the piece.

"Normally, symphonies have four movements, but this one has two," said Held. "This piece is fun, especially when the sections get a little more edgy and aggressive. It's probably my favorite piece we're doing since I have a handful of exposed moments where it's just me and the strings."

Junior Timothy Baumer, the orchestra's principal cellist, said that he's played the cello since he was four years old.

"I've always had that opportunity to make music with others, and it's a way you can connect to people unlike anything else we have," said Baumer. "We have some beautiful parts at the beginning of Schubert and to sound as one and be the core of the orchestra will hopefully help create a good experience for the listener by hearing what the cello has to offer."

Baumer said the John Williams piece introduces a larger instrumental arrangement, including additional brass and woodwind parts to create a fuller sound.

"I've never really played anything John Williams in my life," said Baumer. "We've done classical stuff throughout different bands and orchestras, so I haven't done much contemporary music. John Williams is considered to be one of the most legendary composers, and I think it'd be cool for the brass and winds to have their own fanfare at the beginning – it's very exciting for the listener."

Johnston said live concerts bring audiences together through a shared cultural experience and allow them to engage with music in real time.

"I don't know a lot of my friends who go out of their way to listen to orchestral music, but it's a nice change of pace, and I find it relaxing," said Baumer. "We're in such a fast-paced world, so when you go to a live concert, everything slows down. It's enhanced my life in such a great way with people supporting the arts, making sure we still have these experiences in the future – not just in the orchestra, but all other performances going on as the semester closes."



Instagram, @sacredheartunivperformingarts

Director of Band & Orchestra, Keith Johnston (middle center), conducts the Sacred Heart University Symphony Orchestra during a campus concert, showcasing an evening of classical repertoire and student musicianship.

Sports

Men's Lacrosse Gearing Up For MAAC Playoffs

BY **BRETT CLOWRY**
Staff Writer

The men's lacrosse team is heading into the most important part of their season, as they are hoping to regain the energy of their historic start ahead of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament.

After starting the season 10-0, the Pioneers are faced with a reality check after losing three straight conference matchups to Quinnipiac University on Apr. 4, Siena University on Apr. 11, and Marist University on Apr. 18.

Against Siena, the Pioneers were ahead for most of the game before a second-half surge by the Saints, where they scored six consecutive times.

"It was about five minutes into the third quarter where we kind of lost our heads a little bit, and that's where they scored all their goals," said head coach Jon Basti.

The possession battle was a major factor, as Siena dominated the Pioneers in the face-off circle, forcing Sacred Heart to play defensively oriented for the second half.

"I thought we played really, really hard, but we just weren't buttoned up," said Basti.

As the team prepares for the five-team MAAC playoff, the defensive unit, one of the main pieces of the team's early success, is focusing on communication and timing.

Senior defenseman Michael Amoruso highlighted the 45 goals allowed in the past three games.

"We've been going slow on sliding defensively, things like that," said senior midfielder Michael Moreschi. "We've been a little bit slower setting the tone defensively at the start of the games, too."

Moreschi noted how the team shifted from their original game plan during the loss to the Saints on the offensive side of the ball.

"I think we kind of started to change some things from our original game plan, and I think that's kind of what slowed us down a little bit," said Moreschi.

The team's focus is now on playing consistently for a full 60-minute game.

The Pioneers' fate rests in their own hands. To establish itself in a favorable position in the five-team MAAC playoff, Sacred Heart needs to play its best



Greg Vasil, SHU Athletics

Senior Michael Moreschi fighting off a defender in a matchup against Fairfield University.

brand of lacrosse before its last game against Iona University on April 22.

A win at home against Iona likely gives the Pioneers a higher seed in the tournament, possibly securing themselves a first-round bye, depending on the outcomes of the Merrimack and Quinnipiac games.

After Saturday's 14-13 loss against Marist, the Pioneers are hanging on to the three-seed and first-round bye by virtue of the goal differential tiebreaker.

Basti's message to his team is straightforward: to just return to the mindset that made their magical start come to fruition.

The vibes are still high in the locker room, the team is keeping their head up despite the recent three-game skid, creating a sense of unfinished business.

The Pioneers are locked in and ready to prove that their hot start was not a fluke and that they deserve the opportunity to compete for a MAAC Championship.

Athletic Communications contributed to this article.

Playing For a Cause

BY **JAMES EL-HAGE**
Staff Writer

The men's club rugby team continued their strong start to the spring season, winning the Peter DeSalvo Memorial Tournament on April 12 at Park Avenue Field, while raising awareness for mental health and suicide prevention. The annual tournament is named after former player Peter DeSalvo, who tragically passed away in 2020.

"Peter DeSalvo was our former teammate," said President Tom Ferreira. "It's been a tradition since he passed away to do a sevens-style rugby tournament in his name in the spring, and we like to make it a big event and invite the whole school. Anybody can host a tournament, but hosting a tournament in one of our brothers' names really brought out everybody's passion."

The event, once again, combined competition with purpose, as the



Instagram, @shuclubsports

The X-Men send the ball downfield with a kick during open play at the Peter DeSalvo Memorial Tournament.

team raised more than \$1,500 for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention through T-shirt sales, raffles and donations.

"I know the team is really happy that we raised all that money, but just the impact that it has on the school itself is great to see," said Ferreira.

That sense of community extended onto the field, where players, coaches, referees, and members of the Sacred Heart administration gathered at midfield, forming a circle for a moment of silence to honor DeSalvo's legacy.

"There are no grudges held in a rugby game; that's one of the values of playing," said sophomore Chuck Truicko. "I think it's the best sport for an event like this because it's a whole community coming together. It's a hooligan sport played by gentlemen."

