THE SPECTRUM

SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY FAIRFIELD, CONN

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Fazio is Red, Lamont is Blue: Who Will Win?

BY **TESS DONLAN**
Staff Writer

"For the most part, when it comes to what people want to see out of governors, it's mostly just to know that they have our backs," said sophomore Jadelynn Garrido. "We're getting to a point where people don't want to see promises; they want to see follow-through."

On Tuesday, Nov. 3, the Connecticut gubernatorial race will take place. Candidates include Democrat Ned Lamont, the current governor, who is running for a third term and his Republican challenger, Ryan Fazio.

Lamont's campaign is centered around lowering the cost of living for the working class, delivering middle-class tax cuts, and continuing to invest in public education, childcare and accessible healthcare. Fazio's focus is on cutting overall taxes, capping property taxes and reducing energy bills by eliminating hidden fees.

For professor Gary Rose of the political science department, there is a range of key issues voters are looking at in the upcoming election.

"The key issues in the 2026 election include the cost of living, such as gas prices and groceries, taxes, electricity rates, housing and health care. Support for education is also a very important issue."

As for senior Maia Santora, a key issue she is watching out for is the cost of gas.

"Gas prices are all a lot higher than people want them to be,"said Santora. "They've skyrocketed in the past two or three years."

Sacred Heart partnered with GreatBlue Research to poll voters about the upcoming election. 1,000 participants of registered voters completed the digital survey of 35 questions. This research was conducted from Oct. 6-12. The margin of error was +/-3.1%, and the researchers' confidence level was 95%.

The poll showed Lamont increased his advantage over Fazio, leading 53.4% to 31.1% among registered voters. For undecided voters, Lamont's support increased to 56.3% compared to 33.1% for Fazio, and independents favored Lamont 49.7% to 28.6%.



AP News, Cloe Poissn

Ned Lamont (D) at a campaign stop at the Pulaski Middle School in New Britain, CT from 2022.

"The poll suggests a landslide election is forthcoming," said Rose.

Poll findings show Lamont is more likely to be seen as understanding the challenges facing voters (45.4% vs. 31.2%). Lamont also leads Fazio on voter trust across each of the 11 issues tested, with particularly large advantages on education and public schools (50.3% vs. 23.2%) and healthcare costs and access (49.6% vs. 24.2%).

"Lamont's positions on social and moral issues are in line with where the majority of Connecticut voters are," said Rose. "At the same time, voters see him as trustworthy."

"He does a lot for trans students, he does a lot for education, he does a lot for LGBTQ," said Garrido.

Rose said since Connecticut is a blue state, Lamont has an inherent advantage. Connecticut has not had a Republican governor in the last 15 years.

"I also think that with the current President, Connecticut residents are leaning towards having a Democratic governor even if they are not registered as Democratic voters," said Santora.

Results from SHU's research show voters are looking for a candidate that represents them leading up to election day.

"Lamont is doing a good job at appealing to different demographics in Connecticut, not just families, but also students, young adults, anyone who can vote really," said Santora.

Santora said upperclassmen who live off campus, even if they are not permanent residents of Connecticut, are likely to support Lamont because of his efforts to make the community more affordable overall.

"I personally think that when it comes to running for a political position, you have to be progressive; you have to be progressive to the point where you know that whatever decision you make will push things forward, and I see that Ned Lamont is doing that almost day after day," said Garrido. "He's pushing a lot of boundaries that I agree with."

Remembering One Step at a Time

BY **AMANDA AURECCHIONE**
Staff Writer

Over 360 individuals contributed upwards of $11,200 to the Alzheimer's Association during the fifth annual Walk to End Alzheimer's on Oct. 23 at Sacred Heart University.

The campus walk started in 2022 and had approximately 200 attendees. This is one of two satellite walks that lead to the larger Fairfield County Walk to End Alzheimer's.

"I hope participants leave with a greater sense of unity and empowerment, knowing that no one is alone in the fight against Alzheimer's," said Rui Liu, a professor in the health science department.

Liu described the walk as a prayer to the mission of the university, which is preparing students to go out and make a difference in the community.

Liu affirmed that in overcoming a diagnosis, families can look to the association to get resources, education and support.

Among the strongest moments Liu identified was the Promise Garden Ceremony, where people held colored flowers that signified their relationship to the disease.

The 2026 facts and figures report by the Alzheimer's Association estimates that 7.4 million Americans age 65 and above live with Alzheimer's dementia.

The report also found that over 12 million family members and other unpaid caregivers in 2025 offered 19.6 billion hours of care.

According to Cheryl Podob, a Senior Development Manager for the Alzheimer's Association in Fairfield County, when she began working there five years ago, that number was five million.

In 2024, the United States would report 116,022 deaths caused by the disease, which was the sixth leading cause of death in the country, as stated by the report.

