

# THE SOPHIAN



PHOTO BY RONNY MURRAY '26

## Smith Rugby Claims Second Consecutive Victory in Conference Championship

**HILLARY CONNOR '26** Smith Rugby won the New England Wide Collegiate Rugby Conference (NEWCRC) championships for the second year in a row on Nov. 4. Throughout the fall season, Smith Rugby fought hard and held their own against the 20 other teams in the NEWCRC to qualify for the conference championship. On the day of the championship, dressed head to toe in their signature red and black uniforms, Smith defeated Yale 24 to 17 in a close game to win the title.

Smith competes in the Small College division against other historically women's colleges (HWC) including Wellesley College, Mount Holyoke College and other small liberal arts colleges in the area such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Connecticut College and Williams College.

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## Editorial: On Smith's Academic Identity

**PHOEBE RAK '24 AND** Recently, we were in the archives looking through old Sophian editions and came across an editorial from the Feb. 1967 issue of the Sophian. In this edition, the editors suggested that Smith students were overly focused on "peripheral issues" and were not paying enough attention to "basic educational issues." We found this particularly interesting and relevant to life at Smith today over 50 years later. Smithies today are faced with the challenge of

deciding which issues they want to focus on fighting for, with the climate crisis, the rising costs of living, the fear of "what comes next" post-matriculation and global humanitarian crises it can be hard to focus on the reason that we are here: to earn our bachelor's degrees. In this 1967 editorial, the editors of The Sophian posed some questions for readers to think about. The editors asked: "What basic problems demand our attention?" and listed the questions: "What is the value of a Bachelor's degree anymore? How can traditional curriculum be made

more relevant in today's society? and What do we think of grades and pass/fail?"

All of these questions are relevant to our Smith education today. In this issue's opinions article, the question of the value of a bachelor's degree is also posed. Recently, the New York Times published an article titled: "Nearly Everyone Gets A's at Yale. Does That Cheapen the Grade?" which stated that "nearly 80% of Yale undergraduates earned A's or A-'s in the 2022/23 school year.

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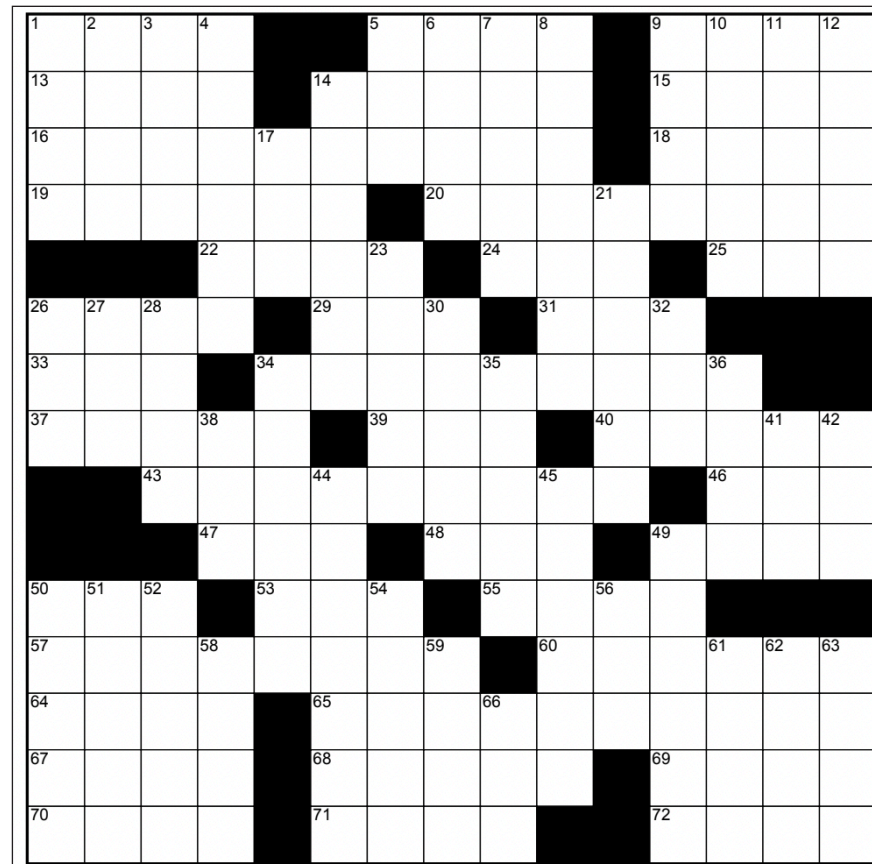
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*continued from page 1* Grade inflation is becoming more and more of an issue at higher education institutions, though it doesn’t seem like this is as much of an issue at Smith which adds more challenges for students post-graduation pursuing graduate degrees. Anecdotally, we have heard from classmates that they take major requirement classes at Amherst College, which boasts being ranked as the best liberal arts college and 8th best college or university overall in the United States by The Wall Street Journal and College Pulse in 2024 because they are “much easier” and “it

