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## CHOATE Hosts Live Recording For *THE HAPPINESS LAB*

By **Eliana Li '26 and Deyi Meng '26**  
Associate Editors

"We are recording live, *The Happiness Lab*, from Choate Rosemary Hall!" Yale University Professor of Psychology and the 2023 Choate Phillips Speaker Dr. Laurie Santos said. On February 4, Choate hosted a live recording of *The Happiness Lab*, Dr. Santos's acclaimed podcast that is dedicated to reshaping perspectives on happiness. Accompanying her was Dr. Ethan Kross, Professor of Psychology and Management at the University of Michigan and the 2024 Choate Phillips Speaker, who recently published a new book, *Shift: Managing Your Emotions — So They Don't Manage You*. Together, Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross discussed how social connections influence emotional well-being and shared how we can harness our emotions toward others to improve our own happiness.

According to Director of Studies Ms. Ellen Devine, the idea for the panel initially came from Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross themselves, who were planning to record an episode of *The Happiness Lab* as part of Dr. Kross's book promotion tour. "Because they have both been speakers at Choate before and had such a positive experience, they asked if they could record the podcast episode with our school as the live audience and share some of the work from Dr. Kross's newest books with our community," Ms. Devine said.

Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross began their visit by discussing how our emotions are deeply influenced by those around us. "We can use other people to improve our happiness," Dr. Santos said. "Social connection is such a huge predictor of the way



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Dr. Laurie Santos and Dr. Ethan Kross record an episode of *The Happiness Lab* live during School Meeting. "We feel and it is critically important to understand how to harness your relationships with other people and also when you interact with others to make sure those interactions contribute to fulfillment."

They further delved into the concept of emotional contagion and the ripple effect, where the emotions of others can quickly spread, affecting how we ourselves feel. Dr. Kross explained this idea and said, "We are a social species. We are constantly looking to other people for how to understand ourselves and what we have learned is that we actually catch feelings from other people quite easily."

Dr. Santos elaborated on how one person's negative feelings could affect an entire group's attitude. "When you see people with a gloomy look on their face, you might catch their emotions without realizing it," she said. "But then,

you tend to kind of transmit that [emotion] to other situations and other people, almost like a virus and that can be dangerous."

However, Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross also explained how the ripple effect can have positive impacts on the people around us. "If you roll into your team and everybody's kind of feeling down, you have to remember, that if you place a seed, a little bit of optimism, a little bit of humor, a little bit more positive energy, that seed is going to spread. Even if it's a little force, [other people] are going to catch that and then they'll feed it back to you and the rest of the group," Dr. Santos said.

Dr. Kross also emphasized the key topic of social comparison, a natural human tendency. Dr. Santos shared a 1995 study about Olympic athletes, where silver medalists were found to express

more negative emotions than bronze medalists, despite being second-best in the world for their particular sport. "If you analyze the facial expressions [of the silver medalists], it's not happiness, it's emotions like contempt and deep sadness. There's a really obvious social comparison: The silver medalist is comparing themselves to the gold medalist, and they feel awful because they were so close [to being gold] but they didn't get it," Dr. Santos said. "On the other hand, the bronze medalist is showing incredible elation, huge smiles, sometimes even fuller smiles than the gold medalist. Again, there is a social comparison but this time, they are comparing themselves to the people worse than them. They are thinking to themselves, 'If I performed a little bit worse, I wouldn't be getting any medal at all.'"

Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross used this example to illustrate how comparing ourselves to others can lead to negative feelings, but they also explained how we have the ability to shift our perception of social comparison in a positive manner. "When you're doing these comparisons all the time, they tend to push us in a negative direction ... and we don't feel great about our lives," Dr. Kross said. "However, you can actually reframe those comparisons to your benefit. If you see someone achieving something you admire, as information that you can use to aspire to reach that goal."

Throughout the recording, both Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross provided community members with actionable advice and "social hacks" for improving emotional health through social interactions and anecdotes. Dr. Kross encour-

aged listeners to think of their emotional "advisers" — people in their lives who help them navigate difficult emotions and broaden their perspectives. While we all have people that we can rant to about issues in our lives, sometimes "we find that they feed into the anger and it just makes you feel worse," Dr. Kross said. Instead, he recommended seeking people who listen, demonstrate support, and help reframe situations rather than fuel your negativity.

As the live podcast session concluded, Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross left the Choate community with a deeper understanding of how to manage their emotions and navigate relationships more effectively to enhance their well-being and happiness. "Listening to Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross gave me a whole new perspective on how the relationships we build can shape our mental health," Emma Zeng '26 shared. "It helped me recognize how those connections can really support us in ways that we may not always realize."

Echoing Zeng, Chloe Lee '26 also found the talk to be valuable. "Hearing Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross speak was really engaging for me, as they covered a topic I had not previously known much about. Moving forward, I plan on trying out some of their tips and implementing their advice in my daily life," Lee said.

"Any time the Choate community is invited to think about how our emotions inform our daily life and the different tools and opportunities we have to shape and inform our emotional reactions, it's a great opportunity," Ms. Devine said.

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## PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE UNVEILS THE TRUTH WITH JOURNALISM



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Mr. Patrick Radden Keefe speaks for the Stevenson Lecture.

By **Bella Welch '26**  
Associate Editor

On February 19, the HPRSS Department hosted investigative journalist, author, and podcaster Mr. Patrick Radden Keefe for the annual Adlai Stevenson II '18 Lecture. The Stevenson Lecture series highlights an individual who has impacted society and exemplifies the value of public service. In front of the Choate community in Colony Hall, Mr. Keefe shared his path to becoming a writer and how his work and journalism have crucial roles in public service.

Third-Form Dean and HPRSS teacher Mr. Jonas Akins served

as the Stevenson Lecture Coordinator. Over the years, Mr. Akins has advocated bringing speakers like Mr. Keefe to campus for the lecture series. "In trying to put together the best version of the Stevenson lecture series, we've tried to keep a pretty broad definition of public service. It's not just elected officials. It's not just authors. It's not just scholars. It's a wide variety of folks," Mr. Akins said. "Choate's idea is that public service takes [on] many forms, and in having an investigative journalist, one of the things we're going to highlight is that it's a form of real service. You're exposing a lot of what's going on and taking some risks."

Simeon Levesque '25 served as this year's Junior Stevenson Fellow, where he introduced the work of Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Keefe. "Journalists like Mr. Keefe, who bring light to dark corners of our world, offer something that is invaluable: clarity in a world filled with obscurity," he said.

After receiving degrees from Columbia University, the University of Cambridge, the London School of Economics, and Yale Law School, Mr. Keefe fulfilled his lifelong goal of writing for *The New Yorker* in 2006, where he began investigating and telling stories that hold influential people accountable. "Part of [my work] is seeing a person who has done wrong — who has created incredible harm and has been able to move on — [and] I know I'm blessed to find a way to make [the truth] stay," Mr. Keefe said. "This may sound very modest to you, but if I can be that piece of gum [that sticks to someone's shoe], I feel as though I will have performed a service."

In addition, Mr. Keefe wrote the critically acclaimed book *Say Nothing* in 2018 about the Troubles in Ireland, which Hulu adapted into a limited series in 2024. *Empire of Pain*, published in 2021, tells the role of the Sackler family in the opioid epidemic and

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## KEC Students Attend Environmental Law Conference

By **Chloe Yeung '28**  
Reporter

On February 15, members of the Environmental Immersion Program (EIP) attended the New Directions in Environmental Law Conference at Yale Law School. The conference featured keynote speakers who discussed shifts in environmental law under the new Trump Administration, as well as panels featuring government officials and environmental law professors addressing pressing environmental challenges and necessary policy responses.

This year's conference focused on climate migration, Indigenous rights, and biodiversity law. Many students arrived with limited background knowledge but left with a greater understanding of environmental interactions and more efficient steps to tackle environmental issues. EIP Program Director Mr. Joe Scanio noted that the conference helped students "understand issues from a variety of different viewpoints and understand how that knowledge was being used in the real world."

Maddy Childs '26 was especially intrigued by the discussion surrounding the ethics of conservation and environmental science. "The biodiversity and nature conservation was my favorite to listen to. They talked a lot about what the rights of nature are and the ethical perspective, which I learned



Photo courtesy of Mr. Joe Scanio

KEC students attend law conference. "about in the fall," she said. She also learned that biodiversity was crucial to the conservation of nature. "We tend to be anthropocentric, but what if we took a more biocentric view?" Childs said.

In order to preserve this biodiversity, corporations have to protect organisms like they protect humans. However, with the increasing defunding of environmental protection systems, nationwide environmental frameworks are struggling, and the conference discussed how individuals should begin to take action themselves. "We can't just think on this macro scale; we really have to think about micro solutions [as well]," Childs said.

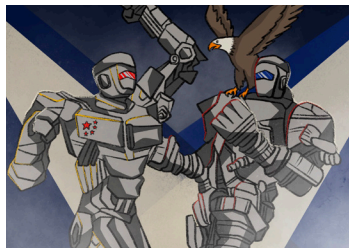
The conference also highlighted the need for interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing environmental issues. "We need collaboration from all fields," Rella Wang '26 said. "The environment isn't just science; it's social scienc-

es, anthropology, literature, [and] law." Mr. Scanio added, "Environmental lawyers are the ones who shape how we interact with the environment, what effects we have on it, and what effects the environment has on people." After all, environmental law is the backbone of environmental science.

Keeping their takeaways from the conference in mind, EIP students are motivated to apply their findings to improve sustainability efforts at Choate. Wang and Childs encourage their peers to stay informed by reading the news and attending environmental conferences to learn more about current environmental policies. "It's so important to stay informed about the current policies because it will impact how we spend the rest of our lives interacting with the environment," Childs said.

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Maia Shah '27, Leah Han '27, Ben Lee '27, and Choate Photos.

### 2025 Dance Concert



April 4-6, 2025

PMAC Little Theater

## CHOATE COMMUNITY DISCUSSES SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS

By **Maia Shah '27**  
Associate Editor

On February 18, Choate hosted its first Community Conversation of the year in Colony Hall, focusing on socioeconomic class. Titled “Everything You Wanted to Know, But Were Afraid to Ask About Socioeconomic Class,” the event brought together students, faculty, and staff to discuss how socioeconomic backgrounds shape experiences and opportunities within the community.

Many members of the Choate community expressed that socioeconomic status has been a difficult subject to address at Choate due to the culture and stereotypes of a preparatory school environment. Sensitivities surrounding the major wealth disparities that exist permeated the entire conversation. Anthony Andrade '27 shared his initial surprise and appreciation for the opportunity to discuss this topic so openly: “In my previous experience, socioeconomic status was always a ‘hush-hush’ topic for the Choate student body. We would never talk about it, even though we knew that some students were on financial aid,” he said. “So, I was pleasantly surprised when I heard about a community conversation on socioeconomic status. It’s a good step in destigmatizing the conversation about class.”

Faculty mediators guided the conversation with questions submitted by members of the community. Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion Ms. Jillian Forgue said, “I am grateful for those who modeled vulnerability and courage in sharing their experiences.”

Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers similarly reflected on the conversation, expressing her appreciation for those brave enough to contribute. “The conversation went very well. People who responded were honest, vulnerable, and respectful. The audience also did a great job supporting their peers and teachers. I was particularly happy to see new community members sharing their thoughts too, as it was their first experience in a Community Conversation,” Dr. Myers said.

As the conversation progressed, the focus expanded to explore the long-term impacts of socioeconomic class beyond daily life at Choate. Students spoke about how financial circumstances influence academic resources, college admissions, and career paths. Some shared how socioeconomic status can dictate the connections their family has. The community reflected on the culture of boasting about family connections for internship opportunities, recommendation letters, and an

overall leg-up in high school.

Though some students and faculty shared, many in the audience remained in “listening mode” for the duration of the conversation. Edward Jeong '27 said, “It was really interesting to hear so many different viewpoints, and I enjoyed learning from people with diverse backgrounds.” During the conversation Wisdom Humalie '27's spoke about his experience coming to the U.S. from Ghana in pursuit of greater educational and athletic opportunities. “I think it’s powerful to share personal experiences like mine. It helps people understand different perspectives and the challenges others face,” he said.

For this School Meeting block, participants left their socioeconomic class at the door and engaged as equals in an open and candid discussion. However, Dr. Myers encouraged the community to view the conversation as merely an “appetizer” to debrief conversations, casual chats with peers, and discussions to serve as the true “main course meal.” Dr. Myers reminded everyone that the goal is to keep these discussions going, both at Choate and beyond. “This is our community, and everyone’s voice matters and deserves to be heard,” she said.

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Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Community discusses socioeconomic class during community conversation.

## STUDENTS EXPLORE IMMIGRATION IN BOSTON OVER LONG WEEKEND

By **Eshana Hora '27**  
Staff Contributor

Over the Winter Long Weekend, a group of Choate students, accompanied by English teachers Dr. Sarah Hancock and Dr. Amber Hodge, explored Boston’s immigrant culture and history. According to Director of Global Engagement Ms. Ashley Sinclair, the trip’s goal was to encourage students to reflect on “the city and the people who built it, whose contributions have [often] been overshadowed or undervalued.”

Isabel Barnes '28, one of the students on the trip, said, “I had never been to Boston before, and I know a lot [about immigrant culture] ... but not really in this area. So it was something that I was really intrigued by.”

Similarly, Sky Hinton '26 shared, “I decided to go because I wanted to learn about immigration and African American history. A lot of the places we were going to sounded like they would be fun and an educational experience.”

From the first day, the trip’s itinerary was packed with events. Choate worked closely with the Envoys organization to try to get the students to explore as much of Boston as possible. Students had the chance to examine Harvard University and its ties to slavery, go on a Chinatown food tour to learn about Chinese immigration, view murals in East Boston, an area with a primarily immigrant population, and even take Haitian dance lessons.

However, organizing this trip was not without its challenges. The group’s biggest hurdle was a weekend snowstorm, forcing them to delay or cancel many of their plans. Additionally, on some days, students had to walk in 20°F weather for hours because of the unpredictable East Coast weather. Nonetheless, the group made the most of the circumstances and



Photo courtesy of Dr. Amber Hodge

Students explore Harvard University’s campus.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Amber Hodge

Students visit Boston’s Chinatown. had the chance to explore Newbury Street and Quincy Market when plans changed.

For many, the highlight of the trip was the Chinatown food crawl, a unique experience where students explored different restaurants. They sampled various traditional and modern dishes while gaining a deeper insight into Chinese immigration in Boston. As Gopika Sheth '27 said, “We were viewing and learning about history while eating through it as well.”

Many students like Anthony Andrade '27 returned with new knowledge and perspectives from the trip. He noted, “I didn’t know

[Boston] was such an immigrant city, and I also didn’t expect it to face a lot of issues as blatantly as gentrification.” Hinton also shared that events like learning traditional Haitian dance styles “brought the group together” and allowed students to experiment with something new.

Overall, students and faculty alike believed that the trip left a lasting impression, with everyone returning to campus having gained a much deeper knowledge of Boston’s rich immigrant history.

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## STEVENSON LECTURE HIGHLIGHTS THE POWER OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

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also serves as one of Mr. Keefe’s prominent works.

Before the lecture, Mr. Keefe held a Q&A session for students in the Journalism course, students and faculty attending the Ireland spring break trip, and members of *The Choate News* Masthead. Q&A attendee Justin Edwards '25 said, “[Mr. Keefe] was very insightful, and he answered our questions honestly and straight to the point. By attending, [I] got an in-depth view of the type of person he is.”

An avid writer growing up, Mr. Keefe realized his dream job was writing for *The New Yorker* while he was in high school. “What I experienced as I started reading *The New Yorker* was the power of words — the idea that you could tell a true story that had a literary seductiveness that would pull you in but also teach you something about the world,” Mr. Keefe said. “You could trust the story that you were being told because it was factual.”

Mr. Keefe also shared how he appreciates researching and specializing in several topics: “The fun of writing these articles is I can parachute into a new story every few months and learn enough to be smart about it and tell the story,” he said.

Part of Mr. Keefe’s work is focusing on confronting individuals in society who have committed crimes, through which he aims to shed light on the facts to share the truth and bring justice. Mr. Keefe spends months interviewing, researching, and curating facts to understand the individuals he writes about, even if the subject refuses to speak with him. “When you’re reading it, I don’t want you to feel like you’re looking at



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Mr. Patrick Radden Keefe shares stories about his career in journalism.

a person five miles away through a telescope. I want you to feel like you’re in the room with them, even if I have never been in the room with them,” Mr. Keefe said. “You find any way you can to get into that person and have a sense of who they are. How do they sound? What kind of person is this?”

Head of the English Department Mr. Mark Gosztyla and English teacher Dr. Mary Roca introduced their sixth-form Journalism students to Mr. Keefe’s novel *Rogues: True Stories of Grifters, Killers, Rebels and Crooks* in the winter term. *Rogues* explores the lives and crimes of 12 notorious con artists and swindlers to understand individual profiles. Dr. Roca said, “[Mr. Keefe’s] pieces were perfect for [learning about profiling individuals]. They’re rich and engaging, so I think the students got a lot out [of] reading them and we had

great conversations around them.”

Mr. Keefe also reflected on the importance and the benefits of maintaining readers’ attention through a long article. “When I sit down to write, all I’m thinking about is, ‘How do I not lose your attention?’ I want to get you over that first paragraph, and then if I can just pull you in, you’re mine,” Mr. Keefe said. “I think that there are real deep gifts, intellectual gifts, emotional gifts, and spiritual gifts in putting your phone away and immersing yourself in something longer ... Occasionally, I’ll engage with a story I’m still thinking about months or even years later. I can talk to you now about things I read 20 years ago that still linger with me. So that’s certainly the ambition [of my writing].”

“[His lecture] felt very hopeful as well, even as he was talking about these big, really difficult problems that one person can’t

change,” Dr. Roca said. John F. Kennedy '35 Program in Government and Public Service member Levi York '26 reflected, “[I learned through Mr. Keefe that] public service doesn’t just have to be working through the government, it can [also] be through journalism.”

Mr. Keefe left the community with advice about the importance of facts and stories. “Remember, the facts matter. Cherish an argument that relies on facts, actually figuring out what the truth is, figuring out how you feel about it, and then organizing it into a story, into a narrative, into a way in which you can kind of persuade other people of your view,” Mr. Keefe said. “Write, tell stories, read narratives, and share them with others.”

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## How Choate Supports International Student Travel

By **Ha Jin Sung '28**  
Reporter

As U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity has increased in recent months and immigration enforcement rules have shifted, Choate has continued to support international student travel. “The safety and well-being of our students is our highest priority at Choate. As [President Donald Trump P’oo’s] administration adjusts policy and practice, we are reading, listening, and learning about how to pursue and honor our mission while following the law,” Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Jenny Elliott said.

Ms. Elliott explained that Choate is “focused on providing information and documentation to community members who will be traveling internationally over break to make sure that they have what they need.” This way, international students will be able to re-enter the U.S. with minimized delays at the border. “As you [will] likely expect, we have excellent counsel with expertise in immigration law who are and will guide us at every turn,” Ms. Elliott said. She highlighted how Choate has dedicated faculty and staff who are well-versed in various travel policies for international students.

Director of Global Engagement Ms. Ashley Sinclair explained that there have recently been more delays and rigorous documentation checks at the immigration borders for international students. “We recommend that students get a copy of their transcript and a letter of good standing,” Ms. Sinclair said. Along with those items,

she advised international students to ensure their passports are renewed before re-entering the U.S. and that students have all necessary visa documents, such as I-20 [visa] forms for F-1 student visas.

Korean international student Ben Lee '27 expressed his worries regarding the new activities surrounding ICE: “The new visa requirements are very strict. There are so many steps we have to go through. We have to make sure we sign the visa every six months, and they will ask very specific questions,” he said. “I’m worried that if restrictions get harsher, not only [myself] but other international students might [become] disadvantaged or inconvenienced while traveling.” Hong Kong resident Fé Yuen '28 agreed, “I imagine many students will think twice about traveling internationally during breaks,” she said.

To mitigate any potential questions and concerns, Ms. Sinclair holds open Microsoft Teams chats when needed to answer any questions that international students and families may have about navigating the traveling process. Ms. Sinclair emphasized how Choate strives to give the most up-to-the-minute information possible and navigate any potential changes that may come up concerning immigration. “If any of the advice changes, we’ll be sure to share that with students and share our guidance,” Ms. Sinclair said. “Travel at any time can feel a little bit scary, but Choate is here to support students.”

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## Can Wallingford Solve Its Affordable Housing Crisis?



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

By **Max Garsten '27**  
Reporter

A lack of affordable housing is plaguing residents nationwide, and Wallingford's residents are no exception. The town is introducing new housing initiatives to find ideal places to build new housing units to mitigate this crisis.

Solving this location problem requires finding plots of land that have the right balance of urban and rural qualities. "Finding these little pockets and turning them into little communities that could have smaller housing for seniors or young families would be a great move," Mr. Scott Amore, a Wallingford resident previously employed by the town, said.

Connecticut recommends that towns allocate 10% of their housing as affordable (houses that rent below \$1600/month) through deed restrictions, but only 4.2% of Wallingford houses have this designation. Deed restrictions consist of restrictions on land usage that the buyer agrees to.

However, Wallingford Town Planner Mr. Kevin Pagini believes this number may be misleading, however, as there is more nuance involved in the calculations behind these statistics. "The state wants 10% of units in town to be deed-restricted affordable, but that doesn't mean that we don't have apartments right now that are considered affordable by the standards," he said. "They have

to be deed restricted to be counted towards that state number." In other words, just because a housing unit is not formalized with restrictions that the buyer agreed to does not mean that it is not affordable, a fact that the Wallingford figure does not reflect.

