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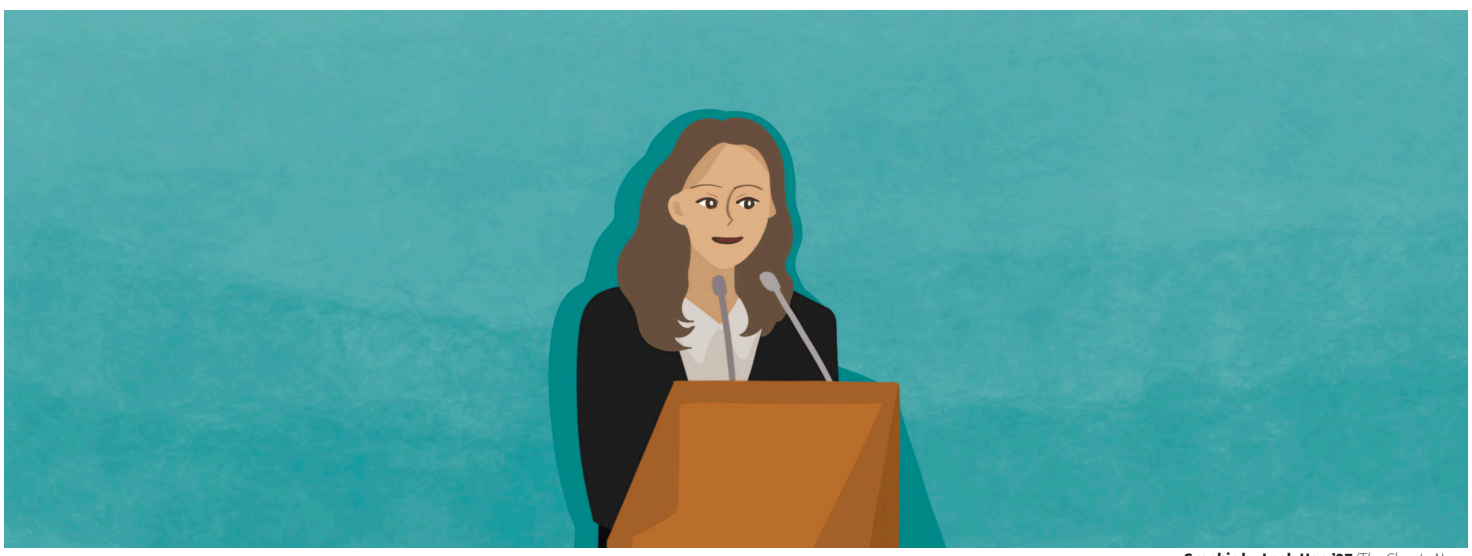
GOODYEAR FINALISTS CONFRONT IMPERIALISM

By **Chloe Yeung '28**
Reporter



Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

On April 8, six finalists gathered in Getz Auditorium for the annual Goodyear Presentations in World History. The event, hosted by the HPRSS Department, featured speeches on new imperialism, a central topic in the World History curriculum.

The Goodyear Speech Competition launched in 2014 and was named in honor of the late HPRSS teacher Mr. Zachary Goodyear. During his 44-year teaching career at Choate, Mr. Goodyear actively incorporated public speaking in his classes as he believed it was a crucial life skill. In that spirit, the Goodyear Speech Competition encourages students to research primary sources, develop original historical arguments, and deliver their interpretations with confidence.

During the winter term, all World History students were tasked to write a speech on a topic related to new imperialism, which was a period characterized by European nations aggressively expanding their control in Asia and Africa. "We have topics relating to resistance movements, cultural impacts on particular wars, and leaders … It's a very big topic, so there's a wealth of sub-areas that students can study," HPRSS teacher Ms. Courtney DeStefano said.

After presenting their speeches with accompanying slideshows during Term End Experiences (TEEs), students could opt in to submit recordings of their speeches to be considered for the competition. Then, a panel of teachers selected finalists to present in front of the entire World History section based on delivery and content. "The content has to do with the strength of the argument, use of evidence, how it's analyzed, and the structure of the argument," Ms. DeStefano said. To narrow the pool, the judges assessed each speaker's stance, projection, articulation, tone, and eye contact (SPATE). After careful deliberation, Kaylin Lam '27, Eshana Hora '27, Aggie McPartland '27, Gopika Sheth '27, Kaitlyn Yu '27, and Sofie Leenheer '27 were selected as the six finalists.

Lam investigated France's use of linguistic materialism during its colonization of African nations, a system in which fluency in French meant social advantages while indigenous languages were suppressed. Inspired by HPRSS teacher Mr. Sam Christenfeld's emphasis on languages during her term abroad in France, "I've been kind of interested in how language and linguistics play a role in history and many other topics… that was what my mind gravitated towards when narrowing down this topic," she said.

Also interested in research related to her personal experiences, Hora turned to her cultural roots when deciding her topic. In her speech, she explored the British suppression of Ayurveda, a traditional Indian medicinal practice, as a means to colonize India. "I chose this topic because I have that connection to culture, and I really wanted to explore more," Hora said. "I still use Ayurveda today in my house."

Meanwhile, McPartland and Leenheer both focused on Herero genocide in German South West Africa."I decided to argue that this was a genocide because in history it's been concealed and pushed as an early extension of the Holocaust," McPartland said. On the other hand, Leenheer traced how a mistranslation of Darwin's theory in German scientific circles gave rise to racialized thinking that contributed to the genocide.

The finalists discussed different topics from a variety of standpoints, yet no matter the subject, they all encountered several difficulties throughout their preparation. Several finalists shared that finding evidence that supported their argument was especially challenging. "[My event] wasn't very well documented… and that was a challenge to navigate," Sheth said. "I remember one time I emailed my teacher, 'I literally can't find anything [on the topic],'" Similarly, while she was searching for extermination orders in the Herero Genocide, McPartland said, "I could not find those at all anywhere."

For some finalists, translating texts also came with great difficulty, though they were able to better understand their sources after consulting others. Leenheer's project depended entirely on Darwin's German text — she relied on the help of the HPRSS Department and German speaker Konstantin Paschos '25 to translate. Likewise, Hora relied on her parents' and grandparents' help to interpret a Hindi text. "I realized I wasn't very fluent," she said. "Luckily, I had help from my parents and translation apps."

Finally, public speaking presented its own hurdle. For many, the competition marked their first time addressing a large audience. "This is the first 'all eyes on you' experience that a lot of students have had," HPRSS Department Head Ms. Kyra Jenney said. As a result, finalists devoted hours to rehearsing and memorizing their speech. "We literally spent that entire weekend practicing," Hora said.

At the end of the competition, Kaitlyn Yu '27 was crowned the winner of the Goodyear Speech Competition. Although only one person left as the winner, Ms. DeStefano commended the hard work and improvement that all competitors made. "Every year, the presentations get better. Students dig deeper, find better research, … we keep getting better and better [and] it's a tough challenge."

Beyond improving their public speaking and historical analysis skills, the students also walked away with a deeper understanding of overlooked histories. "History isn't just about learning about the big world wars or Christopher Columbus; it's about … acknowledging the stories that are brushed under the rug," Lam said.

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Students Explore Identity At CAIS Conference

By **Drew Wolfson '27**
Reporter

"What does it mean to lead with identity?" That was one of many questions explored when 12 Choate students and two faculty members attended the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) Student Diversity Leadership Conference at the Hopkins School on April 6. The students were accompanied by Choate's Dean of Equity and Inclusion (E&I) Dr. Rachel Myers, along with the Associate Dean of E&I for Student Programming and Support Ms. Jillian Forgue. By inviting Choate students to take part in the Diversity Leadership Conference, they engaged in impactful conversations about equity and inclusion beyond their immediate community.

The students began the day hearing from keynote speakers who shared personal experiences. After the keynote, the students split up by grade level into a variety of sessions led by experienced E&I educators. Seventh and eighth graders discussed "Language & Words Matter," third-formers participated in "Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination Unpacked," fourth-formers engaged in conversation focused on "Who Am I & Social Identifiers," fifth-formers talked about "Our Socialization: How Do We Learn What We Learn?," and sixth-formers and post-graduates (PG) discussed "Moving from Allyship to Co-Conspirators."

According to Dr. Myers, who facilitated the upperclassmen, "it was wonderful to see seniors and PG students take the lead in their learning and engagement of E&I topics, just as any classroom teacher gets excited when they see the spark prepared content creates within students." Throughout the session, students brought their authentic selves and shared personal anecdotes that helped to deepen the conversation.

Choate students enjoyed the opportunity to meet students from other schools and engage in meaningful and challenging content. Attending the conference for the second time, Gisele Yeung '27 said, "I went last year and it was a good space to understand more about diversity, and it's also a good space to meet new people, especially from our form."

The students also stepped out of their comfort zones to engage in self-exploration and connection. "We did this 'I am' statements activity," Yeung said. "If a statement applies to you, you stand up. There were some statements where only a few people stood up. That moved me because they had the courage to stand up and place themselves in that category." That vulnerability fostered a sense of shared humanity during the conference, something Liana Alkhayer '28 also experienced. "No matter who we are, even though it may seem like we're a little bit different because we all went through different experiences, at the end of the day, we can always connect," she said. "It felt very accepting."

Through keynote stories, group conversations, and interactive activities, the CAIS Student Diversity Leadership Conference offered Choate students the opportunity to engage with diversity, equity, and inclusion on a broader scale. Alkhayer said, "We should recognize diversity and not refer to it as something that we can use for our own benefit, but to recognize and use it to make everyone feel welcome and to educate others."



Photo courtesy of Dr. Myers

Students gather before CAIS Conference.

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Choate Hosts Annual Spring College Fair

By **Eliza O'Neill '27**
Reporter

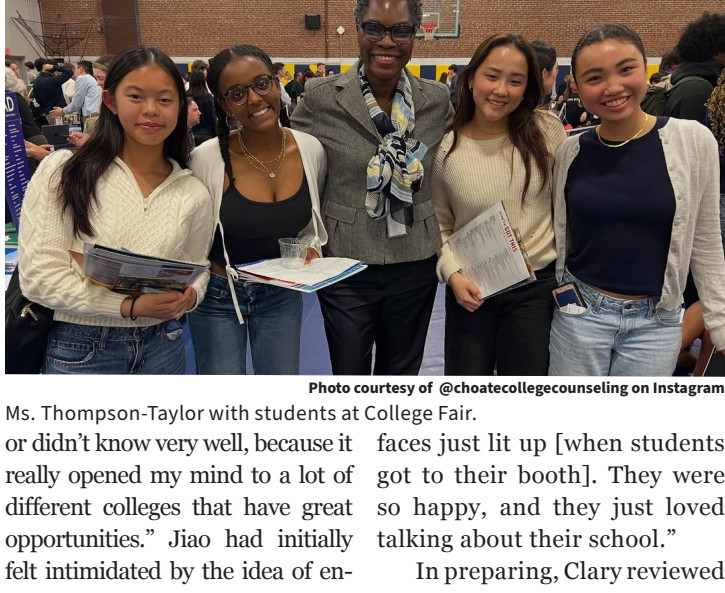

Photo courtesy of @choatecollegecounseling on Instagram

Ms. Thompson-Taylor with students at College Fair.

On April 14, the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC) transformed into a hub of opportunity, as Choate welcomed over 100 colleges and universities from across the country for its annual spring College Fair. Fifth-form students were encouraged to explore the various tables and learn more about each school's unique offerings, connect with admissions representatives, and utilize the experience to refine their ambitions.

Whether it be large public universities or small liberal arts, Director of College Counseling Ms. Marcia Landesman and her team worked hard to cultivate a list of a diverse range of schools and maintain strong existing relationships with schools. Landesman and her team of college counselors explained how the spring and fall college fairs differ, though both rooted in exploration and engagement. "For juniors, it's an opportunity to engage directly with a representative from a college or university," while seniors ask "much more surgical, direct questions" as they are further along in the application process.

Isabelle Jiao '26 praised the fair's atmosphere, remarking, "Having the opportunity to talk to different colleges was a very eye-opening experience." She said, "I really enjoyed going to college [booths] that I didn't know as well, or didn't know very well, because it really opened my mind to a lot of different colleges that have great opportunities." Jiao had initially felt intimidated by the idea of engaging with representatives but quickly realized "they were all super kind and super passionate."

Jiao shared that her curiosity about unfamiliar schools was crucial to give her the full benefit of the experience. She said, "I would be very frank with the representatives, like, 'to be honest, I don't know a lot about this university, but I would love to learn more,' and they were very informative in their response." Jiao also stressed that the friendliness of the reps and the genuineness of the interactions reduced the pressure.

