The Choate News

Year in Review 2024-2025

Editor-in-Chief: Reinah E. Lee '26

Managing Editor: Ethan Y. Zhang '26

Layout Editor: Ian Wu '26

Cover art by: Leah Han '27

Highlights and Recap (2)

Trips and Speakers (3)

Arts Highlights (4)

Sports Highlights (5)

Departing Faculty (6, 7)

Senior Speeches (8, 9)

Senior Highlights (10)

Favorites of the Year (11)

Editorial and Year in Photos (12)

HIGHLIGHTS AND RECAP

Community Service Day: *September 27, 2024*

Whether writing cards or cleaning up gardens, students and their advisors participated in the School's annual Community Service Day to learn more about housing insecurity. Following the theme of "Housing Justice," a panel discussion featuring four speakers: Mr. Ralph Gagliardo, who shared his experience with homelessness; Ms. Stephanie Boyce and Ms. Kelly Dougherty from Hands on Hartford; and Ms. Abigail Brone from Connecticut Public Radio. Members of the Choate community participated in activities both on and off campus, visiting retirement homes like Elim Park, while others spent their morning helping out at the Kohler Environmental Center. This year's Community Service Day allowed students to explore how meaningful small actions can collectively address housing insecurity and contribute to broader efforts toward housing justice.



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Northern Lights: *October 10, 2024*

As an array of bright lights illuminated the sky at the beginning of study hours, October 10 was interrupted by an evening surprise: the Northern Lights. What started as an ordinary day changed at 6:30 p.m., when the dark blue skies turned into a swirl of vibrant purple-pink ombres. An hour later, the palette shifted into midnight blue and deep purple with a hint of pink. Students and faculty stopped their evening activities and gathered outside Colony Hall or outside of their dorms to take in the moment and capture the rare and natural phenomenon. Captivated by this special moment, they took pictures, shared smiles, and watched the Northern Lights all around campus until it faded into the night.



Photo courtesy of Dana Tan '25

Family Weekend: *October 24-26, 2024*



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Family Weekend was jam-packed with activities and memorable moments leading into Fall Long Weekend. Parents and siblings flew from all over the world for the unique opportunity to experience the classroom atmosphere by shadowing their Choate family member throughout a typical school day. From acapella performances to a series of concerts by ensembles, Family Weekend highlighted the diverse talents of students and also provided parents with a chance to talk to teachers, view end-of-term projects, and gain insight into their child's academic and student life at Choate.

Deerfield Day: *November 9, 2024*



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

The Wild Boars were dominant on the field during Deerfield Day 2024, with a winning record of 4-2 in varsity sports. From the Friday night pep rally, where Boar Pen fired up the entire campus with dances and games, to the final game ending in a Choate victory, the energy was palpable in the face of friendly rivalry. Students, faculty, families, and alumni packed the sidelines supporting the teams in their gold and blue attire. The Varsity Football team punctuated the day with a 41-0 victory, which propelled them into the New England Championship game later in the term.

Holiday Ball: *December 4, 2024*

The Holiday Ball (Hol Ball), Choate's annual winter dance, transformed the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center into a winter wonderland. While the ongoing construction of the Hill House dining hall displaced the event from its traditional location, the towering Christmas tree returned with a sense of familiarity as the prime photo-op spot, delivering that cherished Hol Ball ambiance. Flowing chocolate fountains with strawberries added to the students' joy and excitement, and fueled their energy to dance. "I got to see my friends in all different forms and had so much fun listening and dancing to the music," Hannah Yeo '26 said.



Photo courtesy of Dana Tan '25

Tiz the Season: *December 17, 2024*

On December 17, 2024, Choate celebrated one of its long-standing traditions: Tiz the Season. Hosted during the final school days of the 2024 calendar year, the event was created by Math teacher Mr. Marquis Tisdale to dedicate time for students to relax and enjoy sweet treats and holiday festivities. With an abundance of hot chocolate, gingerbread cookies, and custom pencils embellished with "Tiz the Season 2024," the event served as a break from classes and a celebration of the holiday season. Students were also able to sign cards sent to local communities within Wallingford to share the joy.



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Diversity Day: *January 25, 2025*



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

On January 25, Choate's 34th Diversity Day opened with the theme "Keeping the Torch Lit: Athletes and Advocates for Justice." The 2024 Paris Olympic Gold Medalists Ms. Tara Davis-Woodhall and Mr. Hunter Woodhall spoke to the Choate community about justice and advocacy through sports. Along with the Woodhalls' presentation, Choate students and faculty participated in various workshops and film screening sessions. By listening to the stories of Ms. Davis-Woodhall, Mr. Woodhall, and other athletes showcased in workshops and films, the Choate community was encouraged to openly support one another and strive for greater diversity and inclusion.

President's Day: *January 30, 2025*



Photo courtesy of Dana Tan '25

"Tomorrow is... President's Day!" The video created by Choate's very own Board of Trustees surprised the students on a late Thursday evening on January 30. As the news of the impromtu long weekend spread quickly, students stormed out of the dorms and came together in a special Student Activities Center (SAC) dance to spend the eve of President's Day together. With a day off from classes, many chose to catch up with friends and recharge for the rest of the term. Many students relaxed in their dorm rooms or went out to enjoy a meal with friends. President's Day was a well-deserved break for both students and teachers during the cold winter months.

Revisit Days: *April 1-4, 2025*

Throughout the first week of April, Choate hosted Revisit Days for prospective students entering the upcoming academic year. The revisit days allowed prospective students to experience a "day in the life" as a Choate student, actively participating in classes and learning the ins and outs around campus. Incoming students also had the opportunity to connect with student representatives at the Community Fair and see the various activities Choate has to offer on and off the field. From CRH Grilling to Varsity Ultimate Frisbee, the Revisit Days served as a world of possibilities for prospective students.



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Carnival: *May 2, 2025*

The Great Lawn was filled with bright lights on May 2 with the much-anticipated Choate Carnival making its remarkable return since 2019. The evening was full of food trucks, thrilling rides, and game booths, transforming the campus into a fairground with screams of delight. Enthusiasm from all members of the Choate community was palpable throughout the event. Katherine Pan '27 said, "I got to spend time solely on creating many good memories with my friends. I took full advantage of the various food trucks and the rides." The carnival that once brought countless smiles back in 2019 had once again raised the community spirit this year.



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

New Phone Initiative: *Spring 2025*

With the help of the Challenge Success Committee, Choate recently implemented new initiatives across campus to encourage students to disconnect from their devices. Across campus, bright reminders stenciled into the ground read, "Eyes Up, Phone Down." In addition, the first floor of the dining hall has been made into a screen-free zone. Multiple pilot programs have also been tested throughout the spring term, like the Digital Detox challenges in dorms and forms giving students the chance to enter a raffle and win prizes if they left their phones outside their rooms for the night or with their Deans' Assistant for the academic day. When students return in the fall, the committee will determine a new policy to deepen inter-community connections phone-free.



Graphic by Leah Han '27

New Visitation Policy: *May 19, 2025*



Graphic by Leah Han '27

As of May 19, Choate will implement a revised visitation policy for "House Guests." Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard's outline of the new policy highlights how House Guests may only visit common rooms after the academic day until 10 minutes before curfew on weekdays and on weekends, from noon until 10 minutes before curfew. However, he also noted the addition of 'dorm clusters.' Intra-cluster visits require the visitor to signify their location via REACH. Cross-cluster visits must be granted permission by the Duty Associate. Next fall, the policy will begin once all students complete annual consent workshops.

New Dining Hall: *Spring 2025*

It is finally time. The long-anticipated and newly renovated Hill House dining hall has finished construction. At the end of the 2023-2024 school year, Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis announced that Choate would receive a new and expanded servery. There will be a significant expansion of new food options and different culinary styles for everyone's dietary demands. The revamped servery has an expanded floor, so there will be less traffic going in and out during busy mealtimes. Dr. Curtis allowed for a sneak peak with an open house for students and faculty to get a glimpse of what it looks like inside.



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

TRIPS AND SPEAKERS

INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

St. George's, Bermuda


Photo courtesy of Mr. Chris Aguiar

Led by Mr. Chris Aguiar and Ms. Mallika R. Beach-Mehrotra, students engaged passionately and directly with the island's coastal environments. They collected samples from two beaches to analyze in the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS) lab as part of a citizen science project that analyzed the impact of microplastics on the ocean, a prominent issue that affects humans and other organisms. While creating lasting memories, students were also able to discover the impacts of climate change on these ecosystems.

Thimphu, Bhutan


Photo courtesy of Dr. Marrotte Newman

Choate students, accompanied by Mr. Mark A. Gostomski, Mrs. Kate Doak, Dr. Selena Gell, Dr. Marotte Newman, Ms. Laura Lynn van Mierlo, Ms. Deighna L. DeRiu, and Ms. Kolina Koleva, explored Bhutan's cultural heritage, natural history, and traditional art. Throughout the trip, students learned about various wellness initiatives, such as Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index, while also exploring Bhutanese culture through interaction with local communities. They visited buildings and houses that reflected Bhutan's traditional art and concluded their trip with a special karaoke session with students at a local Bhutanese high school.

Belfast, Northern Ireland



Photo courtesy of Ms. Amy Howland

During a week-long trip to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland over spring break, Choate students explored the history of the peace process, learned from ex-combatants, and worked alongside youth workers. AllPeopleBeHappy (APBH), the organization that coordinated the trip, focused on peace and anti-prejudice activities in the Belfast and Derry communities. Accompanied by Ms. Courtney DeStefano and Ms. Amy Howland, students also explored religious neighborhoods, visited historical sites, and gained insights about Gaelic culture.

Toulouse, France



Photo courtesy of Marin Wang '27

This year, students studied abroad in Toulouse, France, and immersed themselves in the city's culture and traditions. Walking across the streets of Toulouse, students engaged in a novel environment, explored the region's parks, sat along the Garonne River, and sampled restaurants with the region's famous food staples. They also interacted with locals and had the opportunity to create long-lasting friendships. One particularly unforgettable memory for a few of the students was renting bikes and cruising down the river at sunset — an indication of how Toulouse's cycling-friendly streets encouraged solo-exploration and interaction with the cityscape.

Athens, Greece


Photo courtesy of Dr. Julie Hagen

This spring break, 35 Chorale singers traveled to Athens and Nafplio with Mrs. Le'ah Griggs, Mr. Jorge Rodriguez, Dr. Julie Hagen, Mrs. Carol Jones, and Mr. Michael Abbatiello. Students spent one week practicing singing, exploring local sites, and tasting traditional cuisine at a Syrian-Greek fusion restaurant called A Little Taste of Home. Students had the opportunity to sing and perform with local Greek choirs, sing impromptu performances on the streets of Greece, and rehearse in ancient, traditional theaters. Along with performances and rehearsals, students engaged with Greek culture by visiting famous landmarks and learning about the history of music in Greece.

SPEAKERS

William Tong


Photo by Emily Ma '25/*The Choate News*

On November 5, Connecticut Attorney General William Tong spoke on the presidential election during School Meeting. He shared personal anecdotes and emphasized democracy's role in fostering civic engagement. The conversation, moderated by Quinn Farmer '25 and Nilan Kathir '25, covered Mr. Tong's experience as an attorney general and his work with social media regulation and the opioid crisis. Students appreciated his approach as well as the humor he brought to the conversation. His words were inspiring, arguing for awareness of civil responsibility and the importance of the democratic process.

Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah and Dwayne Betts


Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

On September 17, the authors of the 2024-2025 summer reading selections, Mr. Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah and Mr. Reginald Dwayne Betts, spoke at School Meeting, offering their own reflections on mass incarceration in the United States and the transformative power of storytelling. Mr. Adjei-Brenyah opened with a dramatic reading from his book, *Chain-Gang All-Stars*, immersing students in a dystopian world where prisoners fight to the death in gladiator matches for freedom. Mr. Betts shared how poetry reshaped his life after his own incarceration and how he incorporated his experiences into his writing.

John Della Volpe


Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

As this year's Phillips Speaker, Choate invited Director of Polling at the Harvard Kennedy School and author of *Fight!* Mr. John Della Volpe to campus on November 1. During his talk to Choate students at School Meeting, Mr. Della Volpe educated students on the political and social influence of Generation Z. Highlighting empathy, civic engagement, and resilience, Mr. Della Volpe emphasized Generation Z's ability to reshape the future. In addition to his School Meeting presentation, Mr. Della Volpe visited classes and participated in student Q&A sessions.

Patrick Radden Keefe



Photo by Emily Ma '25/*The Choate News*

On February 19, investigative journalist, author, and podcaster Mr. Patrick Radden Keefe spoke for the annual Adlai Stevenson II '18 Lecture. As a journalist, Mr. Radden Keefe spends months interviewing, researching, and curating facts to understand the individuals he writes about. Through his presentation, he emphasized the importance of journalism and its role in public service, bringing truthful stories to the world. Mr. Radden Keefe left the Choate community with a piece of advice: "Write, tell stories, read narratives, and share them with others."

Ralph Gagliardo


Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

As part of this year's Community Service Day theme, "Housing Justice," Mr. Ralph Gagliardo spoke to the Choate community on September 27 about his own experiences with addiction, incarceration, and homelessness. After the presentation of his music video, *Walk a Mile*, which depicted the daily struggles of homeless people, Mr. Gagliardo encouraged students to consider the humanity of every individual who is facing housing insecurity. "Not every homeless person has the same tale," he said, emphasizing that awareness and empathy are key in eradicating harmful stereotypes.

Emily Oster



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

On May 13, Ms. Emily Oster '98 received the Distinguished Alumni Service Award, the highest recognition the School bestows upon a graduate. In her speech, Ms. Oster described how her successes stemmed from many failures she experienced while authoring papers, applying to graduate schools, and even as a member of *The Choate News* masthead while she was a high school student. Ms. Oster encouraged the Choate community to look at failure as an opportunity to grow and as a stepping stone for future success.

Dr. Joy Buolamwini and Dr. Kate Crawford


Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

On November 12, this year's Thalheimer speakers, Dr. Joy Buolamwini and Dr. Kate Crawford, who authored *Unmasking AI* and *Atlas of AI*, respectively, visited Choate to discuss the ethical and environmental implications of artificial intelligence (AI). In a School Meeting panel moderated by Director of Studies Ms. Ellen Devine, Dr. Crawford and Dr. Buolamwini shared their personal journeys with AI and contemporary topics surrounding AI, such as the risks of generative tools like chatbots and the urgent need for interdisciplinary oversight. The day included class visits, book signings, and reflections on AI's social and ecological footprint.

Ruth Weiner


Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

In honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah, Choate welcomed Holocaust survivor Ms. Ruth Weiner via Zoom to host a live Q&A session. Born and raised in Vienna, Austria, Ms. Weiner recounted her memories of childhood under the Nazi regime. She lived in Vienna until 1938, when she fled first to England and later to the United States, describing the growing antisemitism and fear that followed the Anschluss in 1938. Ms. Weiner shared her story of being Jewish during the Holocaust, and how she was saved by the kindness of others.

Dr. Laurie Santos and Dr. Ethan Kross



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Professor of Psychology at Yale University Dr. Laurie Santos and Professor of Psychology and Management at the University of Michigan Dr. Ethan Kross recorded a live episode of *The Happiness Lab* at Choate on February 4. During School Meeting, they shared how social connections influence emotional well-being and how Choate students can improve their own happiness through recognizing their emotions and social interactions. Dr. Santos and Dr. Kross concluded the live podcast session with actionable advice on emotional health.

Hunter and Tara Davis-Woodhall


Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

As keynote speakers for Choate's 34th annual Diversity Day, Olympic gold medalists Tara Davis-Woodhall and Hunter Woodhall visited campus on January 25 to share their journeys as elite athletes and advocates for justice. Speaking to this year's theme, "Keeping the Torch Lit," the couple reflected on mental health, social media, and identity, offering insight into their experiences with disability, pressure, and purpose. In addition to a School Meeting talk and student Q&A panel, the day concluded with workshops, film screenings, and journaling activities.

ARTS HIGHLIGHTS

A Strong Start

October 31–November 2 & November 14–16, 2024

This fall, the theater department produced two dynamic productions that made the audience laugh, cheer, and reflect.

From October 31-November 2, Choate students performed *The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals* in the Joan Harris Gelb Theater. This horror-comedy musical followed Paul and his colleagues as they tried to save the world from a musical apocalypse and dancing zombies. The musical showcased original choreography by Jordan Dodd '25 and Leanne Parks '25. Director of *The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals*, Ms. Deighna DeRiu, said, "I hope [the audience] enjoyed themselves and that they appreciated the incredible amount of work that the students did."

On November 14-16, students took the play *Eurydice*, which creatively and humorously retold the well-known Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in the 1950s. Because *Eurydice* is a blend of tragedy and comedy, the actors had to explore both sides of emotions for each character. Actor Maya Abeles '28 played one of the Stones, one of six cast members who acted as an ensemble for the main actors. Abeles said, "Especially as a Stone, you fully play off of each other's emotions. It's such a small cast that if one person comes in and they're not into it, then no one's gonna be able to perform the way they want to." Director, Ms. Kate Doak, chose *Eurydice* because the different interpretations of love and loss, as well as its overall message of cherishing memories, remain relevant today.



Sharing Their Craft

November 3, 2024

The Colony Recital Hall hummed with excitement on November 3 as Yale's talented a cappella group, the Whiffenpoofs, stepped through the doors. Organized by the Faculty Advisor of a cappella, Ms. Le'ah Griggs, and Arts Department Manager Ms. Carol Jones, the workshop gave students a rare opportunity to learn: students received one-on-one coaching on breathing, singing, and posture techniques. A cappella member Nana Winston Ashie '27 said, "It was really cool because we also have [small musical phrases before we perform], and [the Whiffenpoofs] just seem really put together. They had really good team dynamics." The collaboration concluded with a Holiday Concert on December 13, where Choate singers performed alongside the Whiffenpoofs on stage.



Steps Meet Stories

December 7, 2024

The combined works of student choreographers and professional teachers created a diverse collection of dances that culminated in the Fall Dance Showcase on December 7. New dancers participated alongside experienced artists, exploring and learning the artistry of dance. This year also marked the introduction of the Dance Program's 2024-2025 Past Forward Guest Artist Initiative. Under the guidance of guest artist M. Brad Beakes, a former member of the Limón Company and current teaching artist for the José Limón Dance Foundation, Choate dancers explored the legacy of modern dance icon José Limón. For the FDS, Mr. Beakes collaborated with students to create an "original movement language that could evoke both the echoes of the past with the voices of the present," Ms. Pamela Newell wrote. The dances spanned a variety of genres and provided audiences with a display of the creativity, vulnerability, and beauty of dance at Choate.

Ensemble & Individual Recitals

Termly

At the end of each term, the campus comes alive with the vibrant sounds of our music ensembles, as the Symphony Orchestra, Concert Orchestra, Jazz Band, Wind Ensemble, Concert Choir, and Choate Chorale take the stage to share months of dedicated work. Directed by Instrumental Ensembles Director Mr. Gene Wie, Arts Department Head Mr. Matthew McLean, and Choral Director Dr. Julie Hagen, students prepared challenging pieces ranging from the classical to the contemporary period, performing in front of the Choate community.

In addition to these performances, individual recitals took place each term. These recitals provided students with a chance to perform as soloists or in smaller chamber groups. Whether through symphonies or solo pieces, these performances remain a highlight of the Arts Program.



"All Hail, *Macbeth!*"

February 20–22, 2025

On February 20-22, William Shakespeare's Macbeth graced the stage of the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) Little Theater. The play highlighted Shakespeare's original language and the portrayal of the 11th century while featuring sword fights, sudden lighting changes, and elaborate costumes. The actors spent their time memorizing Shakespeare's language and worked seamlessly to deliver three amazing performances. In addition to learning their lines, the actors spent countless hours practicing intricate sword-fighting choreography and going over sudden and complex lighting and set changes. Leanne Parks '25 played the lead role of Macbeth, and she successfully demonstrated the slow unraveling of Macbeth's sanity through her acting.

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

Preparation Meets Stage

April 4–6, 2025

Every spring, the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) stage becomes a canvas for storytelling through movement. But what audiences see under the stage lights — synchronized motion and emotional expressions — is only a glimpse of the months-long journey leading up to the Spring Dance Concert. The concert, which took place from April 4-6, featured various student choreographers, dancers, and leaders. They worked for all of fall, winter, and the beginning of spring term, rehearsing every Sunday morning, to bring this unique dance experience to the stage. Despite the intensity, dancers consistently emphasized the sense of connection that grows backstage. "Getting closer with the girls in the dressing room has always been my favorite part of this whole dance concert since I was a freshman," said dancer and choreographer Nao Murata '25. Ultimately, the dance community was able to form new connections and share their love of the art with the larger Choate community.



The Worst *Disaster!* Yet

May 22–24, 2025

Over three exciting evenings from May 22-24, Choate brought Jack Plotnick and Seth Rudetsky's Disaster! to life. Directed by acting teacher Ms. Deighna L. DeRiu, the musical is set in a floating casino in 1979. The musical, which included a total of 28 songs, was a parody of classic disaster films from the '70s. The musical featured a showcase of talented individuals who portrayed a variety of quirky and iconic characters that brought smiles and laughter to the stage. Set to the beloved disco-era hits such as the song "Hot Stuff" and "I Will Survive," Disaster! promised a night of nostalgia, comedic drama, and excitement. Actress Talia Bourdon '25 has enjoyed the upbeat soundtrack of Disaster!, but her favorite part of the show "has been seeing everyone grow into their character. All of the characters in the musical are super zany and eccentric, and watching everyone get more and more into character each rehearsal is a really cool experience."



Composing from the Heart

April 17, 2025

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 shared how she found a voice through music. After moving to the United States, a place that provided her with more opportunities to pursue her passion for composition, Nishimura discovered the ability to evoke emotions within an audience by weaving together melodies and harmonies. The Choate Symphony Orchestra performed Nishimura's own work, Snowberry, after learning from the composer. Nishimura encouraged students to play brightly and broadly by feeling the musical lines within themselves. "I just want to share something [with these students,]" Nishimura reflected after her visit to Choate. "Music can move your heart."



Visuals by Choate Photos, Finn Wikstrom '26, Mr. Gene Wie, and Sofia Schmidt '25

SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

Team 125 Ends Season Undefeated

Fall 2024

This fall, the Varsity Football Team finished another season undefeated. The team credits their success to their discipline, spirit, and mindset of self-improvement, working with Head Trainer Brian Holloway to maintain their performance over the season. According to Head Coach LJ Spinnato, seniors played a key role by "[taking] the reins and [holding] the team accountable." Every week brought new challenges, but the team remained focused on improving their performance. Coach Spinnato said, "[We] tried to focus on becoming better each week." Every snap, sprint, and huddle led to a common goal of victory and built lifelong connections.