Mr. Amore described a split of opinions in the Wallingford community. "Some people think we have enough [affordable housing units], and others think there are nowhere near enough," he said. Mr. Amore added, "We are nowhere near the 10% [recommendation], and we aren't making significant progress towards that ... It's slower than a snail's pace because the incentives to build the affordable housing are, 'let's wait for a developer who wants to do it,' as opposed to actively recruiting developers who want to do it."

Mr. Pagini explained that this slow progress in building affordable housing is partially due to the historic prioritization of multi-family housing to balance the development of commercial and housing properties.

Another issue slowing down progress on affordable housing in

Wallingford is finding locations suitable for families. Mr. Amore said, "If you try to build downtown, the biggest complaint is that there's no parking and the traffic is going to be bad, and then if you try to build out in the rural parts of town, it's like 'oh well, we don't want to lose our wildlife or our landscape.' So these two different things don't leave very many options."

Despite the challenges, Wallingford is trying to take the next step in creating affordable housing units at a faster rate. "It's a big project, but really, the big hurdle is getting the zoning in place for these big units to be built," Mr. Pagini said.

The Wallingford Housing Authority (WHA) is also working to create affordable housing. "[The WHA] are all affordable, so we do provide probably the highest part of that percentage of that affordable housing," WHA Director Mr. Ron Canalia said. "The land that we have now was gifted to us by the town, and then we were given money by [Connecticut Housing Finance Authority] to develop that land."

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## RENT THE CHICKEN: AN EGG-CELLENT SOLUTION



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Rachel Fan '27**  
Associate Editor

With the H5N1 bird flu devastating poultry farms across Connecticut and inflation across the country, Wallingford residents are experiencing egg shortages and skyrocketing market prices. Grocery stores, including Trader Joe's and Price Rite, have even imposed limits on egg carton purchases to manage dwindling supplies amid a decimated chicken supply. As shelves empty and costs skyrocket, an unconventional solution is gaining traction: Rent The Chicken.

Rent The Chicken operates as a seasonal rental service, providing families with two to four egg-laying hens, a portable coop, food, and necessary supplies for five to six months, beginning at \$495. The goal is to offer fresh eggs without the long-term commitment of raising chickens year-round.

However, if renters decide to keep their chickens permanently, they can adopt them at the end of the season by paying an additional \$350 to keep the initial rental package, or only \$30 if they want just the hens. The program has affiliate farms spanning across the U.S. and Canada, and the Connecticut branch of the program is operated by Farmer Joe's Gardens in Wallingford, making it easily accessible to residents.

"It's a great way for people to experience backyard chickens without the stress of figuring everything out on their own," Rent The Chicken Co-founder Ms. Jenn Tompkins said. Farmer Joe's Gardens Owner Mr. Joe DeFrancesco emphasized how simple chicken care can be. "It only takes about 10-15 minutes a day to feed them, give them water, and check on them," he said. "But most people find themselves spending much more time just watching them because it's so relaxing."

In response to the growing demand for fresh and locally sourced food, Rent The Chicken allows families to rent egg-laying hens for the season and collect fresh eggs straight from their backyard. "My husband and I started Rent The Chicken over a decade ago as a way to help people bring a food source

closer to their table," Ms. Tompkins said. "We never imagined it would grow into what it is today, but the demand keeps increasing — especially in times like this."

Despite concerns about bird flu, Rent The Chicken ensures that all hens are healthy and well-monitored. According to Mr. DeFrancesco, the chickens are "raised in controlled environments and kept separate from wild birds, reducing any risk of disease transmission."

Beyond fresh eggs, Rent The Chicken has introduced backyard farming to many families. For renters, it's a hands-on way to educate their children about responsibility and sustainability. Parents have shared that their kids love caring for the chickens, naming them, and watching them grow. "It's amazing how quickly people form a bond with their hens. For a lot of families, it starts as a fun experiment, but it turns into a daily routine they look forward to," Mr. DeFrancesco said.

The program has also helped strengthen communities, with neighbors bonding over their shared experience of raising hens. "We've had renters tell us they didn't even know kids lived in their neighborhood until they got chickens," Ms. Tompkins added. "Suddenly, all the local kids wanted to come over and see them!"

With egg shortages driving up prices and emptying store shelves, Rent The Chicken has become a reliable way for families to secure fresh eggs at home. More people are turning to the program for a steady food source and to escape the unpredictability of grocery store shortages. "Every time there's an egg shortage, we see more families interested in renting chickens," Mr. DeFrancesco said. "It gives them peace of mind."

As demand increases, Rent The Chicken plans to introduce more hands-on educational opportunities to ensure that backyard farming remains an accessible option for years to come. "We started this to help families bring a food source closer to home, and we're excited to see how many more people we can reach," Ms. Tompkins said.

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## WALLINGFORD SCHOOLS RESPOND TO NEW IMMIGRATION POLICY

By **Ava Hult-Falk '27**  
Staff Contributor

Since taking office in January, President Donald Trump P'oo's administration has introduced a series of immigration policies that could significantly impact K-12 schools across the United States.

One of the administration's most notable acts so far is an executive order titled "Protecting the American People Against Invasion," which directs Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to increase efforts to identify, detain, and deport undocumented immigrants.

This order includes provisions for increasing ICE presence in communities, with potential operations taking place in schools. Additionally, the Trump Administration has revoked previous guidelines restricting immigration enforcement actions in so-called "sensitive locations," such as schools and places of worship, allowing ICE agents to conduct operations on school grounds.

The Laken Riley Act, signed into law on January 29, which grants federal authorities expanded powers to detain undocumented immigrants accused of certain crimes even before a conviction,



Photo by Sabrina Liu '28/The Choate News

Photo of Wallingford Public School Moses Y. Beach. has also served as a significantly impactful policy. These changes have caused concern for families and school officials as they raise the possibility of immigration raids occurring inside educational spaces.

Wallingford Public Schools have reassured families that their students will continue to be safe and supported, regardless of their immigration status. On January 28, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Danielle Belizzi's office sent a letter to Wallingford families, reaffirming the district's commitment to maintaining a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

The letter stressed that schools are protected spaces where ICE agents cannot enter, nor access student records without proper legal authorization because of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy

Act (FERPA). "We want to reassure you that our schools are safe spaces for all students, regardless of immigration status," Ms. Belizzi wrote.

Wallingford Public Schools have created clear protocols for staff to follow if ICE agents visit schools. These protocols are designed to protect their students' rights while complying with federal laws.

The Wallingford district has also published a collection of resources to help families navigate their fear and uncertainty, including articles covering updated emergency contact information and the Connecticut American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU)'s "Know Your Rights" guide. Ms. Belizzi emphasized how crucial it is for families to have at least two emergency contacts, which can

be parents, guardians, or trusted adults, listed for their students.

While the federal policy changes could potentially incite fear around ICE enforcement in schools, Wallingford Public Schools remain dedicated to ensuring that all students, regardless of immigration status, feel safe attending school.

The district's proactive approach aims to mitigate these fears by reinforcing student privacy protections and offering concrete support to families. "We are committed to maintaining the trust and partnership of our families. Together, we will continue to ensure that our schools are where every student can learn, grow, and thrive," Ms. Belizzi said.

As federal immigration policies continue to shift, school districts around the country must respond and address their community's concerns. Wallingford's approach to the new ICE policy shows how schools nationwide can protect student privacy, provide resources to families, and take a proactive stance to ensure every student has the opportunity to learn in a safe and supportive environment.

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## Shining Light on Truth at the New Haven Museum

By **Reid Bock '27**  
Staff Contributor

The New Haven Museum's latest exhibit, *Shining Light on Truth: New Haven, Yale, and Slavery*, has captivated community interest since its opening on February 16, 2024. This groundbreaking exhibit, which ran until March 1, 2025, explored the essential role enslaved and free Black people played in the development of New Haven and Yale University.

In celebration of Black History Month, the exhibit presented key findings from the Yale and Slavery Research Project. The goal was to highlight histories preserved in archives, both in Yale and in the town of New Haven, for over three centuries and to elevate the stories of those historically omitted.

Director of Learning at the New Haven Museum Ms. Joana Steinberg shared insights on the exhibit's impact. "Since it's been up from February ... we saw over 11,000 people in the museum. There's been a tremendous amount of impact, and people

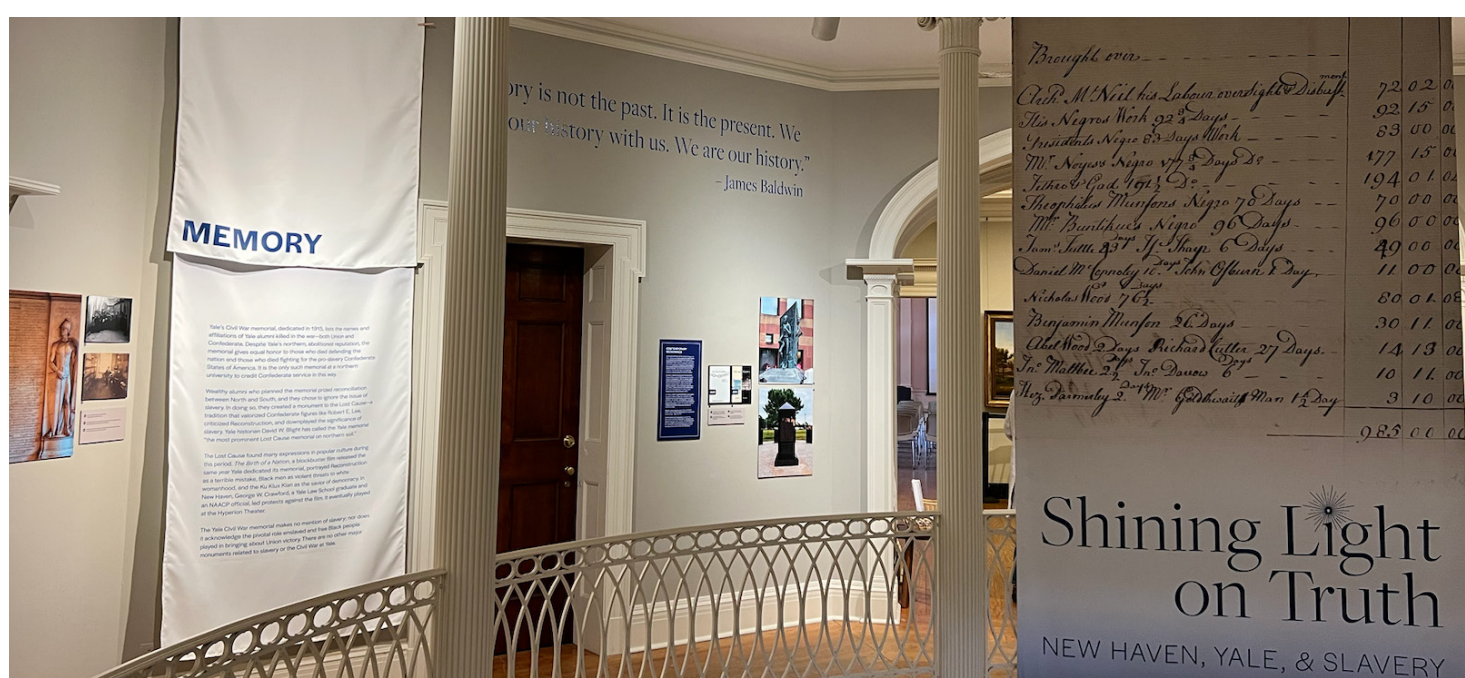


Photo Courtesy of Yale Daily News

Outside *Shining Light on Truth* exhibit.

were really interested to learn about this groundbreaking research that's really centered the stories of enslaved people and New Haven's free Black communities," she said.