is easier to get an A at Amherst than at Smith.”

Recently the Law Students Admissions Council (LSAC) decided after much deliberation that they would continue to require the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), likely due to the discrepancies in grading systems among United States Universities. Perhaps it is time that Smithies rethink these questions posed by alums in 1967, “What is the value of a Bachelor’s degree anymore?”, “How can traditional curriculum be made more relevant in today’s society?” and especially “What do we think of grades and pass/fail?” With the increasing issue

of grade inflation, are letter grades still valuable determinants of academic success? These questions, important in 1967, are of increasing importance now, and while there are many problems Smith students have to worry about, we argue that the “basic educational issues” posed by our fellow Smith students in 1967 should be added to the list.

With gratitude,

Phoebe Rak '24, Editor-in-Chief  
Isabel Birge '25, Managing Editor



# 20th Annual Hot Chocolate Run Raises Money for Safe Passage

CATHERINE COLLINS '27 On Dec. 3, over five thousand people gathered in downtown Northampton to run or walk in the 20th annual Hot Chocolate Run for Safe Passage, collectively raising over \$782,000.

Safe Passage is a non-profit organization based in Hampshire County dedicated to providing support to survivors of domestic violence. Silas Clish, Communications Director for Safe Passage, was “incredibly pleased” with the turnout.

“[Safe Passage] offers counseling, safety planning, social support groups, housing, economic advocacy and immigration assistance,” said Clish. The money raised from the run will go towards prevention initiatives and support for survivors.

Safe Passage isn't limited to these programs. “We like to say that every person's needs are different,” said Clish. “If someone has specific needs that apply to their situation, oftentimes we'll do what we can to make sure

they get what they need.” For example, the organization won't turn someone away if they are not from Hampshire County.

On the morning of the event, participants gathered before the first race to listen to speeches made by Northampton's Mayor, Gina-Louise Sciarra; Senator, Jo Comerford (MA-D); Representative, Lindsay Sabadosa (MA-D) and members of Safe Passage. Runners and walkers chose between a 3k walk, 5k fun run or 5k race, and all finishers received a mug of hot chocolate upon crossing the finish line.

Despite the pouring rain, racers and spectators alike dressed up in costumes and brought high energy to the event. The streets of Northampton transformed into a parade of Santa Claus costumes, inflatable animals and princesses. “It was so much fun seeing all the Smithies out cheering,” said Natalie Szewczyk '25J, who ran with the Smith Run Club. “There were people in Northampton standing in the rain and cheering from their porches.”

Likewise, finisher Madelyn Halperin '26J



ILLUSTRATION BY CIARA MCAULIFFE '26

said, “I think the costumes are really fun and it's funny to see people running in a full blow-up outfit.”

Various on campus clubs gathered to compete in the race and fun run, including the Nordic Ski Club, the Running Club and the rugby club team. Lily Fairman '27 said that the race was “the end of the season for the Running Club. [It was] a last hurrah before the spring semester.”

Though this event only occurs annually, there are ways to get involved with Safe Passage year-round, like volunteering for the organization or making donations. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, it is estimated that one in four women and one in nine men have experienced some type of domestic violence at some point in their lives. Safe Passage provides free, accessible and confidential services for survivors and is accessible by helpline or in person in the Northampton-based office.

“It was so cool and powerful to see how many people came to support and donate to the cause,” said racer Isabel Vivanco '25. “[It was] especially nice to see Smithies getting involved in the broader community.”



PHOTO BY CATHERINE COLLINS '24



# Smith Rugby Claims Second Consecutive Victory in Conference Championship

HILLARY CONNOR '26

SPORTS & WELLNESS EDITOR  
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Among HWC  
competitors

specifically, Smith proved themselves a worthy opponent this season, besting Mount Holyoke 72-0 on Sept. 23 and Wellesley 63-0 on Oct. 22.