Photo courtesy of @choateathletics on Instagram

Deerfield Day: Boars Beat Doors

November 9, 2024

On November 9, 2024, the Wild Boars claimed a huge 6-5-1 overall victory against Choate's rival, Deerfield Academy, during the annual Deerfield Day. The 102-year-old tradition kicked off early in the morning, featuring a roster of Varsity and JV matches throughout the day and concluded with a major 41-0 victory for Choate's Varsity Football team. Varsity Soccer Team player Jamie Lee '27 said, "During the match, the entire other side of the pitch was filled with students and parents. Seeing all the gold and blue, it was just a crazy sight." He added, "I feel like Deerfield Day brought everyone together; it was loud, energetic, and fun." Athletes and students highlighted the amazing day by demonstrating exceptional sportsmanship and positive attitudes, cheering on teammates and peers while displaying their enthusiasm and school spirit all day.



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Loeb's 500th Volleyball Win

September 14, 2024

On September 14, the Girls' Varsity Volleyball Head Coach David Loeb earned his 500th career win with a huge victory over Kent School, marking a notable milestone in his 39-year coaching journey. Starting as a Thirds Volleyball coach, Coach Loeb rose to lead the Varsity team in 2008 and has left a lasting impact on the team through his upbeat and player-centered coaching approach. Co-Captains Cait Ahn '25 and Fernanda Opazo-Aravena '25 praised his supportive and fun nature that makes members of the team feel valued. His motto, "It's not the destination, but the journey," shows how Coach Loeb cherishes each and every moment of the volleyall season. Coach Loeb's 500th win is not just a number, but it's a milestone and reminder of the journey he has had and will continue to have with the Choate volleyball team.



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Signing Days Celebrate Athletes

2024-2025

This year, Choate Rosemary Hall hosted three signing days, where student-athletes signed their National Letter of Intent. A total of 51 student-athletes committed to various divisions within the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA). Each event took place in the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center, where teammates, coaches, families, and friends were brought together to celebrate every signed student's athletic journeys.



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Choate Swim Makes Waves

Winter 2024

The Girls' and Boys' Varsity Swim Team had a sensational season, setting 63 new program Top-10 All-Time performances and smashing school records in the 200-yard medley, 200-yard freestyle, and 400-yard freestyle categories. In their dual meet against Hopkins School, the 200-yard medley relay team, consisting of Neil Alejandro '27, Ryan Liu '26, Daneel Polakoff '25, and Michael Xu '25, broke a school record set back in 2016. The record-breaking streak didn't end there: Liu broke his 100-meter butterfly record from the previous season, and Baz Huang '28 set a new 100-meter breaststroke record. Just a week later, Polakoff, Xu, Liu, and Dylan Kim '26 broke the 400-meter freestyle relay record at Loomis Chaffee. Armed with these achievements, the Boys' Varsity team closed off the season by winning the Founders League Championship for the fourth year in a row.

The Girls' Varsity Swim Team also ended their season with significant time drops and triumphs in the Founders League Championships, such as Claudia Li '26's victory in the 100-yard breaststroke event, Sara Macri '25's win in her 200-yard freestyle race, and Claire Liu '28 placing first in her 50-yard freestyle event. Whether breaking records or cheering on the pool deck, the dedication and unity of the Boys' and Girls' Varsity Swim Team led to a historic and unforgettable swim season.



Photo courtesy of @choateswimdive

A Historic Shutout

Winter 2024



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

The Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey team made history by defeating Canterbury School this winter. With a final score of 6-0 in a shutout on January 15 at the Remsen Arena, the match marked the team's 1000th game. Founded by Coach Polly Packard in 1972, the hockey program has grown to be a significant part of Choate athletics, producing Olympians such as Angela Ruggiero '98, Julie Chu '01, and Hilary Knight '07. The team's accomplishments is the result of generations of guidance from 15 coaches spanning the past 52 years. Assistant Coach James Stanley praised the players' commitment and cooperation, and Former Head Coach Kristen Harder received recognition for her contributions in turning the team into a top-tier program.

Triumphs, Takedowns, and Titles

Winter 2024

During the winter term, many sports teams had their moments to shine, but one team truly stole the spotlight: the Girls' Varsity Wrestling team. Described by Head Coach Ryan Roddy as a "dream season," the team earned top places and took home the gold at tournaments like the New England Championships and the Beast of the East. Near the end of the season, Coach Roddy was recognized as the Girls National Prep Head Coach of the Year at Prep Nationals. Team captain Calli Gilchrist '25 also earned recognition by winning the All-American title after earning 6th place at the U20 World Team Trials. With strong performances and wins, the Girls' Varsity Wrestling team had one of its most successful and competitive seasons to date.



Photo courtesy of @choatewrestling on Instagram

Will Black '25's All-American Run

January 11, 2025

As Choate's first-ever 5-star football player, Will Black '25 competed in the 2025 U.S. Navy All-American Bowl, a prestigious high school football all-star event. The event took place on January 11 at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas, with the best football prospects across the country invited. He described the opportunity as a showcase of his talent to the public and his invitation to the game as "a dream come true." Black is an ESPN national top 100 player and is ranked by On3 as the fourth-best overall player and number one offensive tackle in the country. Following his historical accomplishments as a varsity football player, Black will continue his journey at Notre Dame University this fall, where he hopes to perform for a professional spot one day. Anticipating his future career, he said, "I'm excited to learn as much as I can and reach my potential in college. From there, [I will] see where I can go."



Photo courtesy of Will Black '25

Schwerin '26 Conquers the Peaks

May 15, 2025

This spring, Emma Schwerin '26 became the youngest female to conquer the Seven Summits, the highest mountains in the world. In preparation for her last climb on Mount Everest, Schwerin trained by using the StairMaster machine and a high-altitude machine that helped her improve her physical endurance. She also reviewed routes, planned for potential weather issues, and mentally prepared for her climb to Everest's summit. Schwerin strives to demonstrate the capabilities of women in largely male-dominated sports, like mountineering. On May 15, Schwerin completed her journey of climb ing the Seven Summits with Everest, becoming the youngest woman ever to achieve this record and securing her place in mountaineering and Choate history.



Photo courtesy of Emma Schwerin '26

Wild Boars on Preseason Trips

2024-2025

This year, some of Choate's Varsity sports teams embarked on preseason trips. Over the summer, Choate Boys' Varsity Soccer spent time in the United Kingdom, competing against various local teams. During spring break, the Boys' Varsity Baseball and Girls' Varsity Lacrosse Teams traveled to Florida to learn from professional players, such as lacrosse player Kylie Ohlmiller. In Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, Boys' Varsity Lacrosse spent their break practicing and analyzing college-level lacrosse games. Girls' Varsity Water Polo travelled to California, competing against local high school teams in Irvine and Laguna Beach. These preseason trips allowed Choate's athletes to prepare for the upcoming season and fostered positive team dynamics.



Photo courtesy of @choate.gvl on Instagram

DEPARTING FACULTY

Ms. Amy Salot: Forever an American Studies Icon

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

Respected mentor, beloved colleague, transformational teacher, American Studies icon, and cultural pioneer. These are all words that describe HPRSS and English teacher Ms. Amy Salot, who is retiring from Choate after 39 years of tireless dedication. She departs not quietly but with the reverberation of nearly four decades of impact — echoes of her voice in classrooms, her laughter during dorm duty, and her steady presence in office hours and on courts.

Ms. Salot knew she wanted to be a teacher after her experience of working with kids while coaching tennis during her high school and college summers. Right out of college, Ms. Salot took a job at the Berkshire School, where she met colleague and Choate alumnus Charlie Tierney '81, who often spoke reverently of his alma mater. After visiting Choate for the first time at a squash tournament, Ms. Salot fell in love with the school and applied for the job in 1986.

Initially hired as a history teacher, Ms. Salot taught U.S. history, geography, and even a stint in moral reasoning. Over time, her American Studies background from Amherst College positioned her uniquely to teach both the English and History side of the American Studies program. She became one of the early educators to truly bridge the disciplines, working alongside colleagues like Mr. Ned Gallagher and Mr. Steven Farrell.

Outside of the classroom, Ms. Salot served as form dean for the Classes of '99 and '02, Associate Dean of Students, Director of Residential Life, Judicial Committee advisor, and coach for Girls' Varsity Squash and Girls' Varsity Tennis. She now serves as a house mentor in McCook and coaches Fitness and Conditioning and Girls' JV Golf. In the dorms, she is a familiar, grounding presence — firm, funny, and fiercely protective of her students. "There was never a topic too silly or too serious for her," Friday Acuna '26, a three-year McCook resident, said.

In the classroom, she is equally dynamic. "It was annoying at first," Isa Marvin '26, one of her American Studies students, admitted, "because she kept saying 'Why? Push the idea further' ... But I really think it's made me a much better writer and a better thinker, and I think that sentiment is shared by everyone." Acuna agreed, "She's the most passionate educator I've ever met ... She just asks and asks and asks, and I think it really works."

Ms. Salot brings structure, spontaneity, and soul to the classroom. Her quizzes are unexpected. Her humor, sharp. Her love for literature and history? Contagious. "Her celebration of our collective nerdiness is fantastic," HPRSS faculty and Athletics Director Mr. Thomas White said. Mr. White and Ms. Salot have been co-teachers of American Studies for over a decade.

Her proudest achievements from her teaching career are her students — those who became writers, professors, and public servants. "I'm proud of them and what they're doing now for our country," she said.

Among students and faculty alike, Ms. Salot is synonymous with American Studies. "She's the mother of American Studies," English teacher Dr. Amber Hodge, who has co-taught the course with her for the past five years, said. "She's the bridge between departments ... When she speaks, it's impactful."



Photo courtesy of Ms. Amy Salot



Graphic by Rachel Fan '27/*The Choate News*

Mr. White echoed this sentiment: "She mentored me, and I think she informally mentored a lot of the new, younger faculty and has helped them progress in their careers," he said.

As much as she built programs, Ms. Salot built people. HPRSS Department Head Ms. Kyra Jenney described her as "a big ear and a soft shoulder" — a mentor to new teachers, a sounding board for colleagues, and a friend. "She's a team person and community person in every sense of the word," Ms. Jenney said. "She's not someone you can replace in the fabric of the school or the department."

English Department Head Mr. Mark Gosztyla praised Ms. Salot's unique balance of rigor and kindness. "One of the things that stands out to me is the way that she holds the students to high expectations, but she does that through a combination of humor and love," he said. "She supports the students as they strive for that and supports them whether they reach those high expectations or not."

But Ms. Salot's influence goes far beyond academics. Her presence helped catalyze a cultural transformation at Choate — one that has made the school more inclusive and humane. "I think she has pushed the department to think about history in different ways, to open up the kind[s] of voices that we're hearing, the perspectives that we're bringing in," Mr. White said.

"The culture has changed a lot," Ms. Salot reflected. "We were far more white and male-centered when I first came. The History Department was white males. There was no one of color, basically, and I was one of three women in the department, and we were basically voiceless. But now the number of students and faculty of color ... and the number of students and faculty who are LGBTQ is just amazing."

When Ms. Salot and her wife, Science teacher Ms. Fran O'Donoghue, first met at Choate, they were forced to hide their relationship. "Fran and I were 16 years into our relationship when we first moved into the dorm together, because it just wasn't allowed. I think our lives would have been very, very different. We probably would have had children if we had been allowed to live together," she said. However, Ms. Salot is pleased that Choate has now made measurable progress towards recognizing same-sex relationships and creating a community that is supporting, accepting, and uplifting. "I love that about Choate," Ms. Salot said.