The exhibit featured several notable showcases, including an "1831 College Room" that contained framed portraits and

biographical information of the first 224 known Black students to attend Yale University.

Ms. Steinberg also emphasized the educational value of the exhibit. "I teach on a daily basis in this exhibit, and I've worked with New Haven schools and schools from across the state of Connecticut. Many came [to the exhibit] to

learn about Black history as local history [and] an honest retelling of U.S. history as well," she said.

The exhibition's design played a crucial role in engaging visitors. "The design elements have allowed for these pedagogical opportunities because the design supports people in interpreting this history

and the source material," Ms. Steinberg said.

One of the exhibit's most impactful aspects was its focus on earlier Black writers who have often gone unrecognized, such as Jupiter Hammon, Jacob Oson, and William Grimes. Ms. Steinberg said, "Students said that they heard many names for the first

time in this space, and that was meaningful. Names that haven't always come up in the curriculum, and names that are attached to history that happened in our communities here."

Ms. Steinberg believes that the exhibit left a lasting impact on the New Haven community. "In terms of the everlasting effects, I think a lot of students, when they learn about black history, they learn about national figures. But to really see Black history as local history, and to learn the stories of many individuals within the Black communities who created churches and schools and wrote autobiographies and grew up in New Haven or attended Yale — there are so many different names," she said.

After the exhibit concluded on March 1, it left a lasting impression on visitors and continues to spark conversations about racial justice and historical reconciliation. Through historical research, *Shining Light on Truth* worked to honor the past and pave understanding for today.

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### Out with the old...

## THE CHOATE NEWS



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### ...in with the News

## THE CHOATE NEWS



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## POTENTIAL USES FOR THE OLD SAC

By **Elizabeth Burgstahler '26**  
Associate Editor

I remember walking into Choate during the first week of my freshman year and wondering what the building between the Bernhard and Tenney dorm complex and the Worthington Johnson Athletics Center (WJAC) was. When I asked, seniors would either try to tell me it was haunted or that it was just the old and inferior Student Activities Center (SAC).

However, with the recent renovation of the Hill House dining hall, the old SAC needed to be revamped as the temporary dining hall. But what will happen to the space once the dining hall reopens? From being an alternate dining hall to a temporary home for the Arts department, there are multiple ways to maximize the old SAC's utility.

Keeping this space as a satellite dining hall on campus would be advantageous. One of the most commonly circulated issues among the student body is offering lunch solutions so athletes can avoid the hectic dining hall on Wednesday game day afternoons.

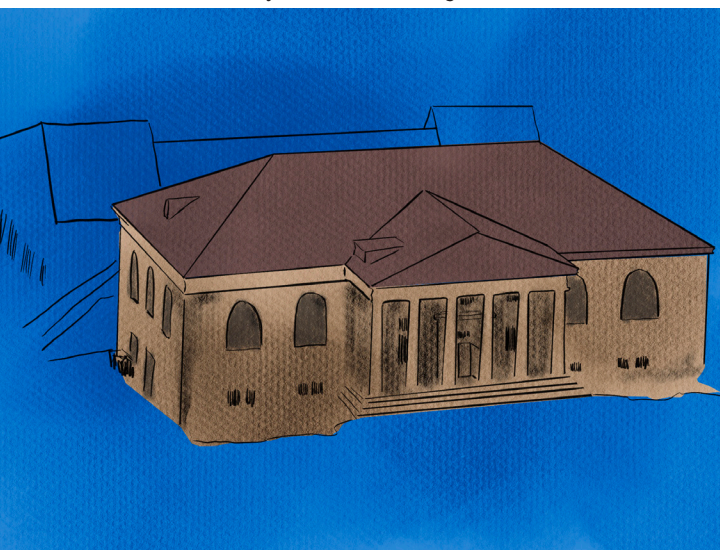
This alternative dining hall doesn't need to be open for every meal during the week, but having another space with limited menus on Mondays through Fridays can solve two problems. Athletes with tight schedules on Wednesdays have a dining option closer to the WJAC that would most likely have

less crowding, allowing them a smoother dining experience before leaving for away games. Along with serving as another dining option, the old SAC could also be a great space to have grab-and-go bags ready for these athletes and other busy students throughout the week.

The old SAC should be a multipurpose space. When other buildings around campus need to be renovated and closed, this space can fill those temporarily missing roles. For example, after the dining hall renovation and Carr Hall's completion, the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) will be renovated, and the School will need to find a temporary space for the theater and visual arts programs. The old SAC could alternatively be used by the Choate Arts department, utilizing the space for classes and rehearsals alike. Similar to the layout of the current PMAC, the old SAC has several floors that can serve different purposes: the upper floor can take on a similar role as the visual arts balcony, and the lower levels can be used as rehearsal spaces for the performing arts.

The old SAC is a versatile space that can accommodate various needs around campus, and it should be taken advantage of by our community while other parts of campus are under renovation.

**Elizabeth Burgstahler is a fifth-former from New York, NY. She may be reached at eburgstahler26@choate.edu.**



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MEANINGFUL STUCO ELECTION SPEECHES

By **Ethan Zhang '26**  
Associate Editor

Criticizing the "poisonous" SAGE food, showing off hidden talents, and making countless brazen, unfulfilled promises — many Student Council (StuCo) election candidates try to transform their speech into a theatrical performance and do anything to stand out and garner votes. Often, these strategies succeed. Nonetheless, the student body has the responsibility to see through these theatrics and vote for the most qualified candidate, not the best showman.

In order to get elected, most nominees do anything and everything to make their speech memorable, potentially disregarding how StuCo candidates should present themselves. While the occasional joke may be justified to hype up the crowd and prevent them from falling asleep, the speeches that decide the future of student voices at Choate should not become a comedy or talent show. These candidates may forget the true purpose of running for StuCo: to make positive changes that reflect the needs of our student body.

Portraying the long-fought struggle to provide paper towels in bathrooms as a revolutionary new election promise or declaring unrealistic school-wide events

bring about false hope, but more importantly to candidates, it brings cheers and election votes. These promises aren't tied to commitment — they will push and fight for show, but candidates never guarantee anything in their speeches. This layer of protection allows candidates to make bold promises without any bind to actually bringing them to fruition. It takes votes away from the candidates who are perhaps a bit less ambitious and more realistic with their promises.

The student body cannot keep encouraging candidates to make empty promises they themselves don't have absolute confidence in. It establishes a mindset that candidates can make bold commitments in order to garner votes and only worry about achieving them after they secure the position. Instead of striving to secure their positions by promising change, candidates should express how they can best bring about this change through their desired positions.

Along with often outlandish promises, many speeches strive to be more entertaining than powerful or meaningful. I'm certainly not saying candidates with theatrical, performance-like speeches aren't strong leaders, nor am I saying they are bad candidates; in fact, they are often extremely creative and pas-

sionate people. However, when voters open the election form, they will vote for these performances rather than a strong, meaningful, and realistic speech from another less theatrical candidate. These performance-like speeches can be meaningful and significant, but it's more often than not they slip into tasteless humor rather than becoming a creative platform to express genuine interest in representing the School.

The fault in this system doesn't lie in the voters of these students, nor does it inherently lie in those students making the empty promises or creating these performances; it lies in the fact that not enough students view Student Council as a serious election. Many students will often vote purely based on how charming they find a candidate, rather than how well they would actually serve on the Student Council.

We should strive to separate personal feelings for a candidate from a genuine opinion on how they would serve in their role. If we don't, students who genuinely care and want to represent the student body aren't given the opportunity to express themselves meaningfully. Just because a candidate's con-

dom jokes made you laugh and you have a clear picture of them throwing candy out to the crowd doesn't mean they should represent the

School and advocate for necessary, student-led change. Again, this is not the fault of the theatrical candidates — they are campaigning within a system that encourages these extravagant performances. We have shown that individuals can be elected with speeches that seem to be funnier and falsely promising than impactful and genuine. The candidates with 'boring' speeches — the ones that don't have some spark, some dirty joke, or surprising promise — are often buried under the memory of a bold performance, yet these students with 'boring' speeches could potentially be even better representatives on the Student Council.

It is our duty as voters and members of the community to recall the significance of the Student Council — those elected represent the Choate community and are chosen to create positive change. The current election system rewards performance-like speeches far too much, and it's imperative that we as voters understand the difference between a funny speech and one that reflects the qualities of someone who should represent Choate's students.

**Ethan Zhang is a fifth-former from Acton, MA. He may be reached at ezhang26@choate.edu.**

## EDITORIAL: JOURNALISM MATTERS NOW, MORE THAN EVER



Photo by Maia Shah '27/The Choate News

The 118th masthead celebrates their final Tuesday Layout Meeting.

By **Fiona Fu '25**  
Editor-in-Chief of the 118th Masthead

The newsroom has always been a paradox: a place of chaos and order, exhaustion and exhilaration. Tuesday nights stretch into Wednesday mornings, punctuated by frantic edits, the hum of laptops overheating on InDesign, and the occasional existential crisis over a headline. This year, we made it our mission to transform *The Choate News* from just a publication into a space — a space where people wanted to be, where ideas flowed freely, where the work of journalism felt less like a duty and more like a shared pursuit.

The 118th Masthead placed our focus on accessibility. We started small: instead of having writers line up out in the hall, we invited them into the newsroom, because they are an integral part of our ecosystem. We wanted *The Choate News* to feel less like a closed-door institution and more like a shared endeavor, a reminder that the glass wall to the newsroom is transparent both ways. Thank you to all of our contributors; this year, we've run out of assignments for writers for every single issue, which speaks volumes about the collective drive and creativity of our community.

Accessibility also meant expanding our reach beyond the print edition of our paper. Our social media presence continued to grow, with our Instagram passing the threshold of 2,000 followers this year. We have heard from the Admission Office that prospective students sometimes start their emails with, "What's Shakin', Bacon?," a testament to the wide-spread reach of our short-form video series. By making our work more visible and engaging in the age of social media, we ensured that our journalism and insights into life at Choate could reach not just our community but also those who might one day want to be a part of it.

We also finally did something that should have happened long ago: we bought beanbags. For years, our copy editors — who spend hours combing through each article to ensure clarity and accuracy — were left to sit on the floor during our meetings due to a seemingly constant dearth of chairs. It was an unspoken tradition, an unintentional rite of passage that left a bad taste in my mouth during my time as a copy editor. This year, we changed that. It was a small step, but it matters — when people feel comfortable, they produce better stories. With this attention to comfort, we saw a newsroom that was not just functional but welcoming, yet also a

place where student journalists could experiment, learn, and grow.