Similarly, Nico Clary '26 described the fair as "very informative and fun." Clary appreciated the demeanor of the representatives, especially those who offered advice on navigating the college process. Regarding their enthusiasm, Clary said, "They seemed like they wanted to be there … Their faces just lit up [when students got to their booth]. They were so happy, and they just loved talking about their school."

In preparing, Clary reviewed the list of schools in advance and came up with questions. He recommends this approach for future attendees: "There were a lot of people in line saying, 'what am I supposed to ask?' So definitely prepare your questions beforehand." However, he believes that he would have benefited from "a group meeting with our counselors beforehand" to clarify individual goals for the fair.

The annual spring College Fair is an indispensable resource and provides an unparalleled opportunity for students. For both Jiao and Clary, the fair allowed them to envision themselves as a part of a wide range of institutions. As Jiao reflected, "It really opened my mind to a lot of different colleges that have great opportunities for me."

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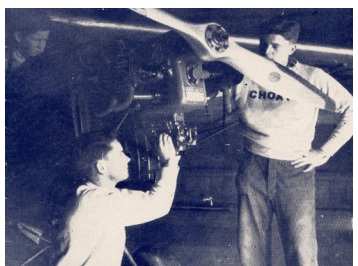



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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Sabrina Liu, Stan Cho, Mrs. Gold, and Connor Zeitlin.



SCHOOL NEWS

A SPACE FOR EVERYONE: CHOATE INTRODUCES NEW CLUBS

By **Harry Kim '28**
Copy Editor

From jamming on the guitar to analyzing personality tests, Choate students now have seven brand-new ways to connect, create, and explore their passions beyond the classroom. Recently, students have introduced a variety of new clubs to the community:

Chemistry Club

The Chemistry Club — led by President Chloe Lee '26, Vice President Deyi Meng '26, and Secretaries Leah Han '27 and Rachel Fan '27 — aims to cultivate a passion for chemistry beyond the classroom and allow students to deepen their understanding of the subject. "If I had a chemistry club when I was a freshman, I would have been exposed to this passion earlier, and I feel like that's an opportunity that we can give to future Choate students," Lee said.

Psychology Club

Founded by President Leilani Gao '26, Vice President Kate Park '27, and Secretary Alexis Lee '28, the Psychology Club strives to provide an inclusive space for students who are interested in the field of psychology. The club plans to invite guest speakers, host fun activities, and engage students in psychology discussions. Their first meeting on April 15 consisted of a short personality test for students to see a snippet of what the club is about. Lee said, "Psychology is found in everyday life, and by coming to our club, it will help you not only understand yourself, but others, and ultimately the world."

Creative Writing Club

The Creative Writing Club is for students who love writing and crafting creative works. Led by President Finn Wikstrom '26, Vice President Grace Yoon '26, Secretary Friday Acuna '26, and Treasurer Adrienne Prater '28, the club aims to be a collective space where student writers can brainstorm ideas together or share different perspectives on each other's work. Prater said, "We wanted to give this kind of space where [students] can be supported in whatever their literary endeavors are." The club hopes to host free write nights, open mics, and lectures for creative writing, poems, and stories.

Choate Talks

Founded by President Victoria DeVito '27, Vice President Honmi Oshe '26, and Secretary Chiamaka Eke '26, the Choate Talks Club provides students with more opportunities to practice public speaking. DeVito said, "These skills are helpful in and out of classes and are a great way to have lasting impacts." The club plans to host student speaker events, organize smaller public speaking activities, and provide a space where students feel comfortable exploring topics that interest them.

Jam Club

Jam Club is an open space for all student musicians to play their instrument and collaborate with others who share similar interests. Founder of the club Odie Adelson-Grodberg '26 said, "I learned how music can really foster community ... I hope this club becomes a completely unpretentious space where [students] can casually play music." Additionally, the club hopes to organize halftime performances at sports games and record Tiny Desk style concerts in their club faculty advisor Mr. Morgan Harris's office.

Music Production Club

Founded by President Andrew Feng '27, Co-Vice Presidents Bowen Jin '26 and Harry Huang '26, the Music Production Club is a space for students to come together and share their talents in music production and composition. It accepts students of any level and hopes to introduce students to more diverse forms and genres of music. Feng said, "There is a big population of student producers who make music on campus. Here, you can share your skills and knowledge. In music, there is no wrong answer." The Music Production Club will help students with musical talent express their creativity freely.

Choate Reads

Choate Reads — led by President Dana Chung '26, Vice President Nicha Tongdee '26, Secretaries Elle Hardy '26 and Joaquin Maldonado Alvarez '26 — is a book club that brings student to read together in a comfortable space. Tongdee said, "[We hope to] create an enthusiastic space for readers at Choate who want to bond over love for literature." Choate Reads will introduce monthly books to foster open discussions for book reviews and create a catalog of favorite books. The club is also planning to work with the Wallingford Public Library to serve the community through reading.

With interests ranging from science to storytelling, these seven new clubs reflect the creativity and curiosity of our student body. As these clubs continue to grow on campus, they will also enrich student life at Choate and strengthen our community. What club will you immerse youself in next?

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Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

Choate Takes Top Prize At HPEC

By **Ellie Porter '25**
Staff Contributor

With a couple syllables to decide when to buzz in and just ten seconds to think, Choate's two economics teams proved they could handle the pressure at a national level. On April 12, students clinched the School's first win in over a decade at the Harvard Pre-Collegiate Economics Challenge (HPEC).

The 2024-2025 HPEC drew student teams from across the country to compete in a rigorous test of economic knowledge and quick thinking. Choate entered two teams into this year's competition: Team One and Team Two. Team One included Arjun Pathy '25, Jason Cao '25, Xiu Lim '25, and Sam Bae '25. Team Two consisted of Lexi Kert '26, Kaylin Lam '27, Gage Hakim '28, and Logan He '28. After a day of intense competition, Team One emerged victorious.

The competition format consisted of three quiz bowl rounds and a 60-question multiple-choice exam. In preparing for the competition, many team members had previously completed AP Macroeconomics, AP Microeconomics, and studied from a comprehensive guide developed by generations of Choate HPEC participants. However, both teams agreed that their greatest advantage was the guidance of the Economics Club's faculty supervisor, Mr. Ted Hartsoe. "I think Mr. Hartsoe is the single best high school econ teacher in the country," Lim said.

While both teams found the multiple-choice exam to be relatively straightforward, the quiz bowl format proved significantly more challenging. Participants had to buzz in before a question was fully read — often after just a few words — and then deliberate quickly to provide accurate answers. "The most skilled HPEC quiz bowl people will be able to hear half of the question [before buzzing in to answer]," Lam said.

Cao noted that striking a balance between speed and accuracy was instrumental to Team One's success. "Once you get behind in the scores," he stated, "You get more nervous, and you're more inclined to buzz in too quickly." Despite the high-pressure environment, Team One thrived through collaborative and analytical skills.

In addition to the competition itself, HPEC featured a Q&A session with Dr. Gautam Nair, a Professor at the Harvard Kennedy School, and a current Harvard student. The session focused on development economics and touched on the challenges associated with rapid economic growth and policy formation. "I think that learning from these preeminent economists in the field, particularly somewhere like Harvard, where there's so many complex economists, is really a great honor and great pleasure for all the members of the team to have this experience," Cao said.

This victory marked not only a milestone in Choate's HPEC competition history, but also marked an invaluable experience for all competitors. Through the exam and quiz bowl rounds, they learned how to balance speed and accuracy, think critically, and be able to engage with complex economic problems. As the Choate economics program continues to grow, Team One's performance will stand as an inspiration and aspiration.

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16th Annual Choate Spectrum Conference

By **Kaz Kousaka '27**
Copy Editor

On April 13, Choate hosted the 16th Annual Spectrum Conference and brought together students from over 10 schools to celebrate the ways LGBTQIA+ athletes continue to break barriers. Under the theme, "Out to Win: How Queer Athletes are Changing the Game On and Off the Field," the conference included workshops, discussions, and a keynote address by radiologist Dr. Jamie Lee Twist Schroeder '99.

Spectrum, Choate's student-led and LGBTQIA+ focused club, organizes the annual conference to support queer students while fostering conversations about identity and ways the community can move from accepting differences to valuing them. A day for students to lead, listen, and learn among others from peer schools, the Spectrum Conference is one of the club's initiatives.

This year's keynote speaker, Dr. Schroeder, is a two-time Olympic rower, a heart and lung specialist, and professor at MedStar Georgetown University. She is also a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. She discussed the intersection of gender identity and athletics and encouraged students to see sports as a place where everyone can be included.

Blake Steremberg '26, Vice President of Spectrum, played a key role in organizing this year's conference. They explained how "Out to Win" was chosen to reflect courage and representation in athletics. "We wanted something that represented a wide variety of people," they said. "

Steremberg also reflected on the dual role sports culture plays in silencing and uplifting queer voices. "More and more athletes are willing to come out of the closet," they said. "That takes courage, especially in a time when political tensions are targeting trans and gender-nonconforming athletes. But we're also seeing people step into their truth, and that's powerful."

The planning and school outreach of the conference was supported by faculty advisors for Spectrum and the Dean of Equity and Inclusion at Choate, Dr. Rachel Myers. "Spectrum isn't about the Choate community," she said, emphasizing the conference's inter-school reach. "Hosting Spectrum is about building a coalition and understanding across school communities. The impact is in the regional conversations we help lead."

In line with the conference's attention to inclusion, the Ruutz-Rees restrooms were designated for all-gender use. While the change was a step towards Spectrum's mission, Dr. Myers highlighted the importance of practical, everyday support for LGBTQIA+ athletes in other areas. "Maybe it's a different fit of uniform or a private changing area," she said. "A small ask could mean the world to that student-athlete."

Reflecting on the day's takeaways, Steremberg highlighted the inspiration from Dr. Schroeder's talk: "She has two doctorates, went to the Olympics twice, and she's a Choate alum. But she also talked about making sports more inclusive for trans and gender-nonconforming people."

In a moment when inclusion in sports remains a debated issue nationwide, the Spectrum Conference demonstrated how inclusive conversations continue to shape athletics and students can help rewrite the rules — on and off the field. Hosting a sucessful conference once again, Steremberg hopes the club can "keep growing, host more events, and continue to outreach for students of all identities."

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COULD YOU GIVE UP YOUR PHONE FOR A WEEK?

By **Rhea Doshi '27**
Copy Editor

We now live in a world where cellphones are more than just phones — they are cameras, calculators, flashlights, calendars, and, sometimes, our escape. They connect us with people thousands of miles away, bring entertainment, cause distractions, and provide answers right in the comfort of our own rooms! For many of us, our phone is the first thing we wake up to and the last thing we see as we go to bed. But what happens around us when we are on our phones?

A recent student-led pilot program invited Choate students to leave their phones with their Dean's Assistant for an entire day. No texting. No scrolling on Instagram. No fast dopamine hits from notifications. Inspired by the recent school meeting conversations regarding digital balance and the well-being of students, this challenge offered a chance to slow down and reconnect with the community around us.

Challenge Success Committee members — headed by faculty advisors Mr. Wes Jenkins and Ms. Emily Osterhout, and student leaders Ana Isabella Bury-Negrón '25 and Adam Fleischman '25 — helped to organize the phone-free initiative with a goal to encourage students to become more present with themselves, friends, and their surroundings. "Well-being was on everybody's mind," Bury-Negrón said. Thanks to student interest and faculty support, the team created phone-free areas, such as the first floor of the temporary dining hall, and the phone-free challenge. "It's been great to see students engaged and even grateful for the chance to get back to the present and live fuller lives," Bury-Negrón said.

Among the students who took part in this challenge was Ayaz Zuberi '27, who gave up his phone for a week. "The most unexpected part of going without my phone for a week was basically just having to carry my school ID around," he said. "Your phone, you always have a back pocket for it, and it kind of becomes your everything. So it was just an extra step to remember to take my ID with me everywhere."

While others might have anticipated FOMO or withdrawal symptoms, Zuberi found the break from his phone refreshing: "It encouraged me to talk more," he reflected. "You kind of get bored without it, so you start reading, doing homework, or having conversations. After a while, it made me want to socialize more."

While Zuberi emphasized the importance of students getting to choose if giving up their phone is right for them, Mr. Jenkins sees value in creating intentional boundaries surrounding phone usage, especially in public spaces on campus. "I think having spaces in which you are expected to have more one-on-one connections is critical to building a community," he shared. "Phones are essential tools in the 21st century, but we've also come to rely on them in ways that don't allow us to grow socially."