"There's so many ways she has left her mark on this broader community culturally," Ms. Jenney emphasized. "She brought a lot of firsts to the community, pushing for all-gender housing, to be more thoughtful about non-classroom related things that impact students' lives ... We're a very queer friendly campus for faculty, and that is in large part because of Ms. Salot and Fran ... These things make a huge difference. They help retain faculty. They help make us feel like this is a home where we want to live and have our families, and so that cultural piece hopefully isn't lost. She's a kick ass teacher, an amazing educator, but also just an amazing human being."

Retirement will be anything but idle for Ms. Salot — in her own words, "we're going to play." She and Ms. O'Donoghue will split time between their longtime home on Lake Winnipesaukee in New Hampshire and their new home in Asheville, North Carolina, where they will spend their days hiking, reading, cooking, and "doing whatever the hell [they] want to."

If she had one last lesson to teach, it would be about presence. "Embrace the day and don't spend all of your time working for something in the future, but rather spend your time enjoying what you're doing right now," she said.

Ms. Salot will miss the little things: classroom discussions, walking on campus, hearing students call her. "I love that feeling of being known," she said. Her students and colleagues will miss her just as much. "She is my guiding star," Dr. Hodge said. "I don't know what I'll do without her."

"Thank you for making me understand that it's okay to be insufferable — and to write forever," Acuna said.

Third-form dean, HPRSS teacher, and fellow longtime colleague Mr. Jonas Akins said, "We'll be a weaker community without her ... I hope she knows how much of a difference she has made and how much her impact will persist even as she leaves campus."

In her final words, Ms. Salot captured it best: "Thank you. To everybody, because I've taken little pieces of everyone's heart and merged them with my own throughout my career here. So I'm taking you all with me."

And so she will. Goodbye, Ms. Salot. Thank you — for your wisdom, your courage, and your incomparable presence. You were, and are, an icon.

Fiona Fu *may be reached at ffu25@choate.edu.*

Thank You, Mr. Jeremy Oliver!

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Reporter

As Choate bids farewell to Mathematics and Computer Science teacher Mr. Jeremy Oliver, students and faculty reflect on the thoughtful impact he brought to campus. For many students, he has been more than just a teacher or advisor; he is cherished as a trusted mentor and friend.

In the math office, Mr. Oliver is known not only for his innovative thinking but also for his joy and contagious curiosity. Mathematics teacher Mr. Zach Kafoglis, who shared an office with him, recalls many conversations about "life at Choate, math class, or just what's going on in the world." He described Mr. Oliver as inquisitive and kind. One memory that stood out to Mr. Kafoglis was the day they stacked textbooks to see how high they could make a Slinky drop across the office — an activity that perfectly embodied the playful spirit of Mr. Oliver's character.

Mr. Kafoglis said that Mr. Oliver's "passion for math is very clear and contagious," and that he always looks for "new and interesting ways to make math accessible." His legacy, according to Mr. Kafoglis, lies in introducing new angles to teaching and departmental collaboration, an aspect that will be missed but hopefully carried forward.

Math and Computer Science Department Head Mrs. Andrea Sorrells, who worked closely with him, shared that Mr. Oliver was a cheerful face to his fellow teachers. "I consider Mr. Oliver a personal friend," she said. "I am greatly going to miss seeing him daily in the math office, hearing him sing while he makes his copies, or laughing with him about something that's happened during our day."

Students also speak of Mr. Oliver's supportive and approachable nature. Leo Wei '27 described him as someone who "supported [him] immensely," especially when he was stressed or sick. After a long, exhausting day consisting of an AP Calculus BC exam, a sports match, and wind ensemble rehearsal, Wei returned to the dorm and found Mr. Oliver there, ready to play a dice game and chat. "It really helped me relax," he said. "It was a 14-hour-long day, and he helped me a lot." Matthew Zhang '28, one of Mr. Oliver's advisees, said, "He's just someone who's there when you need him."

Reflecting on his eight years in Choate's Math and Computer Science department, Mr. Oliver said he is most proud of his relationships with students. Whether guiding them through a math problem, playing a board game in the dorm, or simply sitting down for a conversation, he made an impact on the lives of Choate students. As Choate sends him off, his colleagues and students carry with them the best parts of what he brought to campus — curiosity, compassion, and the joy of lifelong learning.

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

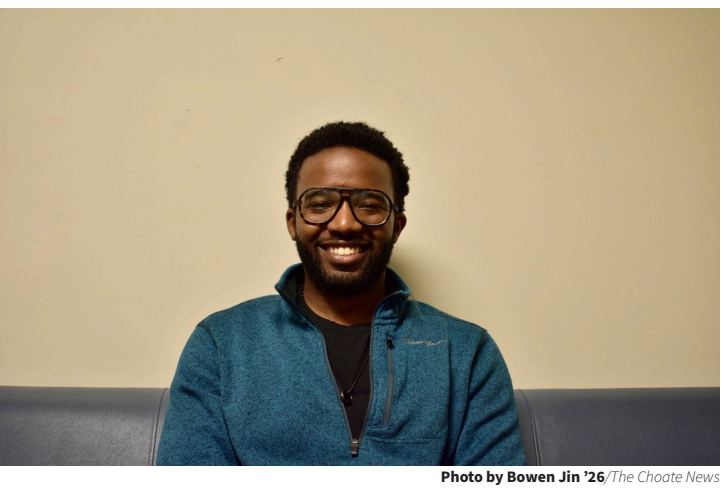


Photo by Bowen Jin '26/*The Choate News*

Mr. John Paleski: The Backbone of Choate's Athletic Programs

By **Harry Kim '28**
Copy Editor

After 27 years of hard work and dedication, Assistant Equipment Room Manager Mr. John M. Paleski retired on April 18. At the heart of Choate athletics, Mr. Paleski's work behind the cages supported athletes and carried the Wild Boars to victory.

Mr. Paleski was responsible for various duties. A former football coach for Youth Football in East Haven, he was exceptional at repairing helmets and setting up the field for athletes to practice and compete. He also played a key role in customer service at the equipment room window daily, helping with laundry, checking out uniforms for Choate's interscholastic teams, and organizing necessary equipment.

Mr. Paleski has been a certified member of the Athletic Equipment Managers Association since 1998. The association provided an opportunity for equipment managers from different schools to connect through various opportunities. Assistant Coordinator of Athletic Operations and Head Equipment Manager Mr. Justin Whittaker said, "[Mr. Paleski] attended [Athletic Equipment Managers Association] conventions as an Equipment Manager throughout his 27 years at Choate. We bonded a lot over our involvement with this association."

Mr. Paleski's colleague, Assistant Equipment Room Manager Ms. Dawn McGrath, also spoke about her experience working with Mr. Paleski: "We worked together for 17 years, and we worked together very well. He was always here and helped out with everything."

Outside of the equipment room, Mr. Paleski is an avid sports fan. He followed the Los Angeles Lakers and the Brooklyn Nets religiously.

Most importantly, he loved seeing Choate teams excel and was proud to watch individual athletes thrive. Especially, graduated Choate students who competing at the college level or even professionally. Mr. Paleski's dedication and diligence as an Assistant Equipment Room Manager helped student athletes at Choate perform at their best level, and his commitment to his work will not be forgotten.



Photo courtesy of Choate Directory

Harry Kim *may be reached at hkim28@choate.edu.*

After 43 Years, Mr. Neil Shimmield Signs Off



Photo Courtesy of Mr. Neil Shimmield

By **Eshana Hora '27 and Teya Tejavibulya '28**
Copy Editors

Former HPRSS and Mathematics teacher Mr. Neil Shimmield was an integral member of the Choate community. After teaching at Choate for 43 years, Mr. Shimmield retired in the fall of 2024.

In his primary role as an HPRSS teacher, Mr. Shimmield helped the department rework the World History curriculum by bringing clarity and structure to course expectations and contributing to broader departmental conversations about content and pedagogy.

Additionally, Mr. Shimmield taught Islamic Civilizations of the Middle East, Honors, and The Modern Middle East, Honors, both integral to the Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies Signature Program. Earlier in his Choate career, Mr. Shimmield also taught various algebra courses in the Math Department.

One of Mr. Shimmield's most prominent roles at Choate was serving as the advisor for the debate team. HPRSS Department Head Ms. Kyra Jenney described Mr. Shimmield as "an expert in the public speaking and parliamentary debate world." For over 30 years, Mr. Shimmield spearheaded the debate program, playing a pivotal role in Choate Debate's many successes.

"He is very passionate," Nikki Moussavi '27 said, recalling Mr. Shimmield's World History Honors class. "He was a teacher who really loved to be here [at Choate] ... he loved his job and the kids he was working with," she added, emphasizing Mr. Shimmield's keen love for teaching and tough, but good-natured support in the classroom. "He really pushed my whole class to improve [our] writing."

According to Alan Lu '27, Mr. Shimmield taught his students that recognizing and meeting each teacher's academic expectations is essential for success. With his formulated teaching style and strict rules, Lu had to adapt to the classroom atmosphere. "It was easy to tell what he wanted for an assignment ... [his teaching] was very stable," Lu said.

Eliza O'Neill '27 said that Mr. Shimmield was "one of [her] favorite teachers," explaining that "[Mr. Shimmield] had a genuine love of learning and inspired each student to cultivate the same passion." In the classroom, Mr. Shimmield encouraged students to continue learning and asking questions, fostering a curious classroom community. "He encouraged us to never stop asking thought-provoking questions," O'Neill said.

Ms. Jenney described Mr. Shimmield as distinctly scholastic — always immersed in a book and ready to hold conversation with other teachers. Ms. Jenney valued his generosity in sharing articles and documentaries and providing valuable resources to the department.

Although retired from Choate, Mr. Shimmield continues to share his passion for the humanities from his home in Wallingford. He now dedicates approximately 18 hours each week to teach various subjects — ranging from Shakespeare to World History — to students in China via Zoom. "I'm only retired from meetings, advising, and dorm duty," Mr. Shimmield said.

Mr. Shimmield's retirement marks the end of 43 years of unwavering commitment to students and colleagues at Choate. Through his passion, expertise, and mentorship, Mr. Shimmield helped enkindle confident, articulate speakers and critical thinkers. Though he no longer sits at the cherished Harkness table with his collection of dice and charming accent, his legacy of curiosity and love for learning will continue to inspire the Choate community for many years to come.

Eshana Hora and Teya Tejavibulya *may be reached at ehora27@choate.edu and ttejavibulya28@choate.edu.*

DEPARTING FACULTY

Trail Blazer Ms. Fran O'Donoghue Bids Farewell

By **Eshana Hora '27**
Copy Editor

What started as a plan to teach for a few years before going to medical school turned into an impactful multi-decade career at Choate for Science teacher Ms. Fran O'Donoghue, known as "Fran" by both students and colleagues. Since her arrival on campus in 1984, Ms. O'Donoghue has become a key figure in the community and has contributed to every aspect of Choate life, from teaching classes and coaching sports to being a house mentor. Now, 40 years later, she is retiring.

While she never believed she would teach at Choate for long, Ms. O'Donoghue quickly formed connections with students and faculty and became a core part of the community. She recalled that when she was being interviewed for a teaching position, "[The interviewer] said…'I think you're going to stay here.' And he was right."