But our biggest achievement was the long-overdue website revamp, a project that three mastheads before us have attempted to undertake. Thanks to the tireless work of our Website Team and the support of Choate's Communications and ITS departments, we were finally able to make it happen this year.

If you've ever tried searching for an article on our old site, you understand why this was necessary — the search function now actually works. Author bylines are visible. Formatting is consistent. It's cleaner, faster, and no longer looks like a relic of the early 2000s. With these improvements, our articles are finally accessible as they should be, allowing students, faculty, and alumni to engage with our work without frustration.

These technical and cultural changes matter because journalism itself matters. This isn't just about making a student newspaper look nicer or run more smoothly — it's about ensuring that information remains free and factual.

When the truth is under siege, when those in power manipulate reality in real-time, and when the foundations of our democracy itself are shaken, we have an obligation to push back. If the official White House account on Instagram can

post an image of President Donald Trump P'oo in a crown, with the caption, "Long Live the King," we are long past the point of complacency. As our 2024-2025 Stevenson Fellow Mr. Patrick Radden Keefe reminded us during his lecture, print media, quality media, and *factually true* media are under fire, and we must do everything in our power to protect them.

Looking ahead, the next mastheads have a responsibility to continue this fight. As we leave this publication to the capable hands of the 119th Masthead, we trust that they will carry the torch with the same passion and commitment to truth; that they will hold truth to power, uplift the voices that need to be heard, and continue innovating and growing *The Choate News* while preserving the integrity of journalism. And to our beloved readers — keep reading, keep engaging, keep holding us accountable. Journalism survives only if we fight for it, and your support is what keeps it alive.

It has been an honor serving as your 118th Masthead. Thank you for reading.

Love,  
Fiona

**Fiona Fu is a sixth-former from Hong Kong. She may be reached at ffu25@choate.edu.**

### Trump's NIH Budget Cuts Threaten Medical Research



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Alexis Lee '28**  
Opinions Writer

On February 7, President Donald Trump P'oo's administration announced drastic cuts to the funding of medical research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), aiming to cap indirect cost reimbursements at 15%. While framed as a government cost-saving measure and an initiative to eliminate "diversity, equity, and inclusion," this decision is a direct assault on biomedical research, public health, and economic innovation. Though NIH funding mechanisms have inefficiencies, such as inequities in funding, workforce issues, and budget cuts, these cuts do not address them. Instead, they threaten to undermine the foundation of American biomedical research.

For decades, the NIH has driven medical breakthroughs that transformed global healthcare. From fluoride's role in preventing tooth decay to vaccines that protect against deadly diseases, NIH-funded research has saved millions of lives. Yet, instead of strengthening this vital institution, the Trump administration has undermined its progress by dismissing the NIH as wasteful spending. Critics argue that this decision is based on a fundamental misconception — or deliberate misrepresentation — of indirect costs. These expenses have

been falsely dismissed as "slush funds" spent on luxury travel and administrative bloat. In reality, indirect costs are the backbone of research institutions' function: they cover research facility maintenance, specialized equipment, utilities, regulatory compliance, and administrative support. A laboratory without electricity, trained staff, or functioning equipment cannot produce novel discoveries.

The consequences of these cuts will be immediate and devastating. Universities and research institutions that rely on indirect cost reimbursements will be forced to adjust budgets by reallocating resources, downsizing programs, and laying off staff. Leading research institutions such as Harvard University Medical School potentially face a staggering \$24 million annual loss. In addition, Connecticut institutions, including Yale University and the University of Connecticut, could lose \$150 million in combined research funding. The damage extends beyond U.S. borders: in South Africa, a promising HIV vaccine trial using mRNA technology has already been halted due to the abrupt funding freeze. This disruption has stalled pre-clinical tests and human trials, endangering a crucial initiative that could save lives.

The long-term damage is even more alarming. As funding dries up, projects will be aban-

doned, and the most complex and resource-intensive research areas will suffer the most, slowing medical innovation. The stagnation will decrease the overall quality of scientific research and even discourage young scientists from entering the field.

Furthermore, this talent drain will weaken U.S. research capabilities and its status as the global leader in biomedical science. Economically, this move will jeopardize industries — from pharmaceuticals to biotechnology — that heavily rely on scientific advancements. According to United for Medical Research, the funding not only supported research but fueled more than \$92 billion dollars in economic activity and nearly half a million jobs.

Recognizing the recklessness of this policy, U.S. District Judge Angel Kelley has challenged its legality, emphasizing the need for a more measured and strategic approach to NIH funding reform. Cutting research funding is a short-sighted attack on medical science that will have far-reaching and lasting consequences for public health, economic growth, and America's position in the world. This is not just a debate about budgetary decisions: it is a fight for the future of scientific progress.

**Alexis Lee** is a third-former from Seoul, South Korea. She may be reached at [alee28@choate.edu](mailto:alee28@choate.edu).

### DALGONA TO DOLLAR SIGNS: ON KOREAN ARTIST RESIDUALS

By **Harry Kim '28**  
Opinions Writer

Every Sunday night, wrapped in silk pajamas, I binge-watch Korean Netflix shows — my way of staying connected to my homeland while living in America.

Korean productions have redefined Netflix's global success. From "Squid Game" to "All of Us Are Dead," these shows break viewing records daily. Traditional Korean games like dalgona, marble contests, and ddakji from "Squid Game" became instant worldwide phenomena. The first season of "Squid Game" alone created \$900 million in revenue for Netflix. *The New York Times* reported that 80% of Netflix subscribers watch K-content, yet Korean artists receive zero commission based on viewership. Every extra dollar goes straight to Netflix's accounts.

On the contrary, American film artists, specifically those in the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) labor union, receive residuals. Since the 2023 SAG-AFTRA strike and the successful demands for streaming residual payments, Netflix must now pay residuals to American artists. Actor wages increased by an immediate 7% and background actor wages by 11%. Since South Korean productions operate un-

der domestic labor laws, however, Netflix is not obligated to pay any residuals to Korean film artists. This disparity demands attention, and Netflix should pay residuals to Korean artists accordingly.

In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, "Squid Game" director Hwang Dong-hyuk admitted: "I chose to make the second season because I didn't make much money [from the first]." After spending 10 years creating one of Netflix's most successful shows, Hwang had to take out loans to support his family due to modest upfront pay.

While Hwang secured a second season, countless artists — especially background actors — left the industry due to financial instability. However, residuals shared equally among all onscreen actors could sustain these essential performers between roles. Properly supporting artists would ensure continued excellence in Korean entertainment, ultimately enriching Netflix's content.

Why should only American artists receive residuals? Every artist contributing to Netflix productions, regardless of filming location, contributes to the streaming service. Netflix's stated culture emphasizes fairness and inclusion, yet this double standard contradicts these principles. This issue isn't solely about Korean artists; all international artists merit equal pay.

The numbers speak for themselves. If "Squid Game" generated \$900 million, even a 1% residual pool would provide \$9 million to distribute among cast members. This could be life-changing for struggling actors while barely reducing Netflix's profits. This innovative business decision would strengthen international support and show Netflix's dedication to ethical practices.

Netflix can solve this issue by extending SAG-AFTRA-style residuals to international productions. It should establish standardized contracts that guarantee equal compensation across all production locations and create transparent reporting systems so artists reach their earning potential. Furthermore, Netflix's decision to offer universal residuals would push other streaming services, such as Apple, HBO, and Amazon, to do the same.

Netflix deserves credit for showcasing international talent worldwide. However, real global leadership demands fair compensation for all artists who create the content we love. Netflix must reconsider residual payments for international artists and fix this unequal system in global streaming as I return to binge-watching the second season of "Squid Game."

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Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

### THE U.S. CAN'T BAN ITS WAY OUT OF THIS AI REVOLUTION

By **Zaki Shamsi '26**  
Associate Editor

Artificial Intelligence was supposed to be for everyone. It was supposed to be the great technological breakthrough that made knowledge, creativity, and problem-solving accessible to all. But somewhere along the way, Silicon Valley decided that AI should be a gated luxury product, locked behind paywalls, subscriptions, and corporate monopolies. And then DeepSeek happened.

This small Chinese startup didn't just release another chatbot — it shattered the Silicon Valley business model. DeepSeek created an AI system as powerful as OpenAI's, trained it for a fraction of the cost, and — most importantly — made it open-source.

That last part is what really scared the tech giants. Open-source AI means everyone is free to use, modify, and improve the code behind the model. Instead of being locked away by a trillion-dollar corporation, the technology is out in the world, available to anyone who wants to build on it. And that's exactly how AI was supposed to work. But instead of celebrating this leap forward, Wall Street panicked.

The moment DeepSeek's R1 model dropped, the market went into meltdown. Nvidia, the king of AI hardware, lost nearly \$600 billion in market value overnight. Investors who had been told AI would be a closed, expensive, billion-dollar arms race suddenly realized that maybe it wouldn't be. Even Sam Altman, OpenAI's CEO, had a crisis of faith. In a stunning rever-



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

sal, he admitted OpenAI had been "on the wrong side of history" in resisting open-source AI. That's a big deal, because OpenAI — ironically — was founded as an open-source nonprofit before transforming into the most closed-off AI company in existence. DeepSeek forced Altman to acknowledge what the AI world had been ignoring: the old business model is dying.

For years, OpenAI, Google, and Meta have poured billions into AI development, running their models on tens of thousands of high-end Nvidia chips. The assumption was simple: to make AI better, you have to spend big. This

belief stemmed from the idea that larger models trained on massive datasets would lead to more capable, generalizable, and human-like AI systems. DeepSeek obliterated that assumption. They built R1 using only 2,000 chips, far fewer than OpenAI's last model. Instead of throwing money at the problem, they focused on efficiency. And that means the future of AI isn't limited to trillion-dollar corporations anymore. Now, smaller startups, universities, and even independent researchers have a chance to build competitive AI models. AI doesn't have to be monopolized. It can be accessible.

Of course, Washington isn't cheering. U.S. officials are already discussing banning DeepSeek over "national security concerns." The argument? The company stores user data on Chinese servers, which means the Chinese government could access it. Fair concern. But let's not pretend this is just about security. This is about control.

Whenever China builds something better, the U.S. doesn't try to out-innovate — it tries to ban it. We saw it with TikTok. We saw it with the ban on Huawei 5G technology. And now, we're seeing it with DeepSeek. If the AI industry were a basketball game, Ameri-

ca's defense wouldn't be blocking shots — it would be pulling the fire alarm when the other team starts winning. If the U.S. wants to stay ahead in AI, banning competition won't cut it.

Here's the irony: DeepSeek's rise is actually the best thing that could've happened to OpenAI, Google, and Meta. Right now, AI companies have no real incentive to lower prices or improve accessibility because, well, where else are you going to go? ChatGPT Plus charges \$20/month. Claude from Anthropic is similarly gated. Even Google's Gemini is paywalled for advanced features.