According to Mr. Jenkins, while phones connect us, they can also hold us back and act as major disruptions to life. "Students use phones to share videos, photos, and jokes with friends, which can strengthen social bonds," he explained. "But at the same time, I've seen how the fear of missing a text or a post can split students' attention in class. There's a delicate balance."

Mr. Jenkins encourages students to unplug, even if it is required, since time away from phones can lead to better focus and awareness in our everyday lives. "Phone-free spaces are louder — in a good way," he said. "There's laughter. People talk to each other more. And when you don't have a phone to hide behind, you're more likely to strike up a conversation with someone new."

In addition, Science teacher Dr. Chris Hogue's speech at a recent school meeting highlighted this issue at a more existential level. He encouraged students to not just rethink their ties with phones, but to reconsider their awareness and consciousness. "Life consists of what we pay attention to," he said, quoting journalist Chris Hayes.

Phones, Dr. Hogue argues, have completely hijacked this process of attention. Our attention is constantly being pulled away from the real world into an endless scroll. "Your attention has been monetized," he reminded the audience. "People often say that time is our most valuable commodity. But really, it's our attention."

Dr. Hogue urged students to reflect on their screen time and consider what those numbers say about our lives. Would we actually remember the TikTok we watched on Tuesday? Or would we remember a moment with a friend, or a quiet moment of joy? Choate's new technology-aware initiatives encourage the community to reconnect with each other, and with ourselves.

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Graphic by Cora Slowe '26/*The Choate News*

WALLINGFORD REVISES NONPROFIT FUNDING PROCESS

By **Hiyab Mebrahtu '27**
Reporter

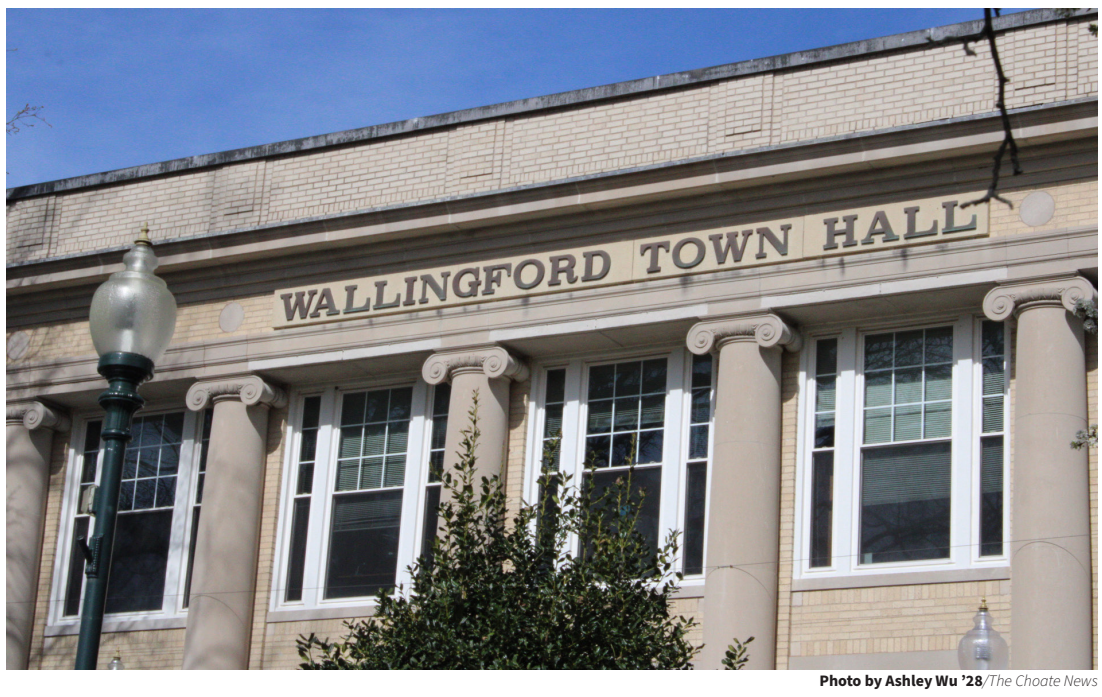

Photo by Ashley Wu '28/*The Choate News*

Front view of Wallingford Town Hall.

After much deliberation, the Wallingford Town Council implemented new regulations for nonprofits seeking funding on March 25. The decision, however, sparked mixed reactions from council members and nonprofit directors concerned about the potential impact on vital community services.

This winter, the Columbus House shelter — a resource which provided aid to Wallingford's unhoused population for nine years — had to shut down due to severe budget cuts from the government. The closure of Columbus House was the tipping point for new policy, prompting the Town Council to reevaluate its funding process. Town Council Chair Mr. Joseph A. Marrone said that the shelter's struggle with funding cuts emphasizes the need for stringency and oversight in distributing government funds to ensure organizations are using town money effectively. "I think we could do more with the money we are currently spending and feel obligated to spend as judiciously as possible," Mr. Marrone said.

As a result, the Town Council has enacted new, stricter requirements for nonprofit organizations that request funding. Previously, nonprofits weren't required to submit detailed financial records and were based on informal assessments. While the former nonprofit funding regulations lacked a clear picture outlining the allocations of the funds, nonprofits now must submit comprehensive financial documents, including profit and loss statements, balance sheets, and tax forms.

Councilor Mr. Thomas Laffin opposed these new rules and argued that the new regulations make it challenging for smaller organizations to get the funding they need to serve the community. "A lot of these organizations have long been serving the community, and there is no reason why they should be thrown several requirement changes after the process has started, as if they are not to have been trusted," Mr. Laffin said.

However, there is also strong support for the new regulations. Councilor Mr. Vincent Testa defended the changes, emphasizing their necessity to ensure that taxpayer funds are used effectively. "I think it was more related to some of the larger contributions we've been making and wanting to be a little bit clearer as to whether it was a prudent use of sound funds to continue to give some of these organizations the amount of money we've been giving them," Mr. Testa said. "We have a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers to handle the tax dollars responsibly," Mr. Testa added. The new regulations are designed to provide more transparency and accountability in using taxpayer funds, which could lead to more efficient allocation and better outcomes. This commitment to responsible fund management may give taxpayers a sense of security.

While some councilors supported the shift, nonprofit leaders expressed concerns about how the changes could affect their operations. Executive Director of Wallingford Center Inc. Ms. Liz Davis reflected on the results of these stipulations.

Ms. Davis believes the new regulations make the process much more "complicated" and said providing an accurate snapshot of the required funds would be more challenging. Ms. Davis mentioned that the documents they must provide represent different financial periods, making it more difficult to explain to the Council. "It could impact us because we may not get the funding we're asking for," she explained.

Although concerns remain, councilors say the policy could be adjusted if it proves too burdensome. They have outlined a straightforward process: "If somebody could demonstrate that the demands we placed on them are making it harder for them to fulfill their mission, we can respond to that," Mr. Testa said. "We can make changes if necessary." This process involves a review of the specific challenges faced by the organizations and a discussion among the council members about potential adjustments. As the town enters the next budget cycle, all eyes will be on how these changes impact the nonprofits at the heart of Wallingford's community support system.

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The Diner Dilemma: Colony or Center Street?

By **Allie McNerney '27**
Reporter

In Wallingford, brunch isn't just a meal — it's a showdown: will you side with Colony Diner or Center Street Luncheonette?

Colony Diner has been in business since 2004 and is known for serving breakfast all day. Part of its charm for many locals and students is its classic American Diner atmosphere. Juju Iannace '27 said, "I prefer Colony Diner because I know the menu so well and always feel so welcomed."

Will Lawrence '27 prefers Colony Diner for its delectable dishes. His go-to order is the Hungry Man's Special: a big ticket item at Colony that he argues cannot be replicated at Center Street Luncheonette. Lawrence gets two cinnamon roll pancakes, two eggs, two strips of bacon, two sausage links, home fries, and toast, all for the affordable price of $20.

Center Street Luncheonette is a smaller, more intimate breakfast spot located in Wallingford's downtown. It is only a short walk from campus, and students can enjoy an affordable breakfast spread. Center Street Luncheonette prices their Bacon Monster Veggie omelette at $16.50. It includes a feast of bacon, onions, mushrooms, peppers, tomatoes, artichokes, garlic & cheddar. Ava Hult-Falk '27, a loyal Center Street fanatic, said, "I love Center Street Luncheonette. It's so delicious, and the quality is the same as Colony Diner, if not better. Also, the staff are kind and the service is impeccable."

Center Street also has advantages in terms of transportation. As the name suggests, the spot is located on Center Street, less than a mile away from Choate and an approximately ten-minute walk from Hill House. On the other hand, Colony Diner is 1.3 miles from Choate and requires a more strenuous journey to get there. Iannace usually opts for an Uber to Colony with friends rather than walking and often pays around $8.50 for a ride there, adding to the price tag of eating at Colony. "Instead of spending money on an Uber, you can spend money on extra french toast or a drink," Hult-Falk added.

Both Colony Diner and Center Street Luncheonette have their own strengths, from huge omelettes and bacon strips to the location and its atmosphere. Choosing between them depends on what you value most: a hearty, all-day breakfast with friendly service or a convenient, cozy spot for a quick meal. Ultimately, both remain popular contenders in Wallingford's brunch scene for good reason.

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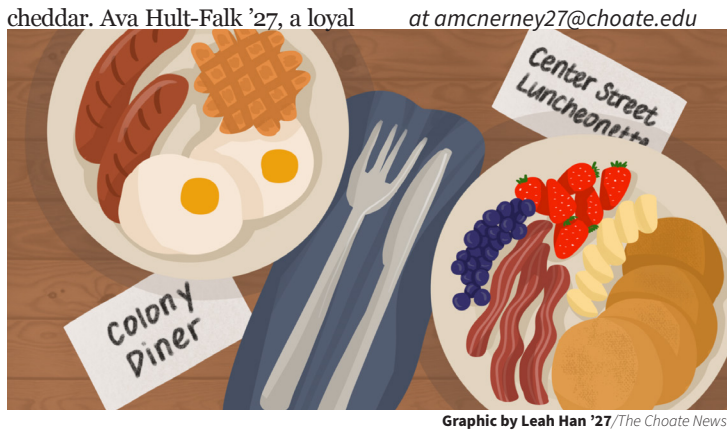

Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

Za-Onn: A Taste of Home for Thai Students

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28**
Copy Editor



Photo By Sabrina Liu '28/*The Choate News*

Za-Onn Thai House Owner, "Aunt Miew."

In the heart of Wallingford, amongst a row of small eateries, sits a cozy restaurant called Za-Onn Thai House. Since its opening in 2012, Za-Onn has grown from a niche spot, popular among a few Thai families, into one of the most popular diners in town for students. Restaurant Owner Ms. Miew Mulpurke, known as "Aunt Miew" by Choate regulars, has created a central gathering spot for Thai students nostalgic for home.

Whether it is a quick dinner after a long day of classes, a celebratory weekend meal with friends, or a quiet moment of comfort during stressful times, Za-Onn is the place to go. Known for its atmosphere, authentic cuisine, and community connection, Za-Onn is a popular nearby option for Choate students where they can feel welcomed and cherished. "Since Za-Onn is very popular amongst students, I try to make the place feel like home as much as possible," Aunt Miew said. Though already offering a large range of dishes to choose from, Aunt Miew takes custom orders for whatever you're craving. "We can cook other dishes that are [off] the menu. You can just ask us, and we are welcome to make it for you," Aunt Miew said.

For Thai Club member Pete Areewong '27, Za-Onn quickly became a staple of his life at Choate because of the food, comfort, and connection when he craves flavors from home. "Personally, I always find myself wanting something that I would at home, and Za-Onn is always the first answer that comes to my mind," he said. Za-Onn also helps Areewong to stay connected with his culture by interacting with the staff in his native language. "It's more than just food — it's a place where you feel understood," Areewong said. "If Za-Onn ever disappeared, I'd probably disappear from Choate too. It's that important to me."

Another Thai Club member, Tim Anantanavanich '27, echoed a similar sense of belonging. He heard about Za-Onn from other Thai students and said it was the first restaurant he ate at in Wallingford. "I keep going back because the food is good. It's also in an accessible location. It's affordable, and lots of other Choate kids go there, so it's easy to get in touch with other people and make new friends," Anantanavanich said.

Anantanavanich's regular order is Duck Basil. His pro tip? "If you swap the duck with minced duck, the dish costs about half as much." As a frequent customer, Anantanavanich has forged a familiar relationship with Za-Onn's beloved owner. "Even though the food isn't exactly reminiscent of home, the atmosphere makes up for it," he said. Aunt Miew similarly enjoys conversing with students familiar to the cuisine. "Sometimes, when students walk past, they come in just to say hi," she said.