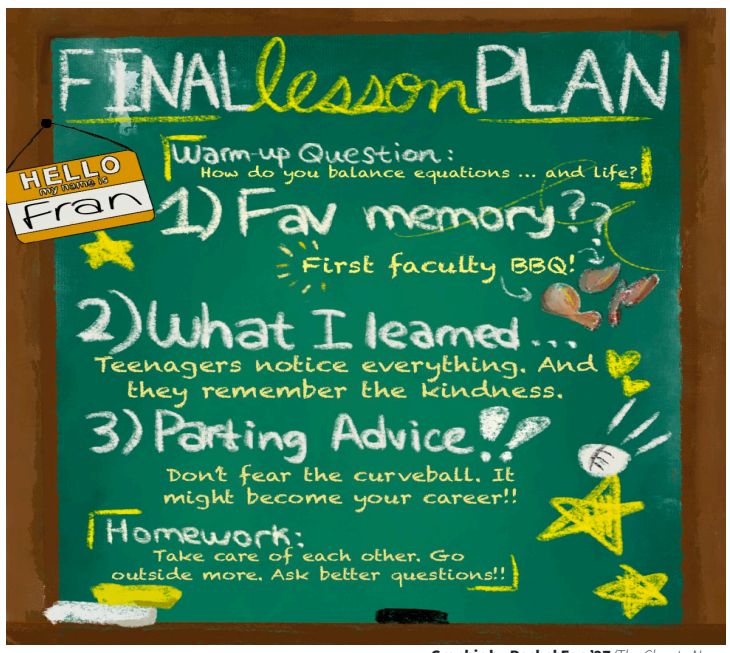
Ms. O'Donoghue has balanced various roles during her time at Choate. While she had no previous teaching experience, she quickly settled into her role as a Chemistry 350 and Physics 200 teacher. "I knew nothing about teaching … it was all learning, learning, learning," she said.

Outside of the classroom, Ms. O'Donoghue was a Girls' Varsity Field Hockey and Girls' Varsity Lacrosse coach for several years. As a multi-sport athlete at Dartmouth College, where she played lacrosse and field hockey, Ms. O'Donoghue brought years of experience and passion to the teams she coached. When coaching, she worked tirelessly to instill pride and build a sense of camaraderie and unity within each team, both on and off the field. While Ms. O'Donoghue stepped back from coaching for a few years, her love of coaching brought her back to lacrosse when she returned last spring as an assistant coach for the Girls' Varsity Lacrosse team. From her first day onwards, her impact was felt immediately by her fellow coaches and players. "Fran was our rock last season, bringing wisdom, positivity, and integrity to the program every single day," said Girls' Varsity Lacrosse Assistant Coach Ms. Abby Kandel. She added that Ms. O'Donoghue's focus and wisdom shaped the team, and she struck a key balance between working hard and having fun.

Most recently, Ms. O'Donoghue received the M.D. Nadal Sportsmanship Award, presented to a coach who "play[s] by the rules, accept[s] victory or defeat graciously, [and] respect[s] all who assemble and participate."



Photo courtesy of Ms. Fran O'Donoghue



Graphic by Rachel Fan '27/*The Choate News*

Over the years, Ms. O'Donoghue has served as a house mentor in almost every corner of campus. "I started in an all-boys fourth-form dorm, and then I moved to an all-girls senior dorm. Then I moved to Nichols, Hill House … then I moved to McCook … then Pitman … [I spent] almost 30 years in a dorm," she said.

In addition to teaching, coaching, and being a house mentor, Ms. O'Donoghue also spent many years as a form dean, guiding students through the various stages of their Choate careers: "I was a dean for the Class of 1998 and the Class of 2001, and then I was the third-form dean for … six or eight years," she said.

Out of all her accomplishments, Ms. O'Donoghue said, "If I could rank the things, coaching was my favorite thing to do, living in a dorm was my second favorite … and teaching was my third." She highlighted the lasting bonds she built with many of the players she coached, and how their connection has remained strong throughout the years.

Beyond her official roles at Choate, Ms. O'Donoghue has become well-known for her end-of-year barbecue, affectionately known as "Fran's Barbecue." Fellow Chemistry teacher Mr. Will Morris explained, "Ever since her first year [at Choate], she's been organizing a picnic for all the faculty families after the students all leave."

"There were about 23 of us who were at the end of the [faculty] line [at graduation]," Ms. O'Donoghue explained. "We realized that the dining hall was going to be closed that night, so … I said, 'We'll have a cookout at my house.'" The event has now become a cherished tradition for faculty members and their families, allowing them to relax and reconnect with one another after a busy school year.

Ms. O'Donoghue's impact extends beyond her students and colleagues, many of whom she had mentored during her tenure. "When I started teaching at Choate in 2001, I was a new teacher and was teaching physics. Mrs. O'Donoghue was one of the senior teachers who was a real mentor for me and helped me get a clear vision of what [a] really amazing teaching should look like," Mr. Morris said. Her humility, dedication to her students, and all the work she did behind the scenes were qualities that left a lasting impact on him and other science teachers.

In the classroom, Ms. O'Donoghue is known for her emphasis on critical thinking and the continuous support and encouragement she gives her students. "She's definitely made me a better problem solver, not just in academics, but in general," said Arushi Krishnan '27, a student in her Chemistry 350 course. "I'm leaving this class with a much different skill set than I came in with because of her."

However, her care for students extends beyond academics. "She's also been incredible for me because she's been helping along with my [running] injury … I don't think I could come back from my injury if it [weren't] for her," shared Kino Liu '26, another student in her Chemistry 350 class. As an avid runner herself, Ms. O'Donoghue helped guide Liu through every step of the recovery process.

As Ms. O'Donoghue looks to the future, she plans to spend more time outdoors without a restrictive schedule. "I love my job, but it limits what I can do for fun and when I can do it," she explained. "I love to go outside and play … [so] I'm really looking forward to being able to exercise at any time of the day as long as I want," she said. After years of living by the school calendar, she is looking forward to having time to run, bike, or travel without the pressure of classes, meetings, or games. "If I want to go for a three-hour run, I can. Or a three-hour bike ride. And I don't have to be back for class or a game," she said.

She and her wife, Humanities teacher Ms. Amy Salot, plan to split their time between New Hampshire and North Carolina, giving them both the time and space to enjoy what they love. Ms. O'Donoghue has left her four-decade-long mark on Choate. Whether as a coach, teacher, colleague, or house advisor, her influence has been felt across the community. "I think her legacy at this school will be as a trailblazer … Her impact has been wide and deep in so many areas of school life. It's extraordinary … she's one of a kind," Mr. Morris said.

Eshana Hora *may be reached ehora27@choate.edu*

Mx. Aidan Wolff-King Says Goodbye to Choate

By **Rhea Doshi '27**
Copy Editor

Since their first day on campus, English teacher Mx. Aidan Wolff-King has brought compassion, critical thought, and creativity to the English department, inviting students to voice their opinions and explore every perspective. Over the last two years, their time at Choate has left an indelible mark, not just on the curriculum but in the hearts of many. Beyond teaching English classes, Mx. Wolff King enjoys coaching the Varsity Girl's Crew Team and playing ultimate frisbee.

Reflecting on their Choate years, Mx. Wolff-King said, "I knew I wanted to continue teaching writing and close reading to a group of interested, engaged students, and Choate of course has that in abundance. A great department didn't hurt either." They have taught courses such as Literature in a Global Context, Reading and Writing Poetry, and developed a new syllabus for Art of the Essay. "I'm proud to have developed syllabi for several classes, and I appreciate the experiences that have been given to me by Choate in my growth as an educator. I'm also very proud of the relationships that I've made with my students and with my colleagues," they said.

As they prepare to start their new life in New York City, they look forward to reconnecting with former friends and playing ultimate frisbee. They will miss lots of things about Choate: the morning walk to campus, the beautiful views on the way, going to Jaya's Kitchen, and perhaps most of all, the students they will no longer be able to see graduate. "One of the all-time favorite memories of mine is when students take class pictures of themselves or do creative writing and turn it into graphic stories — the drawings created are always such a joy," Mx. Wolff-King said.

Varsity Girls' Crew Member Norah Wang '27 recalled Mx. Wolff-King was instrumental in her training as a new coxswain. "There was one day when it was incredibly rainy and we still went out … I was scared, but in the end, they were there to make sure that I was okay," Wang said. Sofie Leenheer '27 echos Wang's sentiment regarding Mx. Wolff King's positive presence: "I love the energy they bring to practice and long race days, while always coaching with an optimistic and encouraging attitude," she said. Lucy McCutcheon '28, a novice rower this season, said, "I love how Mx. Wolff-King gives us individual fist bumps when we are getting ready for our races."

As they prepare for the next chapter, the Choate community thanks them and sends them off with much gratitude — and a hope that they will know how much they will be missed!

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



Photo courtesy of Mx. Aidan Wolff-King

DR. MATTHEW BARDOE'S 14 YEAR LEGACY

By **Rhea Doshi '27**
Copy Editor

After 14 years of teaching and serving as department chair, Math and Computer Science teacher Dr. Matthew Bardoe is set to leave Choate, a school he now considers home. From his first impression to his final reflection, Dr. Bardoe's impact on the school has included inspiration, education, and deep appreciation.

Before coming to Choate, Dr. Bardoe taught at a private day school in Chicago. He was drawn to the idea of being in a boarding school environment — one where learning did not end at the classroom door. "I saw a lot of really smart kids sent off to boarding school," he said, "and I thought maybe I could teach those smart kids instead of these smart kids who stayed behind."

That decision brought him to Choate, where he was quickly impressed by the quality of the individuals. "Choate's an amazing school," Dr. Bardoe recalled. "It has amazing facilities, amazing students, and amazing teachers." Even for a veteran educator, he was impressed by his colleagues. "I considered myself a good teacher, but the people that I was surrounded by were so amazing and developed such amazing relationships with students that I found the school incredibly inspiring."

During his time at Choate, Dr. Bardoe was not just a teacher but also Chair of the Mathematics and Computer Science Department, a job that he held for eight years before taking a step back to focus on teaching mathematics and computer science. In the classroom, he remained an eager learner himself, often amazed by the talent and curiosity of his own students. "I've had so many students who were smarter than me sitting in the classroom," he explained. "There's just a million things the students have taught me that I would never have learned otherwise."

Dr. Bardoe also spoke about the relationships that grew from those moments — the day-to-day moments that, over time, came to mean the most. "There are a lot of students who are important to me, and I will be rooting for them all their lives," he said.

Jeremiah Olubowale '25, a student in Dr. Bardoe's Statistics, Honors class, expressed his deep admiration for him as a teacher and mentor. When asked to provide a final message, Jeremiah stated that Mr. Bardoe "is 100% the best Statistics teacher in the world." While Olubowale will miss him, he will also appreciate the lasting impact Dr. Bardoe has had on his Choate academic and school life. "Dr. Bardoe is very engaging and very supportive with extra help. I think he caught on that I'm interested in statistics, so he always goes beyond the curriculum and finds ways to explain how these statistics concepts are applicable outside of the classroom," he said.

Dr. Bardoe expressed his feelings about leaving Choate. "The students, the faculty, the buildings — these are all things which I will miss very much," he said. "This will always be a little bit of home to me. This is where my children were raised," he said.

To new teachers, he offers simple but useful advice: pace yourself. "It's more of a marathon than a sprint," Dr. Bardoe said. "You have to set some boundaries for yourself so that you have a little bit of life to yourself."

Choate has deeply affected Dr. Bardoe on both a personal and professional level. When he began working at Choate, his kids were in third grade and kindergarten. Now, they're in college. "It's been an incredible community — incredible people who are just so committed and really seeking to be on the cutting edge of what's new and where things are headed," he said.

As Dr. Bardoe concludes this chapter, he leaves behind a legacy not only of mathematics and computer science but of humility, curiosity, and genuine care for his students, his peers, and the Choate community as a whole.