Despite their success, the team maintained their policy of accepting all interested players, regardless of their experience level. President Anna Gunning '25 spoke on the importance of this policy to the values of the team. They said, "Rugby is a unique club sport in the sense that it fills a niche between recreational and competitive sports at Smith. We want that opportunity to be competitive to remain accessible to people, regardless of their experience."

Also, unlike other club sports, rugby is not a commonly played sport before the collegiate level. Gunning said this makes the sport more accessible because "most of [the] players come in not having tried it before; it levels the playing field for anyone who might not have played a lot of sports in high school."

In order to smoothly incorporate these new players, lovingly deemed "rookies", onto the team, there's a B-Side captain, who helps teach the rookies the fundamentals of the game and help them acclimate to the team structure. However, the team's captains and leaders work hard to make sure the new players feel welcome. Gunning said, "We try to integrate rookies into the team with different team bonding activities, such as team dinner after practice and other special events."

As for the future of the team, Gunning said, "while winning is always a goal, it's not necessarily the goal. We like to work hard and to win but more important is maintaining a welcoming and inclusive club environment that is for everyone. It's impossible to have a successful team without a healthy environment and I think we have been and are going to continue working towards making that environment the best it can be."

Rugby's inclusive atmosphere has been life-changing for Gunning. They said, "If you had

told me a few years ago that I would be playing rugby in college, I would have laughed at you."

*Gunning didn't participate in team sports in high school because they didn't see themselves as an athlete, but she said that rugby helped her realize her potential because of its focus on learning, growth and its celebration of body diversity.*

Gunning didn't participate in team sports in high school because they didn't see themselves as an athlete, but she said that rugby helped her realize her potential because of its focus on learning, growth and its celebration of body diversity. She said, "I think it draws people, like myself, who might have not felt like they always belonged in sport previously, which is why I think it's especially important to make the team as open and encouraging to new players as possible."

The team will have a short break from competing for the winter, but they will continue to strength train and practice their skills to prepare for the next competition season. The spring is technically the team's "offseason" but they will continue to compete whenever possible in tournaments and scrimmages and will keep fans updated on the exact schedule on their social media.

Smith Rugby has over 1,000 followers on their team Instagram and many fans in the stands at every home game. The team has coined the phrase "Scrugby love" to celebrate their successes, which has become popular among other student fans. And with this season's success in a team led by mostly rookies, there will be a lot more Scrugby love (and hopefully championship titles) in the future seasons ahead.

*The team has coined the phrase "Scrugby love" to celebrate their successes, which has become popular among other student fans.*



PHOTO BY RONNY MURRAY '26

# Why You Need to Listen to Argentinian Post-Pandemic Punk

**ROZ BEILE '24**

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In Buenos Aires, Argentina, a do-it-yourself (DIY) genre-bending punk scene is flourishing. Thanks to a group of 20-somethings, the music scene in Buenos Aires eagerly returned after the pandemic, burgeoning full of new music, energy and punk rage.

This new music revives classic post-punk elements: distorted guitars, indiscernible lyrics, reggae and industrial sounds. Yet, bands like Dum Chica, Las Tussi, Buenos Vampiros and more, draw inspiration from old Argentinian rock icons like Sumo, Charly Garcia and Babasonicos. The unique crossover of Argentinian rock, which combines rock, reggae and rap, alongside elements of hardcore punk informs an entirely new genre. Despite these new bands' diversions from previous genre expectations, the most defining aspect of this scene is its live performances.

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Buzzing with anticipation and the nerves of interviewing a band in Spanish, a language I am far from fluent in, I entered the unassuming blue doors of the Club De Arte Tempuja, a music venue situated in the middle of a residential neighborhood.

Friend groups of teens wearing black jean jackets and sporting long hair made their way into the venue. I spotted an “any pronouns” pin amongst a sea of punk rock pins on one of their

jackets. The crowd patiently lingered behind a long black curtain that arbitrarily divided the lounge from the stage area. They seemed relaxed, like waiting was a part of the experience.

After telling someone my name for my ticket, which consisted of a check mark on a list, they ushered me and the rest of the crowd past the black curtain, revealing a black room and dimly lit stage.

