

THE SPECTRUM

SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY FAIRFIELD, CONN

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Editorials

My Pioneer Journey

BY MADISON BEEKMAN
Editor in Chief

I'm sitting in the Spectrum office on my last day of classes ever and I'm unsure what to write. I've always enjoyed writing (obviously, otherwise I wouldn't have this position) but it feels like there are not enough words to describe how I'm feeling. How could I possibly sum up the best four years of my life in an adequate way? The answer is that I can't, but I guess I'll try my best.

It feels most important to first thank my mom for being the one to hear about Sacred Heart, specifically the Dance Program, at a dance competition when I was in high school. If she hadn't forced me to go on a tour in November of my junior year, who knows where I'd be now.

It's cliché, but Sacred Heart really did feel like home as soon as I stepped foot on campus. It also helped that my tour guide was a part of the dance program and the Spectrum, both of which became my biggest commitments on campus. From that moment on, no school I saw (virtually – thanks Covid) compared to SHU. My May 1st decision, unlike many of my friends at the time, was extremely easy.

Despite how excited I was about my decision to attend Sacred Heart, that didn't make my transition into college any easier; it took me a while to find a rhythm here. My roommates definitely made this easier, even if they still make fun of me for doing the same exact morning routine every day. If I could go back to Toussaint 403 and listen to "That Should Be Me" with Carly, Maci and Nellie one more time, I would in a heartbeat (I might even let them put all four beds on one side again).

If you know me, you know I spend more time in the dance studios than anywhere else. I was actually convinced by Brianne, who is now one of my best friends, to join Dance Company and I can't thank her enough for that. But this wasn't the case my first semester and I wasn't sure I belonged in Company.

My first dance class was the Inception Dance Crew audition (our professional track of hip hop), and that was the only dance commitment that I actually wanted to do. It was terrifying, but I made it and I'll never understand how. I was late to the first rehearsal and cried as I practically ran to the shuttles to meet Jen, who I barely knew at the time but became friends with after bonding over this mistake. It wasn't my finest moment but the group quickly became very special to me and was one of my favorite parts of college.

As for Company, it wasn't until an older student who I barely knew at the time asked me to take a dance class off-campus that I started feeling like I fit in. I am eternally grateful to Erin Grace Gibney for inviting me that day and making me feel like I had a space here.

From a trip to Italy to 24 hours in LA to performing on the Edgerton stage at every opportunity, the Dance Company has given me more than I could've ever imagined. I am so lucky to have this family who shares my biggest passion so deeply. I will never have an environment like this again, so I cannot thank this program enough for all it's done for me.

Sophomore year housing selection was probably the worst experience I had at Sacred Heart. But we somehow got lucky in Final Selection and were put in the last room available in North. I would go back to 302 building 3 in a heartbeat, even with the hike it took to get to class sometimes, especially if I could watch Rihanna's halftime show for the first time again. That unexpected, random suitemate assignment formed friendships that I am eternally grateful for.

Sophomore year is also when I rediscovered my love for journalism. I came in as an undecided major, though I knew I wanted to be in the communications field, and quickly chose Strategic Communication, PR and Advertising after taking Intro to Media Culture. Though I was heavily involved in my high school's newspaper (my first Editor in Chief experience), I wasn't sure it was something I wanted to continue in college. I signed up for News Writing and Reporting for my sophomore fall, assuming it would be an easy grade given that I already knew how to write in AP style, and was reminded of how much fun journalism could be. Seeing my first story on the front page of the paper was such a proud moment.

At the end of the semester, Val, my now partner-in-crime on the Spectrum board, was heading to Dingle, Ireland so the news team needed another editor and a copy editor position was open, so I was asked to join the board. A semester of editing, pitching and placing flew by and the next year's board applications were sent out. This time, I applied for the head news editor position, but was asked to join senior leadership



as a managing editor. I was still unsure if I was qualified for that, but Prof. Kabak and Brendan Williams, my Editor in Chief predecessor, had enough faith in me to convince me to say yes.

Junior year came with "Martire Mondays" as my roommates like to call it, spending hours (and sometimes going crazy) in the Spectrum office to complete the layout of the paper each week. Brendan and I had more fun in here than we probably should've, at least to get work done quicker, but I wouldn't change it for the world. It was so rewarding seeing our hard work come together each week and I couldn't be prouder of what Brendan was able to do with the paper in his time as Editor in Chief.

When applications for this year's Editor in Chief came out last March, I was nervous that Brendan's shoes were just too big to fill and that I'd never be able to run the paper the way he did, but again Prof. Kabak had the utmost faith in me.