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



Photo courtesy of Dr. Matthew Bardoe

SENIOR SPEECHES

John Jannotta



Photo courtesy of John Jannotta '25

Choate markets itself as a playground of opportunity — a place where you can be anything you dream of — but my first week of freshman year, it did not feel like that.

I was 4'11", rocking a pair of jorts down to my knees, a sublime t-shirt, and I traveled around solely by skateboard. So, the week of freshman tomfoolery progressed, and it was time for my first (non-disciplinary) Dean's meeting. For all the four-year seniors and long-time faculty out there, you probably remember Nancy Miller. Mrs. Miller, so I had heard, was a scary old Dean who refused to put up with shenanigans, even unassuming young freshmen. Obviously, I wore the best piece of clothing I had — my Grateful Dead baja hoodie. I sat down for our meeting, shaking in my seat as Mrs. Miller stared at me intensely through her thick glasses. She sat in silence for a second, before sternly remarking, "You know that hoodie you're wearing, that's called a drug rug." I stammered and rambled, trying to come up with a response, "I'm, I'm sorry, I didn't know, I —." She cut me off. "I LOVE those things, you know. I was a hippie back in the day and I wore those all the time!" Mrs. Miller and I then had a long talk about her time in California back in the 60s. It was awesome.

I came out of that meeting feeling differently about Choate. Though I felt like an outcast at first, frowned upon by the administration and my fellow peers, that meeting gave me a sense of belonging I had never felt before — I knew I was meant to be a wild boar. After that, I tried to be a bigger part of my community, but it did not come easy…

I joined the Choate Grilling Club. Cooking wasn't natural to me. I think this was a genetic issue — my mom's specialties growing up were black bacon and medium rare chicken. The first time I touched my home grill it ended in a visit from the fire department. As such, I worked as a "grilling promoter" at first — my job was to scream at people and force them to try our burgers. But my efforts paid off, and by sophomore year, I moved up the rankings to Assistant Chef…and may or may not have started a massive grease fire that put our club out of commission for months. I didn't know it at the time, but that incident would give us the courage to invest in a pristine new Blackstone. I eventually became President of the club, and anyone who's tried our burgers knows they taste fantastic.

I continued to skateboard, and had great support from the Choate faculty. Mr. Jonas Akins was my biggest fan, and he would constantly cheer me on, yelling "PUT ON A HELMET!" I deserved the yelling, but I did eventually learn a kickflip, and that night when I returned to the dorm, I found all my prefects standing on the front steps of Memorial House (Mem) ready to congratulate me.

In the depths of the Mem basement late freshman fall, I learned our dorm advisor, Ms. Aliya Cox, had recommended me for the Choate Diving Team. When asked about it, I said something along the lines of "What kind of idiot would do diving? That's the last sport I'd ever do." But after a convincing email from the coach promising to teach me cool flips, and the realization that it was between diving and the Thirds' Squash Team, I went to a diving practice. The coach, Mr. Ben Small, was at first optimistic for some new freshman talent, and believed my skateboarding skills would translate to diving prowess. He believed wrong. For a good two years, my best dive was the belly flop. But eventually with time, practice, and many slams, I came into my own, captaining the team and "learning cool flips." More importantly, I never got forced into wearing a speedo.

I also decided it was time to tap into politics. Sophomore year I applied to the John F. Kennedy Program in Government and Public Service (JFK), and I initiated my student council campaign. I was crazy enthusiastic about this, putting hours into my speech and essays. When the time came to recite what I had practiced, I took the stage wearing sunglasses and a parka. Not only did I look stupid, but my speech was comprised solely of empty promises and poorly timed Julius Caesar quotes. I lost the race in a landslide. That same week, I got rejected from the JFK program. Instead of giving up on these goals, I got involved in local politics. After a year, I decided I wouldn't run again for Form Representative on the Student Council. Instead, I became the Student Body Vice President.

Now, you would think by senior year I would have it all figured out… everything except for my fall sport. Mr. Ned Gallagher was my teacher that term in Government I, and you know, I wanted that A, which led me to join Choate Cross Country, or as I like to call it, HELL. I lasted two days. After a fateful practice, I remembered an announcement from School Meeting earlier that week — there were auditions for the fall play, Eurydice, at 6 p.m.. It was 5:50, but screw it, I had nothing better to do. Somehow, I landed a good role as Orpehus in the fall production, and discovered a new passion of mine in the process.

I could go on about other accomplishments of mine — I could go on even longer about my failures, but I think my point is clear. The Choate experience is a murky one, but you will succeed as long as you stay true to yourself, and more importantly, try everything — even if it takes a few belly flops and serving a couple hockey pucks to those who expected a burger.

But here's the thing: I never did it alone. I always had the Choate community behind me. Don't get me wrong, it won't always feel that way. You'll have lonely nights where the only solace is the common room couch due to a plumbing leak in your room. You'll have moments where you wake up with an entire raw fish under your pillow, get intentionally puked on at the carnival, or blow up your dorm's microwave. Yet, you'll also have many more pleasant memories — legendary late night dorm antics, playing spikeball on a beautiful spring day, cheering for Choate as you watch Deerfield get crushed, cooking a steak to perfection with your friends, taking an ice bath in the waterfall during a blizzard, destroying a couple pizzas from Sally's Apizza, finding joy in something as simple as a conversation in the dining hall, or emerging from a particularly insightful class discussion.

Choate isn't perfect, and it doesn't expect any of us to be. But, this place will teach you to

be an individual, a free thinker, and you'll be provided with a plethora of resources to become the most important thing of all: yourself. I'll end this speech with how I began it — while I first doubted what Choate had to offer me, as a four year senior, I can confidently say this place is just how I described it: a playground of opportunity.

Joyce Liu



Photo courtesy of Joyce Liu '25

Someone very, very wise once said the words: "I feel like a baked potato. Warm. Overwhelmed. Mostly starch."

Ok. That was me. Freshman year. In one of the first classes of Dr. Mary Roca's Introduction to Literature course, on a day way too hot for the stuffy, air-condition-less classroom on the first floor of the Paul Mellon Humanities building. I remember this moment not because it was particularly memorable (because let's be honest — it wasn't), but because I recently found that journal entry we jotted down at the start of class while nostalgically scrolling through my Google Docs history. And those were the starting words.

"I feel like a baked potato. Warm. Overwhelmed. Mostly starch."

When I first got to Choate, I was lost. For sure, physically lost. Having never toured the school before due to the struggles of an international student during Covid-19, I spent my first week here pretending I knew exactly where I was going — walking fast, looking busy, and avoiding eye contact.

Which, by the way, is a terrible strategy. No one thought I needed help. So obviously… I didn't get any. But more than that, I was mentally lost. I didn't know who I was here yet. Everyone around me seemed so confident, so polished — like they'd been here for years, and already knew what they wanted to do in 10 years. Meanwhile, I was just hoping I didn't mix up Hill House and Memorial House again.

But now that I look back, I think I was fooled by the same strategy I was using myself — the "pretend-to-know-everything-so-no-one-sees-you're-terrified" strategy. I guess we really are all the same. And honestly? During my first few weeks of freshman year, I spent a lot of time trying to adapt by shrinking. I wanted to fit in so badly that I started sanding down the weird little edges of myself that had made me… me. I was scared that being too much of something — too loud, too uncertain, too different — would mean I didn't belong.

But… plot twist: Choate didn't let me shrink. Not for long.

Choate reminds me of those wheels in our ceramics class. We're the clay. And once you're on that wheel, it spins– sometimes so fast you feel like you're going to lose balance, or fly off completely. But just when you're about to collapse, someone — a friend, a teacher, a dorm parent, an advisor — will reach out and center you.

That's how Choate works. It pushes and pulls you at the same time — intensely, constantly. It's frantically waking up at 8:13 a.m. and sprinting to class in your slippers because you're on your last late before detention, while still trying to stuff a quick breakfast into your mouth.

It's sitting in the library at 9 p.m. studying for your Chemistry test, with 10 Organic Chemistry Tutor videos open, your sanity just barely intact, and your will to live… on tab 11. It's bombing your first, ever physics test, the multiple choice section, of course. But then at lunch, you start laughing so hard in the dining hall you forget, for a moment, that anything was ever wrong.

The stress? Oh, of course it's real. The kind of stress where you measure time in units of caffeine. Where "I'm good" really means "I'm surviving by sheer willpower." Where crying is more like an act of emotional hydration.

But here's the thing: Choate is not hard for the sake of being hard and torturous. It's hard because it asks you to meet your potential — not just academically, but as a person too. It wants you to be curious, to be kind, to be accountable. It challenges your intellect and your character at the same time. And while it doesn't always give you the answers, it gives you the questions, even if they come in the form of challenges. But sometimes, that could be much more powerful.

We've all had moments when we felt like we were breaking. A failed test. A heartbreak. A moment where we just didn't feel enough. But in those moments, Choate didn't leave us alone, and instead quietly put people around us who reminded us how to stay whole, who held onto us to stop us from flying off the spinning wheel.

Choate has convinced me that an environment truly shapes its people. And here, where everything moves fast and expectations run high, I've learned that pace doesn't have to equal pressure. Growth doesn't always look graceful — sometimes it looks like almost falling apart, and then rebuilding stronger than before. But through it all, the best parts of this place will stay, no matter what. And when we leave here — we'll still carry the best parts of this place with us. Because it shaped us well, in the ways we deserve.

And now, we get to shape the world. Even if, sometimes, we still feel like a slightly overwhelmed baked potato.

XIU LIM

This summer, when families around the world start researching where to send their kids for high school, some will end up typing "choate.edu" into their browser. And the first thing they'll see — big, bold, and bright yellow—are the words: BE UNDEFINABLE.

I remember the first time I saw that. I raised an eyebrow, and maybe cringed a little — no offense to the marketing team. Because if you've actually spent time at Choate, you know the pressure isn't to be undefinable. It's to be strategically definable. To have a niche. A "spike." A narrative. Something neat enough to fit into a Common App essay or make a college interviewer nod solemnly. Even Choate's official "Be Undefinable" video opens by asking, "How do you want to define yourself?" — shortly before showing footage of someone dancing their heart out in the old dining hall, for some reason.

As for me, I'm not sure how I'd define myself. I could start with the basics: Korean, Catholic, 5'11" but unwilling to round up because I live in perpetual fear that someone who's actually six feet tall will stand next to me and expose me for the fraud I am. Yet that list feels more like a checklist than a portrait of a person.

I could keep going, defining myself by my favorite subjects – history, politics, econ – your typical JFK kid with too many opinions on too many topics he knows too little about, someone who treats debating Jason Cao '25 in class like a sport (one he mostly wins and I mostly lose). Then again, my interests constantly change: I seriously considered being a mathy-robotics kid when I first arrived – until I saw my peers taking Precalculus freshman year and decided to retreat quietly into the humanities. In a world that demands you market yourself with tidy definitions, I had none to give.

Then I read about someone named Bill, to whom I've since grown oddly attached. He was, by all accounts, "fragile, socially insecure, and chronically indecisive." He bounced from science to painting, back to science, then to medicine, finally becoming a professor in 1872. But even then, he kept second-guessing everything. His diary entries from 1905 — when he was in his sixties — reads like this:

☐ Oct 28: "Resign!!!"
☐ Nov 4: "Resign?"
☐ Nov 16: "Don't resign"
☐ Dec 9: "Teach here next year"

The dilly-dallying spilled into Bill's romantic life. A year into his situationship with a woman named Alice, the prospect arose that she might travel to England without him. On Monday evening, Bill wrote to her in support of the trip: "You must go to England. And with a view to all sorts of eventualities we must avoid the appearance of being in a peculiar relation to each other." The next morning, he reversed himself in a second letter: "I have come to see that my saying you must go to England is pedantic folly… I am an idiot, unfit to advise you."