Podob said that the walk began as a

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News

Remembering One Step at a Time

BY **AMANDA AURECCHIONE**
Staff Writer

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collaboration between the association and Sacred Heart faculty.

At the initial walk, they collected approximately $8,000, Podob reported. The event raised $64,000 over four years.

"I think the students now really see it as a part of who they are," said Podob. "Many students at Sacred Heart pursue health-related studies, such as nursing and physical therapy, and view the walk as part of their academic discipline."

According to Podob, Sacred Heart marketing students have created save-the-date announcements, flyers and lawn signs over the past two years.

The athletics department also offered the association the opportunity to participate in two hockey games during the walk weekend, with staff providing information and QR codes at a table.

The organizers shifted the starting time to 9 a.m. two weeks before the walk because the Sacred Heart marching band had plans to hold a march before a football game. Podob commended the students for their participation despite the cold weather.

Senior Chelsea Perez cut the ribbon to start the walk this year, and has been walking all four years. She is the fundraising director for SHU's chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta, the top fundraising group.

"I have gotten to watch this event grow and truly flourish," said Perez. "Everyone truly cares for the cause."

Perez mentioned that her favorite moment is the first lap, when participants walk together. Many people have a friend or family member with the disease, making student support especially important.

According to Podob, people are less secretive about a family member's diagnosis than they were five years ago.

"Research is ongoing," said Podob. "Two drugs have been shown to slow the disease in its early stages, and a blood test can screen for early signs of amyloid plaques."



Daniel Pasapera, Sacred Heart University
Students support the annual Walk to End Alzheimer's Disease.

The Alzheimer's Association has a free, 24/7 helpline available at 800-272-3900. Insurance coverage for the blood test is generally unavailable, according to Podob.

"The ASAP Act, a bipartisan bill in Congress, would mandate coverage. This is the beginning of this age of prevention; we are coming into it," said Podob.

Secure Your Spot: PioneerGuard at SHU

BY **OLLIE WEISMANN**
Staff Writer

Sacred Heart University recently received about $90,000 in federal funding to help launch PioneerGuard, a summer cybersecurity program designed to introduce local Bridgeport and other high school students to the booming field of cybersecurity.

The Department of Defense, through the National Security Agency and its GenCyber program, awarded the grant. It will support approximately 60 students through SHU's TRIO Upward Bound Program. The period of funding began recently, on Aug. 17, 2026, and it will continue up until Jan. 31, 2028.

"The primary goal of PioneerGuard is to spark an early interest in cybersecurity among high school students by making cybersecurity education accessible, engaging and hands-on," said Sajal Bhatia, PioneerGuard program director and cybersecurity professor.

Students will be a part of a six-day, in-person summer camp, providing students with 30 hours of instruction. They will have access to Sacred Heart's cybersecurity, AI, IDEA, and virtual reality labs.

"Rather than simply learning theory, they will learn through interactive cybersecurity labs, AI-powered activities, 3D-printed cipher wheels, immersive AR/VR experiences and team-based hacking challenges," said Bhatia.

Students will explore the core fundamentals of cybersecurity, including network defense, password security, cryptography, ethical hacking and AI.

Dr. Igor Khokhlov, an assistant cybersecurity professor, also emphasized the significance of introducing students to cybersecurity through practical experiences.

"Hands-on learning also makes the subject approachable. Students get to solve problems together rather than simply memorize warnings," said Khokhlov. "It gives those with little prior experience a chance to see that they can participate in cybersecurity and explore it as a possible college or career path."

The camp will conclude with a capture-the-flag competition, where students will work collaboratively to complete cybersecurity challenges using skills they learned and developed through their time in the program.

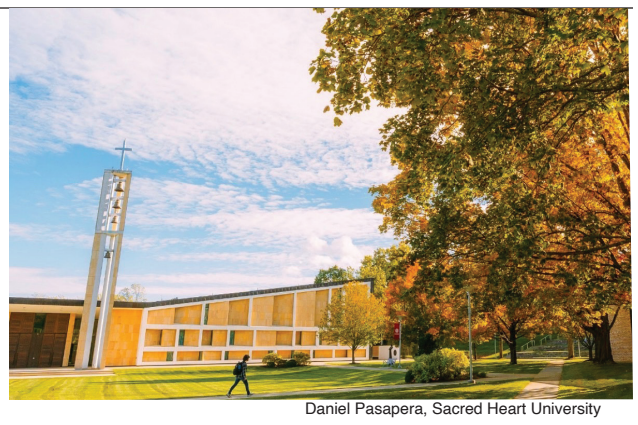
PioneerGuard aims to teach students the importance of cybersecurity in everyday life and help them understand the fundamental skills.