Kill Flora's set started. Ana Julia Gonzalez, wearing silver sparkling boots and strumming a pink guitar, walked on stage, followed by the other three band members. Lucia Szeller, guitarist and lead singer, wore an “American Girl” tank top with Lana Del Ray's face on it, announcing the band into the mic and propelling the audience into cheer. After two introduction songs that barely stir the audience, Kill Flora's popular “Juan” screamed through the stereos, filling the venue with energy. The high paced tempo, attacking vocals and rapid drum beats paired with brief, tight pauses launched the audience into dance — jumping up and down, flailing limbs and moving heads at rapid speed. A group of boys, who reminded me of the San Francisco punk scene, put their arms around each other, swaying and screaming the words to Kill Flora's songs.

After Kill Flora left the crowd chanting “Otra, Otra,” Lucila Storino, the lead singer of Dum Chica, waltzed on the stage in her staple black sunglasses and confidently grabbed the microphone and began the aggressive and transportive set of Dum Chica. The bassist, Juana Gallado, lit a hand rolled cigarette while slowly strumming the bass, priming the audience. Gallardo and the drummer became synchronized, hitting the same rhythm and playing off of each other, creating a full, deep and dark sound.

Storino screamed muffled lyrics that sat on top of the dark and crude tone crafted by the other members. Her lyrics led the feel of the song, breaking down into sounds, screams and rhythms that energized the crowd and brought an eerie sensation to the room.

As the set went on, Storino moved clos-

er and closer to the audience, running around the stage, picking up her knees and throwing her head, all while screaming into a microphone. Storino's addictive flailing, heavy breathing and confident energy played with the crowd, but not Gallardo, who continued to casually smoke her cigarette.

Storino's one-man mosh on stage inspired the audience to physically pray in the pit of the mosh, preparing themselves for the next jump. I got pulled to this mosh, readying myself for Storino to scream “Terremoto (earthquake, but like a BIG one)” into the microphone, signaling the audience to dance. Smiling, I jumped and pushed with all my might, feeling all the anxiety and discomfort melt away. Dum Chica's unique instrumental composition, which relied on the bassist for musical noise, moved the audience left and right, transporting us into a new world. After the show, I asked Dum Chica about the crowd, the show and the experience of playing live. Storino responded, “incredible, just incredible.”

This post-pandemic punk scene in Buenos Aires, and all of Argentina, inspires. This performance reveals one glimpse into this dynamic, supportive and burgeoning scene. Released in February of this year, Dum Chica's new album called “Dum” allows listeners from all over the world to experience their fury. Kill Flora's “Entrada Triunfal” Extended Play (EP) promises head banging with your headphones on. Or Listen to Las Tussi's 2022 EP “JaqueJaque” and Wino Riders's album “Esto es lo que Obtenés cuando tu Cansás de lo que Ya Obtuviste” for angry dance parties. For even more, artists like Buenos Vampiros, Mujer Cebra, Fin Del Mundo and Isla Mujeres, assure the same release.

Whether in a mosh pit at a live show, or playing on a speaker in your dorm room, Argentinian post-pandemic punk offers an escape filled with madness, energy, rage and passion wherever you are.



# The Quiet Action of the Food Rescue Network

**OLIVIA PETTY '26** Due to the nature of Smith's non-centralized dining system, kitchens all across campus are left with an excess amount of untouched food after every meal. Much of the food can be re-incorporated into other dishes or preserved and used on another date, but this is not always the case. Enter: the Food Rescue Network.

"We kind of joke about it sometimes," said Sophia Eastman '26, current co-chair of the Food Rescue Network. "At night, we always go in the back doors of the dining hall, and it's like three or four people, and we split up afterward [...] We kind of feel like spies."

An organization of approximately 70 volunteers, the Food Rescue Network (FRN) is an entirely student-run organization on campus that serves as an active liaison between Smith Dining and Manna Soup Kitchen at St. John's Episcopal Church. Since Feb. 2022, they have rescued over 20,000 pounds of food.

"Food inaccessibility is more common than you would think," Eastman said. "There are people that you could work with, people that you know, that might have skipped a meal because they can't afford it. And you just don't know." Eastman has been involved with Food Rescue since the beginning of her first year. The organization itself has been around since 2014, though there was an ebb and flow of activity leading up to the expiration of its charter pre-pandemic. It was re-founded in 2021 by recent alum Shastia Azulay '23, a heavy proponent of food justice having worked as an intern with Food Rescue US and co-founded the app FoodCycle.

