

# PA program under investigation

## CT DOJ investigating Quinnipiac physician assistant program’s compliance with federal disability laws



AIDAN SHEEDY/CHRONICLE

By CAT MURPHY and KATIE LANGLEY

The Connecticut Department of Justice is investigating the Quinnipiac University physician assistant program’s adherence to federal disability laws.

John Morgan, Quinnipiac’s associate vice president for public relations, confirmed the inquiry’s existence in a Nov. 14 statement to The Chronicle.

“We are cooperating with the DOJ’s investigation into the university’s compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act as it pertains to students in the physician assistant program,” Morgan wrote.

It is not immediately clear when the Justice

Department opened the investigation.

However, the civil rights inquiry is only the latest in a series of challenges facing Quinnipiac’s physician assistant program.

The university’s physician assistant program will be on accreditation probation through 2025 after the national accrediting body determined in September that it failed to meet almost 25% of the body’s standards.

Sixteen months earlier, former physician assistant student Alexandra Faulkner filed a lawsuit accusing Quinnipiac of, among other things, violating the ADA.

The parties “mutually resolved” the case in October 2023, Morgan said.

Faulkner alleged in the April 2022 complaint that Quinnipiac officials failed to accommodate her documented mental health disability, mishandled her discrimination allegations and unfairly dismissed her from the program in part because of her disability. She also alleged that program instructors discriminated against her Ukrainian nationality.

The suit further claimed that university administrators regarded the physician assistant program as “notoriously difficult to work with when it came to accommodating students’ disabilities and accommodation requests.”

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# Olian speaks out about hate two weeks after antisemitic incident

By CAT MURPHY  
News Editor

Two weeks after university officials discovered antisemitic graffiti on the York Hill Campus, Quinnipiac University President Judy Olian issued a statement condemning harassment, group stereotyping and “age-old antisemitic or Islamophobic tropes or symbols that evoke violence.”

“Even though certain forms of extreme speech or actions are legally protected, they do not advance civil discourse or bring opposing factions to a greater understanding of each other,” Olian wrote in the Nov. 27 statement. “And they may violate QU’s own code of conduct built on respect for differences.”

On Nov. 13, amid a national uptick in on-campus hate incidents fueled by the ongoing violence in Israel and Gaza, Quinnipiac officials found a swastika carved into a mailbox in the Rocky Top Student Center.

John Morgan wrote in a Nov. 17 state-

ment to The Chronicle that facilities staff removed the graffiti “shortly after it was discovered.” Morgan confirmed the university’s Department of Public Safety is still investigating the incident as of Nov. 28.

“Anyone with information about this is asked to call or text Public Safety’s confidential tip line at 203-582-6201,” Morgan wrote. “The university condemns all forms of hate speech and bias-motivated acts and behaviors, in accordance with university policy.”

Olian did not specifically mention the swastika incident in her statement but noted that “the divisiveness of the Israel-Hamas war, in particular, has seeped into universities.”

Case in point, more than 120 antisemitic incidents occurred on university campuses in the first month of the war, according to the Anti-Defamation League. For perspective, the ADL documented only 12 similar incidents on college campuses during the same month last year.

“The Jewish students on campus, they’re scared and uncomfortable,” Reena Judd, Quinnipiac’s rabbi, said after the Nov. 13 incident. “This has been the hardest time of their Jewish life.”

Likewise, Muslim Campus Life documented nearly 80 incidents of on-campus Islamophobia in the U.S. between Oct. 9 and Nov. 6.

Referencing Quinnipiac’s commitment to creating a “safe, respectful environment” for community discourse, Olian urged students to engage in challenging discussions with “civility, with moral awareness, within an environment in which each person is protected and safe.”

“At Quinnipiac, we must center our discourse and reactions on our core values of respect for differences, of willingness to listen, of informed debate and attempt to understand,” Olian wrote. “We can challenge, but with civility.”

# QU students assist small businesses across the globe

By KRYSTAL MILLER  
Associate News Editor

Students from the microlending club at Quinnipiac University are helping small businesses that need support in Connecticut and Nicaragua.

The microlending club gives small loans for expanding inventory, increasing marketing or modifications to the business’ location. Quinnipiac’s administration funds the loans through partnerships with Alianza Americana, a language and leadership school in Nicaragua, and Columbus House, a New Haven-based homeless shelter.

Russell Jackson, the president of the microlending club, said what makes the club so valuable is that members decide whether or not they think a business will pay off the loan. Being a part of the club has helped Jackson figure out what he wants to do after graduation.

“It makes us feel like what we’re doing is of value, because we’re helping out family businesses for the most part in Nicaragua and we’re helping better their lives as well as being able to gain experience in lending finance,” said Jackson, a senior entrepreneurship and small business management major.

Thomas Shipman, a senior 4+1 business analytics major and the vice president of the microlending club, said it is great to have the opportunity to support people who are less fortunate.

“It’s great to apply what we’re learning in the classroom and then see that working in the real world and being able to help people because \$1,000 in the U.S. doesn’t go a far way, but (in Nicaragua) that’s going to mean a lot,” Shipman said.

The microlending club differs from other clubs at Quinnipiac because it offers international business consulting, said Colin Smith, a junior applied business major and the marketing manager of the club. In an effort to bring awareness to the club, Smith created Instagram and LinkedIn pages for it this semester.

“It gives us a perspective into the real world because in your classes in the textbook, you don’t get too many real-world opportunities,” Smith said.

Oscar Aragón and his wife Eira Argeña created Alianza Americana. Shipman said Aragón offers applications for the microloans through his connections with his school and the community.

“They’re very tight-knit down there, so he knows people who have businesses and then he has them fill it out,” Shipman said.

In order to qualify for a loan, Jackson said, the business owner must have a co-signer and a steady stream of income, so they will eventually be able to pay off the loan. The application asks questions about the business owners revenue, expenses and general information about the business.

Jackson said communicating with the business owners and Aragón can pose challenges for the microlending club. Aragón also acts as the translator between the business owners — who mostly speak Spanish — and the club over Zoom. There are also several Quinnipiac students majoring or minoring in Spanish that help translate the writing in the applications.

The club — which completed 10 applications during the spring 2023 semester — has gone through three applications this fall but still has around four more to do, Jackson said.

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AIDAN SHEEDY/CHRONICLE

The Quinnipiac University Department of Public Safety’s new signage outside the former Student Health Services building, where the department will officially relocate its Mount Carmel Campus offices in early January 2024.

Public Safety set to move into former Health Services building

By ALEX MARTINAKOVA  
Copy Editor

Quinnipiac University’s Department of Public Safety is slated to fully move its Mount Carmel Campus offices from the Irmagarde Tator Residence Hall to the former Student Health Services building by the beginning of the spring 2024 semester. University officials began talking about how to utilize the free space shortly after SHS relocated its offices to the newly constructed Recreation and Wellness Center in August 2022. But Tony Reyes, chief of Public Safety, noted that the department expressed interest in relocating even before SHS’ move. “We just wanted to get a dedicated space for Public Safety,” Reyes said. “As you know, we’re currently in the dorms — or were — and we wanted to utilize the space and the dorms more appropriately for student spaces.”