"Introducing cybersecurity early matters because young people already make technology decisions every day," said Khokhlov. "Learning to pause, ask questions and consider how information or a system could be misused can help them make safer choices online."

Senior Jakob Siudryga, a cybersecurity student at SHU who works in networking, believes the program could introduce students to careers they never knew existed within the cybersecurity field.

"People hear cybersecurity for the first time and immediately think of hacking, but the field is so much broader than that, with opportunities in digital forensics, networking, risk management and so many other career paths," said Siudryga.

Before being introduced to cybersecurity by his cousin who works in software development, Siudryga initially planned to follow a political science path. His cousin's experience influenced Siudryga to pursue a cybersecurity path in college.



Daniel Pasapera, Sacred Heart University
Students walking to class passing the chapel on Sacred Heart

"That introduction completely changed my direction for what I wanted to study in college, and I think PioneerGuard could provide the same opportunity for current high school students," said Siudryga.

PioneerGuard will mainly focus on Bridgeport students enrolled in Sacred Heart's TRIO Upward Bound program, specifically those with minimal exposure to cybersecurity. Application processes and costs have not been published yet.

Through the faculty, facilities, equipment and Upward Bound partnership, SHU's goal is to provide students with an introduction to cybersecurity that can influence their future education.

"We want students to leave PioneerGuard thinking, 'cybersecurity is something I can understand, something I can do and perhaps something I could pursue as a career,'" said Bhatia.

UPCOMING EVENTS ON CAMPUS

FRIDAY 10/30:
SHU WIND ENSEMBLE CONCERT
8 P.M. EDGERTON CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

SATURDAY 10/31:
WOMEN'S RUGBY VS PENN STATE
4 P.M. PARK AVENUE FIELD

TUESDAY 11/3:
PILATES AND PANHELLENIC
6 P.M. MARTIRE CENTER LORIS FORUM

Features

Ready for Takeoff

BY **MICHAEL CASTNER**
Staff Writer

Students and their families had the opportunity to apply for or renew their passports on Oct. 20 during Passport Day in the Edgerton Atrium. The event brought postal services to campus to make the application process more convenient for the university community.

Arthur Gerkins, one of the event's organizers, said Sacred Heart has hosted Passport Day since 2002 after he learned about the idea at a conference.

"We were one of the first universities in the nation to host Passport Day," said Gerkins.

The event is open to students, faculty, staff, spouses, children and Notre Dame Prep students. Gerkins said the idea came from recognizing how many students could benefit from easier access to passport services, particularly those planning to study abroad.



AP News, Jenny Kane

Shot of a United States Passport.

During Passport Day, postal service staff take passport photos, process applications and mail the paperwork to the U.S. Department of State. Sacred Heart provides the location, allowing applicants to complete the process without traveling off campus.

Maria Gountas, a lettershop technician who helps coordinate the event, said bringing passport services to campus makes the process easier for students who might otherwise have trouble finding a convenient location.

"We have the post office come to us, and this way, they can just bring everything that they want," said Gountas. "It's in one shot."

Despite the convenience, applicants must arrive prepared with the proper documentation and payment. Gerkins said one common mistake is bringing a copy of a birth certificate instead of the original document required for a first-time passport application.

"The key is to have the original document," said Gerkins. "A lot of the trouble with getting your passport is not having your original birth certificate."

Payment can also create difficulties. Applicants must bring cash or checks because credit cards are not accepted. Gerkins explained that applicants need two separate payments, one for the Department of State and another for the post office.

For senior Julia Petrellese, obtaining her first passport involved some challenges before attending Passport Day. She learned about the event through an email sent a few weeks beforehand.

"The first time I tried to fill it out, I was rushing, and I messed up two forms," said Petrellese.

She decided to complete the process through the on-campus event.

The event is especially useful for first-year students, who cannot have cars on campus and may have difficulty traveling to a post office.

"Passport Day gives students an opportunity to handle the application process without adding another off-campus trip to their schedules," said Gerkins.

Gountas said passports can open opportunities for international travel and new experiences.

"It's a good way of seeing the world and making all your dreams come true," said Gountas.

Master of Public Health Program

BY **JOANNA ENCH**
Staff Writer

Sacred Heart University's Master of Public Health (MPH) program reshapes public health education through real-world experience, flexible academic pathways and strong career outcomes.

At its core, the program aims to cultivate workforce-ready leaders capable of addressing systemic health inequities across local and global communities.

"The primary goal of SHU's program is to prepare future leaders to protect and improve the health of individuals, families and entire communities," said Dr. Jacqueline Vernarelli, MPH program director. "Rather than just studying data, SHU emphasizes using translational epidemiology to apply research directly to emergent, real-world public health challenges."