Not only does the organization aim to provide food to those in need, but it also strives to implement a culture of sustainability in Smith Dining by reducing the amount of food waste that ends up in the trash compactor at the end of each day. For volunteers, the time commitment is quite low and flexible.

"There is one driver and usually two or three helpers volunteering. I personally am a driver," Eastman said. "Beforehand, the driver has called all the dining halls and said, 'Hey, this is Food Rescue. Do you have any food for us?'" First meeting at St. John's, the driver's job is to pick up their volunteers and make the rounds to whatever dining halls have food waiting for

them. Due to the efforts of Azulay and the students who helped reboot FRN, most dining hall staff are familiar with the organization.

"They have plastic bins that we provide them to prep the food and to cool it. There are dietary labels, food allergen labels [...] and we carry all that on foot from the building into the vehicle," Eastman said.

After picking up as much food as possible, the driver makes their way back to Manna Soup Kitchen and begins the process of unloading.

"We have a scale, we have a data input sheet, and we have a commercial-grade refrigerator that Manna uses," Eastman said. "We weigh the food — just to get an idea of how much and what we were given — because that is helpful for the dining services to know what people don't eat and how they can adjust their purchases."

The operation of FRN is symbiotic; in return for setting aside and prepping excess food, dining halls receive quantitative feedback about what is or isn't being eaten by students.

"Last year — I think it was the last rescue before Christmas — I was about to leave for winter break, and I was the driver for that shift," Eastman recalled. "The other two people who I would usually go with weren't available, so it was just me. A lot of times, there isn't a lot of food, so I was like, 'Oh, if it's just me, that'll be fine, right.' But there was so much that I had to get."

Eastman described having to trek back and forth between dining halls over and over, individually loading hundreds of pounds of food into her car. When she eventually made it back to Manna, she determined that she would need as much help as she could get.

"The people living in Duckett were having a

***"Food inaccessibility is more common than you would think," Eastman said. "There are people that you could work with, people that you know, that might have skipped a meal because they can't afford it. And you just don't know."***

game night or something, and I walked into their living room and was like, 'Hey guys, I have a lot of food across the street that I need carried into the kitchen, can anybody please help?' And like 10 people dropped what they were doing, walked across the street, and just like, carried hundreds of pounds of food from my car into the kitchen. It was so awesome... just a random act of kindness," Eastman said. Many of those people, she said, are now volunteers with food rescue.

One current mission of FRN is to institutionalize themselves within Smith's official framework in order to receive more administrative support.

"There are pros and cons," Eastman said. "On one hand, we could get a lot of funding, there would be less loopholes to jump through with communication. But there's also a lot of virtue in being student-led."

This year is FRN's first year with a full-time AmeriCorps employee in the Jandon Center assisting with administrative communication, data analysis and coordination of FRN that would normally fall under the purview of the student board. They are currently in the process of divvying up responsibilities in order to maximize efficiency and include as much student involvement as possible.

"The importance of student organizations is that it's what the people here on campus want to do, like volunteering their own time without pay. They're doing it because they want to," Eastman said. "But I also think it would be fantastic if it would be just like a default program that the school was involved in."

Looking forward, Eastman hopes that her work in FRN will solidify a sense of community within the organization and make it more widely known around campus. They are always looking for more volunteers — driver-certified or not — to aid in their mission. Eastman insists that there is always a way to get involved with food justice.

"Look around and find ways that you can feed someone. Like, if there's anyone you know that's sick or ill, any pregnant women you know, offer to cook for them," she said. "Food is such an awesome way that we can form connections and just show kindness to people."

# Expande tus horizontes: ¡Toma una clase de idiomas!

TRANSLATED BY JADA WORDLAW '26  
TRANSLATOR

ORIGINAL BY LOUISA MILLER-OUT '26  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

No podía recordar ni una sola palabra, así que me quedé allí durante diez segundos embarazosos hasta que mi profesor finalmente me ayudó y completó la frase para mí. Me senté, avergonzado, anticipando el juicio de mis compañeros, mi profesor — todos.

Pero en mi primer día de clase de coreano en Smith, a nadie le importaba que hubiera cometido un error. Al final de esa semana, cada estudiante había tenido al menos un momento similar, y todos habíamos superado el miedo inicial de un error público. La semana próxima, estábamos charlando en coreano, limitado solo por nuestros vocabularios y conocimientos gramaticales, los cuales estaban mejorando constantemente.