Reyes said university officials are still deciding how to repurpose the vacated space in the first-year residence hall. However, he said it is more than likely Quinnipiac will again create “student-centric spaces” — either additional residence rooms or student lounges — on Irma’s first floor. Reyes said the former Student Health Services building was not ready for the relocation until early October, which prolonged the official move. “The reason we haven’t officially moved yet, is mainly because of our dispatch center,” Reyes said. “It’s obviously the hub, the heart and soul of our Public Safety services. We didn’t want to move in the middle of the semester and cause any interruptions of service to our community.” Although Public Safety will run the dispatch center out of Irma for the remainder of the fall 2023 semester, some of the administrative offices have already moved to

the new location, according to Reyes. The new Public Safety office building — excluding the administrative offices already in place — will have a new reception area for students, with digital screens displaying relevant information, a waiting area and an outside area with benches and charging stations, Reyes said. “We are really just trying to make it a very user-friendly sort of space for our students,” Reyes said. “In particular because it’s the one space on campus that’s open 24 hours, it’s the round-the-clock resource the students can depend on.” The new dispatch center is already built, Reyes said, but it will not be operational until the official unveiling ceremony, which is supposed to happen shortly after Jan. 8, 2024 — the day of the full relocation. Reyes also said the university will not comment on the relocation until its official unveiling to avoid any confusion.

DOJ from cover

Several former physician assistant students came forward in the weeks after Faulkner filed the suit to corroborate her allegations of mental health discrimination, calling the program’s environment “unsupportive,” “militaristic,” “toxic” and “cutthroat.” In response to Faulkner’s lawsuit, a group of current and former physician assistant students penned a letter to the Connecticut DOJ urging it to investigate the program’s adherence to federal disability laws. The letter, published on May 13, 2022, accused program administrators of disregarding “the recommendations of qualified experts or providers” in favor of giving students with disabilities “the minimum standard accommodations that they feel are ‘reasonable.’” The letter furthermore claimed the program “punishes students with disabilities by placing them on probation, suspension or dismissal instead of seeking ways on how to better support them.” “The discriminatory treatment, including the culture of mental health stigma created by the PA faculty, has been a destructive force for these students and their families,” the letter said. “We ask that your department investigate these claims and hold QU and the PA faculty accountable and responsible for any actions that you deem harmful and illegal to students, past and present.” Faulkner was the third student since 2012 to accuse Quinnipiac of violating the ADA. In a 2021 lawsuit, former nurse anesthesia student Derrick Sutton claimed the university failed to provide reasonable accom-

“We are cooperating with the DOJ’s investigation into the university’s compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.”

– John Morgan  
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

modations for his disability. Nine years earlier, the DOJ opened an inquiry into Quinnipiac’s ADA compliance after university officials removed a student who sought on-campus mental health counseling. Quinnipiac officials reportedly sent the student to the emergency room with a letter stating she could not return to campus without prior clearance from a university psychiatrist. The university refused to refund her tuition after removing her. The university reached a settlement with the student in late 2014, paying out \$17,000 for emotional damages and another \$15,000 to pay off her student loan. However, the DOJ found that Quinnipiac’s failure to consider modifying its mandatory medical leave policy violated the ADA.

Quinnipiac subsequently created a non-discrimination clause to address its commitment to “providing equal educational opportunities and full participation for students with disabilities.” “No qualified student will be excluded from participation in any university program or be subject to any form of discrimination based on disability,” the statement reads, in part. Reiterating this commitment, Morgan said Quinnipiac strives to create “a learning environment that meets the needs of our diverse student body.” “Any student experiencing any barriers to learning in any program is encouraged to contact the Office of Student Accessibility by emailing [access@qu.edu](mailto:access@qu.edu) or calling 203-582-7600,” he wrote.



# How the microlending club is helping businesses from New Haven to Nicaragua

**MICROLENDING** from cover  
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A lot of business owners who receive the microloans are based out of their homes, Jackson added. Shipman said that many people’s social networks are interconnected with their work.

“The sense of community that they have, it’s very different than the U.S. and here in the Northeast, and it’s not like you’re going to work for a company a lot of people work for themselves,” Shipman said of Nicaragua.

The club is currently working with a woman named Olivia Marilet Zarate Mayorga from León, Nicaragua, who runs a pizza shop out of her house. She is asking for an industrial oven which Jackson estimates is around \$800. Zarate Mayorga is still in the process of receiving the loan.

“This lady had her passion,” Aragón said. “I love her passion of having her own business.”

Aragón said Zarate Mayorga and her husband began the pizza shop 10 years ago as a team, but when they divorced, her husband took all of her cooking supplies and ingredients. She originally applied for the microloan three years ago, but didn’t get a response until this semester.

“She’s slowly been building that back up, and she has a broken oven,” Jackson said.

Zarate Mayorga explained that in Nicaragua it is difficult to find a job because it requires a political endorsement. Without an endorsement, jobs will not accept you.

“Now with my pizza business, I don’t have to,” Zarate Mayorga said. “I don’t owe anything to nobody, I’m free.”

Zarate Mayorga has two sons, 16 and 19 years old, that also help with the business, and she said it was tough for them to have to see their father take away their working tools and oven.

“So for them, it was devastating in the beginning because they didn’t know what was going to happen, and even myself, I didn’t know how to fight, how to fight for my rights in the moment, but thank God we had the confidence enough in ourselves,” Zarate Mayorga said.

Zarate Mayorga started her own business

because she said that women don’t need the support of a man in life. She wants all women around the world to know that it is possible to reach their goals.

“I remember my dad’s words,” Zarate Mayorga said. “For the girls in my family, we need to be courageous and work hard and educate ourselves because we as women cannot be humiliated in any way with men.”

Zarate Mayorga said she reaches most of her clients through social media platforms such as Facebook.

“I know for me it’s an honor, what I feel is admiration because I was able to knock on the door of Quinnipiac and Quinnipiac opened the doors for me,” Zarate Mayorga said. “I know that they have helped so many other business owners and all those business owners have moved forward in their lives through this program.”

Erin Sabato, the senior director of global learning, said the university first partnered with Alianza Americana in 2004 while she was still a student at Quinnipiac. After graduating, she lived with Aragón and Argeñal.

“It sounds trite that experiences like this can change your life, but it truly did for me,” Sabato said. “I mean, I’ve been at Quinnipiac for 16 years, my entire professional career has been closely intertwined with Nicaragua, and so, had I

not gone as a student all those years ago, I would not be where I am today.”

Aragón and his wife first founded Alianza Americana more than two decades ago. The two needed a \$200 loan from the microlending program — which Aragón said he did not initially know was a part of Quinnipiac — to purchase a photocopy machine.

Almost three years later, the microlending program called him — they wanted to visit the business. Around 20 students and David Ives, the then-executive director of Quinnipiac’s Albert Schweitzer Institute, flew to Nicaragua to see the business’ progress in person.

Aragón worked alongside Quinnipiac administration to start renting the rooms for interviews with business owners and provide translators. A few years later, Ives called Aragón asking him how he would feel if Quinnipiac partnered with Alianza Americana.

“I said ‘Wow,’” Aragón recalled. “It was the happiest day of my life, and it’s still one of the happiest days.”