To tackle these critical issues effectively, the curriculum trains students to look beyond individual behaviors and examine the underlying social, biological and environmental drivers of community health outcomes. Students put those concepts into action through hands-on local partnerships.

"For example, students in Health Communication worked directly with Fairfield Cares on a community project to create and disseminate health materials for community use," said Vernarelli.

Students can choose between immersive fieldwork with local Connecticut organizations addressing food insecurity and health literacy or a mentored research thesis resulting in national presentations and peer-reviewed journal publications.

"Unlike programs where experiential learning may come later in the curriculum, we intentionally get students into communities during their first semester to work on real public health projects and apply classroom concepts to real-world situations," said Dr. Anna Price, professor of public health.

The program yields a 97% to 100% post-graduation placement rate within six months of completion. Graduates enter careers in epidemiology, health advocacy and policy development or pursue medical, dental or physician assistant (PA) programs.

"An MPH provides a distinct advantage for medical or Physician Assistant applicants by shifting your profile from a standard science major to a holistic, systems-thinking healthcare leader," said Vernarelli.

Students can participate in the program part-time or full-time. Incoming freshmen and current SHU students can utilize an accelerated dual-degree program to earn up to 12 graduate credits during their undergraduate studies.

"We are also seeing a growing trend of students choosing what we sometimes call a gain year rather than a gap year, allowing them to earn an advanced degree, gain practical experience and build professional connections before entering a professional program such as PA school," said Price.

Faculty mentorships and community involvement remain pivotal elements of student experience.

"The focus on public health policy, close faculty mentorship and the extensive network of community and faith-based partners make a huge difference," said MPH student Joseph Falcao.

For some students, studying health inequities alters their career trajectory entirely.

"Exploring health disparities and social determinants transformed my path from a clinical goal toward public health areas like epidemiology, outbreak investigation and community-based nonprofit work," said senior Deven Targgart, health science major.

By pairing flexible course delivery with community engagement, Sacred Heart's MPH program prepares future practitioners to lead change in public health.

"We prepare confident, workforce-ready public health professionals," said Price. "Our goal is for students to graduate not only with the knowledge and skills of public health, but also with meaningful experiences and tangible work they can showcase in a portfolio and on their resumes."



Daniel Passapera, Sacred Heart University

Sacred Heart Public Health students discussing notes in a classroom at the CHE.

CampusLife

Beyond the Costume

BY **DANIELLA DILORENZO**
Staff Writer

As fall brings cooler weather, Halloween celebrations and seasonal activities, Sacred Heart University students have plenty of opportunities to enjoy the season on and off campus.

Whether students choose to celebrate the season or not, there is no shortage of ways to get involved and meet new people this fall.

"So far, more than 140 events and club meetings have taken place this fall, and we've engaged with over 2,000 students through our large-scale campus events that are open to all students," said Daniele Mascia, director of Student Involvement and Student Events Team (SET) advisor.

Past events included the Just SHU It! Fair, President's Gala, DIY craft events, movie nights, monthly bingo and trivia. Students could also attend off-campus trips to a New York Yankees game and Salem, Mass., known for its Halloween attractions and seasonal celebrations.

"Having events on campus gives students a chance to take a break from schoolwork, spend time with friends and meet new people," said freshman Delaney Coyne.

More fall activities are planned for the end of October. Monstober Week began Oct. 26 and ends on Oct. 30. Harryween, another Halloween-themed event, is scheduled for Oct. 30.

"When developing our calendar, we consider several factors, including the academic calendar, student interests and feedback, campus traditions and opportunities to collaborate with campus partners," said Mascia.

These events give students something exciting to look forward to outside of their academics.

"College can get stressful and overwhelming with classes and assignments, so it is nice to have activities to look forward to," said Coyne.

Junior Gabriella Velez said pumpkin picking is one of her favorite fall activities because she enjoys spending time with friends and family while experiencing the season.

"Seasonal traditions bring people together and help create a sense of community, especially for college students who may be away from home," said Velez.

Students can utilize SHU Engage to discover upcoming events, student organizations and involvement opportunities. They can also follow Student Involvement and SET on Instagram and TikTok, check campus announcements and flyers and watch for university emails or check the online events calendar.

"Our goal is to provide a variety of experiences throughout the semester that appeal to different interests and give students multiple ways to engage with campus life," said Mascia.

Whether attending a Halloween event, participating in bingo or trivia or spending an afternoon with friends, students can find opportunities to take a break from their busy schedules and enjoy campus life.

"There is no single right way to get involved, and you don't have to do everything," said Mascia. "Sometimes, showing up to just one event is all it takes to begin finding your community."