For Claire Liu '28, an international student from China, Za-Onn was her first taste of home at school. Her international student mentor first introduced her to Za-Onn's many offerings during orientation week. "I asked about food spots around town, and the first thing he said was Za-Onn," Liu said. Since that first visit, she has become another loyal customer, relying on her usual order of drunken noodles, Thai iced tea, and mango sticky rice to cure her hunger.

What makes Za-Onn truly special is the community it fosters. Aunt Miew watches students grow up and graduate, yet they still return to Za-Onn. In every steaming plate of food, there is a sense of family. This restaurant acts as a quiet reassurance that no matter how far you are from home, there's always a place where you're welcomed to make even the busiest days feel more pleasant.

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Vietnam Veterans Recognized At Town Luncheon

By **Reid Bock '27**
Copy Editor

Wallingford's Elks Lodge, an American fraternal and charity organization, recently hosted a luncheon to recognize local Vietnam War veterans, addressing the historical lack of acknowledgment many veterans faced upon returning home. Thirty-five veterans and supporters attended the gathering from noon to 4:00 p.m..

The Vietnam War deeply affected the veterans who served, many of whom faced lasting trauma, health challenges, and social stigma upon returning home. Around 2.7 million Americans served, with many suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a condition formally recognized after the Vietnam War.

The luncheon provided veterans like Navy Seabee Mr. Bob Wielgosh, who was active in the Navy from 1967–1971 and served in the Vietnam War from 1969–1970, an opportunity to connect with the community. "For years, we never had that camaraderie we have now," Mr. Wielgosh said in a pre-event interview at the New Haven-Hartford (WTNH) News 8 Station.

Wallingford resident Mr. Bertram Martus, a Vietnam veteran who was drafted after college, reflected on the conflicted public perception of veterans at the time: "When we came back, they said, 'Don't wear your uniform ... they'll throw stones at you,'" he said.

Wallingford Mayor Mr. Vincent Cervoni and State Senator Mr. Paul Cicarella joined military speakers in honoring attendees. In addition to recognizing those physically in attendance, Mr. Cervoni and Mr. Cicarelli honored nine Wallingford residents who died in the war.

The luncheon addressed a historical injustice. The Wallingford Vietnam Veterans Monument notes that veterans received "virtually no recognition" for their service. For many, the luncheon was their first formal acknowledgement and a long overdue welcome home.

Ms. Beverly Churchill, a key event organizer, began planning for the luncheon six months in advance. She helped coordinate donations from local businesses like Neil's Donuts and recruited volunteers. "She was a tempest ... donating time, food, everything," Mr. Vincent Longobardi said, the Exalted Ruler of Elks Lodge.

Elks Lodge, which regularly hosts veterans' breakfasts and holiday outreach programs, provided the venue and helped organize the event. Despite challenges, such as last-minute coordination, the event ran smoothly.

Attendees praised the event's focus on recognition. "They just enjoyed the time," Mr. Martus said. "It's crucial ... Vietnam veterans are finally being seen." The luncheon's success has sparked discussions about making it an annual tradition. Though it is not a tradition yet, Mr. Martus said, "We're here to support [the idea]."

The event's execution, from pre-set tables to volunteer coordination, demonstrated how much this event meant to the Elks Lodge. With Churchill's leadership, the luncheon set a precedent for future veteran-focused initiatives.

By acknowledging past sacrifices, Wallingford sets a precedent for honoring veterans, not just with plaques, but with community. As the Elks Lodge's veteran initiatives show, the work continues. For Mr. Martus and others, the event was a long-overdue homecoming: "Better late than never," Mr. Martus said.

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Photo courtesy of Mr. Ray Ross

Vietnam War veterans gather to take a photo at the luncheon.

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The Dorm Dilemma: To Stay or To Go?



Graphic by Eliza Aldrich '27/*The Choate News*

By **Reid Bock '27**
Copy Editor

At the end of every spring term, students complete a form indicating their dorm preferences for the upcoming year. Whether to stay in the same dorm or experiment with a new one is a decision that plays a large role in a student's overall Choate experience. While there are clear benefits to remaining in the same dorm, there are equally large drawbacks to consider.

The most obvious benefit of staying in the same dorm is the development of a sense of consistency and community. Over time, students develop closer relationships with their house mentors, creating a richer and more personal dorm culture. Ian Wu '26, who has lived in Clinton Knight for the past two years, has formed a tight relationship with his dorm mentor, Mr. Jorge Rodriguez: "I know Jorge pretty well now, and after knowing him for such a long time, I feel more comfortable approaching him."

However, staying in the same dorm for multiple years can limit the adults you meet on campus. One of the most unique aspects of boarding school life is meeting new people. Switching dorms exposes students to a new group of house mentors that they would otherwise likely not have met if they had stayed in the same dorm.

Another downside of remaining in the same dorm is the lack of exposure to new experiences. Different dorms offer unique advantages, and by sticking to a particular dorm, you may not be able to fully benefit from the advantages of different dorms. For instance, you may want to live in Hill House to be closer to the Student Activity Center (SAC), or you may want to live in Tenney House or Bernhard House to be closer to the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC). Every dorm offers its own set of advantages depending on your preferences. By remaining in the same dorm, you may miss out on experiencing these perks that living in a different dorm could offer.

Ultimately, the decision comes down to individual priorities. Staying in the same dorm may be ideal for those who value routine and tight bonds with their dorm mentors. On the other hand, students seeking variety and new connections might benefit from switching dorms every year. It's all about finding your perfect fit — because, let's face it, even the SAC's ping-pong tables can get old after a while.

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USC Soak Your Shirt Challenge



Graphic by Eliza Aldrich '27/*The Choate News*

By **Harry Kim '28**
Copy Editor

In recent weeks, the University of South Carolina (USC) #SpeakYourMIND Ice Bucket Challenge has become a viral trend on Instagram. The challenge has spread across the Choate campus, with many, including myself, participating in the trend. However, what started as a well-intentioned campaign for mental health awareness has morphed into a superficial social meme, straying away from its charitable intentions. The USC #SpeakYourMIND Ice Bucket Challenge, to the general public, is largely ineffective and inauthentic.

The trend first kicked off on March 31 with a video posted by the USC Mental Illness Needs Discussion (MIND) club: @uscmind. Club founder Wade Jefferson said, "At MIND, we believe conversations about mental health should be as common as physical health. To help achieve this, we are launching #SpeakYourMIND Ice Bucket Challenge. Every nominee is encouraged to donate, too." The initial purpose of the challenge was to raise awareness about mental health and support the nonprofit Active Minds.

The USC #SpeakYourMIND Challenge is inspired by the 2014 Ice Bucket Challenge, a viral campaign that raised awareness and over $220 million for research into Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)—a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. According to *The Guardian*, Patrick Quinn, the co-founder of the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, was credited with creating "the greatest social media campaign in history," raising more than $220 million for ALS research. This success came directly from the videos, which often included links to donate or a mention of the amount already raised. Additionally, people helped bring ALS into the mainstream conversation, turning online participation into tangible support for those affected.

In contrast, the impact of today's Ice Bucket Challenge is a shadow of its inspiration, lacking clear purpose or measurable outcomes. Although ALS is a relatively rare disease, it was able to garner global attention and awareness, ultimately aiding those diagnosed with ALS through donations. On the other hand, the #SpeakYourMIND Ice Bucket Challenge has done nothing but become a meme across school campuses. The videos rarely mention or reference mental health at all, leaving audiences unaware of the challenge's purpose. Only a few students who participated in the challenge understand or care about the real purpose behind it.

Ben Lee '27, a participant of the challenge, agreed with this sentiment: "Scrolling through my Instagram feed, I saw a bunch of my friends dumping ice water on their heads. They called it the USC mind challenge, but I actually did not know what it was, and no one explained it. So I thought they were doing it for fun."

Compared to the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, the financial contributions from the challenge are minuscule. While the penalty for nominees not participating in the challenge is to donate to the cause, this detail is not emphasized in most videos. Unlike the ALS challenge, most videos do not include links to donation pages either. This has resulted in a lackluster fundraising effort. As of April 20, these penalty donations have only raised a total of $160,000 for the non-profit organization Active Minds.

Additionally, while the 2014 Ice Bucket Challenge brought attention to an unrecognized disease, the current Ice Bucket Challenge's purpose of spreading mental health awareness is somewhat meaningless. Mental health issues are already a prevalent concept among teenagers, and students are aware of the importance of mental health.

Furthermore, the USC #SpeakYourMIND Ice Bucket Challenge is formatted in a way that promotes peer pressure, insulting the importance of mental health awareness, and contradicting the cause the challenge promotes. According to the American Psychiatric Association, mental illness is often caused by stress, social isolation, discrimination, or stigma. Thus, ironically, the format of this challenge to nominate others and pressure them to participate is likely to promote social anxiety.

For instance, on April 13, TikToker @baylee.perkins posted a video of herself crying and complaining about being nominated by her friend to do the challenge, with the caption, "When I see my friend nominate me for the USC speak your mind ice bucket challenge." The post gained over 452,600 likes in just two days. The essence of the challenge is no longer about bringing awareness to mental health; it has become a shallow social media trend for people who want to dump water on their friends.

While the USC #SpeakYourMIND Ice Bucket Challenge may have started with good intentions, its transformation into a social meme has stripped it of authenticity and purpose. Unlike the 2014 ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, the USC #SpeakYourMIND Challenge has had a limited impact in raising awareness and has even been a detriment to people's mental health. If we truly want to support mental health advocacy, we must go beyond hashtags and ice buckets and instead promote donations, sincere conversations, and education.

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It's Time for a Leadership Overhaul

By **Elizabeth Burgstahler '26**
Arts and Leisure Section Editor

While watching my peers assume leadership positions at the School, I have given much thought to the way our student-led institutions, particularly the Student Council, are organized. While the Student Council serves an essential role as the voice for the student body, its leadership structure fails to represent the entire student body. In order to improve the Student Council, we need to ensure that we have the most diverse group of students on the council, while also ensuring that the executives on the Student Council embody the best interests of the school. This means placing regulations on a co-ed lead Student Council, where the gender ratio of the leaders are aligned with that of the School. This way, Student Council is lead with the intention of making change while encompassing the best interests of the entire student body.

Currently, the president is the face of Student Council meetings and has the primary responsibility of communicating with other student-led groups on campus. The vice president, as stated by the Student Council constitution, mainly takes on the role of the president in their absence. Instead of having a vice president who handles excess work from the president, the Student Council constitution should more clearly divide the responsibilities between the two executive officers. If the executive officers share oversight and responsibilities equally, each will have more time to build meaningful relationships with the groups the Student Council is meant to collaborate with — such as Boar Pen and the Student Committee on Programming and Engagement (SCOPE) — and lead with a deeper understanding of the Choate community's needs.

To reflect diverse interests, the Student Council should ensure fair gender representation. For the past three years, both Student Council executives have been the same gender. I believe that it should be stated in the Student Council constitution that each executive officer should be of a different gender. By protecting the diversity of our Student leadership with a gender clause in the constitution, we can take one step closer to creating a council that fully represents our student body.

The Student Council is not solely defined by its executive officers. However, having two executive officers will ensure that the council makes better, more informed decisions, with input from a wider range of students. By having two executive officers of the Student Council who identify with different genders, I believe that people will be able to see aspects of themselves represented on the council. More members of the student body will feel comfortable sharing their needs with the executives of the council, and the executives of the council will have a better understanding of what people in the student body need.

By prioritizing a more diverse Student Council that forms more intimate relationships with other student groups, we will attract more innovative thinkers to push change forward. We will have a council that more fully understands the changes that students want. But even more importantly, we will have a council where people feel more comfortable coming to individuals with changes that need to be made.

When I ask myself what makes a good leadership team, I think about a team that is able to connect with the most students. The leadership teams on campus that are the most successful are able to understand the needs of the student body, even if they don't align with their own needs. By having co-ed co-leaders, there are two main points of contact for students to reach out to with their concerns; each leader will be able to play to their own strengths in order to make the best team possible.

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Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

Graduation Can't Save Kanye Anymore

By **Stan Cho '25**
Opinions Nation/World Editor of the 118th Masthead



Graphic by Stan Cho '25/*The Choate News*

They say to never meet your heroes. Yet, given the unprecedented ease for influential individuals to spread their sentiments on the Internet like a plague, it's become almost impossible to avoid those we idolize. Having access to Kanye West's personal thoughts had once been an asset, giving context to his music and flaunting his bold personality. Yet, as per his unwillingness to address the absurdity of his offensive public statements, I'm not sure I have any "He made Graduation"s left to spare as defense for West.