Given that portrait, you might assume Bill was a dud – someone who died unknown, with no accomplishments to his name. Yet this "Bill," it turns out, was William James — the founder of American psychology. The one whose work ironically helped invent the very idea of the self, even if he had no clue what to do with his own.

The moral here isn't that you should base your life decisions on the ramblings of a 19th-century neurotic with commitment issues. The moral is that even the most accomplished people often operate without a clean throughline. Unlike Bill, we don't have fifteen years to pick a career path, and potential partners might be put off by his level of reluctance to hard-launch a relationship. But what we do have is the freedom to do things like take art history senior year and decide that, hey, perhaps cubism isn't abstract nonsense after all. We have the chance to start off as the kind of freshmen who would rather walk into a wall than talk to someone's parent — and end up, four years later, shaking that parent's hand and telling them how impressive their kid's JFK presentation was. All we truly have is our ability to change — even if that change means our identities will never be something we can hold in our hands and inspect with perfect clarity.

Since a new pope was just elected, I'll end with an Italian proverb, and I apologize in advance for the butchering: morto un papa, se ne fa un altro. The pope dies; another is made. It sounds quite blunt — but the truth is, nobody is indispensable. Thousands of exceptional people have come through this place before us, and thousands more will follow. And at day's end, all of us are fully replaceable in what we do — and that's great news, because that means the only way we can truly distinguish ourselves is by who we are.

Because being undefinable was never the point. But being unresolved just might be.



Photo courtesy of Xiu Lim '25

SENIOR SPEECHES

Jei Han Hall



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Look, if you had one shot or one opportunity

To seize everything you ever wanted in one moment Would you capture it or just let it slip?

Eighty freshman boys in Memorial House rose, and, in unison, began chanting the words to Lose Yourself by Eminem. Not a single beat was off. Everybody knew the lyrics. I stood up too, I wasn't going to be the only one sitting down. But I didn't have a clue what was going on. I couldn't tell if this was the beginning of some David-Goggins-like inspirational speech. As I examined my surroundings, trying to figure out how I could take part, my friends suddenly began beating their chests together while chanting along.

You know when you don't know the words to a song, but you try to sing it anyway. You're like half a beat off, but the atmosphere is so loud, it doesn't really matter if you are actually saying words; it only really matters if you look like you do. That was me.

The whole experience was foreign, literally. I'd never watched a football game in my life, or as I used to insist on calling it, American Football. I did not know that the halftime show was a big deal. I did know who Eminem was, but I only knew Love the Way You Lie, by him and Rihanna, because my sister insisted on playing it every morning on the ride to school.

The morning after the Super Bowl, I woke up and recited the lyrics to Lose Yourself. I did not want to feel like an outsider again. In the shower, I mouthed "His palms are sweaty, knees weak, arms are heavy." For the next three days, I tested myself. Active recall. That was what it was all about. I worried that anything indicating I was different would leave me at a disadvantage. I recited, "Look, if you had one shot or one opportunity."

But as I listened to the song over and over, I realized that the lyrics applied to my life. The previous year, I had made a decision, as all of you have, well, except for you day students, to

leave home at an abnormally early age, and come to some school in Wallingford, Connecticut. It was my first time doing life without my natural support system right behind me. Although I didn't know the lyrics to Lose Yourself at the time, mentally I figured that this was my real start in my one shot to seize everything I ever wanted in the game of life.

September 9th, 2021, was my move-in day. That night, I spent too much time talking to my new roommate and got to the shower at 10:45 pm. I stood there, protected from the outside world, only by a thin-white curtain hanging on a metal rod. I looked at the shower knob for the first time and moved the handle to the part that was red. For seven minutes, I stood shivering in the cold, with no shower shoes to protect me from the foot fungus that lined each tile, waiting for it to get hot. It never did. I pushed the handle as far as it could possibly go without breaking, but nothing changed. It was now 10:52. Scared shitless that I would spend the next four years showering in cold water like some boot camp that all my friends from home made boarding school out to be, I embraced the freezing water and quickly showered. I was out in 5 minutes, by 10:57, but I had not brushed my teeth. I rushed back to my room with only a towel around my waist to grab my toothbrush. But underneath all of the unpacking I had to do, it took me three minutes to find it. Still, with my towel barely holding on to my waist, but toothbrush and toothpaste in hand, I exited my room, swiftly moving towards the bathroom. Suddenly, the door to the third-floor Mem common room swung open. In front of me was my prefect, wearing one of those obnoxiously bright yellow "May I help you" shirts. He looked at me and shouted, "It's 11 o'clock. That's lights out, buddy." I froze. I had screwed up. He stared into my soul. I looked around, questioning how I could have possibly become so distracted from my goals in life to have been late for lights out. I prepared my apology message, unsure if I would be facing 5 weeks of detentions or a harsh conversation with my dean. In that moment, however, the angels above must have touched him, as he glanced down at me and said, "You have two minutes, hurry up."

The next time I saw him, I apologized profusely for being out past lights out. For the next two months, I made sure I showered in the study hall break between 9:15 and 9:30 to avoid any possibility that I would be late to lights out again. I later learned that the hot water only came out if the handle of the shower knob was on the blue part, something that did not make any sense to me, but remained true for all the dorms I have lived in at Choate. Those were the big issues of the time. Today, as a senior, I look back and laugh. However, every problem I have faced at Choate has felt as world-ending as the one before. I still remember freaking out about my first absence, arriving 25 minutes late to Ms. K's geometry class. I remember being rejected from Scope. I remember realizing I had a lot more to do for my history project than was physically possible in a night. I remember writing something I had not thought through completely on a Deerfield day poster, and shaking as I discussed my actions with Mr. G. I remember my first college rejection. I also laugh at the fact that I was so scared of not fitting in that I would recite the lyrics to a song in the shower.

Three weeks ago, I sat in the NMH locker room getting ready to play the final volleyball game of my high school career. It was time for the team to get hype. I queued up the best song for that one purpose.

It began.

Look, if you had one shot or one opportunity

To seize everything you ever wanted in one moment Would you capture it or just let it slip?

Unsurprisingly, everyone on the team began belting the words to the song. It felt like the 2022 Super Bowl halftime show again, only this time, I knew the lyrics and could sing alongside. I pictured myself in my freshman common room, afraid of being seen as the outsider or making any mistakes. This time, I too, was pounding my chest.

For those of you asking if we did seize our one shot in the volleyball game, we did not. But, in that moment, I realized that Eminem's words are not applicable to a place like Choate. Although we all have one shot at life, we don't have one shot at Choate. This is school. You will make mistakes. Mistakes are meant to be made, learned from, and then laughed at. While I might have had one shot at being on time for lights out on the first night of my time at Choate, I have had my fair share of opportunities to correct. These days, my prefectees approach me late at night, stressed after being rejected from signature programs, or fearing that they will get cut from sports teams. I smile, and then yell at them for being out past lights out. Then I smile again. All I can think about is remembering the days I was in my prefectees' shoes. I smile because I know that the stress is unnecessary, but it is a crucial part of the growth process. Don't be afraid to fail. You don't only have one opportunity to seize everything you have ever wanted here.

CAIT AHN



Photo courtesy of Cait Ahn '25

We have alignment. Attention. Row.

For those of you that have not been lucky enough to row at Choate, you unfortunately may not understand the impact that these three phrases have ingrained into my body. There is something so intoxicating about the moments before "Attention, row" is commanded through the megaphone. I think I stop breathing, and for just a few seconds, all the anxious-filled noise fades to an intense silence — one that seems to spread beyond the six aligned boats on the river and becomes sort of a hush over the world, because in that moment, the oar in my hand and the angle of the person's back in front of me are all that my world encompasses. I feel like a sleeper agent when I hear these words. I become a different person. And in my four years of rowing at Choate, that is exactly what has happened. Rowing has made me a different person, and all for the better.

Let's think about it this way: Choate is like a 2k. To the vast majority of you, that utterance doesn't make you shiver, sweat, or go into a panic like it might for some of your classmates or students. So, to be clear, 2 kilometers is a standard distance used to measure an athlete's strength and endurance in Crew.

The first 500 meters is freshman year — it is chaotic, you're just starting to get moving and you're sprinting forward. You put in a lot of energy to establish yourself among the other boats. You're just starting to get a feeling for what this race will be like. When I first naively joined the Crew Team my freshman year, I had no idea that I was enlisting in a mental and physical war. I can confidently say, rowing is one of the hardest things I've ever done, much like moving into Choate as an introverted Califronian, about a week before school was scheduled to start for preseason, and having never been away from my family for more than a weekend. Freshman year is when you begin defining yourself away from your family and old friends. It's a mix of terrifying, exciting, and finding your baseline. In the first 500 meters, in the 3rd form, and in my first year of crew, I learned: "I am stronger than I thought I was." For some wisdom from my reminiscent senior mind, remember there is no "in another life." This is it. So take advantage of every opportunity, attempt those things you're afraid to do, and in doing so stop being so scared of failure or embarrassment. At the end of the day, who cares? This is the time to do it.

The next 500 meters is sophomore year —you've settled into a steady pace, you've found a comfortable, yet challenging racing speed. You may be starting to realize that this piece is going to be hard. Sophomore year is when I realized I may not be able to go to bed before 11 p.m. every night, when I started relying on Dr. Bardoe's Precalculus Honors extra help with half my class before tests, and when I slowly grew to become more of a real person after whoever I was freshman year with my friends. After almost quitting following my first year of crew, my sophomore year of rowing was immensely better. It was because I knew what I was throwing myself into again and had figured out what I was missing. In the second 500 meters of the piece and to stand steadfast against the hardships of sophomore year, I learned: "struggles are easier when you lean on others." I leaned into collaborative study sessions, the supportive cheering from my teammates behind me on the erg, and into my friends when the tough got tougher. And in doing this, I found my pace, made some of my best friendships, and continued to build off of last year, knowing what I needed to tweak to thrive. While you're sure to meet some dark days, do not let those overshadow all the good and don't throw in the towel. There's a version of yourself ten years from now that begs you to enjoy more who you are and where you are now. Metaphorically, don't let a bad hair day end in a haircut. Once you've reached the half-way point, you have to fight through the piece, hang on. You've been pulling and pushing for so long, your legs are burning, and your lungs are working overtime.

In the third 500 meters and in junior year, it is essential, and I think natural, that I learned: "Find something worth fighting for." It's in the all-nighters, the friendship dramas, and the performance pressure that you must remind yourself why you are doing what you're doing. Why are you at Choate? Who are you doing this for? When you look in the mirror when this is all over, how do you want to see yourself? What do you want to be able to say about how you handled the hardships? Whether you're fighting for your dreams, your family, friends, team, or boat, I think it is essential to find your motivation and hold on tight. As everyone says, junior year is the toughest year — but take that with a grain of salt. Equipping yourself with the knowledge you've acquired from the last two years of growth, junior year can be as difficult or smooth as you make it. What got me through this third 500 meters was writing "for the boat" in sharpie on my leg, reminding myself of the goals I set when I applied to boarding school in eighth grade, gifting that feeling of pride to my parents, and seeing my friends and teammates giving it their all and leaving it on the water. In everything you do, find something worth fighting for.