Sabato facilitated Quinnipiac’s programs to Nicaragua until 2018, when students were no longer able to visit in person. Protests began in the country in 2018 because of proposed social security reforms, according to The Georgetown Journal of International Affairs.

Quinnipiac has run the microlending program for 15 years, but before 2018 undergraduate and graduate students from various disciplines were able to go to Nicaragua.

“At one point we were sending hundreds of students there each year, and also hosting Alianza Americana Oscar and Eira, and their staff and students on our campus every year, so it was a really strong partnership,” Sabato said.

Sabato said with the help of Aragón and Argeñal, students in the microlending program were able to talk to the business owners in Nicaragua, visit the business locations, look at financial records, discuss accounting and marketing strategies and give out a microloan if the business wanted it.

Aragón said it has been tough for him not being able to see the Quinnipiac students in person because the politics in Nicaragua and the pandemic has made coordination difficult. Many businesses in Nicaragua have died, Aragón said, but many are still trying to survive.

“Honestly, if you ask me, we are suffering, we’re struggling,” Aragón said. “The whole community at large, everybody is missing everything.”

Aragón mentioned one of the stories that stood out to him was a man who started a food business in his house after losing his job in the pandemic. With a microloan, he was able to produce more orders and on time with a new grill, oven and kitchen.

“He was able to overcome the pandemic challenges because of the loan,” Aragón said. “I can tell you at least 39 different businesses that I know, that they have survived because of the loan.”

Aragón said he is planning to expand Alianza Americana to Costa Rica and Guatemala for more opportunities and a larger community. The partnership the school has with Quinnipiac, he said, offers each community the opportunity to grow and learn from the other’s culture.

“It’s not even about two organizations, two institutions coming together,” Aragón said. “It’s about two countries, two cultures.”

“I can tell you at least 39 different businesses that I know, that they have survived because of the loan.”

– Oscar Aragón  
CO-FOUNDER, ALIANZA AMERICANA

## School of Health Sciences names new associate dean

By LILY PHILIPCZAK  
Staff Writer

Quinnipiac University’s School of Health Sciences appointed Anita Lee, a veteran administrator, as its newest associate dean of academic and faculty affairs, the school announced on Nov. 14.

Prior to her appointment, Lee was a professor of health sciences at Eastern Connecticut State University, serving both as the acting department chair and as a special assistant to the dean in ECSU’s School of Education and Professional Studies.

Janelle Chiasera, dean of the university’s School of Health Sciences, first met Lee when she took her position at Quinnipiac.

“I am impressed by her calm demeanor, her willingness to listen, and the thoughtful approach she brings to this position,” Chiasera said, citing the experience Lee has across multiple disciplines from both a faculty and student perspective.

Lee, who earned a master’s degree in recreation and tourism and a doctoral degree in physical education at Springfield College, was also a peer evaluator for the New England Commission of Higher Education and a facilitator of the Association of College and University Educators.

“My experience as a peer evaluator is to evaluate higher education institutions through

its accreditation process for promotion educational excellence and quality assurance,” Lee wrote in a statement to The Chronicle.

Lee played a significant role in establishing ECSU’s health science program. Lee wrote her previous roles and experiences prepared her to be an associate dean.

“I want to support (Quinnipiac) faculty to achieve the School of Health Sciences strategic goals through high quality academic programs,” Lee wrote. “Quality academic programs would allow students to learn and apply their knowledge and skills.”

The strategic priorities of the School of Health Sciences are educational excellence, innovation, community-based partnerships and programs, organizational health and inclusive excellence.

“My duties at the School of Health Sciences focus on academic programs and faculty affairs,” Lee wrote. “But my experience working with students allows me to understand the academic challenges of students.”

In February 2023, the School of Health Sciences launched a comprehensive strategy plan that is typically done every five years. The strategy plan includes the development of the school’s vision, mission, core values and the strategic priorities.

Lee will assist the smooth implementation of the established plan.

By achieving these goals, Lee said students will benefit academically or in their pre-professional success.

“I am delighted to have her join the leadership within our school,” Chiasera said. “She is very well positioned to be very successful (in her role).”

At ECSU, Lee co-created the Student Excellence and Persistence System, an initiative that offered academically at-risk students a second chance after academic dismissal.

“Action students have to take vary, depending on their personal, family, and financial situations, but the ultimate goal is to help them improve their performance in classes and earn a degree,” Lee wrote.

Data from the fall 2022 semester show that the School of Health Sciences enrolled roughly 1,400 undergraduate students and 730 graduate students.

Although Lee will also serve as a professor of health science studies, she said she looks forward to having an impact beyond her usual classrooms.

“Student success is the key in education especially for students that are behind academically,” Lee wrote. “Helping them to find the root causes of their academic performance and help them to improve is my job as an educator.”



JOHN HASSETT/QUINNIPAC UNIVERSITY

Anita Lee, a former professor and acting department chair at Eastern Connecticut State University, will serve as the Quinnipiac University School of Health Sciences’ newest associate dean.



# Opinion

## Dismantling the stigma

### A plea for comprehensive sex education at Quinnipiac

**By GENEVA CUNNINGHAM**  
Contributing Writer

I remember my first sex education class like it was yesterday. It was incredibly awkward. My teacher didn't know what he was talking about, and I was lost too. Granted, I was 14 years old. We were all curious, struggling to find our identities and consuming media that confused the hell out of us.

As my first year of high school progressed, my classmates showed their more vulnerable sides: asking questions and showing up as if the content really interested them. I even found myself volunteering to put a condom on a wooden penis. Looking back, I realize it wasn't the content that was making students uncomfortable, it was our general lack of preparedness.

So what's so daunting about talking about sex? The strangeness, the graphic nature or the cruel sideline jokes? The truth is, sex brings about feelings of shame, guilt and inadequacy. Speaking up requires you to put yourself at risk, making you unguarded to judgment and rejection.

The problem is that there's not a shared vocabulary about sex. You're not alone if you feel strange saying sexual words and phrases out loud to voice consent or to express instances of sexual assault. Different experiences, cultural expectations and (lack of) prior education leave students aimless. Sexual knowledge doesn't come naturally. We need to be taught about sex in non-judgemental spaces, learn how to communicate and lean into safe sex practices.

Herein lies another problem: where is the sex education at Quinnipiac? If everyone's doing it, why isn't anyone talking about it?

I'm a transfer student, and at my old school I served as the events chair for Sexual Assault Peer Advocates, an organization that is centered

around supporting and advocating for survivors of sexual assault. We cultivated a community through education, prevention, resource connection and thoughtful amplification of voices. My favorite part was fearlessly speaking about masturbation in front of a crowd of 150 peers. It wasn't easy, but the atmosphere was accepting and receptive.

When I arrived at Quinnipiac, I was glad to find that the university has the Survivor Advocacy Alliance. The group focuses on advocating for gender equality and voicing support for victims of sexual violence. The first meeting I attended was welcoming and I could easily find my place there.

There should be an important distinction made between advocating for survivors of sexual assault and sexual education. However, the two converge in considerable ways and you cannot discuss one without the other.