The metric for an artist's worth is undefined because taste is subjective. And yet, regardless of which trait someone might prioritize (e.g., technical skill, cultural relevance, commercial success, critical prestige), an absolute non-negotiable in art is that it should make you feel something. To me, what separates a good artist from a great artist lies within their capability to resonate with their audience — to stir souls.

Back in 2002, a car crash sent a twenty-five-year-old Roc-A-Fella Records music producer, Kanye West, to the hospital. His jaw was shattered and, as a result, West had his mouth wired shut. Yet, the young talent rapped and recorded the hit single, "Through the Wire." Not only did the song revolutionize chipmunk soul, a sampling style of increasing the pitch and tempo of classic R&B songs, but West's story of perseverance also stunned me. West's discography is chock-full of lore that's developed his psyche over three decades: his fear that his daughter may fall victim to exploitative men like himself, his faith as he yearns for God's love whilst questioning the pain he's faced, and his guilt of being a customer of the industry of blood diamonds. West's willingness to seek atonement earnestly reflect and unabashedly express himself, which drew me ever so closer to him and his music.

But it would be dishonest to paint West's career as one made purely with inspiration and goodwill. Instead, throughout his time in the limelight, many have regarded West as a villain. To most, it begins at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards, where West interrupted then-emerging singer Taylor Swift's acceptance speech. West was criticized by publications and peers alike. Still, he quickly made a resurgence in popularity after an intensive production process for his follow-up album, *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*.

Despite his loud personality, West's success in his illustrious discography and fashion endeavors makes it clear that fans were willing to turn a blind eye to the faults of their favorite rapper. As West's career spiraled into constant controversy, both fans and West himself embraced it.

But such instances of controversy seem jovial compared to the recent bombardment of hateful sentiment. Shortly after the release of the album *Donda* (named after West's late mother) and his divorce from media personality Kim Kardashian, West debuted "White Lives Matter" apparel at his fashion show.

Instead of getting away with the controversy he had sparked, West suffered the blunt consequences — Adidas and Balenciaga terminated ties with the fashion designer, frequent collaborators Pusha T and Kid Cudi severed ties with the musician, and Instagram and X restricted the social media merchant. West's statements were founded on hate so blatant that it seemed as if it were an exaggerated publicity stunt. But when West doubled down on X to spew antisemitic rhetoric, it became clear that this was more than what West's career could handle.

Or was it? Last year, West released two new studio albums titled *Vultures 1* and *Vultures 2*, with the single "Carnival" peaking at number one on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100. These albums made it clear that West had no intention of withdrawing his intolerant stance. He peddled swastika-laden merch, German-Reich logos, and lyrics that teased not-so-subtle antisemitism.

Despite public scrutiny for his hateful rhetoric, West has managed to remain in the public eye. Is this proof that art can be separated from the artist? To an extent, it's clear that the people who haven't reconsidered their support for West were indifferent to his image in the first place. They haven't taken the step to appreciate how West's music mirrored his complicated personality, so this turn of events wouldn't — and couldn't — change their view on West.

As for those more invested in West's art as a vessel of his persona, they have attributed West's antisemitism to shallow-minded bigotry or bipolar disorder-induced mania. But, to me, that's not convincing enough — it doesn't make sense for West to waste his entire career on rhetoric that seemingly came out of nowhere.

Perhaps West wants to prove to himself that he is untouchable through these frail, pathetic attempts to get people talking about him. He praises himself when he manages to strike a win, and he blames others for his circumstances when things don't go his way. For instance, West took to X to complain about "being betrayed" by his family, his peers, and "the Black community." As a fan, it infuriates me that West is not only burning bridges with potential musical collaborators but also failing to take accountability for his actions (as he had throughout previous controversies). The art no longer resonates with me. There is no deserved victory lap, no enlightening self-exploration, no desire for innovation — for whatever reason, all that remains is his hate, and that is certainly not art.

While it's impossible to determine whether or not West had held such hateful beliefs long before he made them public in 2022, the absence of blatantly hateful remarks in his earlier work preserves the rest of his discography for me. I'm skeptical of whether or not I can even call myself a fan of Kanye West — beyond the evident moral complications of supporting an antisemite. It's become clear to me that West is (for the moment) no longer invested in creating meaningful art.

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Trump's Strengths and Stumbles

By **Shaleen Sheth '27**
Opinions Writer



Graphic by Adithi Variar '27/*The Choate News*

Within his first few months in the Oval Office, President Donald Trump P'00 carried out executive orders, policy shifts, and sharp rhetoric aimed at reversing four years of Former President Joe Biden's leadership. Trump has attempted to reassert American strength globally through tougher borders, a bold foreign policy, and a renewed focus on national sovereignty. While his "America First" approach has produced tangible results, economic nationalism can only go so far. Without a better understanding of trade and economics, Trump risks undercutting all the progress he has made.

Trump's approach to border security and immigration has become one of his strongest advocacy points. Through policies like the Laken Riley Act, he has attempted to pause the flow of illegal immigration by targeting undocumented immigrants and sanctuary cities.

However, this approach has agitated many, particularly over Trump's treatment of immigrants simply seeking asylum or safety. Trump's administration has moved too quickly regarding deportations, impacting individuals who seek asylum in the U.S. to escape from turmoil and danger. These immigrants should not be treated the same as drug traffickers or murderers, and do not deserve repercussions for seeking safety.

While the Laken Riley Act does address poor border security and immigration policy, high-profile errors by the Trump administration, such as the wrongful deportation of Kilmar Ábrego García to El Salvador, reflect horribly on the administration and prevent them from making fundamental positive changes to immigration policies, as the backlash from their errors overshadows their efforts.

Regarding Trump's foreign policy, things grow less black and white. Contrary to the shared beliefs of those who've watched clips of the argument between Trump and President Volodymyr Zelensky, or Trump's speech about turning Gaza into a resort, Trump's foreign policy has been significantly stronger than that of his predecessor, Joe Biden (or at least, whoever was pulling his puppet strings in recent years).

Take the Ukraine-Russia ceasefire negotiations. The contentious meeting between Zelensky, Trump, and Vice President J.D. Vance was not the most fantastic start to a ceasefire negotiation. Still, it paved the way for stronger discussions on the U.S.-Ukraine mineral resources deal. Trump's strategy has focused on taking control of key mineral resources in Ukraine, ensuring that American interests remain vested permanently in the country. This also deters further Russian aggression for fear of sparking an international war. While Trump may have had harsh words for the Ukrainian President, he laid the groundwork for ceasefire talks, a far more substantial outcome than Biden's empty aid in a war Ukraine could never win without a deal.

Furthermore, Trump has made significant strides in securing the release of over two dozen American hostages held overseas, such as Marc Fogel, an unjustly held captive in Russia whom the Biden administration had largely forgotten. On top of this, Trump has worked to stabilize the Middle East, supporting Israel and redesignating the Houthis as a terrorist organization after the Biden administration removed their designation in 2021. Trump's decision spreads a clear message that terrorism has consequences. His administration also cuts off funding to terrorists like the Houthis by freezing assets and restricting international financial transactions.

Despite Trump's successes in foreign policy, one of his most painful actions often overshadows them: tariffs. The Trump administration has placed tariffs on our fiercest enemies and some of our closest allies. While high reciprocal tariffs on China may be justified in protecting American industries from Chinese manufacturing, Trump's decision to impose high tariffs on Canada and Mexico is harder to defend. The U.S. has maintained a peaceful and mutually beneficial trade relationship with these two countries since Trump's revision of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was reworked into the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) in 2018. The U.S. supply chains are deeply integrated with those of Canada and Mexico, and raising tariffs on allied nations serves nothing more than raising prices on U.S. consumers as importers jack up prices. The tariffs also present the U.S. as unreliable and could drive allies into the arms of other global powers more willing to engage in free trade.

While Trump's protectionist stance may have some merit when protecting American industries from Chinese economic dominance, it is hard to overlook the damaging effects on the average American consumer caused by high tariffs on our key trade partners. It is one thing to confront China in a trade war, but quite another to ruin our relationship with allies with whom we have shared economic ties for decades.

Despite Trump's progress in reaffirming the U.S. as a global power through government policies, he falls short in accurately understanding economics and trade, leading to significant consequences that overshadow his efforts. Hopefully, a real economist will make it to Trump's inner circle and can steer him toward building a stronger, more innovative American economy.

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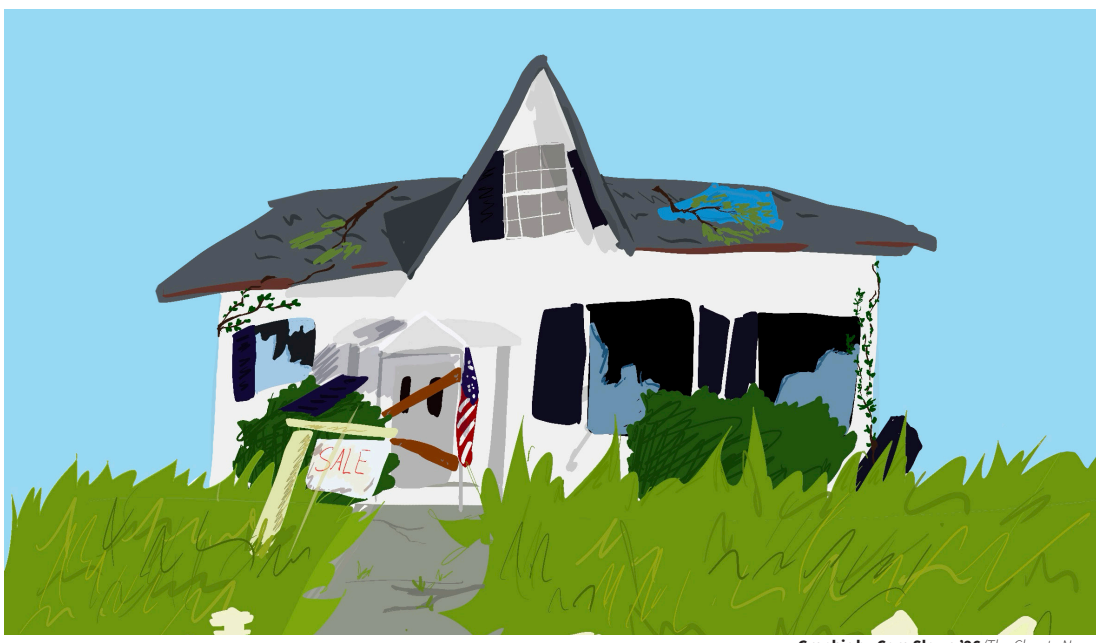
America's Broken Promise



Graphic by Cora Slowe '26/*The Choate News*

By **Jai Midha '27**
Opinions Writer

The American Dream is an idolization of 20th-century American culture. You'll make it if you come to America, work hard, play by the rules, and stay out of trouble. You'll climb the "ladder," own a home, raise a family, and retire peacefully. Historically, this dream fueled millions to cross oceans, abandon comfort, and start over. Immigrants started fresh in a new country, with a new language, and integrated into a capitalist system. The problem with the American Dream today isn't that it's not worth chasing — it's that the dream no longer exists.

And it hasn't just been temporarily suspended; it's been hollowed out, shattered, and killed. The American Dream ceases to exist, not because of a lack of opportunities or capital, but because it has become inaccessible to most Americans: immigrants, minorities, and the working class. We are sold a lie that opportunity is open to all. Today, systems are designed to exclude based on gender, race, and class.

As regulations around immigration, self-expression, and religion begin to tighten, we no longer have the liberty or freedom to chase the very dream America was built upon. No one can chase a dream when the security of remaining in the country itself becomes a broken promise.

Take immigration as an example. According to The Atlantic, on March 15, Kilmar Ábrego García, a father from Maryland, was deported to El Salvador's grim "Terrorism Confinement Center" due to an administrative error. How can we speak of dreams, of climbing the social ladder, when people constantly fear exile, even after years of contributing to and living in this country? The impacts of these administrative decisions are apparent everywhere. Across the nation, residents are being taught what to say if a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer approaches their door. How absurd is it that people have to learn exactly what to say to avoid deportation from an officer who is supposed to protect us, not interrogate us?

Then there's the systematic dismantling of support structures that offer a fair shot, such as the rollback of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs. These initiatives exist to acknowledge centuries of exclusion and begin the slow process of mending it. The removal of DEI programs signals to marginalized communities that they, once again, are on their own.