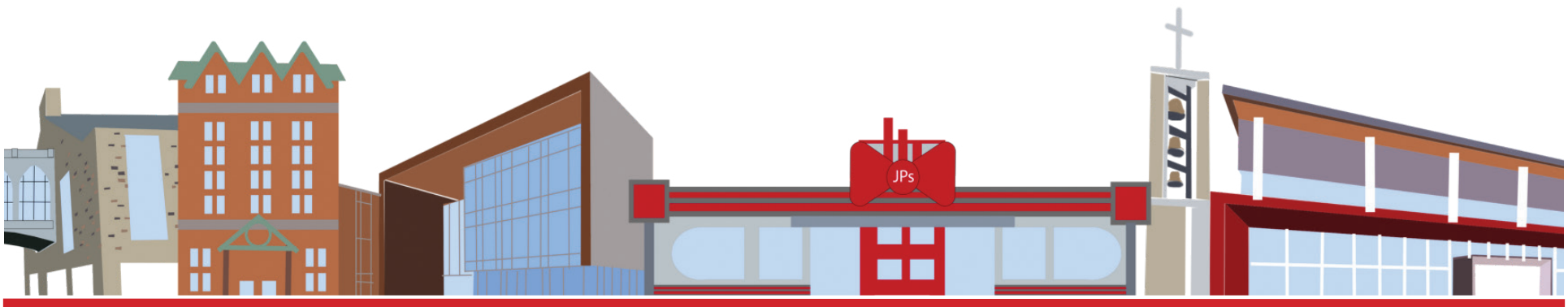
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CampusLife

Marathon on Elm Street

BY **COLIN MCPHERSON**
Staff Writer

Halloween is coming up, which means it is officially horror movie season. A season where movie theaters and televisions are flooded with masks, fangs and chainsaws. Horror movies can scare you, make you laugh and show you how scary the lives of others can be, and marathons are an incredible way to experience these films.

The film kicking off this marathon is "Psycho" directed by one of the legends of Hollywood, Alfred Hitchcock.

"Psycho surely would be high on the list of films that we turn to at this time to scare and delight us," said Professor Sidney Gottlieb of the School of Communications, Media and the Arts. "'An American Werewolf in London' is a nice light horror film to keep the ball rolling on this journey. The mix of comedy, a short run-time and werewolves make for an absolutely incredible time."

Next, Stanley Kubrick's "The Shining" is the story of an unhinged father (Jack Nicholson) who slowly loses his mind in a snowed-in hotel where he is all alone with his wife and son. The next film is the representative for monster movies. "Dracula" stars Bela Lugosi as the Count in one of the most iconic horror film performances.

Continuing the trend of incredible horror performances is "The Substance" the breakout body horror hit from 2024. Demi Moore won multiple awards for her performance in this film as an older actress being pushed out of Hollywood.

Next on this list is "Obsession," the breakout box office hit of 2026 starring Inde Navarrette as Nikki. Her character is possessed by a cursed wish from her coworker Bear.

The film representing religious horror in the marathon is the original of its franchise "The Exorcist," the revolutionary film about the demonic possession of a child.

As for the science fiction portion of the marathon, "Alien" directed by Ridley Scott kicks off the iconic horror franchise featuring Sigourney Weaver as Ripley as she and the others on her crew try to find their way back home after being sent to explore an alien planet. A similar film to that is "The Thing," the rare film set in Antarctica, starring Kurt Russell. It features one of the most debated endings of all time.

Next up is the witty and ever relevant "Get Out" directed by Jordan Peele. This film took home the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay and follows a photographer (Daniel Kaluuya) as he goes on a trip to meet his girlfriend's family before everything goes horribly wrong.

"The scariest horror monsters are those that have their basis in real everyday threats," said Professor Sara Ross, who specializes in women in film and film production at Sacred Heart.

Then, follow it up with "Texas Chainsaw Massacre," a short rip-roaring time filled with blood, sweat and grime.

At this point in the marathon, you might need a few laughs. If that is the case, "Scream" is your go-to movie. To close it off, you will be tired and wanting to go to bed, and there is no movie that refuses to let you do that like "Hereditary."

Being one of the blunter and immediately upsetting horror films of this century, it is perfect to close out this marathon.

The List

1. *12:00-1:49* Psycho (1960) 109 mins
2. *1:50-3:27* An American Werewolf in London (1981)
3. *3:28-5:52* The Shining (1980) 144 mins
4. *5:53-7:07* Dracula (1931) 74 mins
5. *7:08-9:29* The Substance (2024) 141 mins
6. *9:30-11:19* Obsession (2026) 109 mins
7. *11:20-1:22* The Exorcist (1973) 122 mins
8. *1:23-3:20* Alien (1979) 117 mins
9. *3:21-5:10* The Thing (1982) 109 mins
10. *5:11-6:55* Get Out (2017) 104 mins
11. *6:56-8:19* The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974) 83 mins
12. *8:20-10:12* Scream (1996) 112 mins
13. *10:13-12:21* Hereditary (2018) 128 mins



Arts & Entertainment

Drama in the Ballroom

BY **MOLLY RAZZINO**
Staff Writer

On Oct. 13, during week five of Dancing with the Stars (DWTS), Val Chmerkovskiy was suspended after posting a statement online about a disagreement between his wife Jenna Johnson and judge Carrie-Ann Inaba.