Students can choose to take classes in the Womens and Gender Studies Department at

Quinnipiac that hold conversations regarding human sexuality, sexual violence and queer sexuality. However, what we're missing is a continued, comprehensive course expanding and elevating what most of us learned in high school.

Young people today are less likely to receive instruction on key sex education topics than they were 25 years ago, per data from the Journal of Adolescent Health. As we grapple with the reversal of Roe v. Wade and the loss of abortion access across the U.S., quality sex education rises to one of the most important matters students are facing today. There are considerable differences between states on whether students receive thorough sex education, but even worse, there are significant racial disparities.

Young men of color are less likely than their white peers to receive instruction on topics like STIs, birth control and pregnancy before the first time they have sex, according to the National Survey of Family Growth.

It is also integral that the conversation includes LGBTQ+ voices, experiences and safe sex practices. High school sex education materials make the mistake of assuming students are heterosexual and cisgender. Curriculum doesn't mention gender identity or sexual orientation, while some discuss it in a negative way. This results in a climate of exclusion in schools, while gatekeeping information and skills students need to stay healthy.

There is overwhelming research that supports the fact that sex education is effective at reducing high-risk sexual behaviors, promoting safe sex practices and preventing sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy according to the Journal of Adolescent Health. In the same breath, no high school abstinence-only programs have been proven effective at mitigating the results of unsafe sex or delaying sexual activity.

Teaching sex education is seen as the job of middle and high schools, but college is where students tend to step out of their comfort zone and get intimate with others. We, as young adults, need to feel safe and prepared. Now is the time to act, to get involved and challenge ourselves to speak up.

While I think it could be helpful to have administrative support, I truly believe that it should be students leading the conversation. It's much easier opening up to a student than opening up to an advisor, and it fosters a community of forward and vulnerable conversation with people who are facing the same challenges as you.

But first, we as students need to take action and make space for these conversations. It doesn't have to be intense. Picture anatomy memory games, sexuality alphabet games, condom relays or even pictionary.

So Quinnipiac, let's talk about sex.

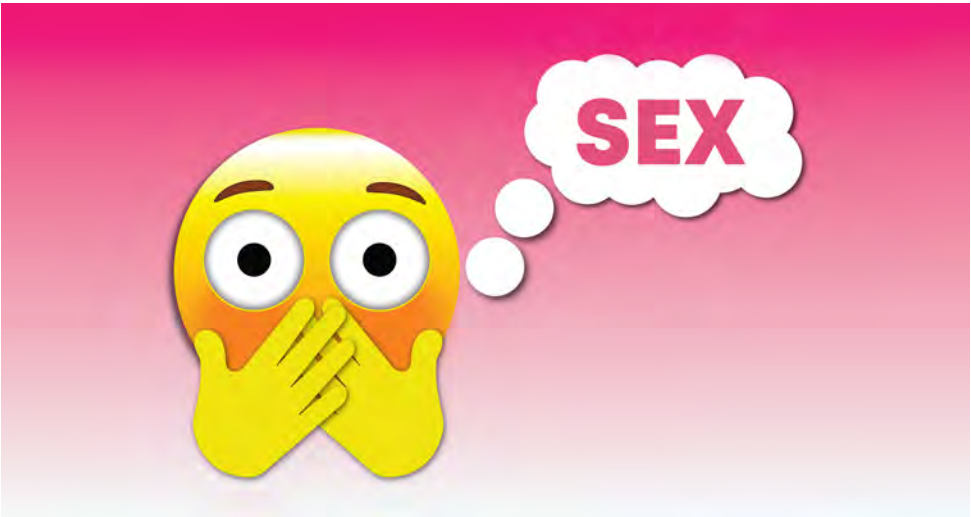


ILLUSTRATION BY AMANDA RIHA

# TikTok Shop needs to stop: The issue of impulse buying

**By SYDNEY KLASS**  
Contributing Writer

Caught in the tantalizing vortex of TikTok Shop's flashy deals and influencer promotions, users find themselves succumbing to impulse buys. But behind the allure of discounts lies a trail of wasted products and financial regret, prompting a closer look at the consequences of the "For You" page temptation.

TikTok Shop is a social media-based storefront selling name-brand items where creators can open their own shops and profit off of products their viewers buy. The "For You" page is flooded with all different kinds of ads for unnecessary products. Every other video is an ad for an item

that happens to be on sale.

TikTok Shop often has coupons available, and the more items you buy, the more coupons you get. There's always suspiciously low prices, such as \$5 for a perfume that's normally \$20. It looks like a scam, but users rave about the products they buy and the price they got them for.

Promoting cheap items is causing people to buy things they don't really need. No one needs a pair of slippers with Christmas trees on them that they're only going to wear two months out of the year, but they see a low price and believe they need them. And when people see their favorite influencers promoting these affordable products, they want to buy them even more.

People promote their TikTok shops because of the money they make when people buy from their pages and the coupons that purchases generate. It becomes a vicious cycle, promoting your shop to get more coupons to buy more things you don't need.

When we see someone we admire promoting a product in their TikTok shop, we immediately believe we have to have these products for ourselves. We run to add an item to our carts as soon as we see someone on the "For You" page enjoying the results an item brought them.

Everyone's bought something on impulse before, like a lipstick in the drug store or a sweatshirt on Amazon. But, when there's constant sales and coupons, people are more likely to impulse purchase unnecessary items. More and more impulse purchases create a buildup of wasted products and money being spent irresponsibly.

I've fallen victim to the coupons on TikTok Shop, I've bought makeup I didn't need that just ended up sitting in the bottom of my drawer. I saw a creator on my "For You" page talking about the makeup they just bought for half of the original price and I immediately added it to my cart.

The things I bought went to waste and the charges to my bank account started to pile up. People buy things thinking, "It's only \$3, it's completely affordable." However, all these \$3 purchases begin to add up over time.

Seeing people on TikTok with their overflowing makeup drawers and shelves always makes me wonder how much of it they actually use. Makeup influencers have all different types of

foundations and concealers, when in reality, they only need one or two different kinds. I used to admire the collections people had, wanting it for myself, but I've come to realize that it's all just money gone to waste because more than half of the products are never used.

The average American spends about \$109 on impulse purchases in a month — that's \$1,308 every year, according to South West News Service Media Group. TikTok users spend decent amounts of money on nonessential items that they aren't likely to use, when the funds could be put to use elsewhere.

Collections of makeup, skincare and clothes pile up and are almost never used in full. We believe we need these things, I see it as almost a form of hoarding. Overconsumption of material goods just leads to clutter and money wasted.

My advice is to think before you buy. Before you hit the checkout button, ask yourself if you really need that workout set being sold for 50% off, or do you want it just because you saw someone on TikTok wearing it and because it's a steal? That workout set is probably just going to end up forgotten and folded up in the bottom of your drawer.

So, next time you're scrolling through the app and you see someone promoting a product, before you add it to your cart stop and think: Do you really need it? Are you really going to use it, or is it just going to go to waste? Take everything into consideration before you make your purchase and instead save yourself some money and some space in your drawer.