And when you finally reach the last 500, to me at least, it feels as if you had just started the piece — not physically, of course, but the time kind of jumped to this point. To this last chance to give your all, prove yourself, and leave your mark. By no means did the inbetween time fly by, but suddenly you're almost done with the 2k and getting ready to sprint. And this is senior year. Looking back, I can relive that first terrifying week of living on campus but in no way do I think those collective years flew by — but I did sort of jump. It feels like it's been forever since I was sitting in the Pitman common room as a freshman listening to my friends complain about my coach's essay assignments (Mr. David Loeb of course), gossiping about trivial relationships, and somehow stressing about college, yet I am about to walk across the stage, ceremoniously marking the end of my time as a student at Choate Rosemary Hall. They say the days and weeks are long but the months and years are short — take that to heart. Having reached the long-awaited senior spring, I've learned: "Once you're through it and have found your stride, help others through it too." This is the responsibility of being an upperclassman, a captain, president, teammate, friend, and classmate. After taking, internalizing, and growing from all the wisdom, comfort, and support you have been gifted over the past four years or however long you've been working to achieve a goal, it is your responsibility to give back and help the next person — the next generation. Be cognizant of the marks you leave behind.

We are a culmination of everything we have ever loved and been loved by. So, when you look back at those pieces of yourself, those carefully curated additions to your person or unavoidable experiences, make sure you're proud of them. When the meters on the erg screen race towards 0, did you give it everything you wanted to, did you pace yourself well, did you finish strong? At the end of the day, your success at Choate and what you get out of this place is, for the most part, controlled by you. So, whichever way you choose to traverse these waters, enjoy yourself along the way and recognize that this 800+ student body is traversing those waters with you. We're all rowing the same race.

SENIOR SURVEY

BEST SAC DANCER

1st Place: Nicholas Malcolm ’25

2nd Place: Jordan Dodd ’25

3rd Place: Nao Murata ’25



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

BEST LAST HURRAH PROPOSAL

1st Place: Jordan Dodd ’25 and Leanne Parks ’25

2nd Place: Arjun Pathy ’25 and Celeste Shattuck ’25

3rd Place: Andrew Kim ’25 and Joyce Liu ’25



Photo courtesy of Nicholas Malcolm ’25

SENIOR SUPERLATIVES

MOST LIKELY TO TEACH AT CHOATE

1st Place: Ana Isabella Bury-Negrón ’25

2nd Place: Simeon Levesque ’25

3rd Place: Ella Morris ’25



Photo courtesy of Leanne Parks ’25

BEST GYM BRO

1st Place: Alex Wang ’25

2nd Place: Will Black ’25

3rd Place: Stan Cho ’25


Photo courtesy of Alex Wang ’25

MOST LIKELY TO STAR ON REALITY TV

1st Place: Maxi Margolis ’25

2nd Place: Valentina Askar ’25

3rd Place: Jeremiah Olubowale ’25

A Love Letter to “What’s Shakin’, Bacon?”

By **Dana Tan ’25**
Former Head of Outreach of the 118th Masthead

Photo courtesy of Dana Tan ’25

“Are you the bacon guy? I came to Choate because of you!”

Of all the reasons to choose Choate, I would have never imagined that Ignacio Granda ’27 being labeled as the “bacon guy” would be a deciding factor. Yet, there we were in September 2024, welcoming the Class of 2028 to campus, the newest members of the Choate community. It is safe to say that there were many adoring fans of “What’s Shakin’, Bacon?” in the new crowd.

“What’s Shakin’, Bacon?” is a short-video series covering various fun aspects of student life on *The Choate News’* Instagram page. The idea came from a wacky brainstorming session with Lauren Kee ’24 and Jacqueline Yan ’24, the Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor of the 117th Choate News Masthead, respectively. TikTok videos and Instagram reels were all the rage, and we wanted to capitalize on short-form video content to revamp *The Choate News’* social media presence. At that time, with no designated Outreach Team, I had the creative freedom to do anything I wanted. No idea was a bad idea, and we spent many fun nights in the *The Choate News* newsroom bouncing ideas off of each other.

It has been incredible seeing “What’s Shakin’, Bacon?” grow, expanding to reach past, present, and future Choate students around the globe. We started this series to highlight student life, so getting to know new faces through random interviews will always be my favorite part. It was most rewarding when my friends showed me excited texts from their parents in their family group chats after they were featured in a video.

Despite its success, creating “What’s Shakin’, Bacon?” content was no easy feat. Coming up with interesting ideas every week while still finding time to film and edit took up many lunch blocks and late Saturday evenings. Yet, we all enjoyed it, and in the end, the work was always worth it to see the smile on a teacher’s face when they were interviewed or for a chuckle at a friend’s funny response to a question.

As a senior, the thought of leaving Choate and everything we have built from scratch for “What’s Shakin’, Bacon?” is heartbreaking, but I know the future of the account is in great hands. The new team — Sofia Fronzi ’26, Clara Kang ’26, Ignacio Granda ’27, Jayden Park ’27, Izzy McGehee ’27, and Arjun Ramnath ’28 — has already produced excellent content, and I am eager to watch the account grow after I graduate. I am grateful that our attempt to highlight the fun side of Choate has encouraged so many to want to join our team and even the School community itself. I hope the members of “What’s Shakin’, Bacon?” will continue to make our community more connected and inclusive.

The impact a single question has had on the Choate community is truly amazing.

Dana Tan *may be reached at dtan25@choate.edu*

FAVORITES OF THE YEAR

Best Senior Assassin Immunity Item



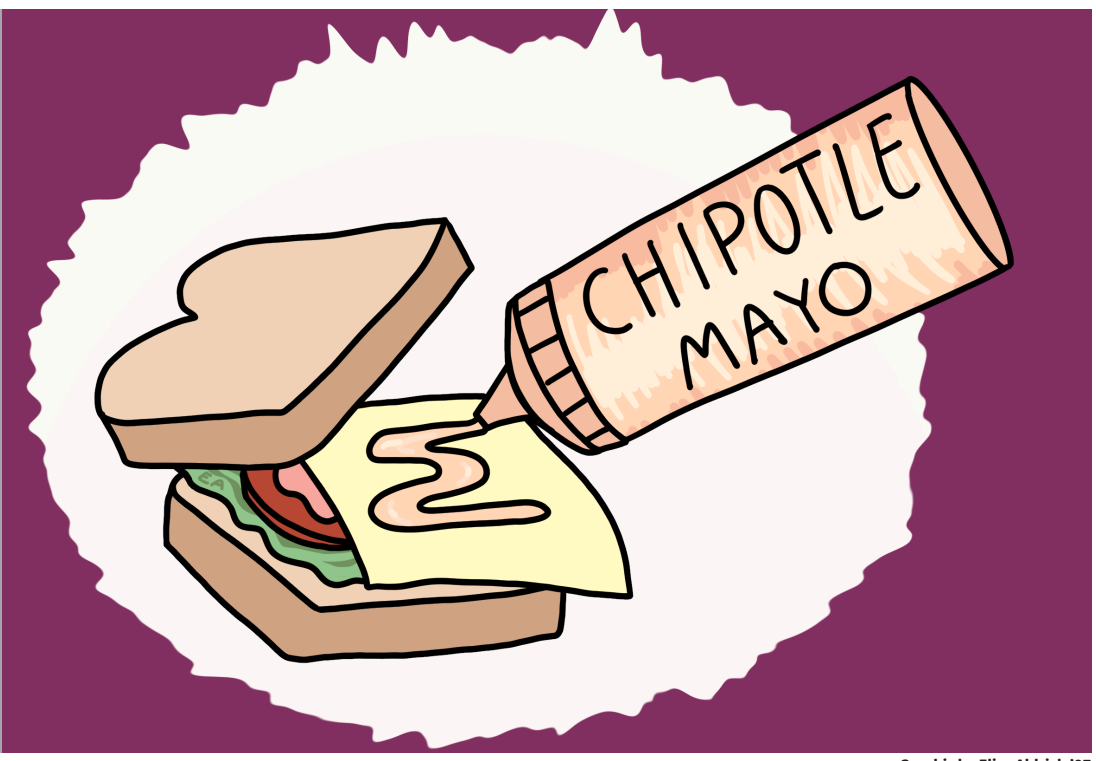
Graphic by Leah Han '27

School Store Item of the Year



Graphic by Scarlett Park '27

Dining Hall Hack of the Year



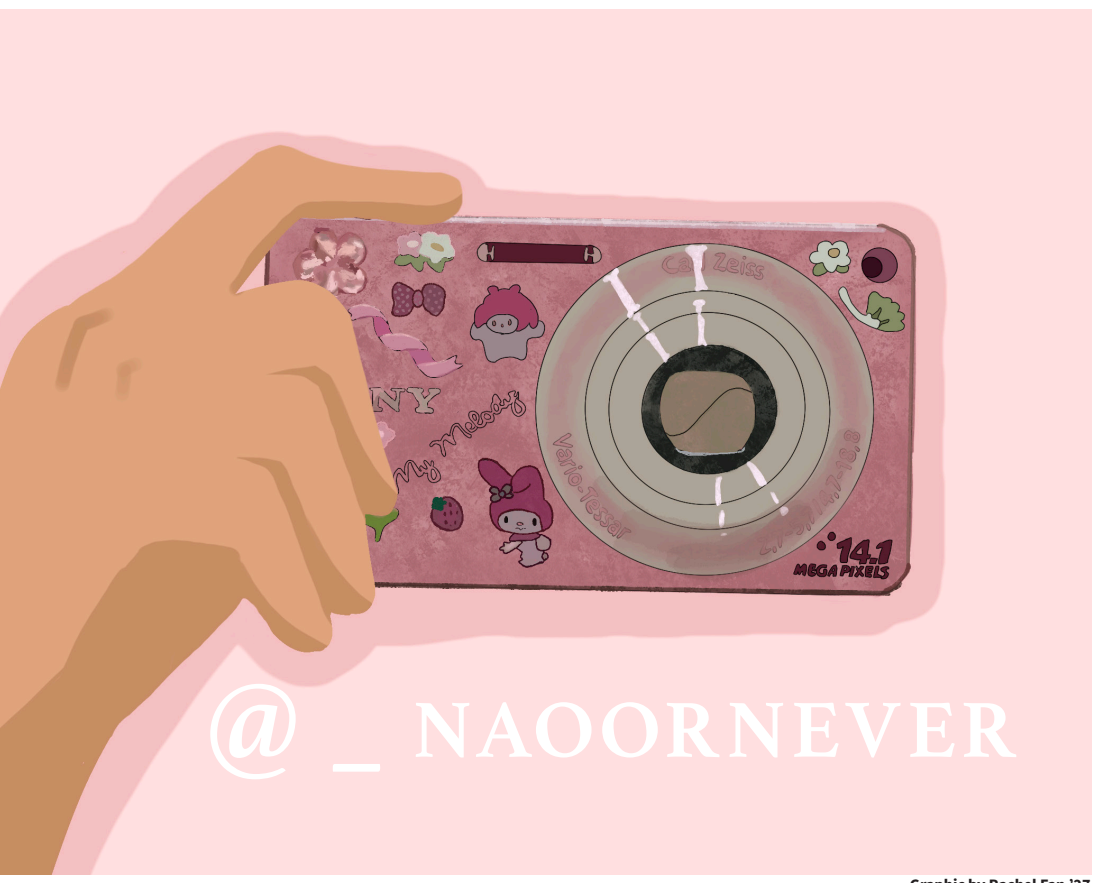
Graphic by Eliza Aldrich '27

Carnival Ride of the Year



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Digi-cam of the Year



Graphic by Rachel Fan '27

Most Eco-Friendly Dorm of the Year



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Theater Production of the Year



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Study Spot of the Year



Photo courtesy of Dana Tan '25

YEAR IN PHOTOS