Serving in this role throughout the year alongside the best team of editors has been one of the greatest honors of my life. I could not have done it without each and every one of them and their dedication to this publication. And serving on the Spectrum board for the past 5 semesters has been valuable in every way, thank you to everyone on former boards who trusted me and especially to Prof. Kabak for these opportunities.

Junior year I also became a Student Ambassador (Pioneer Guide at the time) because I wanted to be able to share my love for SHU with prospective and future Pioneers. Though the mornings can be very early and families can be extremely persistent with questions, being able to form connections with students and families who feel the same as I did when I was 17 deciding on Sacred Heart has been so fulfilling.

That same year, I also started living at 640 with a group of girls I barely knew, besides Carly who had been with me since freshman year. The anxiety of trying to join an already-established friend group junior year of college is something I was extremely unprepared for, but am eternally grateful for. They welcomed me with open arms and have loved me unconditionally, even through the hardest parts of college. I can't imagine having to say goodbye to this house that holds so many memories.

While these moments are all so clear in my brain, it feels like the past four years have been a blur. I could go on and on (and I have) about every single experience and person that has played a role in my journey here at SHU, but I could probably fill the entire paper and then some.

Sacred Heart University has shaped me in more ways than I could've ever dreamed of. If you told freshman year me that I'd be so involved on campus that I have virtually no free time, she probably would've laughed in your face. And if you told freshman year me about all the people she'd meet and learn to love throughout these past four years, well she probably wouldn't be surprised about some, but she'd also probably want to meet others sooner just to get some extra time with them. The people really do make the place.

This is getting extremely long but it still feels like there are not enough words or thank you's in the world to express my gratitude and love for my college experience. I know that I'll visit more than I should in the next few years and in 20 years, I will be the annoying mom that doesn't stop talking about how amazing college was for her.

Sacred Heart will always be my home away from home and I will forever be a Pioneer. Thank you to everyone who was part of my Pioneer journey, I hope our paths cross again someday.

Editorials

Finding My Voice Through the Spectrum

BY VALENTINA MASSONI
Managing Editor of Content



Throughout the past 3.5 years, my name has been listed on the pages of 61 issues of the Spectrum. Today will be the last time it is in the byline.

As I reflect on my time in college, I realize that I've grown into a completely different person. Most especially, I've seen a major improvement in my self-confidence, in every aspect. There are many reasons for this personal growth, but I attribute a great part of it to the Spectrum. I couldn't imagine my college experience without this newspaper.

Kickstarting my Spectrum journey, I was lucky enough to take the News Writing & Reporting class in the spring semester of my freshman year. At this time, I gained the title of staff writer in the features section.

Truthfully, everything about news writing terrified me at the time. When tasked with interviewing Sacred Heart University faculty and even students, I would secretly hope that they'd opt to send me their responses over email so I didn't have to meet a stranger face-to-face.

I also couldn't understand what made the news interesting. I felt like I was just listing facts and quotes over and over until some semblance of a story came together. How is there any form of art in that?

I know this all sounds very pessimistic coming from one of the current managing editors, but I promise my perspective has completely shifted since then.

As that semester was nearing a close, I did not apply for the Spectrum editorial board. I didn't think I was capable.

I am so thankful that Prof. Kabak saw the potential in me, encouraging and allowing me to submit an application past the deadline. I question where I would be today if she hadn't had that faith in me. After our interview, I officially took on the role of news editor for my sophomore year.

Transitioning into this role allowed me to find the beauty in news writing. Sure, it is made up of a lot of facts and quotes; I got that right. But it is much more than that! It is telling the stories that matter most, in a way that is digestible for anybody and everybody. It is giving people an outlet to be heard. Even while maintaining objectivity, it is sharing something the world deserves to know about.

I began to claim my writing, instead of just following a template. I found my voice, and this translated into every other part of my life.

I studied abroad during the spring of my sophomore year, so I had a brief hiatus from the Spectrum. But I returned in the fall as spotlight editor (the newest section of the paper, now known as Campus Life).

That was a challenging semester, as I had the responsibility to fill the section by myself almost every single week. However, this was when my fear of interviewing really began to fade away.

I was consistently writing articles that highlighted specific people, and I loved it! Meeting so many intriguing individuals and being able to shine a light on their successes, big and small, made me realize what an incredible opportunity it is to hear and, subsequently, share the stories of others.

Due to some staffing changes, I was news editor, once again, during the spring of my junior year. With a variety of roles now under my belt, I was thrilled to become managing editor of content for my senior year. Unlike previous positions I had accepted, I finally felt confident in my abilities, and I was excited to flourish in this role.