ILLUSTRATION BY PEYTON MCKENZIE



# Opinion

## High school preaches prep, college proves otherwise

Why high school fails students when it comes to college preparation

By **LILLIAN CURTIN**  
Staff Writer

I went to Avon High School in Avon, Connecticut, which has an “A+” for college prep on Niche. If my high school has the highest rating possible for college preparation, how come it did not prepare me for college?

I was told that things were going to be a certain way in college and in the workforce, and that wasn’t true.

For example, from middle school to high school, my English teachers told me specifically, “You have to use the five-paragraph structure.” After my first essay was due when I started here at Quinnipiac University, my professor told the class, “I hate the five-paragraph structure.” My first week in college, my professor basically told me that the foundations of writing that I learned for years is not how things are done in college.

My English teachers in high school also deducted points from my essays if I used the first-person in my writing. Here at Quinnipiac, it’s encouraged. Most of my peers and classmates have had similar experiences. While talking about a paper due in my political science class, one of my classmates asked, “So, we can use ‘I’ in our essays?” Not only did my professor confirm this, he was ecstatic in encouraging it.

It’s like someone completely changed what I knew as the rules in writing, and then told me there weren’t any.

In college, there are so many different things you have to manage other than just grades, sports and clubs. Most of us have



ILLUSTRATION BY PEYTON MCKENZIE

completely blown through our savings because we have no clue how to utilize our money responsibly. This skill isn’t something that you have to learn for college specifically, but it’s a life skill that high school neglected to teach me.

Before each year, my high school would have students “choose” our schedules. This consisted of deciding whether we took college prep, honors or AP courses. In reality, we didn’t even decide this, it was what the teachers thought we were capable of.

The freedom of choosing what classes I actually want to take in college is refreshing. Even when — as a political science major — I have to take math and art, I still have the choice of what type of class I take. I can

take classes that I know I’ll do better in.

Additionally, I only ever learned how to memorize vocabulary and facts for a short period of time, only until the next test. Now, I actually have to learn things long term because the subject pertains to what I’m going to be doing for the rest of my life. I never actually had to apply anything I learned in high school to real life.

Unless your major is math and you’re going to be doing math for the rest of your life, you don’t really need to find the value of “Y” in everyday life. Topics that I learn in college will follow me in the profession I pursue.

In high school, it was hard to know what I really wanted to do with my life. Thank-

fully, my school had a civics class that was mandatory for seniors to take. Other than that class, I had no idea what I wanted to go to college for. It created a lot of stress because I really didn’t want to major in something I wasn’t truly passionate about. I luckily took a class that showed me what I was passionate about; many students aren’t that lucky.

Students can make adjustments to feel more equipped for college. Many students I’ve spoken to feel that their high schools prepared them because they offered courses that students were interested in, and not just the basic classes that students often find boring.

High school teachers send mixed messages to students, which can be harmful because it creates a harsher expectation than what’s actually true. They shouldn’t be trying to scare them by saying “this won’t fly in college” because the likelihood is that it will definitely fly in college.

I’ve said to my friends that my intro to academic reading and writing class is useless because we’ve all learned to read and write. I was wrong. That class is actually useful because it’s teaching us the real-life-way to do things, when high school apparently wasn’t.

It’s frankly annoying, being taught that something is done a specific way for at least four years. It sets students up for failure because they can’t do assignments right. What’s the point of teaching things a certain way if it’s all going to fly out the window?

## Bobcat Buzz

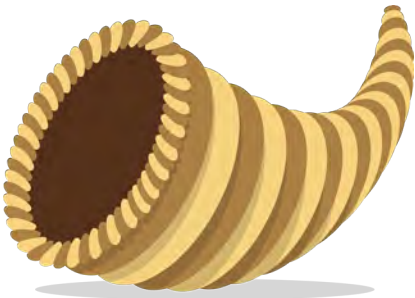


ILLUSTRATION BY PEYTON MCKENZIE

## Semester struggles: The quandry of Thanksgiving break’s timing

By **MICHAEL LAROCCA**  
Opinion Editor

As a college student, there is nothing better than looking forward to Thanksgiving break. At Quinnipiac, students get an entire week of late November to themselves. A week to go home, see family, enjoy the holiday, procrastinate on schoolwork and just live. However, the break’s timing is quite awkward in spite of how much it is needed.

The fall semester is a slog. Students are expected to tough it out from move-in at the end of August all the way to Thanksgiving in mid-November with only two days off, that being the day of Yom Kippur and Labor Day, both university-recognized holidays. That’s over 80 days of non-stop college life. No matter your major, you’d need a break after that.

However, while the date of Thanksgiving can’t be changed because college students aren’t exactly

in the position to make those decisions, the coinciding break comes way too late.

This year, the first day of classes after break through the last day of finals is only 18 days. Students are expected to go home, come back to Hamden and then go right back home in a little over two weeks. I’ve begun to question: Rather than go on break, why don’t we end the semester a week early?

The spring semester is at least a bit more balanced. Spring break comes about 46 days into the semester and the return from break through the end of finals is 54 days.

A recess from coursework should be right in the middle of the semester, when everyone needs a moment to recharge and gear up for the second half. It should not come when professors have already assigned final projects and set dates for exams.

Having the whole week off for

Thanksgiving is quite the gift; other schools like Southern Connecticut State University aren’t as lucky. Then again, it just feels awkward. After a week of relaxation, it forces students to scramble and refocus for the grind of the final weeks of the semester. It’s like a Trojan horse — it looks nice from the outside but internally, is a disaster — and there’s really not much to be done about it.

A break right in the middle of the semester could help. Yale gives its students a week off in October and another week off for Thanksgiving. That may sound nice, but its semester ends a week after Quinnipiac, so there’s a trade-off.

If there’s a way to have two extra-long weekends during the fall semester, one in October and one for Thanksgiving, that would be nice. But for now, who am I to complain about time to myself, however weird it may feel?



# Arts & Life

## 'Silence is not an option for me': How Hollywood is punishing Palestine supporters

By **ZOE LEONE**  
Arts & Life Editor

For almost two months — and 75 years — Palestine has been under attack. People from all walks of life have been voicing their support, and punishments have begun trickling down the line in the forms of job losses and blacklistings. As the news cycle began focusing on the violence occurring, and more and more members of Hollywood began using their platforms, one thing quickly became clear:

Hollywood would be no exception to the trend.

Melissa Barrera — the actress behind Sam Carpenter, the protagonist in the two most recent installments of the “Scream” movies — was recently dropped from the franchise for her social media commentary about the ongoing violence in Palestine.

Spyglass Media Group, the film series’ production company, stated the reason behind the actress’ removal was a zero-tolerance policy for “antisemitism” and alleged that Barrera’s comments included “false references to genocide, ethnic cleansing, Holocaust distortion or anything that flagrantly crosses the line into hate speech.”

Several of the posts Barrera shared came from anti-Zionist Jewish organizations, like an article from Jewish Currents, which is the the post that led to Spyglass accusing her of “Holocaust distortion.”

The article in question was written by Raz Segal, a notable Israeli historian and Holocaust scholar. The piece is called “A Textbook Case of Genocide,” in which Segal himself analyzes the situation in Palestine and explains how it fits the definition of genocide under international law.