Some claim the U.S. has become too "woke," sensitive, and fractured. But the truth is worse: the country isn't too progressive — it's become regressive. The American Dream hasn't expanded to include more people — it's shrunk, become exclusive, and now operates more like a lottery.

So what do we do? Do we abandon this broken dream? Instead of reviving it, we must replace it, and it starts with policies, not platitudes. Protect immigrants instead of expanding deportation powers. Reinvest in public education and cancel predatory loans. Fund housing programs that work, like the ones in Finland, Sweden, and South Korea. Expand access to healthcare. Reinstate DEI initiatives that give underrepresented communities a fair opportunity. Most importantly, acknowledge that inequality wasn't an accident. It was the result of a string of deliberate actions.

If we want to live in a future where hard work is valued — where society is fair, equitable, and just — we must rebuild the systems that allow that to happen. And that begins at the local level, where change takes root. So when you get the chance, advocate for a representative. Reach out to a politician because each step in this world adds up. Change doesn't start with a new president — it begins with the people we elect locally.

The American Dream is no longer what it once was. And if we keep telling ourselves it still exists in its original form, we're not chasing a future. We're running in circles, lost in a past that was never fully inclusive.

Jai Midha *is a fourth-former from Singapore. He may be reached at jmidha27@choate.edu.*

FEATURES

Choate World War II

By **Jocelyn Rivard '28**
Reporter

There were many firsts in 1941: the UK aired its first color television program, the microwave was invented, and M&M's were created. But most importantly, the United States entered World War II after the December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor. While both The Choate School and Rosemary Hall continued classes, many students and staff felt inclined to contribute to the war effort, so they devised numerous ways to help.

At Choate, a new range of courses addressing the war was added to the Summer Session of 1942, akin to Choate Summer Programs in modern times. The Choate Summer Term book stated, "We have turned a peace-loving, unmilitary nation into the mightiest far-flung military force in history; and with this necessity have come corresponding compulsions in education." Boys who wished to enlist in the military could take classes such as Aeronautics to meet preflight requirements; Navigation to meet the requirements of the Coast Guard; and Navy courses to prepare them to serve in the United States Navy. In addition, two graduations were implemented: the classic June graduation and a February one to accommodate students who wanted to finish high school early and join the military.

Beyond the array of classes, Choate built an obstacle course dubbed the "Commando Course" that stretched over 185 meters. The course was composed of physical barriers and challenges. Naturally, the students turned it into a competition, with the record standing at 53 seconds from start to finish.

Additionally, Choate boys sold war stamps to encourage community members to support the war effort. The headmaster Dr. George C. St. John, Sr. bought the stamps from the former head of The Choate News Dwight Morss P'43.

Across the state in Greenwich, Connecticut, Rosemary Hall offered similar war-related classes over the summer, including Radio Communications, First Aid, and Stenography. These courses were described as "Practical Courses to Fit Women for War Work" in a poster distributed around the School and featured in the local newspaper *The Greenwich Time*. Additionally, many girls completed Red Cross training requirements, which allowed them to become nurses in the war. The girls practiced evacuation drills, and classes were scheduled earlier to conserve gas and efficiently ration resources during the war period.

One of the stark changes on campus following the war was the construction of two new buildings. Housing freshmen boys today, Logan Munroe House was built in memory of Logan Munroe, a Choate alumnus from the Class of 1933 who was killed in active duty in 1945. Shortly after, the two faculty residences on either side of Nichols House were created, funded by alum donations and dedicated to former students who had died in combat.

World War II was a riveting time in history, shaping the entire world across multiple continents and nations, including our own Choate School and Rosemary Hall. The students of the past answered the call to serve their country, and in doing so, helped shape the place that we know and cherish today.

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Photo courtesy of Ms. Stephanie Gold

Boys at The Choate School work on a plane for their Aeronautics course.

DIY AT THE DINING HALL

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Reporter

When a dining hall meal doesn't quite hit the spot, Choate students don't complain — they create. Armed with tortillas, sauces, and a little imagination, students and faculty across campus transform mundane meals into delicious art. Welcome to the unofficial "Dining Hall Survival Guide."

The Rise of the Rice Bowl

Damaris Reynoso '27 swears by her signature rice bowl that is equal parts delicious and dependable. "Whenever they have rice, I run to get my bowl and add my toppings," she said. "I like adding cucumbers, beans, chicken, and my secret ingredient is the chipotle mayo. I just mix everything together." Besides being delicious, the meal is also a quick fix for when you don't have a lot of time. "The dish is super easy to make — all you need is some rice, and you can add any toppings you like to customize the dish to your liking," she said.

The idea initially came from Reynoso's friend Rahewa Ocbazgi '27, but Reynoso added her own flair with a squeeze of sriracha, which "adds a bunch of flavors." The hack has even sparked a new fad at Choate. "My friend Rielle [Reyes '27] started copying me, and Bruce [van Wingerden '28] also tried it. Now he makes it too — it's like a little trend going on," Reynoso said.

The Wrap Revolution

Carly Covey '28 has built her reputation on one thing: grilled wraps. "When there's nothing good at the dining hall ... I get a wrap. I put cheese in the bottom, and then I fill it with all the stuff I want, like lettuce, tomato, and chicken ... and then on the top, [I] put more cheese and wrap it up," she said. "I toast it in the [panini] press so that it's like a quesadilla on both sides, crispy and melty, but then you also have the stuff in the middle."

Covey appreciates wraps for their appetizing taste and high nutritional value. However, she mentions some challenges associated with making them. "I tend to put a lot of stuff in it, so the wrapping technique takes a bit [of time] to learn," she said. "A lot of my friends ask me to wrap their wraps every time they don't like the dining hall meal."

Senior Survival Tactics

Virginia Nelson '25 and Chelsea Branch '25 have both taken dining hall innovations to elite levels. "I personally like picking marshmallow fluff and Rice Krispies and making them into a Rice Krispies Treat," Nelson said. "The result is crunchy and indulgent, and one of the most immaculate creations to reach my lips."

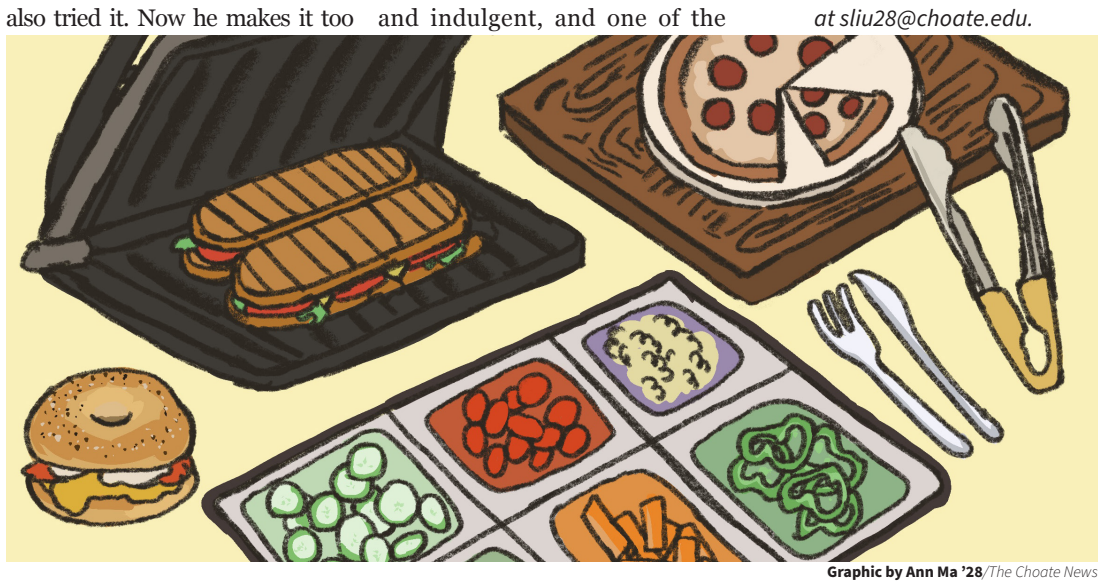
Branch swears by her morning go-to: a honey bagel. "You put the bagel in the toaster, wait for it to become golden brown, and then you put some cream cheese on it," Branch said. "Then you walk over to the tea [station], put some honey on it, and spread it nicely around with a spoon." Branch appreciates the sweetness of the dish, which she says has a "rich and creamy texture."

Breakfast Burrito Brilliance

Even teachers have tricks up their sleeves when it comes to dining hall meals. "If you ask [the dining hall] for a wrap, they will give you a tortilla," Math teacher Ms. Katelyn Skinner said. "I like to make a breakfast burrito out of the fried eggs, bacon, potatoes, and cheese all in one round. And then occasionally, you can get it toasted if they allow you to turn on the sandwich panini press."

Whether hacking a poke bowl or wrapping a tortilla like a Chipotle pro, one thing is clear: at Choate, it's all about being innovative and creative. So, the next time you find your taste buds not resonating with the options available at the dining hall, try some of these tips to elevate your dining experience!

Sabrina Liu *may be reached at sliu28@choate.edu.*



Graphic by Ann Ma '28/*The Choate News*

Harkness Graffiti, A Time-Honored Choate Tradition

By **Steven Kee '27**
Campus Opinions Editor

We've all been there — your English teacher is going on about *Macbeth* and the theme of ambition, while all you're ambitious for is the end of class in 20 minutes. Many students at Choate, whether out of boredom, creativity, or a friendly dare, have left their mark on the round wooden tables in the Paul Mellon Humanities Center, coined "harkness graffiti." Here is a glimpse into some witticisms, drawings, and commentaries that have found a permanent home on these surfaces.

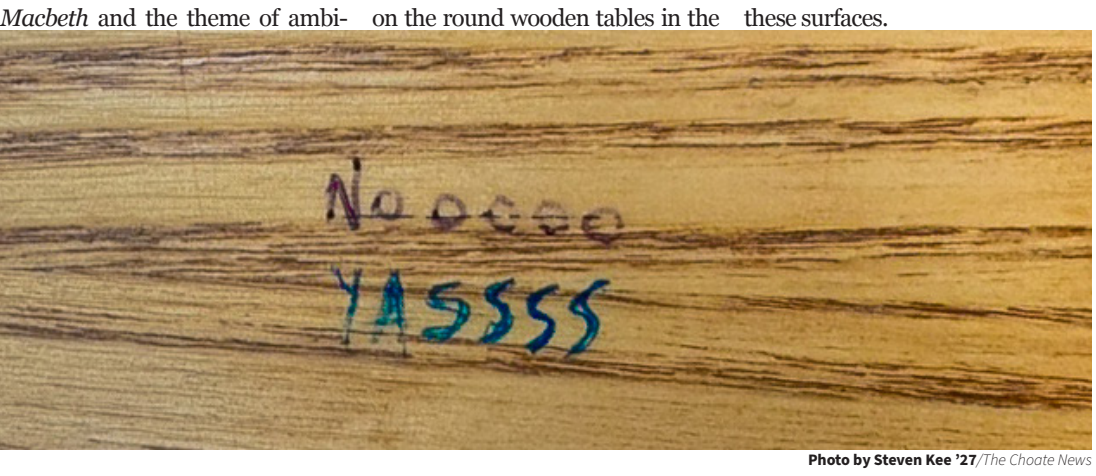


Photo by Steven Kee '27/*The Choate News*

"Nooooo
YASSSS."

The timeless argument of no versus yes. Mini-debates on the Harkness Table transpire while class debate occurs around it.

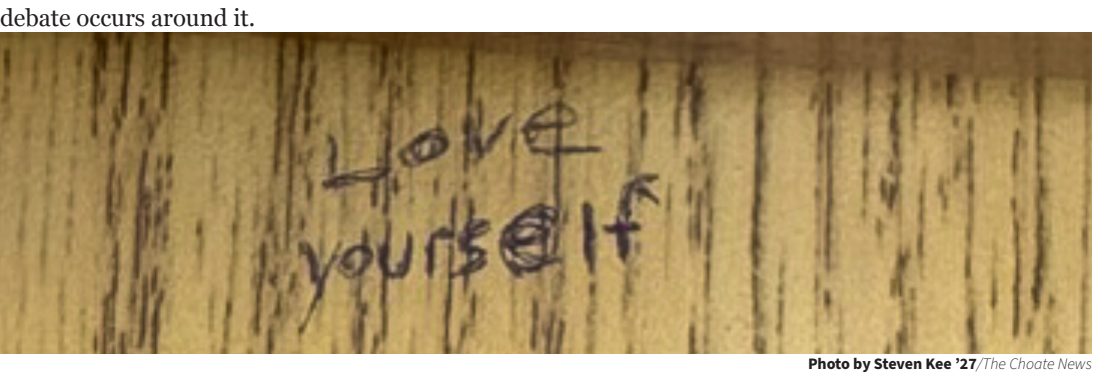


Photo by Steven Kee '27/*The Choate News*

"Love yourself."