Somewhere along the way, I officially changed my major from strategic communications to media arts with a concentration in journalism. My perspective on news writing has shifted so much that I now plan to pursue a career in journalism, and it's all thanks to the Spectrum.

Who knew that writing 600 words on a page for a freshman-year class would eventually help me find confidence and security in myself? That certainly was not my expectation, but I am ever so grateful.

It is difficult to imagine leaving this newspaper behind. It has been, perhaps, the most consistent part of my life throughout the past few years. But I know my Spectrum journey doesn't end here... I'll always be a reader!

Happily reporting for the Spectrum, one last time, Valentina Massoni,
Managing Editor of Content.

Into the Unknown

BY COLLIN MOURA
Campus Life Editor and Copy Editor

Sacred Heart University is where I fell in love with telling stories—where I discovered my passion for capturing moments and exploring the unknown.

Thank you to the School of Communication, Media & the Arts for allowing me to live out my dreams over the past four years, offering support and encouragement at every turn.

To any underclassmen who are reading this: If you have an idea you're passionate about, the professors in this program will help you make it happen.

I never expected to spend my undergraduate years the way I did. Searching for crocodiles in Everglades National Park, traveling the country with one of the world's largest music labels, acting as a translator on a documentary shoot in Costa Rica and sleeping in dozens of train stations to save money on my adventures certainly didn't make for the typical college experience.

During my sophomore year, I wrote an editorial titled "On the Road Again" about my love for travel and newfound appreciation for change.

I had just signed up for CIEE Madrid, a study abroad program that would take me to Spain for four months. I didn't know anybody in my program and had no idea where I'd be living, studying or traveling. It ended up being the best decision of my life.

I fell in love with Madrid—it was a place where I felt truly at home. The art scene, outdoor markets and amazing food were matched only by the easygoing, authentic buzz of the city. I met a number of lifelong friends and traveled across Europe, backpacking through the Swiss Alps and Sistema Central.

Two of my Madrid roommates have stayed very close friends, becoming creative collaborators through my recent work as a wildlife filmmaker and touring photographer.

Last week, "Flyway of Life" premiered in a sold-out event, drawing a crowd of 450 people for an Earth Day celebration. This feature-length film centers on bird migration and conservation movements, all brought together by my good friend and mentor, Tomas Koeck. I first joined this project as a production assistant, but became a cameraman and associate producer as my



confidence and skills progressed. Tomas, thank you so much for bringing me into the field with you. Working on this documentary over the past three years has taught me so much.

My senior project has been the culmination of all my time at Sacred Heart. I first conceptualized the idea while sleeping on a deck at the Loon Preservation Committee's headquarters in New Hampshire this past July.

From there, the planning stages began. I applied for permits from the National Park Service, contacted wildlife guides and built a shoot itinerary for the upcoming multi-week expedition. My fall semester was dedicated to obtaining funding and partnering up with organizations like Yellowstone National Park.

On Dec. 27, it was time to embark on my journey. What followed was three weeks exploring the vast wilderness of the Rocky Mountain region in winter. One of the planet's largest temperate ecosystems, this land is home to the most diverse gathering of ungulates in the western hemisphere.

See INTO THE UNKNOWN
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Editorials

Always Go With Your Gut

BY MOLLY BRUTON

Managing Editor of Administration



Something that most people don't know about me is that I wasn't always a journalism student. In fact, I spent my entire freshman year at Sacred Heart pursuing a career in biology.

I remember sitting in my Seton Hall dorm losing sleep over something I couldn't put my finger on. I was unhappy, mentally burnt out, and felt so out of place. What was the issue? I had a great support system and was at a great school, so there really wasn't anything to complain about.

I started to notice my lack of enthusiasm to attend my classes, and my grades started to drop. What I was learning in class wasn't something I loved anymore. As the year went on, my hopes and dreams of becoming a doctor slowly started to fade. Still, I didn't know why.

Then, there was one late night towards the end of the year where I was

journaling like I always did. My journal was an escape for me, and writing was always something that brought me peace and happiness.

Then, a light bulb went off in my head. I absolutely loved writing and spent a lot of my free time doing it. It never felt like a chore and was something I looked forward to doing after a long day of studying topics that no longer interested me.

By this time it was late April. Finals week was approaching and I began to think of making the switch. However, I was beyond afraid of disappointing those around me who knew that being a doctor had been my life-long dream. What would they say? Would they understand? Being a first-generation American, all I ever wanted to do was make my parents proud. I was filled with hesitation, but I knew change had to happen in order for me to be happy again.