Of course, none of these factors mattered

to Spyglass, which still dropped Barrera and accused her of hate speech against Jewish people. Nevermind the fact that never once did she say the words “Jewish” or “Jews” — simply criticizing Israel and supporting Palestine was enough.

In an Instagram story released shortly after her departure was made public, Barrera explained that as a Latina, she felt a responsibility to use her voice for others.

“I will continue to speak out for those that need it most and continue to advocate for peace and safety, for human rights and freedom,” she wrote. “Silence is not an option for me.”

A day after the news about Barrera was announced, Jenna Ortega — who plays Barrera’s younger sister in the “Scream” films — departed from the film franchise. Deadline reported that Ortega’s exit had nothing to do with Barrera’s firing, and was related to scheduling conflicts with season two of Netflix’s “Wednesday.”

And yet, it was hard not to notice the timing of the news. Considering Ortega has expressed support for Palestine in the past, it’s difficult to believe that the actress’ choice to leave the films had nothing to do with what happened to her co-star.

In a similar vein, United Talent Agency dropped Oscar-winner Susan Sarandon for comments she made at a pro-Palestine rally in New York City. Sarandon has been vocal both on social media and at in-person events in support of Palestine, but parts of the speech she gave at the Nov. 17 gathering were quickly weaponized against her.

“There are a lot of people that are afraid, that are afraid of being Jewish at this time, and are getting a taste of what it feels like



ILLUSTRATION BY AMANDA RIHA

to be a Muslim in this country, so often subjected to violence,” Sarandon said.

The actress was commenting on the quality of life for Muslims in America post-9/11, relating the way many Jews are now fearing for their safety due to being Jewish to the way many Muslims have been living for decades now. And yet, much like Barrera, all context seemed to slip away as Sarandon was labeled antisemitic and lost her agent.

Barrera and Sarandon might be among the first to face retribution for supporting Palestine, but they will almost certainly not be the last. Already the problem is stretching from talent to behind the scenes, with the powerful Creative Artists Agency demoting its former co-chief, Maha Dakhil, after she shared a pro-Palestine Instagram post. She was only able to remain employed as an agent at the company after Tom Cruise,

one of her most notable clients, went to the company inperson to stand in support of her.

And yet, as those supporting Palestine are losing their jobs and facing internet vitriol, supporters of Israel in Hollywood continue to share posts supporting Israel cutting Gaza’s water and electricity supply and memes implying all Gazans are rapists (specific examples from Sarah Silverman and Amy Schumer, respectively).

Not only has Hollywood historically stood with Israel since the country’s founding in 1948, but it’s been long known to oust those who oppose its infrastructure.

The reality is, supporting Israel benefits Hollywood, but it does not benefit all of those who work within it. And as more and more industry professionals continue to show their support for Palestine, they prove that no awards are worth more than a life.

## Rife to the occasion: Matt Rife’s journey to comedic stardom

By **A.J. NEWTH**  
Opinion Editor

Good comedy isn’t for the weak. And now, there’s a new guy on the block who’s capturing the laughs of thousands.

Matt Rife, the 28-year-old comedian from Columbus, Ohio, quickly blasted into fame after going viral on TikTok in 2022. Capitalizing off of a female audience, his mix of sex appeal and raunchy comedy is nearly unbeatable and he’s continued to rise in popularity ever since.

Rife recently released his own Netflix special, “Natural Selection,” which aired on Nov. 15. The special tackles a variety of topics, from his personal background to the backlash he’s faced in the industry, all while making jokes that teeter on the line of funny and controversial.

The comedian first took an interest in comedy when he was 14, performing in a school talent show. He’s been chasing a career for 12 years — he told a D.C. audience during his aforementioned special — and it wasn’t until a TikTok edit blew up that he got his big break.

Despite only recently coming into the spotlight, this isn’t Rife’s first time on the screen. He has three prior comedy specials on YouTube, “Only Fans” in 2021, “Matthew Steven Rife” in February and “Walking Red Flag” in June. He’s also made appearances on several other popular comedies, “Wild ‘n Out,” “Brooklyn Nine-Nine” and “Fresh Off the Boat” among them.

The 28-year-old accredits his fame to hard work and his sudden rise in popularity on social media. However, there’s a running joke that his adoration comes from a combination of crowd work and conventional attractiveness within a female fanbase.

Rife is definitely what I’d call easy on the eyes, there’s no lie there. However, I think he deserves more recognition for his comedy. He mixes edgy and raunchy jokes with relatable material and personal anecdotes to create the perfect recipe for good comedy. Rife often throws a pretty controversial joke in the first few minutes of the segment like he does in “Natural Selection,” in order to “test the waters” and “see if y’all are still fun.” This is a regular bit for him as he’s seen doing it in several clips from shows online.

One thing that makes Rife like many other comedians is his fair share of controversial jokes that some sensitive audience members may not like. It’s people like these that look for any way to cancel newly-popular microcelebrities. That being said, it’s also fair to say some of his jokes do take it too far.

Rife opened up his most recent comedy special with a joke about domestic violence which is now facing an enormous amount of backlash online. Simply typing his name into a Google task bar prompts “matt rife controversy” as one of the top searches.

In response to the controversy, Rife

issued a mock apology on his Instagram that stated “If you’ve ever been offended by a joke I’ve told, here’s a link to my official apology,” then a link that said “Tap to solve the issue.” The link led viewers to a health website where they could purchase special needs helmets, further angering fans.

Another thing worth noting is that it’s the female demographic of fans that pushed Rife into the spotlight. The comedian mentioned in an interview with Variety that his recent special is aimed more toward a male audience, while his social media videos often cater to a more female audience. It’s great that he’s trying to expand his audience, but it’s important that he remembers where he came from, as many are arguing on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Obviously this isn’t a good look, but I’d argue that comedy is a tough industry and every comedian comes under fire once in a while by making a joke that upsets someone somewhere. He addresses a lot of dark topics in his routines, and I think for a lot of people, trying to laugh through painful discussion topics is a good way to cope or even heal.

Overall, despite some edgy jokes, I really enjoy Rife’s comedy. His recent special, however, was a little boring. I found Rife after stumbling upon a few viral videos on my TikTok feed, and was attracted to his crowd work more than anything else. His ability to make up puns

on his feet while interacting with individuals in the audience was hilarious and unpredictable, which captivated my attention.

His recent special, however, mocks several different groups, most importantly his “haters” online who question his abilities as a comedian. His closing line references the joke that he only does crowd work in an attempt to debunk the hearsay, but the special honestly proved that he’s simply better at crowd work than stand-alone standup.

I’m not a regular comedy fan and I really don’t know much about stars in the industry — with that being said — as an everyday viewer, I find the crowd work way more entertaining. Regardless of which form of comedy he chooses to pursue, Rife’s openness with his fans is what really makes him relatable. He’s been open about his struggles with depression and anxiety, even working them into his routines.

The comedian is selling out shows all over the country for his ProbleMATTic World Tour, with tickets for all dates selling out in a matter of 48 hours and Netflix calling it a “Taylor-Swift-worthy Ticketmaster presale crash.”

Rife isn’t just a rising star; he’s a comedian who’s turning controversy into comedy gold, proving that even in the “ProbleMATTic” world of standup, laughter remains the best medicine.