Students leave words of encouragement to make it through the class period. Messages of hope and solidarity transform Harkness tables into unexpected galleries of support.



Photo by Steven Kee '27/*The Choate News*

A sketch of a player in the pandemic-popular game *Among Us*, where this impostor has just created a crime scene. Made in 2022.



Photo by Steven Kee '27/*The Choate News*

Students tally the minutes until class ends; one arrow points towards the door to escape, and the other points towards eternal academic despair. Which one can be trusted?

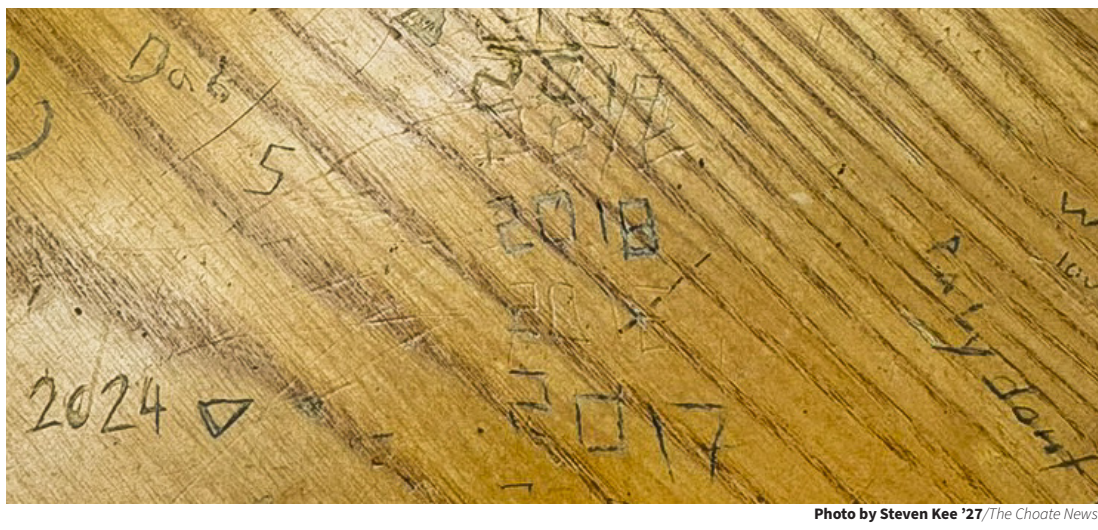


Photo by Steven Kee '27/*The Choate News*

A time-honored Choate tradition, where students list the consecutive years they've been at the table since 2017. Each year, students add their own flair with additional doodles.

While these doodles have become a key part of the marks Choate students leave on campus, their reception by students and faculty of the Choate community is mixed.

Gulaid Muse '26 feels strongly about respecting Harkness tables and keeping pen marks off their surfaces. "I think it's just petty vandalism, in a sense. I don't really agree with drawing on something that you haven't paid for, even if it's just a work of art in your sense," Muse said. HPRSS teacher Ms. Courtney DeStefano also added that while drawing on Harkness tables may be entertaining, she is concerned about the level of respect given to the tables. "These tables are very expensive. They also mean something; we sit at this table, and it's round for a reason. [Drawing on the tables] feels sort of disrespectful, but I think people think it's just funny," she said.

In contrast, Ethan Cheung '27 asserted that Harkness graffiti is a core Choate tradition. "I think it adds to the history and legacy of the classroom, especially with different engravings and drawings on the table. They each tell a different story about how boring the class was and how engaged the students were," he said.

Whether you like it or not, Harkness graffiti is a well-established method students use to leave indelible marks on campus after they graduate. So, the next time you sit at a Harkness table, look down below — you might just find a piece of history staring right back at you.

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ARTS AND LEISURE

Yukiko Nishimura Explains the "Why" Behind Music

By **Rhea Doshi '27**
Copy Editor



Photo courtesy of Mr. Gene Wie

Yukiko Nishimura poses with Mr. Wie after leading workshops.

What does it mean to compose with the heart? To feel harmony as an emotion and create music that leaves an audience in tears? On April 17, internationally celebrated Japanese composer Yukiko Nishimura hosted several workshops with members of the School's ensembles to delve into these questions.

Nishimura began learning piano and composition at Yamaha Music School for Children when she was five years old. At the age of eight, she had already composed several of her own pieces. "I was such a shy girl," she said. "But music helped me speak." After Nishimura earned her undergraduate degree from Tokyo University of the Arts, she moved to the United States to study with the renowned wind composer Alfred Reed at the University of Miami. Her move to the United States was motivated by her admiration of American composition and her desire for creative and individual freedom. "In Japan, it was tough being a woman in music. I knew in America, there would be more opportunities [and] less gender roles," she said.

Nishimura reflected on her process of composing music. "First, I think about the title. Then I sit down at the piano, play the keys, and see what happens," she said. From there, the harmonies and melodies assemble in a unique color, shape, or feeling. According to Nishimura, composition is fluid, emotional, and meant to invoke a feeling or memory within an audience. "I just want to share how music can move your heart and how your interpretation can change how the music feels," she said.

Despite her passion for her work, Nishimura admitted that working as a composer has not always been easy. "Sometimes I don't know what to write, but the deadline is looming, and I forget whether I even like writing anymore," she said. "When I was young[er], it was more fun."

Despite these challenges, Nishimura's passion for music and composition shines through, especially for the students she instructed at various workshops. After her visit, Nishimura hoped that Choate musicians realized that music has the power to move an audience. "I just want to share something," Nishimura said. "I've been doing music for almost 50 years, and I still cry when I hear something beautiful. Music can move your heart."

Norah Wang '27, who participated in Nishimura's workshop with the Symphony Orchestra, explained how rather than giving traditional instructions, such as "play louder" or "play quieter," Nishimura encouraged students to "play brighter," "more open," and "more [broadly]." Nishimura also described music in terms of daily life to enable students to have a greater understanding of its emotional impact.

Wang explained how much she appreciated that Nishimura took the time to visit Choate's ensembles. "It's nice to bring in some new, fresh perspectives, where people can be like … 'this is another way to learn music,'" she said.

By devoting her time, imagination, and heart, Nishimura did more for Choate's musicians than teach them lessons. She emphasized how much music meant to her, reminding students how powerful music truly is.

Rhea Doshi *may be reached at rdoshi27@choate.edu.*

The Newest Faces Behind the Arts Showstoppers

By **Ha Jin Sung '28**
Copy Editor



Photo by Ben Lee '27/*The Choate News*

Ms. Serna-Pedraza and Mrs. Hyatt pose in front of the PMAC gallery.

Behind the scenes of Choate Symphony Orchestra's exhilarating performances, the Dance Company's lyrical concerts, and the vibrant theater productions, Choate's newest Arts Department Coordinators, Mrs. Ashlee Hyatt and Ms. Andrea Serna-Pedraza, work to ensure that students can showcase their talents on a well-organized stage.

Music Ensembles and Private Lessons Administrator Mrs. Ashlee Hyatt helps students schedule private lessons and coordinates various performance logistics. She also ensures adjunct music teachers have the space and information they need to teach on campus. "I organized the accompaniment that needed to happen for the choir … and I pick up whatever needs to be done. The planning with the schedules, that's my puzzle piece," she said.

Mrs. Hyatt's own experiences with music began when she was in fifth grade. "It was [my] first chance to pick up an instrument, and [my school] only had bands … I picked clarinet, and then it really stuck with me," she said. In high school, Mrs. Hyatt was encouraged by her band director to pursue teaching, and she has pursued a career in music education for the past 20 years.

At Choate, Mrs. Hyatt enjoys her face-to-face interactions with students. "I think my favorite part is working with all the students and helping to coordinate things for them," Mrs. Hyatt said. "I got to see the [Choate] Symphony [Orchestra during] the winter instrumental concert, and I was so blown away. I'm surrounded by artists all day, and it feels so good," she said.

Ms. Andrea Serna-Pedraza worked for five years in Choate's Community Safety Department before joining the Arts Department. "It was a learning experience at first, because I am not from an arts background," Ms. Serna-Pedraza said. Getting her bachelor's degree in criminal justice, Ms. Serna-Pedraza didn't have the chance to discover how much she enjoyed creativity and the arts until the Covid-19 pandemic. "I really enjoyed doing design … I really fell in love with [it]," she said. "I started helping out local organizations in town … I would create posters for them."

For Ms. Serna-Pedraza, the spring term Dance Concert was the most memorable. "I work with Ms. [Pamela] Newell a lot … I really enjoyed watching the show come together from [our] meetings," she said, explaining how she coordinated with Ms. Newell, the head of the Dance Program at Choate, to ensure the concert was successful. "I helped [Ms. Newell] create the posters, and with any other things she [needed], [like] getting food or snacks for students," Ms. Serna-Pedraza explained.

Collaboration is at the forefront of Ms. Serna-Pedraza's work in the Arts Department. "[Manager of Arts Center Operations] Mrs. [Carol] Jones [and I] work a lot together to plan events, because there are just so many layers. You have to think of the event space, food, how many people are coming, and sometimes those changes can happen really quickly or last minute," she said.

With the spring term well underway, there are no better people to thank for the success of Choate's high-demand concerts than Mrs. Hyatt and Ms. Serna-Pedraza, as they ensure that every performance is a showstopper.

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Actor, Blacksmith, Storyteller: Connor Zeitlin '25 Shares His Passion for the Arts

By **Bruce van Wingerden '28**
Reporter



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Connor Zeitlin '25 acts as MacDuff in Choate's Winter Production of *Macbeth*.

A proficient blacksmith, co-producer of his own show, and Acting III, Honors student, Connor Zeitlin '25 is among Choate's most artistically ambitious students. Known for his theatrical flair and friendliness, Zeitlin's independent arts projects stretch across several areas of the arts.

At the heart of his creative pursuits is Black Arrow, a student-produced Sci-Fi saga. Zeitlin created the world of Black Arrow alongside co-producers Aidan Geaney '24, Carter Foster '24, John Freeman '24, and Max Leventon '25. The saga began as a Dungeons & Dragons campaign and evolved into a play series, following explorers navigating a fictional galaxy called New Babylon. Zeitlin and his four co-creators developed the characters and improvised hour-long episodes, which were edited in Final Cut Pro and enhanced with battle maps and sound design.

Despite their success, Zeitlin and his co-producers' journey to a polished version of Black Arrow wasn't exactly smooth. Early attempts to film with cameras borrowed from the library failed, as they would be cut off every 12 minutes.

With their films demanding greater digital storage than they had, Zeitlin and his team ran into another issue: Choate's Wi-Fi , eduroam, frequently refused to support essential programs and software. The solution? Zeitlin and his co-producers used their phones, kept the resolution low, and relied on a Covid-era Zoom robot to display interactive maps on set. "We were so close to being like, 'this isn't possible,'" Zeitlin said. "[But] we put our sweat, blood, and tears into it. We found a way through the obscurities and through the challenges."

That same commitment and resilience shine in Zeitlin's work on stage. As a student in Acting III, Honors, Zeitlin is highly involved with acting and playwriting throughout the school day. He performed The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged), a fast-paced satire of 38 plays in just 40 minutes.

Yet, the one-person show that Zeitlin wrote and produced for the class's winter term truly showcased his storytelling talents. Having produced Black Arrow and being a "Dungeons and Dragons guy," Zeitlin decided that he was going to incorporate "the most audience participation [he] could possibly [add]." Built entirely around audience participation, the 20-minute performance drew 13 audience members onstage for improvised scenes involving invisible tables, fight scenes, and a fake glass of water. "I took it to a level of audience participation that I really wanted to [and] that my experience in Dungeons and Dragons had prompted me to pursue," he said. "I thought it was incredibly successful."

Zeitlin's Dungeons and Dragons-style imagination and background in martial arts have also helped him to choreograph fight scenes in Choate's renditions of Macbeth and She Kills Monsters. "We had a professional fight choreographer [named] Rebecca [Hirota]. She's incredible. She taught me a decent amount about fight choreography, and in turn, she gave me some freedom to create some of my own fights in Macbeth," he said.