DeepSeek has forced these companies to rethink everything. OpenAI is already talking about releasing its learning model to the public. Google and Meta will have to lower costs. In other words, AI is about to get cheaper and better for all of us.

Sam Altman once framed OpenAI's mission as building AI that serves humanity, not corporate shareholders. And yet, for years, OpenAI and its peers have treated AI like a high-stakes poker game, where only the richest players get a seat at the table. DeepSeek just flipped the table over.

Yes, there are risks with open-source AI, such as misuse, misinformation, and security concerns. But the alternative is worse: a future where a handful of trillion-dollar companies hoards the most powerful technology in human history. AI should be open, competitive, and accessible, not controlled by a few Silicon Valley CEOs deciding who gets in and who doesn't.

This is how capitalism is supposed to work. Competition drives innovation. When someone builds a better product for a lower cost, it forces everyone to step up their game. That's exactly what's happening with AI right now. DeepSeek isn't the problem — it's the solution. And whether or not OpenAI, Meta, or the U.S. government likes it, AI just became a little more free. And that's a good thing.

**Zaki Shamsi** is a fifth-former from Glastonbury, CT. He may be reached at [zshamsi26@choate.edu](mailto:zshamsi26@choate.edu).

## Novel Ways to Rediscover Reading

By **Deyi Meng '26**  
Associate Editor

Reading constitutes an essential part of many people's lifestyles — whether you're curled up under a fluffy blanket with a murder mystery on a cold winter night, sipping an iced latté in the quiet ambiance of a café fixated on classic Thoreau, or sprawled out on Memorial Circle's sunny grass lost in a world of romance. However, for many students, especially at Choate, our lives are filled with endless distractions and packed schedules, and reading often takes a backseat. So how do we find a way back into the pages?

For Chiamaka Eke '26, reading was a highlight of her childhood and has remained a part of her life on campus, where she enjoys fantasy as well as contemporary fiction. To make time for reading despite her busy schedule, Eke suggests doing so before bed. "I'll probably spend about 30 to 40 minutes or an hour reading before I go to bed, or reading until I fall asleep," she said. "For me, reading is a way to relax and take my mind off of everything. It's something that brings me peace."

Andy Stahlman '26 shares a similar approach. Like Eke, he finds it challenging to balance academic reading with personal reading, especially with demanding coursework and the ever-present distractions of social media. Stahlman makes a point to read before bed, both for enjoyment and as a way to transition into sleep. "[Reading] separates the work I was just doing — like cramming



Photo by Ashley Wu '28/The Choate News

A Choate student reads the (albeit mandatory) freshman classic, *The Odyssey*. For many, finding the right book is the key to rekindling a love for reading. "You do your research, and you find a book that's like, 'Oh, that sounds so interesting. It has everything I'm looking for.' And you start reading that book, then that can open the doorways to so many other things to read," Eke said. She recommended apps like TikTok or Goodreads and bookstores like Barnes & Noble as possible methods to find new book suggestions.

Beibhinn Geaney '25, who enjoys classical literature such as Shakespeare and Jane Austen, emphasized the importance of maintaining an open-minded approach when discovering books. "Finding something that you like, being okay with liking whatever that is, and not feeling pressured to do certain kinds of things puts the joy back into [reading]," Geaney said. Additionally, beginning with shorter books can help ease the transition back into reading. Eke said, "Reading shorter books might help because those

can be consumed quicker. Once you read something and you're like, 'Oh, I really like this,' then you can keep on going."

Beatrice Kim '26, an avid reader who appreciates fantasy-adventure, classics, and autobiographical books, also recommends easing your way into a novel. "Read a few pages a day and of course, pick something that you're interested in reading. I suggest reading a short story because once you're done with it you feel more accomplished and more motivated to read another book," she said.

Students also highlighted the importance of limiting distractions when trying to get back into

reading. Geaney recounted a day when she did not have access to her phone. "I picked up *The Secret History* [by Donna Tartt] and I read the whole thing, cover to cover, because I just got so invested the minute I put my phone down and let myself focus on reading," she said.

Stahlman echoed this sentiment, citing how crucial it is to take initiative and open a book up. "Find a book that you're really interested [in], and then just tell yourself you're going to read this chapter. And even if you don't want to, just get to that chapter and then get to the next one," he said. "It's kind of like you're giving yourself home-

work, and at a certain point, you'll start to forget that you're assigning yourself reading homework, and you start wanting to understand the story."

At Choate, the Andrew Mellon Library has a wide range of books across a variety of genres, as well as monthly displays highlighting diverse topics. Teaching and Resource Librarian Mrs. Nicole Brothers emphasized how browsing various selections at the library can provide many new opportunities for reading. "But if you read something and you find that you're sitting down and you're not liking it, maybe go on to do something else. Give it a try, but don't be determined to be completely committed to it," she said.

Mrs. Brothers also highlighted digital reading options. She said, "eBooks and audiobooks really help because not everyone has the opportunity [to read]. If you don't have the time ... [utilizing] that time with an audiobook can be very valuable."

Whether you're a beginner looking to reignite your love for reading, or an enthusiastic reader adding the 19th book to your 2025 Goodreads list, hopefully these tips will help you in your reading endeavors. So, the next time you find yourself lounging on the couch on a Friday night, resist opening Instagram reels and instead dust off the Mary Shelley classic on your shelf — you might have just novel-ly changed your weekend plans.

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## A SWEET TOOTH'S GUIDE TO THE DINING HALL'S BEST DESSERTS



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Maia Shah '27**  
Associate Editor

We all know that hankering feeling after you've had a long day of classes, and all you crave is a sweet treat to raise your spirits and blood sugar levels. You head to the dining hall to brave the numerous food options, but upon arrival, you suddenly become indecisive about the most important part of any given meal: dessert. Which treat should you eagerly anticipate, and when should you make a cautious beeline for the cereal bar? Here are the best desserts the dining hall has to offer to help you make the right choice and avoid the dreaded dessert regret.

### Brookie (Brownie/Cookie):

Behold the Brookie, a heavenly fusion of a dense brownie and a chewy chocolate chip cookie. The two classic staples create a crave-able concoction sporadically layered with Oreo crumble. The rich, fudgy texture of the brownie alongside the sweet, soft bite of the cookie results in an elite combination: "It's the best of a cookie and a brownie together, and it tastes so good. I look forward to it every time," Waew Techajareonvikul '27 said.

### Ice Cream Sundae Bar:

The ice cream sundae bar is a reliable pick on a hot fall day or in the dead of winter. If you're craving a more customizable option, enduring the long line and sticky

scoops is worth the wait. Whether you simply indulge in classic vanilla with chocolate syrup and rainbow sprinkles or prefer to get creative with macerated strawberry and whipped cream, the possibilities are endless. If you're not a fan of the trifecta, fear not, for the dining hall will sometimes introduce flavors like cookie cream, mint chocolate chip, and coffee! Annie Coody '26 said, "Vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry make me happy, but when they mix it up and serve new flavors, I'm always very excited."

### Snickerdoodles:

There's something uniquely comforting about a Snickerdoodle cookie. Soft, chewy, and dusted with just the right amount of cinnamon-spiced sugar, these classic cookies bring a sense of home. "It genuinely makes my day when I find out it's snickerdoodles in the dining hall. They are hands down the best type of cookie and the best dessert Sage makes, with the perfect amount of chewiness and cinnamon," Maddy Childs '26 said. With an impeccable balance of sweetness and spice, snickerdoodles are the ideal antidote for the inevitable homesickness that strikes a Choate boarding student.

### Double Chocolate Cookies:

English Teacher Mr. David Loeb said, "I have a hard time turning away from any chocolate. If there's chocolate involved, I am immediately interested." Like Mr. Loeb, the chocolate lovers of the Choate community have a hard

time resisting Sage's famous double chocolate cookies. The rich cocoa flavor, combined with perfectly melted chocolate chunks invites indulgence, striking a balance between texture and taste.

### Chocolate Chip Cookies:

Sometimes, you just can't beat a classic. If you're feeling nostalgic or prefer a more reliable option, you can never go wrong with the classic chocolate chip cookie, a delectable combination of buttery cookie dough and gooey chocolate chunks. "The chocolate chip cookies are the best reminder of home," Jennah Idrees '27 said.

### Apple Crumble:

"During the winter, the apple crumble warms my insides," Leruo Chikapa-Phiri '27 said — and it's easy to see why. With its toasty and tart apples, cinnamon-spiced crumble topping, and a side of vanilla ice cream, the apple crumble is a reminder of a decadent Thanksgiving spread and a pleasure you can enjoy all year round.

For boarders and day students alike, dessert is crucial to powering through any study session. So, next time you're in the dining hall, be sure to keep this guide in mind. From the irresistible Brookie to the exquisite apple crumble, there's something for every kind of sweet tooth.

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## HOW TO SURVIVE THE WINTER FLU SEASON

By **Ethan Zhang '26**  
Associate Editor

There's nothing worse than waking up at 7 a.m. on a Monday and experiencing what feels like a double-reinforced titanium wall blocking your nasal passages. Particularly in the winter, when the frigid air is harsh on your lungs, it's easy to catch an unwanted illness. So, to ensure your nostrils are safe from industrial blockades, take some advice from students and Health Center staff on staying healthy at Choate.

In the winter, it can be hard to get enough exercise, especially when the sun sets at 4:30 p.m. and seasonal depression hits. Still, Boys' Varsity Soccer Captain David Villavicencio '26 believes that regular exercise is crucial to good health, especially in the colder months. "I do club soccer training about twice a week, which promotes health and keeps sickness away," he said.

Marinna Syms '25 agreed and said, "I try to stay active even when it's cold. Whether that means going for a walk or doing something indoors, I just like to get moving." So, even if you feel languished and the cozy blankets on your bed are calling your name, try to get some exercise.

The winter air makes staying hydrated absolutely essential. Varsity Swimmer Gisele Yeung

'27 said, "I hydrate a lot and make sure to take my vitamins." Syms also believes hydration and food help her body fight against unwanted illnesses. "I try to rest as much as possible and drink an insane amount of tea and water," she said.

In addition, maintaining a proper and balanced diet is key to helping your immune system fight off ailments. Though that means respecting the food pyramid, for Syms, "Comfort food ... is a must. So, soup, toast, anything really easy [to eat]," she said. Pratt Health Center Nurse Ms. Molly Fortuna also emphasized the importance of a structured diet. "You want to eat foods that are going to make you feel well, such as fruits and vegetables, [and] Vitamin C," she said.

The most effective way to prevent illness is to stay clean and eliminate the pesky germs that sit on your skin. "I wash my hands several times a day, especially when I know there's [the] flu going around," Oscar Hyatt '26 said.

Villavicencio similarly values the importance of personal hygiene. "I think doing the [possibly] inconvenient little things are the big things: washing your hands as well as using hand sanitizer," he said. Scrub with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds to be sure you get rid of pesky bacteria!

In addition, it is vital to wear a mask during high waves of infection to prevent any illnesses from reaching you and to ensure the safety of others. Ms. Fortuna said, "A lot of the time, students are not putting masks on, and I find that that's the best way to prevent getting sick, especially with the flu. [The flu] spreads by droplets through your mouth, and if you don't wear a mask, then you're more likely to spread it to others."