# Snow lands on top in 'The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes'

**By ALEX MARTINAKOVA**  
Copy Editor

You either die a hero, or live long enough to see yourself become the villain. That is the only way to summarize “The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes.”

Based on the book of the same name by Suzanne Collins, the movie follows the story of 18-year-old Coriolanus Snow (Tom Blyth), during the year of the 10th annual Hunger Games, 64 years before the events of the original “The Hunger Games” trilogy.

As someone who loved the story of Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark as a young teen, I was halfway expecting to straight up hate anything related to the President Snow that I knew from the books.

Oh, if only I knew how wrong I was.

Blyth’s performance was enthralling. Book-to-movie adaptations usually struggle to show the emotions that the reader can easily pick up on from the pages, and considering half of the book is just Snow’s inner monologue, Blyth had his work cut out for him.

And yet, the man captured my attention the second he showed up on the screen and didn’t let go until the end. Snow is such a complex character — a chameleon — playing a different role with everyone he talks to, hiding in plain sight.

Even surrounded by bigger names in the acting industry, such as Viola Davis (Dr. Gaul) or Peter Dinklage (Dean Highbottom) and their phenomenal performances, Blyth shined in his own light, making sure we remember whose story we are watching. Because it was his.

“The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes” is not about the beautiful singing from Rachel Zegler, her parallels to the beloved character of Katniss or the tragedy of poor, naive Sejanus

Plinth — the supposed best friend of Snow and his perfect parallel.

Lucy Gray Baird (Zegler), Sejanus (Josh Andres Rivera), Dr. Gaul, Dean Highbottom and even Tigris Snow (Hunter Schafer) — while incredibly important – are nothing more than side characters, explanations as to how Snow grew from being “Coryo” – best friend, lover and cousin – to “President Snow” — traitor, abuser and murderer.

That is not to say the actors’ performances should be overlooked. Zegler was everything that one could want in Lucy Gray. She was witty, charming and beautiful and played off of Blyth incredibly well.

Olivia Rodrigo’s “Can’t Catch Me Now,” which appears on the film’s soundtrack, summarizes who Lucy Gray was to Snow and her lasting effect on the man practically perfectly. We never learn what happens to her and any speculations about the character won’t ever get confirmed.

She’s finally free and neither Snow or the Capitol can’t catch her and control her anymore.

Even though the movie omitted a good majority of how deep and complex the relationship between Snow and Sejanus really is, the casting of Rivera was a great choice and the addition of mockingjays echoing his last words, powered by the theater audio, was a bone-chilling experience.

Sejanus was the one to die a hero, while Snow lived long enough to become the villain.

While the movie works well as a stand-alone – so no, technically you don’t need to see the original trilogy to go see it, though if you still haven’t seen the trilogy, which rock have you been living under? – the nods are there for every fan to enjoy.

Familiar surnames in Snow’s classmates

in the Academy, like Arachne Crane (Lilly Cooper) or Hilarius Heavensbee (Florian Burgkart), and lines such as “It’s too early for katniss” or the moment when you hear the voice of older Snow saying “It’s the things we love the most that destroy us” as the movie ends, rose goosebumps across my skin.

And I just cannot not mention Lucretius “Lucky” Flickerman (Jason Schwartzman), who was exactly who you’d expect him to be, as the ancestor of Caesar Flickerman (Stanley Tucci).

One thing I wished the movies focused on a little more is the “Hanging Tree” ballad and the new symbolism this story gave it. Lucy Gray — arguably the love of Snow’s life — being the one that wrote the song that becomes the anthem of the rebellion that ends his reign? Talk about poetic justice.

I could sit here and write about all the other

details the movie missed or changed from the books. I could describe how Tigris’ character wasn’t explained properly, how the tributes’ deaths were changed, how the timeframe was slightly rushed and how the movie barely even named all of the members of the Covey.

I could, but I’m not going to.

Because even though I am usually the first one to point out the differences between books and movies and how those differences often do injustice to the books — hence why I usually do not enjoy these adaptations —none of those details were the focus here.

No, the focus of this movie was the young man who did everything he could to ensure he would be the one who ends up being the victor, to be the one who can control everyone and everything, including himself, because life taught him anything less than that is dangerous.

After all, Snow lands on top.



ILLUSTRATION BY SHAVONNE CHIN

# Colleen Ballinger's disastrous return to YouTube

**By KRYSTAL MILLER**  
Associate News Editor

Four months after the once universally loved YouTube personality Colleen Ballinger fell from grace, Ballinger returned to YouTube through her vlog channel, posting a video titled “fall vlog.”

For a mere three minutes and 13 seconds, Ballinger, whose internet persona is Miranda Sings, apologized for her “really embarrassing” video. That video, titled “hi.” currently has 16 million views where she strung her ukulele singing a song repeating the words “toxic gossip train” to describe the accusations that she had acted inappropriately towards minors.

Ballinger claimed the evidence against her was misinformation and manipulation. The video lasts a painful 10 minutes, while she glares into the camera with a soulless face.

Ballinger’s “fall vlog” was likely intentionally posted on Nov. 18, right before the six month mark, which is when YouTube can demonetize your channel for inactivity. The holiday season is also when YouTubers post the most to gain more AdSense, which is the money from advertisements in videos. YouTuber and founder of Vidcon Hank Green said creators see between 25% and 200% more income during the holidays.

In the new video Ballinger says, “I was being accused of some really awful things and I was just mad and I should’ve handled that situation with maturity and empathy, but instead I just let my

ego take over and I’m really disappointed in myself.”

This shows no real accountability for her actions because she is still not truly admitting what she did. She never mentions the victims’ names or what she has specifically done to hurt people, she just remains as vague as she has in all her other videos.

Former fans of Miranda Sings alleged that the social media star had inappropriate online and live conversations and behaviors toward them while they were underage.

Adam McIntyre posted his first video addressing Ballinger three years ago, titled “colleen ballinger, stop lying.” When he was 13, he became close to the then 30-year-old Ballinger after going to two of her shows.

McIntyre claimed Ballinger shared private details about her divorce and used content he came up with as hers without paying him. He said that Ballinger and her friend Kory DeSoto mailed him lingerie, which DeSoto wore over a livestream.

McIntyre also said he was a part of a group chat which contained mostly minors and Ballinger. McIntyre said in

one instance, she told the group to recreate her video of putting a tampon in her mouth. She also asked McIntyre in the groupchat “Are you a Virgin?” and “What’s your fav position?”

Becky — who chooses not to share her full name — also a former fan of Miranda Sings, posted to X, formerly known as Twitter, in June, a picture of Sings during a live performance where she opened the then 16-year-olds' legs in a skirt during a “yoga challenge.”

The caption of the tweet says, “i’ve been debating posting this picture, but this was me on stage. she encouraged her fans to wear revealing clothing so we would get called on stage. and then she exploited us and our bodies for her own gain. so yeah, i’m okay with calling her a predator.”

Ballinger's vlog continues as she sits in front of a white bed staring at the camera in a white and beige sweater with her hair pulled back in a ponytail. This time, without the ukulele.

“I need to take time to make sure I was listening and learning as much as possible, and I also needed to get the help that I needed to be okay,” Ballinger said.