Inaba and Johnson disagreed on a call made about an illegal lift in her dance, and also that Johnson needs to add more content to her dances.



Instagram, @valentin

Val Chmerkovski and his partner on Dancing With The Stars, Jenna Dewan rehersing together for their Paso Doble.

After the episode, Chmerkovskiy posted on his TikTok, "You almost saw Fresh Prince enter the ballroom last night," referencing Will Smith and Chris Rock at the 2022 Academy Awards.

On March 27, 2022 at the Academy Awards, Rock made a joke during his speech about Smith's wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, comparing her to GI Jane. Smith went up on stage, slapped Rock, and while returning to his seat, yelled, "keep my wife's name out of your mouth."

Later, Smith apologized on stage during his acceptance speech, and after the show ended, he issued a written apology to Rock. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences later had Smith give up his membership and gave him a ten-year ban from all events and programs starting April 8, 2022.

Chmerkovskiy's message gained attention on social media, from his fanbase and the fanbase of DWTS. Variety said that the post was taken down quickly, but not before Inaba was made aware of the comment.

DWTS management decided to suspend Chmerkovskiy for week six. His dance partner, Jenna Dewan, danced with Alan Bersten in his place, who was eliminated in week three.

Junior Kayleigh Lauten believes that although his post was meant as a joke, people should be mindful of what they are posting especially in regards to their workplace.

"I don't think Val should have made the post, but it was taken out of context. I do not think he should be suspended for the week because of it," said Lauten. "Carrie-Ann Inaba was rude as well, but we do have to remember that this is someone's work environment. Inappropriate comments, no matter where you work, are not okay."

For freshman Katarina Carvalho, celebrities have a much larger impact on social media, compared to ordinary people whose posts do not carry as much weight.

"He made a comment, felt provoked, but this was a disagreement that did not have to turn into something huge," said Carvalho.

"Social media fanbases are loyal, so if a public figure comments, their fans will support them 100%. Social media creates a larger issue involving many people, simply because everyone wants to give their input on a situation, or state their opinion, especially if it is a trending topic," said freshman Emily Nazar, a dancer and fan of the show.

Nazar said she believes that Chmerkovskiy was held to basic corporate standards, and although he did not mean for it to imply violence, it was unprofessional.

"Making posts on social media puts it out there for the entire world to see, and if a comment is negative towards something or someone, it can create a wave of backlash thrown at that thing or person, creating almost a cycle of hate," said Nazar.

Dr. Belinha De Abreu, a professor in the School of Communication, Media and the Arts, said that there is a difference between an at-will employee and a celebrity. While at-will employees are censored in what they can say by their company's policies, celebrities do not have that same restriction. Some celebrities choose to be private, while others will speak out on whatever topic they feel passionate about.

Chmerkovskiy later issued an apology on Instagram, saying he had only meant to reference Smith's statement, "keep my wife's name out of your mouth," and did not think about the other implications that could follow that reference.

"He made a threat, and it's not something that should be taken lightly, and I think that when you suspend someone, you hold everyone to the standard with how they should treat people," said Carvalho.

Remembering RJ Mitte

BY **REESE PHILLIPS**
Staff Writer

RJ Mitte, an actor with cerebral palsy (CP) best known for his role as Walt Jr. in the critically acclaimed show "Breaking Bad," passed away from suicide at the age of 34 on Oct. 12, 2026, as confirmed by his publicist.

Cerebral palsy is a group of disorders that affect a person's ability to move and maintain balance and posture, according to the CDC.

Beyond acting, Mitte was a major disability rights advocate. He served as an ambassador and honorary trustee for United Cerebral Palsy, often appearing in classrooms and at events to raise awareness for disabilities and inclusive education. Mitte was also a patient ambassador with Shriners Children's for their anti-bullying campaigns and partnered with Can Do Canines to provide service dogs to people with disabilities.

Mitte inherited The Mitte Foundation from his grandparents, investing in disability inclusion and local art programs in his hometown of Brownsville, Texas.

As a member of SAG-AFTRA, the film industry's actors union, Mitte also served as a union spokesperson, pressing Hollywood and the film industry to be more inclusive.

"I'm one of many people fighting for this type of diversity and equality in film and television. But it's growing. And it's positively growing. And now more than ever, it's game-changing," said Mitte to Fox News in a 2021 interview.