I wanted to make sure I could still enter a career where I would be able to help others, as that was extremely important to me. I quickly learned about broadcast journalism and becoming a news reporter. I started doing some research and knew that this was what I was meant to do, as it would give me the opportunity to combine writing and public speaking, both of which I loved to do.

As soon as I finished my last final, I walked out of the Schine Auditorium and emailed my advisor to make the switch. This was terrifying, and I was afraid I was extremely behind after missing an entire year of communications classes. To my surprise, I was told it was the perfect time to switch and that I barely had any catching up to do. That's when I knew I had made the right choice.

Fast forward to now, I am two weeks from graduating from the School of Communication, Media & the Arts with a degree in Broadcast Journalism. I am the Senior Producer of The Pulse, Managing Editor of The Spectrum, and just completed a full year internship at NBC News in the Consumer Investigative Unit. I am an award-winning Journalist in the Connecticut Society of Professional Journalists, and have accepted a full time offer at News12 working towards my career of being an on-air Investigative Reporter, giving back to the community and seeking justice for stories that matter most.

If you take one thing from this story, let it be that you don't owe anyone anything, and to never let your fear of change cost you your happiness. To Sacred Heart University and SCMA, thank you for giving me an experience that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

More Than a Diploma

BY SAMANTHA MARANO

Managing Editor of Administration and Public Relations Manager

I never thought the words "Apply" or "Submit" could be so frightening. As I am about to graduate within the next two weeks, the word grateful sums up my feelings towards the past four years regarding every opportunity that was given to me by Sacred Heart University.

Attending Sacred Heart as a nervous, second-semester transfer student, I was a freshman with no sense of direction or friends. Nevertheless, I will be walking away with so much knowledge regarding life and relationships, concerning my overall purpose in this world. Looking back at my years here at SHU, I have cultivated a strong skill set defined by determination, creativity, and effective problem-solving. The people I met along the way in my journey, from professors, faculty, and classmates, have shaped my entire perspective on life positively.

I have been on the Spectrum editorial board for the past three years, and sadly, it has come to an end. It has been a major part of my college experience, and I have given weeks upon weeks throughout each school year, dedicated to helping develop the newspaper. It may seem hard to believe, but being a part of the Spectrum requires more work than some may think. However, this work isn't complicated or dreadful; instead, it has stimulated my intellectual curiosity. There have been countless days I've spent in the office, regularly sending emails, communicating with fellow editors, brainstorming, and problem-solving. As a result, the Spectrum became my niche.

Being a part of the editorial board has allowed me to grow and acquire so much additional knowledge about my major and career field. Ultimately, I'm stuck because I now have to find a new activity on Tuesday morning. Because for the past three years I've spent my time meeting with my staff and the amazing Prof. Kabak, whom I have had the pleasure of working with all these years.

Initially, I started in the CM-211 class as a features staff writer and then became the Circulation Manager/Public Relations assistant in my sophomore year. I was Co-Head Arts and Entertainment Editor my junior year, and finally, in my senior year I am sadly stepping down as Public Relations Manager and Co-Managing Editor of Administration.

This was a fantastic opportunity, overall, which has given me the opportunity to work closely with some extraordinary ladies. First, my fellow senior leadership and Editor-in-Chief, Madison Beekman; Next, Managing Editor of Content, Valentina Massioni, and finally, my partner-in-crime, Molly Bruton. I am so grateful to have known and worked with them in the SCMA program as



well as throughout the 2024-2025 academic year.

As I continue my professional career and life journey, I am happy to be moving back home to Westchester, N.Y., and being with my family. As I apply for jobs in the journalism field, it can be daunting, yet I am so excited to see what the next chapter holds and I'm confident it will be a positive journey.

If there is one piece of advice I wish to leave my peers with, it is that you should never take the opportunity to experience new things for granted. This is not limited to just college experiences, but life in general. I have come to the ultimate realization that "This is it. It's over."

I have spent the past four years experiencing new things with the goal in mind of having no regrets. The friends I've made along the way, and of whom I'm confident will stick by me throughout the rest of my life, will most definitely be there to cheer me on as I enter the "real world."

The best advice I could give to current college students and those incoming freshmen is just to say "YES." Obviously, there are limitations, but say YES to all those late-night ice cream runs. Say YES to going out for a few hours even though you might have an early morning. And finally, just say YES to life.

Experiences are everything, and the experience that Sacred Heart has given me is one I wouldn't change for the world. I've been told, "Don't cry that it's over. Smile because it happened!" and I believe this is very true, because trust me, before you know it, you will be walking across that stage getting your diploma, and at that moment, it's the final curtain call.