Zeitlin handcrafts everything from knives and fire pokers to spiraled metal roses and napkin rings in his backyard workshop, where he opened his handmade forge named Forge Starlight. What started as a passion for fantasy weapons, like Aragorn's sword from The Lord of the Rings, turned into a love for simply being artistic. "I've often compared my experience forging knives and tools with my experience as a Choate student," Zeitlin said. "I feel like a piece of steel being heated up and smashed into shape … I've seen myself in [my] work quite a bit."

Zeitlin described his first attempt at blacksmithing a wall hook as "so ugly it's hidden away forever," but he insists that trial and error is a key part of the journey. "There wouldn't be the pieces I'm proud of without that one," he said. Now, his forged creations are both for personal enjoyment and practicality. "I won't be buying paper towel holders when I move out," he said. "I'll be making them."

For Zeitlin, art is more than an extracurricular — it's an integral aspect of his identity. Whether through swordplay, stagecraft, or steel, he crafts stories in every medium he touches. His advice to other students is simple: "Don't do art just for college. Do it because it allows you a release of pressure … Do it because it makes you feel something."

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Movie Musicals to Boost Your Mood



Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

By **Callie Crowell '28**
Reporter

As we approach the peak of spring, shaking off those winter blues can be tough. Whether it's the struggle to get rid of unnecessary stress or the annoyances of unpredictable weather, everybody needs a pick-me-up once in a while. Compiled here is a pool of movie musicals that are sure to melt away your winter term frostbite and freshen up your mood for the spring.

Amelia Sipkin '25 recommends watching John Chu's rendition of *Wicked* with friends and family to set an upbeat tone for the season. "[*Wicked* is] so bright, colorful, fun, and vivacious," Sipkin said. Featuring an unlikely blossoming friendship between two apprentice witches on their quest to success, *Wicked* offers an inviting, magical getaway for viewers to dive into and is sure to leave viewers wanting the second part, *Wicked: For Good*, to come out sooner.

Sophie Eliades '27 considers Steven Spielberg's remake of *West Side Story* — a modern retelling of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* — to be her favorite movie musical. Eliades explained that one of her favorite scenes in the musical is when the main characters, Maria and Tony, sing together live on set. "[They are] singing to each other, and they're right in front of this beautiful stained glass window … [It's] illuminating them, and it's really beautiful," she said.

Jayden Chen '28 suggested watching *La La Land*, a melodramatic Hollywood romance directed by Damien Chazelle. *La La Land* follows the story of two aspiring artists who share the same dream of fame. "It's realistic and raw, [and] the plot is very well written," Chen explained. He highlighted Ryan Gosling, who played the male lead, Sebastian. "The acting is very well done," Chen said. "[Gosling] is such a real actor, and he portrays emotions wonderfully."

Eliades also praised *La La Land* for its cinematography: "As someone who used to be really involved in filmmaking, [*La La Land*] spoke to me. It's a love letter to Hollywood," she said.

Alexandros Antonopoulos '26's favorite movie musical is *Mamma Mia!*. "When I was younger, my siblings, my parents, and I would all watch it together and loved the story," he said. Antonopoulos explained how he particularly loved the comedic performances of Meryl Streep and Christine Baranski, who played Donna and Tanya in the musical, adding, "I just love their characters so much … [Their] performances are incredible." For Antonopoulos, the entertaining and humorous scenes in *Mamma Mia!* make it the perfect comfort movie musical for the spring.

If all the spring-term stress is getting to you, it's time to gather some buddies, grab snacks, and escape into a musical wonderland. Even if it is a simple 90-minute experience, you will assuredly be more relaxed than ever once the movie credits roll in.

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THE CHOATE NEWS

SPORTS

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FIELD REPORT

Choate Spring Record

65 - 48 - 0

Varsity Games

Girls' Golf (7-0)
vs. Ethel Walker, 5-0

Boys' Baseball (4-5)
vs. Kent, 10-0

Girls' Water Polo (3-0)
vs. Exeter, 10-4

Boys' Tennis (4-1)
vs. Loomis, 5-2

Girls' Lacrosse (4-5)
vs. Lawrenceville, 8-15

Boys' Track & Field (0-5)
vs. Hopkins, 32-38

Girls' Tennis (1-4)
vs. Hotchkiss, 1-5

Boys' Volleyball (0-6)
vs. NMH, 1-4

J.V. Games

Girls' Golf (1-1)
vs. Sacred Heart, 3-2

Boys' Tennis (3-0)
vs. Loomis, 7-0

Girls' Lacrosse (3-0)
vs. Miss Porters, 16-3

Boys' Golf (4-2)
vs. Loomis, 216-207

CHOATE HOSTS FIRST-EVER UNIFIED GAMES

By **Norah Wang '27**
Reporter



Photo courtesy of Cristina Antonopoulos '25

Students play volleyball together in the first-ever Unified Games.

This spring, Choate held its inaugural Unified Games event, a celebration of inclusivity and community that welcomed athletes with disabilities from Wallingford to campus. Choate athletes teamed up with these students for a day filled with competition, camaraderie, and fun.

The Unified Games was the brainchild of Cristina Antonopoulos '25, a student who is passionate about working with the special needs community. "I was somewhat disappointed that Choate didn't have any programs like the unified sports programs at public schools," she said. "Working with the special needs community has had such a profound impact on my life ... and is something that I think everyone should have the opportunity to experience," she said.

Antonopoulos began to organize the event at the beginning of the school year and contacted individuals from the special needs camp where she volunteered. "The groups who participated were mainly high school and college kids from the surrounding public schools," she said.

The Unified Games offered four sports for athletes to explore: volleyball, basketball, wiffle ball, and soccer. Choate students worked at these stations and floated between activities. Volleyball was a crowd favorite, as many athletes could participate at a time. "I started with Bucha ball, and then we kind of just rotated through. I think the most popular one was volleyball," Nani Keyes '25 said.

Though Antonopoulos had planned multiple groups and stations, the participant turnout was smaller than expected. There were about 20 disabled athletes who showed up, which prompted her to take a more flexible approach on the day of the event. "I ended up just going with the flow ... which was the best way to go about it," she explained. "Everyone had fun and provided positive feedback ... I truly hope this gets carried on and becomes an annual school-wide tradition."

Keyes shared that while the format was not what was initially planned, it allowed for more interactions to take place. "A lot of the athletes were a little hesitant to join new things at first," she said, "so it was a little hard to figure out just how to create that environment where they could start to open up. Then I was able to recognize how far you would be able to bring them out of their comfort zone to try new things." For Keyes, the event also held personal significance. Her older brother was one of the participating athletes. "It was very special to share something at Choate with him," she said. "Choate is very selective, so for him to come and kind of get a sense of what it's like for me here ... was really special."

For Lucy Pateman '25, the day was a chance to rediscover the joy she had previously found when working with disabled communities. Pateman found herself drawn into a conversation with a mother whose son uses a wheelchair. "I was really impressed by her [resilience]," she said. "It made me reflect on myself and my patience and the dedication of the adults who care for these kids," she said.

For many, the most valuable moment of the day was when participants received medals in recognition of their courage and enthusiasm. "I was just excited to be around [the] contagious energy," Pateman said. "Just seeing all the kids happy ... that was the most amazing part."

The Unified Games began as a single student's idea but grew into a space that aimed to foster empathy, connect local communities, and spark collaborative joy. "The main objective for me was to create a day of fun for a community we don't often interact with at Choate and give Choate students the exposure to explore any future interests within special education," Antonopoulos said. "I feel so grateful."

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ATHLETES PURSUE SPORTS BEYOND CAMPUS

By **Chloe Yeung '28**
Reporter

While most Choate students play a sport on campus, some athletes travel off-campus to hone their skills and fit in extra practice. These athletes typically try out and play with a club team outside of school, practicing with peers, improving their skills, and preparing for the upcoming season. Additionally, players get the opportunity to try out for nationwide competitions and tournaments, further enhancing their athletic experience.

Moreover, most of these students have gradually viewed their sports as more than just pastimes and are pushing themselves to play at a collegiate or professional level. For Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey player Juju Iannace '27, her passion for hockey at a young age has evolved into a larger goal. "I first started playing when I saw that it was something that my best friend did. I tried for the first time, and I loved it," she said. "Now, one of the biggest reasons why I play hockey so much is because I want to get recruited."

Iannace especially enjoys the wide range of connections she makes through club hockey. "My team has people from all different prep schools: Kent [School], Berkshire [School], Millbrook [School] ... I have friends from all over the country on my club team," she said. Practice off-campus also allows her to broaden her network and learn from her peers. "I have memories of ... meeting [friends] from different places ... [and] learning different styles of hockey people play," Iannace said.

Apart from bringing about more networking, Girls' Varsity Volleyball player Izzy McGehee '27 appreciates how her club team offers a higher level of competition and team dedication. "[In club practices,] everyone's really dedicated and is willing to give what it takes to get recruited [for college]; there's a large difference in playing level [that] challenges me more," she said.

While playing off-campus on a club team can be a very rewarding experience, it also comes with many obstacles. As Boys' Varsity Tennis player Johnny Guo '26 reflected, "Logistically, there are a lot of challenges." Students are required to fill out an athletic activity application form and receive approval before going off-campus to play sports. Many students also travel with others to train off-campus. "[Some team members] carpool with me to practice," Guo said.

Furthermore, club teams take up lots of time, making a tight schedule even more packed. Club athletes like Boys' Varsity Swimming Team member Emerson Nappi '27 struggled with long travel times and late practices that leave little time for schoolwork. "I used to leave school at 4:10 p.m. ... [and] get back in the nick of time for study hours," he said. Often returning after the dining hall closes, he had to find another way to get dinner and his work done. "It was really hard to ... get my work done ... because [some] days, practice ended at eight ... That was the hardest thing," he said. Iannace echoes Nappi's sentiment. "[It's a lot of] late nights and early mornings," she said.

Despite the challenges that off-campus sports bring, many decide to persevere and pursue their sport outside of Choate. To the athletes, club sports form lasting memories, close friendships, and a sense of unity, so they endure challenges with a clear dream in mind.

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SONGS, SNACKS, TEAM BONDING: AWAY GAME TRAVEL TO-DOS

By **Eshana Hora '27**
Copy Editor

Long bus rides to away games can sometimes feel endless, but for Choate athletes, they're more than just time on the road. These rides help students motivate themselves before big games, unwind after long matches, and build camaraderie through shared traditions. Whether they are individual activities, such as cramming in last-minute homework, or team bonding activities like having full-bus karaoke sessions, each team has its way of making the most of the ride.

For Boys' Varsity Golf Captain Ernie Mok '25, music is vital when the team is on the go. Upbeat tunes help energize players before a big game, and more mellow music helps them relax on the way back to school. "We love playing music on the car sound system," he said. "I like listening to nostalgic music, so [we stream] Justin Bieber, Shawn Mendes, and Dua Lipa."

The Girls' Varsity Swimming Team has turned music into a source of bonding. When returning from a winter swim meet at Miss Porter's School, the team had a spontaneous concert. Captain Isabelle Jiao '26 said, "We had a whole karaoke session ... We sang songs like 'Let It Go' ... [It was] so fun." In addition to singing, Jiao also mentioned her tradition of giving pre-meet speeches to the team, emphasizing "how important it is to have fun" but also to "swim for your team, not just for yourself."

For the Girls' Varsity Softball Team, singing Pitch Perfect riff-offs has become a team ritual. "We always sing those ... especially after a big win," player Margot Seiden '26 said. Before games, Captain Maggie Swanson '26 said, "There's a lot of hair braiding going on ... We do our eye black, and a lot of us put on our uniforms on the bus, too."

For other athletes, snacks are vital on long bus rides. Seiden shared that the SAGE cookie trays are a favorite of the Girls' Varsity Softball Team. "We take the cookie trays from the front of the bus ... [and] we all go crazy," she said. The Girls' Varsity Crew team likes to fuel up with grocery store snacks. Rower Erin Kim '26 said, "For crew regattas ... we all eat Trader Joe's Scandinavian Swimmers before we race." The team also celebrates wins with pizza parties on the bus throughout the season.

But beyond shared traditions, many athletes have their own routines to prepare for games and unwind afterwards. Swanson shared, "I like to listen to my music and put my feet up and play Candy Crush." She added that avoiding schoolwork on the way also helped her reset and stay "focused on the game." To decompress, Mok shared that after long tournaments, he likes to swim "because it ... helps relieve [tension from his] muscles."

Every team has a way of filling the time traveling to and from games, from music to snacks to game debriefs. Many athletes felt that these trips helped them bond and form friendships with their teammates. "I think I've gotten closer with people because of bus rides," Kim shared. The long bus rides help create lasting memories, making the journey as important as the game.

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