Esta inoculación al estrés es solo uno de los beneficios he cosechado de tomar clases de idiomas extranjeros. No solo he superado mis dudas sobre hablar en público, sino que he aprendido a tratar cada error como una experiencia de aprendizaje en lugar de retirarme en un capullo de vergüenza. Después de varios años de clases de idiomas, incluyendo español, latín, coreano, italiano, y mandarín, ahora estoy completamente convencido de que todos deben estudiar al menos un idioma fuera de su lengua materna.

Mi estudio de idiomas de por vida ha mejorado enormemente mis habilidades en otras áreas. El latín ha mejorado mi comprensión de los conceptos gramaticales en inglés y otros idiomas que estoy aprendiendo. En innumerables ocasiones, he encontrado palabras desconocidas pero podría inferir sus definiciones debido a mi fundación en latín. He desarrollado sólidas habilidades de estudio para la adquisición de vocabulario porque, durante la mayor parte de mi carrera académica, he sido responsable de memorizar listas de vocabulario.

También hay una base científica para estos avances. Los estudios han encontrado repetidamente que el aprendizaje de idiomas mejora la memoria a corto y largo plazo. También se ha demostrado que aumenta el volumen y la densidad de la materia blanca y gris en el cerebro,



FOTO DE SHERRY LI

aumentando la función cognitiva de innumerables formas a través de una mayor conectividad neuronal.

Fuera del aula, el estudio del idioma abre una abundancia de experiencias potenciales. Convertirse en multilingüe facilita el estudio en el extranjero y las oportunidades de la carrera en países que no hablan inglés. Aparte de eso, conocer por mínimo algo de la lengua vernácula local permite a un viajero conectarse con hablantes nativos en un nivel más profundo. Pero uno no necesita salir del país — ni siquiera su dormitorio — para explorar los nuevos espacios desbloqueados por un idioma. De R&B coreano a “Squid Game” y “Parasite,” medios en otros idiomas es mucho más agradable cuando el espectador puede acceder al juego de palabras y los matices cuidadosamente colocados en cada línea por el creador original de la obra en lugar de depender en las aproximaciones de los traductores.

Si bien el aprendizaje de un idioma fomenta las conexiones entre los individuos a través de las naciones, también lo hace dentro del aula. En Smith, los estudiantes frecuentemente toman clases de idiomas en una secuencia predeterminada, generalmente con el mismo profesor y un grupo de estudiantes similar en el curso de sus car-

reras académicas. Esto permite la formación de amistades más cercanas a medida que los estudiantes exploran un nuevo idioma y cultura juntos. Las clases de idiomas también tienden a enfatizar mucho la oratoria, por lo que prácticamente no hay posibilidad de un aula silenciosa de completos desconocidos. Incluso cuando se estudia una lengua muerta como el latín, todavía hay infinitas oportunidades para un éter por escenarios tontos en el libro de texto, cómo Caesar siempre se refirió a sí mismo en tercera persona.

Del kindergarten hasta el colegio, mi viaje de aprendizaje de idiomas me ha enseñado habilidades invaluable — incluyendo, pero no limitado a, adivinar las definiciones de las palabras en el SAT y jurar profusamente en italiano — e introdujo alegría y curiosidad a mi vida. Uno ni siquiera necesita ser completamente proficiente en un segundo idioma para acceder a beneficios similares. El simple hecho de recoger algunas palabras o frases puede expandir la comprensión cultural y catalizar la formación de nuevas relaciones con los estudiantes internacionales y domesticados por igual. Consideren esto como una invitación a acompañarse a mí en la expansión de los horizontes lingüísticos de nuestros mundos.



# In Loving Memory of American Higher Education

**KAREN COLMÁN-MARTÍNEZ '26**  
OPINIONS EDITOR

I have probably read over 200 BuzzFeed articles throughout my life. Back when it was still culturally relevant, much of its content focused on American college life and the culture that emerged from within it. From 23 things that perfectly define “college culture” and 21 things that are so college, it hurts. The 2010s were the years of America’s cultural hegemony; American cultural products (books, movies, music, art, etc.) were consumed all around the world. Movies about the “American College Experience” were also very prevalent: from “22 Jump Street” and “Legally Blonde” to “Monsters University.” The sentimental attachment Americans held onto the colleges they attended, or desired to attend, was fascinating: buying merchandise, keeping up with football games and donating large amounts of money for no particular reason. At this point, College seemed to be a quintessential and uniquely American experience.