Editorials

From Freshman Year to the Finish Line: Making the Most of My Four Years

BY LAUREN KEHRLE
News Editor



For most freshmen, the start of college comes with an array of emotions: excitement, fear and uncertainty – all of which stem from this new experience and uncharted territory. While I was eager to meet friends and take the next steps towards my future career in coming to SHU, it was hard to imagine moving away from home and embracing full independence for the first time. I didn't know how well I would be able to adapt to this type of change all at once.

When the time finally came to load up the car and make the hour-and-a-half drive to Sacred Heart from my home in southeastern Connecticut, my nerves were high, but, unexpectedly, started to subside upon pulling into campus. While my mind had been clouded with doubts prior to this moment, I suddenly felt that I had ended up exactly where I was meant to be.

The coming days turned into weeks, and I was amazed at how much had already happened over such a short span of time. By this point, I had completed band camp as a member of the marching program to practice the annual SHU field show routine, accustomed to my classes and dorm

life and attended the involvement fair to learn more about the different organizations and opportunities that Sacred Heart offers. It didn't take long to see that there is truly something for each student to enjoy.

Once I reached the end of my first semester, I realized that I wanted to become more active in a musical sense. This led me to join SHU's chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi, a national honorary band fraternity based around the principles of musicianship, leadership, service and brotherhood, in the spring.

Shortly after my membership began, I recognized both the remarkable commitment and sense of community shared among everyone involved. As a result, I decided to pursue a leadership position as secretary of the chapter, which requires recording the agenda for and minutes from each weekly meeting as well as taking attendance. At the end of my second semester, I was voted into this role. I have now been secretary for the past three years, and this title has helped me tremendously to both strengthen my organizational skills and build deeper bonds with other members.

At the beginning of my junior year, I began to learn more about Spectrum, leading me to enroll in News Writing & Reporting for the spring semester. As someone who has always tried to stay up to date on local and national stories, I was happy to have been assigned to the news section of the paper and offered the opportunity to become an editor for the same section moving into my senior year. This role has reinforced my love for writing by enabling me to expand my knowledge of journalism and various topics related to SHU as well as our outside world.

Upon reflecting on these past four years, I find myself immensely thankful for the way in which college has pushed me out of my comfort zone. I truly believe that if I had not taken steps to become involved, most notably in the band program as well as Spectrum, I would not be the person I am today. My leadership roles have greatly helped me to realize the importance of teamwork and collaboration to support a shared goal that benefits the entire campus community. Beyond this, I have built friendships that will last a lifetime, and I will forever be indebted to Sacred Heart for giving me some of the greatest people imaginable. I often think back to that initial car ride to campus, and I wish I could travel back in time to tell myself just how wonderful this experience would be. While SHU will always be home, I can't wait to see what my next chapter will bring!

Hey Freshman Me, You Did It!

BY JESSICA BALOGH
Arts and Entertainment Editor

While everyone else was counting down the days until their first day in college, I dreaded it. The idea of moving away from home for four years in a different state was terrifying. How could I leave everything I'd ever known and start somewhere new?

Looking back now, coming to Sacred Heart was the best decision I could have made. As tough as college seems in the beginning, you find your place. I was lucky enough to find my place through my friends and several organizations on campus.

Before I even stepped foot on campus, I had a guaranteed community in the Choir Program. While the program saw its ups and downs during my time as a student, I have deeply treasured my time in it. I got to travel abroad to Europe for the first time, met so many wonderful people, and found a place for my love of music to shine.

This year, I took on a bigger role in the program by taking charge of the advertising efforts. I was given creative liberty, making videos, flyers, and more that I was proud of, and people responded to.

News Writing and Reporting was a class I wasn't going to take at first, as I am a Public Relations major, but I am very glad that I did. I have grown immensely through my time on the Spectrum Newspaper board. While I have always had a passion for writing, the idea of interviewing people was nerve-wracking. Now I think that's the best part of journalism, getting to hear people's lived experiences and putting that on the page. I have become a more confident and well-rounded writer over these last two and a half years with the Spectrum.

As president of the film club for two years, I feel that I have created a fun little community. I truly love film, and getting to show others my choices was a treat. I am very excited to pass on the torch to continue thriving in my absence.

One thing that I am extremely happy I decided to do was intern at the SHU Discovery Science Center & Planetarium. I got to take the skills I



have learned out past the campus bubble in a team that uplifts one another and welcomed me with open arms. Getting to see a booklet I helped design in the hands of people at their last gala was such a proud moment for me.