They matched that purpose with dominant play, going undefeated in the tournament and winning all four matches by a large margin, capped by a 43-12 victory over Keene State College in the championship.

"What stood out was their confidence," said head coach Gennaro Gelsi. "They walked into that tournament feeling like this was their tournament, and this was their house. Last year, they unfortunately lost in the finals, and I was not allowing that to happen again this year."

That confidence is rooted in the values the program emphasizes both on and off the field.

"The goal of the tournament is not only to bring awareness of rugby to the university, but also to keep Peter's memory alive and support an important cause," said Gelsi. "Rugby is built on community, brotherhood, and looking out for one another, and we want everybody to know that they are always supported, no matter what, not just on our team but in our entire community."

Despite bringing home the trophy, the message remained clear. The tournament served as both a celebration and a reminder of the importance of community, mental health awareness, and a legacy that continues to bring people together.

"We played really good rugby, but the reason we played really good rugby was that we were playing for each other and for a greater cause," said Ferreira.

Athletic Communications contributed to this article.

Sports

Stepping Up and Hitting Back

BY LEAH MANSFIELD
Staff Writer

In the final weeks of the season, Sacred Heart softball isn't just chasing after wins, they're breaking records at the same time.

The Pioneers are struggling with senior starting pitcher Sam Kowalski being out, but are still on track to continue their success and reach their end goal of playing at the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Championship.

"The goal every year is to make it to our playoffs and win. We were on track for that until we lost Sam, who is our number one pitcher and our best hitter at the moment," said head coach Pam London. "It's kind of a blow to the team, we took a shot to the head, but we just have to get it together."



Senior Sam Kowalski smiling big before a game.

Josh Gee, SHU Athletics

Kowalski recently broke the program record for strikeouts and is sitting at 599.

"Sam is a model citizen. She has terrific grades; she has her future mapped out. She is going to be very successful in whatever she does because her work ethic and maturity is beyond her years," said London.

Despite Kowalski being out, a few other Pioneers have stepped up, took on the challenge, and have not gone unnoticed. The three primary examples are junior Cierra Bender, sophomore Alexa Barbera and senior Charlene Davis.

"I think Cierra had a really good comeback year. She fell off a little her sophomore year but made it a point to rise back to her freshman year form, and she did that," said London.

"Alexa took over in right field for a senior that had graduated and she's done a solid job out there. She waited for her turn and when her turn arrived, she was ready," said London.

"Charlene behind the plate has just been steady, and this year she has thrown out so many runners at 2nd base, a lot of times they don't even try anymore," said London. "That was a really big improvement for her, and that really helped us."

The Pioneers have a few games remaining and are looking for that final push.

"It's a long season; 56 games and it's very hard to stay consistent for that long. You just have to try to be the last man standing where you're cruising at good speed towards the end of the season towards playoffs," said London.

"We are a very good team. We have to play to our ability. If we do that, we should really finish out the season on a strong note with or without Sam," said London.

The Pioneers faced Mount St. Mary's on Saturday April 18 in a double header which ended in 4-2 win for the first game and 2-3 loss in the second.

SHU will face Fairleigh Dickinson University in a double header Thursday, April 23 in Teaneck, NJ.

Athletic Communications contributed to this article.

Men's Volleyball Serving Progress

BY TUCKER TERRANOVA
Staff Writer

The Sacred Heart men's volleyball team has had plenty to celebrate at the Pitt Center this season, tying their most home wins in a single season since 2017 with six. On April 10-11, the Pioneers honored Senior Day and pushed No. 15 Penn State University to five sets in consecutive hard-fought matches.

The weekend was highlighted by holding the match point in the fourth set on April 11. Head coach Adam Niemczynowicz said he has been encouraged by his team's progress and the resilience it showed against one of the nation's premier programs.

"We've been working all season for these moments, and I believed in our team's ability to go into a fight and compete with anyone," said Niemczynowicz. "It was great to see because it proved our work is paying off."

After opening the season with two losses, the Pioneers responded by winning six of their next seven matches, building momentum heading into Eastern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association (EIVA) play. That strong stretch carried into conference competition, as Sacred Heart secured a spot in the EIVA Tournament for the first time since 2017.

"We've been talking about trusting the process, believing in each other and just focusing on playing, being patient and disciplined," said Niemczynowicz. "We've really hit our stride as of late."

Niemczynowicz, now in his fourth season as head coach, believed in his team's potential entering the year. He pointed to the March 27-28 series against Harvard University as a turning point in the season, when the Pioneers began to find their identity.

"There was an identity that was missing, but I think we found it the week leading into the Harvard match," said Niemczynowicz. "Something finally clicked, and the energy shifted. We were able to take a match from them and then beat Princeton twice the following weekend."

The Pioneers' roster features three seniors, including Ben Lillie and Carter Lyons, who have spent all four of their collegiate seasons with the program. After enduring a winless EIVA campaign last season, their experience has played a key



Sacred Heart's three seniors pose on Senior Day.

Shae Carroll, SHU Athletics

role in the team's turnaround.

"They're great players who provide a lot of experience both on and off the court," said Niemczynowicz. "We set expectations in the preseason for what we wanted to achieve, and they were a big part of that."

As Sacred Heart returns to the postseason, Niemczynowicz believes the combination of veteran leadership and experience against top competition will serve his team well.

"We enjoy playing in those pressure-filled moments because we think it brings out the best in us," said Niemczynowicz. "We've proven that when we play the way we know we can, we can compete with anybody. If we continue to do what we've been doing, we will be dangerous."

The EIVA tournament is scheduled for April 22-25 at the home court of the No. 1 overall seed. The Pioneers will be making their first appearance in the tournament since joining the conference after departing the Northeast Conference prior to the 2025 season.

Athletic Communications contributed to this article.

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