Though helpful in reducing your chance of getting ill, heeding this advice does not guarantee winters at Choate without sickness. When you inevitably fall victim to a cold or the flu, focus on your recovery. "Just listen to your body and take care of yourself; don't overwork yourself," Yeung said. Syms agreed: "Pay attention to what your body really needs, and don't keep pushing through [your sickness] if you feel off," she said.

Hopefully, these tips will help you survive another dry and cold winter. Even if you catch some type of illness, remember to prioritize your recovery. After all, you can't properly finish your biology lab report or history paper with a nasty headache!

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Photo by Ben Lee '27/The Choate News

Bins have been placed around campus with masks for members of the community.

## “All Hail, Macbeth!”: Choate’s Winter Production Hits the Stage

By **Kaitlyn Yu '27**  
Associate Editor

From February 20-22, Choate students dazzled the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) Little Theater audience with the Shakespeare production *Macbeth*. Performing a Shakespearean production came with its own challenges, including Shakespeare’s complex lexicon and creating an accurate set design. The intensity of Lord Macbeth’s descent into madness also involved elaborate fight choreography and intentional acting choices. However, each element of the production coalesced into a seamless execution over the weekend.

The classic play, read in many fourth-form English 200 classes, is a timeless tale about the dangers of power and corruption.

Excited to pick it back up, Actor Alexandros Antonopoulos '26 was overjoyed to learn the play would feature the original Shakespearean dialogue. “[We] have the text as another vehicle, another medium through which we tell the story ... so having that added layer of discovering the meanings and the nuances ... elevates a lot of different themes [of war, violence, and mystery] in the play,” he said.

Director and Acting teacher Mr. Bari Robinson also highlighted the importance of understanding the characters’ behavior through Shakespeare’s text and stage directions. “The characters in *Macbeth* ... strive toward safety and survival,” he said. “I was looking for a character that has a vulnerability ... and is not afraid to show weakness as a means to strength.”



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Leanne Parks '25 with two stage daggers in hand.

Choate’s production of *Macbeth* also featured elaborate sword fighting scenes, requiring the cast to put in significant effort to master the fight choreography. “We had the great privilege of working alongside our fight choreographer, Ms. Rebecca Hirota, as well as our fight captain, Jordan Dodd '25 ... [They] taught us about the techniques of using the swords and the different forms and blocks and strikes for each one of them,” Antonopoulos said. Leanne Parks '25, who starred as the titular character, Lord Macbeth, also mentioned that the cast practiced the fight scenes

every day during rehearsals to master the techniques effectively.

The training was not without challenges, though. “Like any kind of choreography, all of the subtle little movements ... of the swords and the timing of it ... is all very technical and specific, and that was really hard to layer all that in while keeping up the ... energy of the fighting,” Antonopoulos said.

Technical theater workers like Xyla Kiang '26 managed the technology, lighting, and effects of *Macbeth*. “The lighting is so dramatic,” they said. “Instead of using slow fade-ins and fade-



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

A glimpse of the dynamic battle scenes.



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Students practice sword fighting work.

outs to signify a scene change, there’s a lot of sudden black-outs or sudden switches.”

There were lots of other effects in the play that helped enhance the plot and set design. “We use something called ‘Peppers Ghost,’ Kiang said. “There’s fog hooked up under a certain part of the stage, and we can project things onto the fog to make apparitions [appear].”

Kiang also highlighted the effort and precision that went into the tech and set design. “I think a lot of it boiled down to how to properly hook everything together, being careful with each piece

... and there was a lot of attaching heavy stuff to the fly rail to be flown up,” they said.

Costume Designer Bree Miksovsky '26 also highlighted elements of the set design that helped enhance the play. “The designer [Mr. Johann Fitzpatrick '13] had a close connection to Choate ... and [the PMAC] really inspired the brutalist architecture of the set. So they took inspiration from the actual PMAC building while designing elements of the set,” she said.

Mr. Robinson tried to emulate the atmosphere of the play as closely to the original setup as possible,

using the set to limit the distance between performers and audience members. Mr. Robinson said, “So we’re like, ‘let’s make the set also ... really interactive.’ You can slide down it. We use all these different levels ... [to] bring the action closer to you. And I think that’s really important ... because that’s how it was originally intended to be.”

Miksovsky also elaborated on costume design during production. “As the play progresses, Macbeth starts to go insane, and we wanted hair and makeup and costume choices to sort of reflect that. So throughout the play, he gets increasingly disheveled, and that’s seen through his hair as the gel starts to fall out of place ... reflecting his deteriorating mental state,” she said.

Intentional costume design enhanced the effect of unexpected character deaths. “We put Candace Beverly '25, [who plays Banquo], in all white for one scene to emphasize when Banquo dies and gets really bloody ... During the show, Beverly steps off [the] stage, and I am there with a bucket of fake blood, and I cover her in it,” Miksovsky said.

Choate’s production of *Macbeth* combined its timeless Shakespearean language with strong visual and physical elements. “I loved working on the rhythms and the timings with [the cast],” Mr. Robinson shared. “They were such great partners and collaborators ... Those are memories I’ll definitely take with me.”

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## Celebrating Student Talents at Fringe Festival



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

A glimpse of the student performances at the Fringe Festival.

By **Sabrina Liu '28**  
Reporter

From commentary on Groundhog Day to faked death scenes, Choate’s annual Fringe festival features a bit of everything.

This year’s Fringe Festival took place in the Gelb Theater from February 13-14, providing students a space to showcase their creativity. Fringe serves as a unique, student-driven, theatrical experience where students submit original works in the fall, and selected pieces are produced and performed in the winter. This year’s setlist featured student songwriters, spoken word poetry, and, for the first time, stand-up comedy, adding more energy and tonal variety.

The festival provides an opportunity to transform student ideas into reality each winter, offering a platform for budding playwrights, directors, actors, and musicians. English teacher Mrs. Katherine Doak, who oversees Fringe, emphasized its accessibility. “It’s a great place to try acting again if you haven’t acted since middle school or if you’ve never acted before,” she said.

One of the festival’s most unique aspects is its inclusivity — any student can submit a play, original songwriting, or poetry,

regardless of their previous experience. Fringe also offers an entry point into the performing arts for those who want to try something new in a supportive, low-pressure setting. “The audiences are small. It’s not put on the internet. It’s just an exchange between the actors and the audience in the room,” Mrs. Doak said.

Max Leventon '25, who has been submitting plays to Fringe since his freshman year, saw his latest work, *Chess in the Park*, directed by Chelsea Branch '25, come to life on stage. “Fringe is meant for people to take their crazy ideas and put them into paper, and then we see if we can make it work,” Leventon said. He took inspiration from his relationship with his grandfather, who taught him chess, hoping he’d summon enough strategy to defeat the master players of New York’s streets.

The play also explores how neurodivergence shapes the dynamics within a relationship. Because the play is primarily dialogue-driven, Leventon leverages every exchange between protagonists Mira and Landon, played by Lois Kahu '26 and Will Garcia '27, respectively, to explore the challenges of being neurotypical and neurodivergent in a relationship.

Branch reflected on the creative challenges of staging a dia-

logue-driven play while keeping it visually engaging. “Thankfully, I got an incredible script and some great actors, so it was easy to work around it once I figured out how to do it,” Branch said.

The student-led Fringe Board encourages more students to submit their work and take advantage of everything Fringe offers. Whether writing a poignant drama, a comedy, or an original song, the festival provides a chance to see student ideas transformed into performances.

Cora Lloyd '28, who performed an original song called “Summer Song,” hopes more students will sing next year. “I was the only freshman, so it was kind of intimidating,” Lloyd said. “I’ve never performed one of my own songs before.” However, she found the experience rewarding. “It felt like a nice way to ease into the idea of performing [my own songs] live for people,” she said.

Fringe is more than a performance: it’s a launchpad for student creativity. Although this year’s festival has come to a close, Fringe offered a showcase of creativity in the final stretch of the winter term.

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## STUDENTS REACT TO KENDRICK’S SUPER BOWL HALFTIME SHOW

By **Elizabeth Burgstahler '26**  
Associate Editor

Every year, the headliner of the Super Bowl halftime show enjoys weeks of advertisements and acclaim leading up to the event. Rapper Kendrick Lamar’s performance, however, represented more than a 15-minute musical act. His performance directly called out the American political system, racism, and his primary rival in the music industry, Drake.

Students had varying opinions on Lamar’s statement performance, acknowledging its deep connection to the artist’s history. However, questions arose about whether such a political statement was appropriate for a live performance at a sporting event. Some wondered if Lamar had taken the feud too far. Some viewers also struggled to decide whether Lamar’s statements took away from viewers’ enjoyment of his musical act.

Many Lamar fans believed that his performance highlighted the struggles, injustices, and realities faced by the Black community nationwide, sending a necessary message to the American public. Avid Lamar fan Matthew Choi '26 said, “The music was not catchy, but it’s exactly what Samuel L. Jackson was saying: ‘It was too hip, too ghetto.’ Jackson represents the people who didn’t understand the cultural impact of the show.”

Some believe that the composition of Lamar’s performance also added to his overall political messaging. “I liked the idea of having an all-Black dance crew. Their outfits, dancing, music, and choreography led to a bigger message about the American state. It was less about the Drake beef. Obviously, he was performing popular songs, but it was more than that,” Jeremiah Olubowale '25 said.

Other students found Lamar’s direct attacks at Drake too deterring from his repertoire. Owen Morris '26 said, “I thought that Kendrick was just ... dragging out his beef [with Drake] into the performance rather than just putting on the show for the fans.”



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

Beyond Lamar’s charged political statements, the musical content of his performance led to controversy among viewers as well. “I know a lot of people were annoyed because he didn’t play his whole songs, but he’s going to play what’s popular now,” Olubowale said.

Chris Joseph '25 discussed how Lamar’s performance lacked elements of a good Super Bowl halftime performance. “I was a little upset,” Joseph said. “He didn’t play a lot of older music because he was focusing on the new album and spreading his hidden messages.”

Across the rap community, many believe Lamar won the Drake feud when he dropped his hit single “Not Like Us” because of the amount of traction and viewership it received. However, he focused most of his performance on teasing out the single, intermittently dropping attacks at Drake. “It was petty and sort of an unnecessary way to promote because, yes, Kendrick got a lot more popular recently in the feud with Drake, which got him more

money and appearance. That is fine,” Joseph said. “Not Like Us” was released in May 2024, dating Lamar’s performance nearly a year after the feud’s media attention peaked. “Do what you have to do to make your money, but I feel like it comes to a certain point where you now have to do something else. I feel like we’ve gotten to that point, and we have to hang it up,” Joseph said.

Lamar’s followers expected him to give a provocative commentary leading up to this performance because many of his new songs comment on his feud with Drake. “Kendrick doesn’t want to end Drake’s career. Kendrick wants to end Drake,” Choi said.