Roger Schulman, a BAFTA winning, Oscar nominated screenwriter and professor at Sacred Heart University, described his experience of writing in the industry before disability representation became mainstream.

"It's taken many years for persons with disabilities to be portrayed first as people!" said Schulman. "The character RJ Mitte played in'Breaking Bad' was inspired by a real person and portrayed by someone who could harness personal experience."

Schulman felt the character of Walt Jr. was beautifully balanced and three-dimensional, unlike before where people with disabilities were generally portrayed as background characters solely for a "diverse tableau or as the hero subject of a tale of struggle."

Audiences find proper representation important as well.

"I don't think the fact that a person has a certain disability should necessarily change anything about the movie or their character," said senior Luke Spinner.

"TV, movies–all of the performing, visual and literary arts–have always been powerful tools for understanding, education and connection," said Schulman. "TV shows can create empathetic portraits that everyone can relate to."

Todd Barnes, a Sundance Film Festival award winning filmmaker and film professor at SHU also believes media and art play an important role in educating people and spreading awareness.

"TV shows, movies and other kinds of popular art shape everyone's world view," said Barnes. "Hopefully, that creates empathy."

Barnes described how the film industry has evolved when it comes to disability representation.



Instagram, @thegiancarloesposito

RJ Mitte and "Breaking Bad" co-star Giancarlo Esposito

"More people are aware that if an opportunity exists for an actor from an underexposed group, it should go to someone from that group if at all possible," said Barnes. "That builds up the talent base and helps future projects get off the ground."

Following Mitte's passing, fellow actors with disabilities have expressed their gratitude to Mitte and how his role in Hollywood changed the industry for people with disabilities.

"If you don't see it, you don't think it's possible," said Ruth Madeley, a BAFTA nominated actress with spinal bifida, to the BBC. "When I was younger, acting wasn't even on my radar. I didn't even think it was an option."

"[Your disability] shouldn't define you," said Mitte in a 2014 essay to the Huffington Post. "I just happen to have CP."

Sports

Paul Pabst, Not So Fast

BY **MARLEY GURMENDI**
Staff Writer

While viewers tune in for Paul Pabst and Andrew Perloff on NBC Sports' new show "Not So Fast," a team of Sacred Heart graduates are helping bring the production to life behind the scenes.

"Not So Fast" premiered Aug. 31 and airs live at noon on Peacock and NBC Sports Now. The show follows "The Dan Patrick Show" and was built to keep that audience watching.

"It's a little bit like the Dan Patrick Show meets PTI [Pardon the Interruption] from ESPN," said Pabst. "It's a two-person show, fast, talking about sports, stuff outside of sports, whatever we want to talk about."



Contributed by, Paul Pabst

The set and staff of the Pabst and Perloff show at NBC Studios.

SHU graduate and sports communication and media (SCM) professor Mario Miranda was offered the opportunity to direct the new show.

"Since I was already directing the [Dan Patrick Show], I was offered the opportunity to direct the new program as well, with both shows being produced out of the same facility and control room," said Miranda.

Beyond his broadcasting career, Pabst serves as interim director of Sacred Heart's graduate sports communication and media program and as its professional development coordinator.

"Part of my job is to help our students get jobs and internships," said Pabst. "When I was able to have a little bit of a budget to hire some people, I went right to the Sacred Heart people I knew because I know what I'm getting into. We actually call it a bit of a pipeline,"

That pipeline includes Jack Cavicchi, Morgan Bedard, Miranda, Dan Gardella, Ray Niver, Rob Heineman, Anthony Surrusco and Dan Raath, all of whom helped produce content for either "Not So Fast" or "The Dan Patrick Show."

Miranda, who also serves as an adjunct professor, has helped create opportunities for graduates to enter the industry.

"It's been awesome working with so many SHU graduates," said Miranda. "Many of them were actually students of mine, and I had the opportunity to be involved in the hiring process."

One of those graduates, Raath, joined "The Dan Patrick Show" part-time after being recruited by Miranda before moving into a full-time role when the launch of "Not So Fast" expanded the show's staff.

"I now work as a studio technician, where I help develop and expand the broadcast infrastructure used for NSF," said Raath.

While Raath works behind the scenes, fellow SHU graduates Jack Cavicchi and Dan Gardella have found opportunities as editors for "Not So Fast."

Cavicchi started part-time with "The Dan Patrick Show" in April 2026 and is now a full-time editor for NSF.

"A typical day for me involves editing b-roll for the show based on whatever event was important last night, such as Monday Night Football or an MLB Playoff game," said Cavicchi.

Gardella followed a similar path, starting as an intern for "The Dan Patrick Show" before being hired as a full-time editor for NSF.

"There is a level of trust I have with everyone that they will be the best at their specific roles as a result of being a Sacred Heart alum," said Gardella.