Fast-forward to the 2020s, earlier this year, *The New Yorker* magazine announced the death of the English major, *The Atlantic* declared the humanities to be in a state of crisis, and a creative writing professor asked Universities to stop corporatizing her students in a *New York Times* guest essay, where she discusses the recent educational trend focusing on student professional outcomes. It doesn’t really matter, though. The crisis is not limited to the humanities; any department that is not profitable is affected.

At the same time, total student debt in the United States has almost tripled over the last 15 years, and from 1980 to 2020, the average cost of tuition, along with room and board for an undergraduate degree, has increased 169%. The question of “is College worth it?” looms over our heads. If the American dream is dead, then where does that leave American higher education?

Several universities claim to be the first university in the United States. The University of Pennsylvania considers itself to be America’s first university, John Hopkins University claims to be ““America’s first research university.”” Harvard University, founded in 1636, claims to be “the oldest institution of higher education in the United States.” The College of William &

Mary is said to have been planned even before, in 1618. In 1940, about one in twenty adults had a college degree. Now, more than one-third of the adult population hold a college degree. What drove the increase in demand for higher education? Is it still, or was it ever, a necessity?

In 2019, OperationVarsity Blues happened: an investigation into a criminal conspiracy to influence undergraduate admissions. Between 2011 and 2018, 33 parents were accused of paying more than 25 million dollars to fraudulently inflate entrance exam test scores and bribe college officials. It involved money laundering, the use of photo-editing software to fabricate sport credentials and submitting false paperwork to prove a disability and get a stand-in to take the ACT. The scandal resulted in multiple indictments, students expelled from their respective schools and an epiphany for many; America doesn’t know what college is for.

The scandal not only revealed the lengths that some upper-middle class parents were willing to go to secure spots for their children at prestigious institutions, but raised concerns about the nature of higher-education. Parents were willing to embezzle, bribe, lie and be convicted of crimes to get their kids into an elite school. On the other hand, high-schoolers will go to impossible lengths, creating startups or working to find a cure for cancer if that gets them into an Ivy League institution. Does America really have a purpose for higher education anymore?

Most people would answer very simply: yes, money. Financial stability and professional security are largely reasons why people go to college. Upward mobility is a sensible goal, and Americans who hold four-year college degrees have a better chance at financial stability, at least in comparison to those who don’t. According to Federal Reserve data, 75% of American wealth is owned by college graduates.

Money is a good reason to attend college, and the fact that money is a good reason to attend college means college, as we know it, has no reason to exist. If the sole reason for college is financial security and to achieve a certain standard of living, we should consider ways of reshaping college to fit these desired outcomes. If, indeed, the act of getting a college education is an invest-

ment, college as it is must be completely restructured.

It is not really a question of whether we should do away with college or not because we have been doing so. In the past few years, West Virginia University has been undergoing an “academic transformation,” aimed at restoring the university’s traditional agrarian ideal and offering courses and academic programs that prepare students for specific sectors and career pathways. Most recently, Gettysburg College has gotten rid of the Gettysburg Review, one of the country’s top literary journals, as part of a larger academic plan that seeks to encourage students to recognize the need for and invest in career skill development. Similarly to its liberal arts peer, Smith College recently revealed the unveiling of plans for a \$32 million building to accommodate career development centers, which has raised questions about Smith’s commitment to its liberal arts promise.

Contrary to the prevailing narrative that cutting funding for humanities benefits low-income students, it is essential to clarify such actions are not altruistic. The humanities are not exclusively for the financially privileged, and every student, irrespective of their means, is entitled to engage in the inquiry of the holistic human experience. This notion instead reduces individuals to immediate financial concerns and directs students toward ostensibly more practical fields like engineering or finance, often motivated by the desire for a visually appealing alumni list for the school and churning out graduates who are able to pay back their student loans.

If a liberal arts college decides their goal is no longer to provide funding for a prestigious literary journal, but to advance career development strategies, what is the point in having it even exist anymore? If public research universities decide their fate lies along the path of becoming vocational schools and liberal arts colleges around the country decide to become prep-academies for elite consulting firms, is there anything left for us to learn? In loving memory of American Higher Education, let’s bid farewell to an era that although had its flaws, maintained the basic principle that education is valuable for its own sake.