Despite the polar division of viewer responses across Choate’s campus, one thing is clear: Lamar’s charged performance evoked strong reactions from his audience and led to a controversial ending of a long-lasting rap feud.

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## FIELD REPORT

**Choate Winter Record**  
141 - 77 - 4

### Varsity Games

**Boys' Basketball** (19-4)  
vs. Hotchkiss, 59-44

**Girls' Hockey** (11-10)  
vs. Taft, 3-2

**Boys' Swimming and Diving** (6-2)  
vs. Loomis, 115-70

**Girls' Basketball** (12-8)  
vs. Thayer, 54-47

**Boys' Hockey** (7-12-2)  
vs. NMH, 0-1

**Girls' Swimming and Diving** (5-4)  
vs. Loomis, 81-105

**Boys' Squash** (11-9)  
vs. Andover, 3-4

**Girls' Squash** (6-2)  
vs. Hotchkiss, 1-6

### J.V. Games

**Girls' Basketball** (11-1)  
vs. Loomis, 31-25

**Boys' Basketball** (11-1)  
vs. Salisbury, 65-41

**Girls' Hockey** (9-2-1)  
vs. Taft, 4-1

**Boys' Hockey** (3-10)  
vs. Pope Francis, 1-5

## Choate Squash Gets New Tech

By **Laveenya Seenivasagam '27**  
Reporter

In an effort to elevate the experience for both athletes and spectators, the Choate Squash program has recently integrated new technology into its courts. The addition of TVs displaying live match scores, alongside iPads for digital scorekeeping, has enhanced the overall efficiency and enjoyment of squash matches at Choate. With the new setup, players now have a simpler way of tracking scores, while spectators or families from home can easily follow multiple matches from anywhere.

"For coaches, it's super helpful when we're walking around from court to court and checking who's playing and which games to view," Girls' Varsity Squash Assistant Coach Jenny Elliott said. "[Girls' Varsity Squash Head] Coach [Colin] Mort has been very efficient in helping set [the technology] up, and it makes it easier for challenge matches as well."

The main feature of the upgrade is the installation of TVs on each court that broadcast live scores for individual matches. The screens not only display the score but also indicate warm-up times, show

whether players serve from the left or right, and show point calls for "Let" or "Stroke."

From a coaching perspective, the integration of iPads for scorekeeping has also had a substantial impact on match management. Coaches and players have been inputting scores into digital systems called the Club Locker system to record point-by-point summaries of each game. Now with the new court technology, these scores are instantly reflected on the court's TV screens. This transition has led to a smoother match flow and has improved the organization of each match for visiting teams as well.

Boys' Varsity Squash player Lucas Carlson '26 is fond of the TVs. "It's nice that we can see the scores ourselves as opposed to asking the referees during the game since it's challenging to hear from [within] the glass [walls]. I feel more focused and comfortable without feeling the need to look outside the court every time," he said.

The system has been combined with the U.S. Squash Club Locker platform, which keeps track of players' profiles and match records and updates player ratings. This allows players to easily access their scores and statistics after each match, while coaches can quickly re-

view the scores to identify areas for improvement.

Girls' Varsity Squash player Leanna Robie '25 said, "It's awesome that everything is linked to my Club Locker profile after the matches too, just to keep a record as well." She added, "When I have finished a match, I can check the TV to see how my teammates are doing as well since we're all playing at the same time."

However, this technology isn't flawless, so traditional ways of tracking scores still exist. "We still always have pen and paper as backup. During one of the girls' squash matches against [The] Kingswood Oxford [School], we had to switch mid-game," Coach Elliot explained. "But I think [the new system] is really helpful and convenient."

With continued advancements and innovation in sports technology, Choate's Squash program is flourishing with winning records for every team. These newly efficient scoring systems and TVs have provided an improved and engaging experience for players and spectators alike.

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## SWIM SMASHES RECORDS

By **Rhea Doshi '27**  
Reporter

The Boys' Varsity Swim Team has dominated the season, breaking multiple school records and demonstrating exceptional teamwork and dedication. On February 12, during a home meet against the Hopkins School, the 200m medley relay team composed of Neil Alejandro '27, Ryan Liu '26, Co-Captain Daneel Polakoff '25, and Co-Captain Michael Xu '25 broke a school record set in 2016 by 1.7 seconds.

Following the victory, individual achievements followed, with Liu setting a new 100m butterfly record and Polakoff beating Liu's old record in the same event. After the 100m butterfly, Baz Huang '27 broke the 100m breaststroke record previously held by Polakoff.

Just a week later, on February 19 at The Loomis Chaffee School, a team composed of Polakoff, Xu, Liu, and Dylan Kim '26 set a new 400m freestyle relay record, bringing the team's total to five new records before the Founders League and New England Championship meets.

For Liu, breaking his own 100m butterfly record was a testament to his growth and training this season. "Breaking [my record] again confirms my practices are working," Liu reflected. He aims to refine his stroke efficiency and technique to push his limits further next season.

Beyond personal achievements, Liu values his team's competitive and supportive culture. "We push each other in practice, whether racing [each other] or attending extra sessions," he shared. "Swimming isn't just about times — it's about the experience, the team, and growing together." When acknowledging the mental challenges, Liu highlights the importance of mindset and resilience. "I doubted myself after bad meets, but my teammates kept me motivated," he said. Through race analysis and a constant motivation to improve, he has learned that confidence is just as vital as training.

For Polakoff, demonstrating perseverance was key to breaking records this season. Despite an early-season illness and shoulder injury, he powered through, rounding out the season with three record-breaking swims. At Loomis, he anchored the record-breaking 400m freestyle relay, feeling the weight of his final chance to set a school record. "As I flipped for the last 25 [meters], everything went quiet — I put my head down, hit the wall, and secured another spot on the record board," he reflected. Polakoff is focused on strengthening his mental game. "On race day, all you have to do is focus and execute. The time I will go has already been decided; now I just have to go race to find it," he said.

Head Swim Coach Nolan Silbernagel credits the team's success to their strong camaraderie, passion, and dedication. "Even though records are individual or relay-based, the entire team cheers as if they all broke the record," he said.

Coach Silbernagel also highlighted the team's evolution, noting their increased intensity and fitness. A key moment was defeating the School's athletic rival, Deerfield Academy. "That win proved this year is different. We've reached a new level. Now it's about maintaining it," he said. His philosophy is simple: work hard, have fun, and put the team first. "If you do those things, individual success follows," he emphasized. "When one swimmer succeeds, we all succeed."

Boys' Varsity Swim has had a great season with a 6-2 winning record. The invaluable bonds formed throughout competition, training, and group victories showcase the spirit of these athletes, creating a culture of excellence and passion. Whether in the pool or cheering for teammates from the deck, the team's unity has contributed to a successful, record-breaking season!

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## CONGRATULATIONS ON SIGNING!



Committed senior athletes celebrate their Official Signing Day.

Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

## WINTER WARRIORS

By **Sofia Rubenstein '27**  
Reporter

Whether they are in or out of season, Choate's student-athletes are challenged to stay motivated to train and keep fit during winter break. However, the harsher weather conditions and darker evenings limit athletes' access to training facilities, and balancing work and sports can often feel overwhelming. Nonetheless, with a positive mindset and the right plan, Boys' Varsity Lacrosse player Will Lawrence '27 and Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey player Kate Tortorella '26 shared solutions that have worked for them.

As a lacrosse player, Lawrence has a set workout plan to ensure he stays in shape and keeps up with his training, utilizing his winter break to prepare for the lacrosse season in the spring. "The break is seen as an important opportunity to get ahead by continuing to work hard while others may be least active," he said. Lawrence focused on maintaining speed with footwork exercises and staying strong by lifting weights.

Additionally, Lawrence believes that having the right mentality and drive is a significant factor in being a successful and consistent athlete. "You have to think about what other people would be doing and use that as motivation," Lawrence said. Powering through the frigid months at the School, he believes that taking advantage of the off-season sets great athletes

apart. "A lot of people are going to take the [winter] break off, but if you're still grinding, that's when the differences start to accumulate," Lawrence said.

For Tortorella, time off from school meant investing more time in ice hockey. The timing of winter break, falling right in the middle of her season, meant Tortorella had to keep up with her training regiment. "I approached [the break] like my usual workouts and tried not to slack off." Incorporating goblet squats, backward lunges, and bicep curls, she got creative with various workout methods when she felt she needed more. "I got into doing some workouts in my room. Whenever I felt down or my day hadn't been filled with a lot, I wanted to get on the ground and do a plank while watching TV instead of just sitting around and being stiff," she said. To keep herself motivated, Tortorella shared the same mindset as Lawrence, telling herself, "If I don't [continue working out], then I'll lose all the work that I've put in."

Although training and conditioning in the winter can be difficult, student-athletes have found various ways to stay in shape. By adopting the right mindset and a consistent routine to improve their performance on the field and ice, Lawrence and Tortorella have stayed motivated to excel in their respective sports.

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## Aiming Higher With Choate Archery

By **Suyeong Hahn '27**  
Reporter

Choate's Archery Team is full of resilient athletes who strive for excellence. The team's friendly environment provides students with low-stakes scenarios where they can learn something new without the fear of failure.

For Co-Captain Lindsay Hong '25, one of the most satisfying aspects of the sport is the camaraderie. "When people try out, 90% of them don't know how to shoot. Everyone starts at the same level, and we can all learn and grow together," she said. Hong added that starting with a shared blank slate helped to take the edge off picking up a bow for the first time. "Don't be

afraid because almost everyone will be new to the sport. Even if you don't know how to hold a bow, we'll teach you everything," she said.

Aside from its beginner-friendly nature, Co-Captain Farrah McQueen '25 emphasized that while archery may seem like an individual sport, it is anything but a lone-wolf game. "As we've rotated through different sets of incoming and outgoing archers, I've never felt this support falter," she said. She noted that such an encouraging environment was ideal for easing the fear of the trial-and-error-filled nature of the sport. "[There are] dozens of different variables of getting the perfect shot — some of which are even out of your con-

trol," McQueen said. She also highlighted the importance of having a tight-knit team behind her. McQueen noted how team members were ready to cheer for the "highs" and laugh off the "lows," which was enough to keep every archer motivated, whether their arrows hit or missed the target.

Under the leadership of coaches Mr. Marquis Tisdale and Mrs. Elisa Currie, Choate's Archery Team has continued to grow. "They run a very organized and supportive program," McQueen said, crediting the coaches for the significant increase in the team's opportunities to compete and the steady stream of meets with local clubs. She said, "Some of our archers have even gone on to compete at Nationals by the end of the season."

For the 2025 archery season, Hong and archer Leah Han '27 competed at the 56th USA Archery Indoor Nationals, which was held at Fiskdale, Massachusetts. "Since we're ... competing with archers that we have never encountered, it's a unique experience ... we have to trust ourselves," Han shared.

Whether looking for a new activity to try out or pursuing your sport competitively, archery at Choate has options for all students to aim higher and farther — together.

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Co-Captain Lindsay Hong '25 aims to shoot.

Photo courtesy of Choate Photos