For athletes reading this article, "we're [the SCM program] a great option for anyone at Sacred Heart who loves sports, loves playing sports, but wants to continue by covering sports," said Pabst.

The growing number of SHU graduates working in professional sports broadcasting reflects the vision behind the sports communication and media program.

"We want to flood the industry with SHU graduates," said Pabst. "It's working, it's happening."

Men's Ice Hockey Win Against Ohio State

BY **OLIVIA FIUMARA**
Staff Writer

The Sacred Heart men's hockey team earned its second win over a Big Ten program, defeating Ohio State 5-3 on Friday, Oct. 16, at Martire Family Arena.

"It was honestly a surreal feeling. Being at Ohio State last year and then coming to Sacred Heart, there's been a lot of change in my life over the past few months. I think sometimes you don't really understand why things happen the way they do until you look back on them. So being able to share that moment with my new teammates was something special," said sophomore Landen Gunderson, a former Buckeye.

The victory followed Sacred Heart's first win over a Big Ten program, Penn State, at Martire Family Arena on Oct. 10.

"We have a very positive group. It is still early in the season, but you can tell that the guys just want what is best for each other. We got a group that never gives up no matter what the score is and a group that wants nothing more but to win," said sophomore Gavin Bryant.

Sacred Heart kept the game scoreless through the opening minutes of the first period while Ohio State had two power-play opportunities. Junior Aiden VanRooyan scored his second goal of the season at 15:31 to give the Pioneers a 1-0 lead.

The momentum continued in the second period when Ashton Adams scored his first collegiate goal to make it 2-0 SHU. Nick Bernardo followed with his first score as a Pioneer, making the score 3-0 SHU. OSU came back strong and scored two goals in the final 9:02 of the second period, leaving the score 3-2 with SHU leading into the third.

Sacred Heart extended its lead in the third period when Gavin Bryant scored his first goal of the season. Ohio State responded with another goal with 2:40 remaining, cutting the deficit to 4-3.

Landen Gunderson clinched the game for the Pioneers with a late empty-net goal to close out a 5-3 win.

"I still think that we're a work in progress and a lot of phases of our game. I think our power play is showing improvement. We're breaking through, scoring some power-play goals. We were getting good momentum, but we weren't scoring, so I was happy to see that our power play scored some goals, and I think that our defensive play has gotten better," said head coach C.J. Marottolo.

The victory over Ohio State was an important step for Sacred Heart as the team continues to build its momentum early in the season, and a 5-goal victory can hopefully be a building block.

"It was exciting to watch the guys come out with that much energy and get the win. The atmosphere was great, and it was fun seeing the team compete against a Big Ten opponent," said student-athlete Kira Palmer.

Sacred Heart faced Holy Cross the following weekend, losing 3-1 on Friday, Oct. 23, before earning a 4-3 victory on Saturday, Oct. 24.

Athletic Communications contributed to this article.



Jayden Hunter, Photo Editor

Men's Ice Hockey walking out of locker room prior to running out on the ice.

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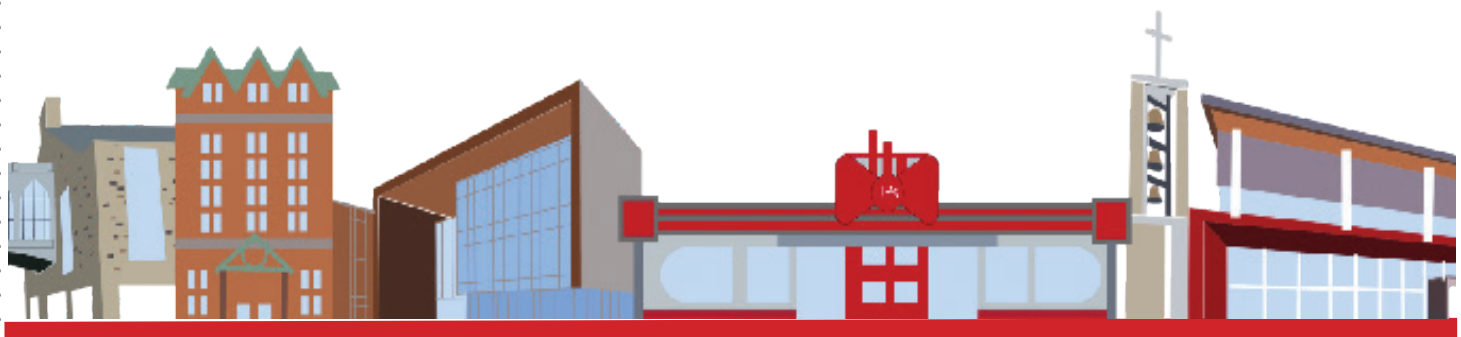
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