The SCMA program shaped me into the person and student I am today. I have been taught to think more critically and openly with creative abandon. The things I have accomplished as a student in this program, I would have never dreamed of. I want to thank all the professors I have had, especially Dr. Belinha De Abreu, who trusted me to aid her work.

To my friends, you have all become my home away from home. I love every one of you. Thank you for always being there for me. Now I have the opposite attitude about college as when I started; I am dreading leaving. This campus has become my home, and I am so lucky to have the opportunity to miss something this much. My freshman self would be amazed at all I have accomplished at Sacred Heart. Now it's onto whatever the future holds! As one of my favorite Wallows songs puts it, "My life's going by, but it's just begun!"

Editorials

Beyond the Books: How Journalism and Broadcasts Changed My Path

BY JOHN HEINZE
Assistant Sports Editor



As I sit down to write this article it is finally hitting that I am graduating. It feels like yesterday I was a freshman moving into Merton eager to see what college would bring me. It is safe to say my path through college was full of twists and turns I never thought I'd take, but I'm grateful I did.

Coming into Sacred Heart it had been a lifelong dream to study sports communications and media and pursue a commentator career. From a young age I watched sports in awe of the guys on the screen talking about the teams and players I loved. This dream was quickly altered my freshman year in intro to media 102 when I first had to make a video and be on screen. I realized being in front of the camera was not for me after all. This left me wondering what I would do with my major.

Still a little clueless on what to pursue heading into my junior year

I ended up signing up for news writing and reporting. I only signed up for the class because it was the only communications class with seats open. After being assigned to write for the sports section, I quickly realized signing up and writing for the spectrum was a blessing in disguise. My first article was about club powerlifting. I did my interviews over email and struggled through my first article. From then on, I started pushing myself out of my comfort zone conducting in person interviews with athletes and coaches around campus. I quickly started to love writing and covering sports through journalism and chose to apply as a circulation manager. In the matter of two months, I went from giving the class a shot to being fully involved with the newspaper. This past year I have been one of the assistant sports editors for the paper which has allowed me to continue covering sports along with helping others learn and grow as writers.

This past year I also started working on games for broadcasts. I went from nervous to sign up for my first game to looking forward to my next chance to work. Once again, I got my start through a class and chose to stay involved. After months of doing broadcasts, I have found countless production roles that are super fun to work. Finally, after years of uncertainty, I was able to find a new purpose in my dream major.

If I could offer advice to incoming SHU students and current students trying to find their way, I would say push yourself out of your comfort zone and get involved. Going to class and learning only gets you so far, getting involved lets you take the skills you learn in the classroom and put them to use. My only regret from college is not getting involved sooner. Four years seems like such a long time when you first arrive, and it is easy to think you have all the time in the world to get involved. My time with the Spectrum over the past two years and my time doing broadcasts has helped me grow my confidence and has introduced me to amazing people. While I am sad college is coming to an end, I can proudly look back with a smile, happy that I got involved at SHU.

Better Than Expected

BY ALLY FABBO
Photography Editor and Graphics Manager

I did not want to go to college. Which sounds crazy, thinking about it now. Growing up I was not a good student, and I knew that. I would struggle in my classes and preferred to stay at home and do my own thing. The idea of coming to college was extremely scary for me, being away from home and having to be on my own for the first time. I used to tell my friends and parents I wasn't going to college at all. But what would I be doing if I didn't go to school? I didn't have an answer.

With nothing to do if I didn't go to college, I had to rethink my plan. Lucky for me, I have a sister who is just a year older than me. All throughout our childhood I would get a glimpse of what was to come for me, through her experiences. When she decided to go to Sacred Heart, I started thinking about doing the same thing. After I heard how much she liked the school, I made up my mind: I was going to Sacred Heart. To make my situation even better, my best friend since kindergarten also decided to go here. Even if I was worried about college, I knew I would always have my sister and best friend there to help me out. A small piece of home would be with me every day, which made me feel better.

Despite my initial worries, the transition from high school/being home to being in college went smoothly. As soon as I moved into Merton Hall, I knew I was ready for this next part of my life. From the first day of class, I started thriving. I got As on all my assignments, met new people, and branched out, which was a drastic change from my school life back home.

Once I started doing better and receiving positive feedback from teachers, especially in my art and marketing classes, I grew more confident in myself and my work. Because of this, I felt inclined to get more involved with the school, which is when I joined The Spectrum, which I've been on for a little over a year as Photo Editor and Graphics Editor. Being involved gave me new opportunities and new connections. A teacher once told me that "it's so important to tell students who do



good that they are on the right track and to keep producing quality work," which really stuck with me and made a difference in my life.

Not only was I surprised by the sudden change in my schoolwork and social life, but I was extremely proud of the person I was becoming while at Sacred Heart. My family was probably more surprised than I was, they watched me go from a little girl who hated school and struggled to a young woman who enjoyed school. It made them very proud.

I never thought in a million years I would be sad to finally be done with school. Never did I think I would go from struggling in all my classes when I was younger to now graduating Summa Cum Laude with a Silver Medal of Excellence, being a member of three honor societies and a part of an amazing club (shoutout The Spectrum). I am eternally grateful for the friends I made along the way, my teachers and advisors, and especially my family for supporting me these past four years. Sacred Heart University changed my life for the better and now I'm ready for the next stage in my life!

Editorials

Slow Down, You're Doing Fine

BY **DANIELLA MAXWELL**
Photography Editor



I graduated college a semester early to get a headstart on my career. In December 2024, I was done with school. No more discussion posts, replying to my peers. No more. I had to double up on classes, start searching for post-grad jobs in Michigan so I could move in with my then-fiance, and get all my ducks in a row to make sure that when I left SHU for the last time as a student that I could focus just on me, my career and starting the “big-girl” life that I have always dreamed of.

Why did no one tell me that adulting was going to be the best thing that I would ever do for myself...but also the hardest?

I applied to tons of jobs. I heard no after no after no until I took a long shot and applied to the local news station in Traverse City, Mich., where my now husband is stationed with the U.S. Coast Guard, and 8 minutes from our apartment.

I was sitting in my 8 a.m. History of Broadcasting class and got an email from the News Director at UpNorthLive News in Traverse City, asking to have a “quick call.” After a few more virtual interviews, I accepted the job

as a Digital Content Producer halfway across the country, 2 months before I even graduated college, and to start a week after my last classes of the Fall semester.

At that moment, I realized that I had to pack the last 20 years of my entire life away in my car, and drive 14 hours to Traverse City to start the next chapter of my life.

Fast-forward to now, since I graduated college, I became a real journalist writing for UpNorthLive News, 7 & 4, which are NBC/ABC channels, reported for the first time and had my video and photo footage in our shows on TV, and I got married to my “highschool sweetheart.”

I found a love for the most mundane things, like grocery shopping with my husband, decorating my apartment with little found treasures, and even things as simple as cooking dinner on a Sunday night.

Through these last 7 months and the start of my adulting, I have looked back on all the time that has passed and think of all the things that I could have done in college.

Should I have gone out more and lived the “college life” that everyone talks about? Should I have not gone into college in a relationship? Maybe I should have joined more clubs and got more involved. Will I feel like I missed out on the last semester of college? But no. None of those things were in the plan that God and the universe had for me. There was a reason I didn’t do things differently and made the decisions that I did, and that all led up to where I am now. All things fall into place when they are supposed to.

If I never went into college in a relationship I would not have traveled as much as I did, experienced all the things I have, and I would for sure not have taken the opportunity to live 844 miles from home, in Michigan, right now.

Take the chance, don’t stress over the things you can’t control and let it all be put into God’s hands.

I think the point I am trying to make is that you don’t have to do what you THINK you are supposed to do in college. You don’t have to stress to be the person that fits in with the stigma of a college student. And you for sure don’t have to graduate early to find a job like I did because in the end, you have control over the path you take and whichever path that is, it’s what was planned for you.

And as Billy Joel said, “Slow down, you’re doing fine.”

What I Learned From Running BarstoolSHU

BY **RYAN TASHMAN**
Web Manager and Graphics Manager

BarstoolSHU is Sacred Heart’s student-run, Barstool-affiliated Instagram account that posts student news, campus memes, sports content, and the occasional dorm ranking that starts a minor civil war in the comments. For the past two years, I helped figure out what to say, when to say it, and how to make it entertaining without getting in trouble.

When I first took over the account, I thought it would just be a fun way to post jokes and hype up our sports teams. What I didn’t expect was how much I’d actually learn about Sacred Heart and how much it would make me appreciate it.

I posted win (or loss) memes, made updates when something happened on campus, and every now and then, tried to start a cool event on campus, like the time my friend and I organized a campus-wide snowball fight on the Upper Quad.

Sacred Heart is small enough that everyone’s kind of in on the same inside jokes, but big enough that there’s always something going on. Running the account meant I had to be aware of everything, from what event was coming up, to who won last night’s game, to which dining hall item everyone was weirdly obsessed with that week. I got to see how quickly word travels, how people rally around each other, and how much students genuinely care about what’s happening here.

One of the coolest things I got to do was work with the SHU women’s basketball team when they made the NCAA tournament. Instead of just reposting the score, I teamed up with them to do a “day in the life” series. It gave everyone a look at what they were experiencing and made Sacred Heart’s March Madness run feel even more personal. I learned that the people here love feeling connected, whether it’s through sports, events, or even a meme about not finding



parking.

Some of my favorite posts weren’t even the biggest ones. Who else would get genuinely fired up about whether Seton or Roncalli is better than Merton?

There were definitely some challenges along the way. Not everything hit the way I thought it would, but I had to learn when to hold back, when to lean in, and how to handle feedback. Running BarstoolSHU gave me a behind-the-scenes look at Sacred Heart that I don’t think I would’ve gotten otherwise. It showed me how funny people are and how easy it is to bring everyone together with the right post at the right time. Overall, I am so lucky I got the chance to run BarstoolSHU and see firsthand how close Sacred Heart’s community really is.

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How Did I End Up Here?

BY LAURYN ENGLISH
Assistant Public Relations Manager



If someone had told me four years ago that I'd be who I am today, graduating in less than two weeks, I would not believe it. For a while, I didn't think it was possible to do anything on my own, and my mind was my worst enemy. How was I supposed to live away from home, away from the support system that struggled for years to keep me healthy and happy? Not to mention the stress of figuring out what I would do with my life, managing my coursework, and try and make friends when everyone still had to wear masks.

The fear of the unknown is something that I've struggled with for so long, but college is full of unknowns. Somehow and some way, being thrown straight into the unknown is exactly what I needed.

As someone who always had an interest in science, I realized that dissecting animals and organic chemistry was not for me. I needed something more creative. I

wanted to find a career path where I could create things the world can see. SCMA had everything I was looking for.

Even though I was terrified for the unknowns that college would bring, I was excited for the blank slate with endless opportunities to find out more about myself. I found friends that truly make me feel at home. I found a major that allows me to do things I am passionate about. I found out how to live on my own. And most importantly, as a girl from New Jersey, I found out how to pump my own gas.

In four years, I have changed in so many ways. A new group of friends, a new hair color, a new favorite coffee order, and a new hope for the future. However, I am far from perfect. My housemates can attest that I still can't wake up to my alarms. My professors can attest that I am always late to class. Public Safety officers can attest that I still struggle to park between the lines. So yes, there's plenty for me to work on.

As for where I go from here, I have no idea. When I think of all the unknowns that graduation brings, I have to remind myself "How did I end up here?" because for a long time, I didn't believe I could get to where I am today. I've made it this far, I know I can keep going.

Venturing into the unknown that is college, I slowly began to figure out who I am, and what my hopes are for the future. Working hard, facing my fears, and making lifelong friendships is what got me here.

For anyone going into college, or graduating like me, it is important to know that the unknown holds the greatest potential. Instead of avoiding the unknown out of fear, we need to embrace it to get the most out of it. Find what you love to do, meet new people, and appreciate every moment of college because it goes by fast.

Although my college journey is coming to an end, the only thing that stops is the rent and tuition payments. The skills I have learned, friendships I've made, and changes I've done will carry throughout the rest of my life. I am so grateful to SHU for giving me a place to grow into myself and set me on the path to fully become the person I want to be. In a few years, wherever I will be, I can't wait to once again ask myself, "How did I end up here?"

Into the Unknown

BY COLLIN MOURA
Campus Life Editor and Copy Editor

CONTINUED FROM PG 3

"Frozen Prairie" explores the American Bison's relationship with the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. A keystone species, bison play a major role in maintaining a healthy and balanced environment. The largest terrestrial animal on the continent of North America, they have long served as an iconic symbol of our people and culture.

In the 19th century, the westward expansion of European colonists across the continent drove the species into rapid decline. The slaughter of Bison is the largest extermination of an animal in modern history, led directly by the United States government in an attempt to defeat and submit Indigenous tribes who resisted the takeover of their lands.

Protected land like Yellowstone National Park has led to the remarkable recovery of these animals, with numbers in the park growing from only two dozen in 1902 to 4,500 in the park today.

"Frozen Prairie" is available to watch now on YouTube. I put my heart into making this film come to life and I'm so excited for everyone to see it.

Because I've always loved ending articles with a quote, I'll do it one last time.

The motto behind "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and a line that has driven and inspired me to take risks and jump into the unknown: "To see the world, things dangerous to come to, to see behind walls, draw closer, to find each other, and to feel. That is the purpose of life."