Ballinger chose her words to gain sympathy from her audience. She wants people to be focused on what she has done to heal rather than the years of healing that others have had to go through due to her alleged abuse. Within minutes, the focus of the video shifts to her chickens and baking cookies, showing she does not really care, she just wants to appease her audience so she can move on.

Ballinger defended herself in the original apology video, stating her content is PG-13 and it’s not her responsibility to decide what is appropriate for children to see. However, her videos are geared towards a younger audience, which she knows because she sees who shows up to her performances and she sees who

comments under her videos. Miranda Sings was one of the first YouTubers I watched as a child after my younger sister showed me a video, so I know for a fact that her content attracts a younger demographic.

I believe the first apology video is more of a reflection on how Ballinger really feels about the situation compared to now. This new video seems more of a PR stunt to save her brand and reputation. If she really wanted to make things right with the victims, she would apologize to them directly instead of hiring attorney Andrew Brettler who is known to work with clients convicted of rape and sexual assault.

“I have not heard from Colleen Ballinger at all, I do not have her blocked on any social media, she does not have me blocked on any social media, my emails are public, everything is public, I have not heard anything so this is incredibly performative,” McIntyre said in a YouTube video reacting to the “fall vlog.”

This is not a simple mistake, but a pattern of behavior Ballinger has shown throughout the years. It doesn’t matter how lonely or desperate you are, it doesn't make taking advantage of children that look up to you as a role model acceptable in any capacity. As a viewer, it feels like betrayal to have someone you have watched for so many years be able to sit there and lie about the extent she has harmed these victims. It is hard to decipher what is true of what Ballinger has said throughout the years.

Taking a break from the platform or a video of you sitting on the floor doesn’t prove you've done any work to change your actions. Telling the truth, apologizing offline, taking down content that involves inappropriate behavior and doing your best to be a role model fans should look up to are actions worthy of fame. For now, maybe Ballinger should click the sign out button.

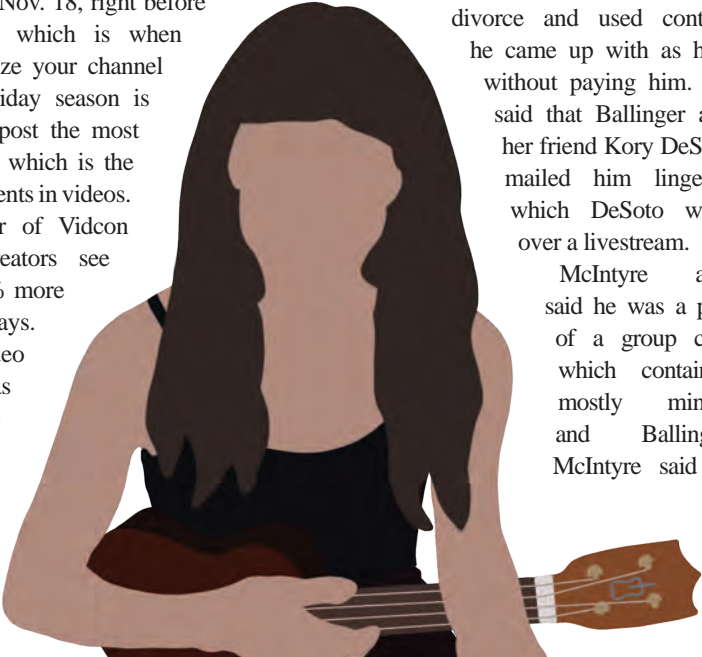


ILLUSTRATION BY LINDSEY KOMSON



# Christmas music has reached a point of diminishing returns

By **MICHAEL LAROCCA**  
Opinion Editor

Nostalgia can make a lot of different things sound, taste, smell, feel and look better than they really are. However, only a select amount of things can be nostalgic. Once that limit is reached, then it’s just annoying. And Christmas music is the worst offender.

Twas’ the afternoon of Nov. 24, Black Friday, the first official day of Christmas songs. I was driving along the gorgeous Garden State Parkway. Feeling in the spirit, I decided to play some holiday tunes as I drove. Listening to the “Essential Christmas” playlist on Apple Music, I was more or less horrified by the amount of songs I was skipping.

The whole playlist was plagued by terrible covers of the classics. I can only take so many renditions of “Baby, It’s Cold Outside” and “Little Drummer Boy” before I’m begging Baby Jesus to put me out of my misery with George Michael’s sweet vocals on “Last Christmas.”

Out of curiosity, I went to see how many versions of “Baby, It’s Cold Outside” are actually on Apple Music. I stopped counting out of sheer fatigue and disgust once I reached 25. Even Mariah Carey’s iconic “All I Want For Christmas Is You” had over a dozen covers of its own on the platform.

This isn’t cute, it’s boring. It only floods

the market with subpar versions of songs most people adore. When I hear the lyrics of “Run Rudolph Run,” I think of the great Chuck Berry, not JoJo Siwa.

I get it, making a Christmas cover album might just be the easiest thing to do on the planet. All the songs are composed and all the lyrics are written. The only thing left to do is put yourself in front of a passable microphone and sing three or four takes until you say, “Good enough,” and tell Spotify to start printing your money. However, all of this takes away from artists who are putting in the work to make new and innovative songs for the holiday season.

For every “A Philly Special Christmas” by Lane Johnson, Jason Kelce and Jordan Mailata of the Philadelphia Eagles, listens are taken away from truly modern Christmas records like “A Different Christmas” by Bryson Tiller or “A Very Laufey Holiday!” by Laufey.

Tiller’s album is a mix between excellent original R&B Christmas songs like “Lonely christmas” with Justin Bieber and very personalized covers of just a couple of classics, including “winter wonderland” which he sings with his daughter Harley. On the other hand, Laufey’s EP captures the jazzy holiday spirit seen in the ‘60s, and works it into new arrangements for the modern day like in the song “Christmas Dreaming.”

Tiller’s work specifically might not

sound completely like normal holiday tunes, but is there a rule that says every Christmas song needs to have jingle bells up the wazoo and Frank Sinatra singing his heart out? No.

Despite everything I’ve said so far, I’m not exactly too picky with what I call Christmas music. An artist can make a full-on rap album, but if Christmas is in the title, I’d be sure to listen to it come December.

In 2017, the late XXXTENTACION released an EP titled “A GHETTO CHRISTMAS CAROL.” Does it have anything to do with the holiday? Debatable. Have I been listening to it nonstop like it does? Duh. The fact it has Christmas in the title but sounds nothing like a Christmas song gets me in the spirit all the same.

The music industry needs to let the classics be the classics. They’re called that for a reason. Versions upon versions of these works only undermine the talent, passion and sheer holiday cheer that went into making the originals. Create new classics, stop mooching.

And if an artist is making Christmas music, they need to market it. I only heard about Tiller and Laufey’s work through word of mouth. If they don’t tell the public about anything they’re making, then I’m just going to have to resort to the “Essential Christmas” playlist like I did this year, and I don’t want to be disappointed again.



ILLUSTRATION BY CONNOR YOUNGBERG

# Girl power is fun, not forced, in 'The Marvels'

By **JENNIFER MOGLIA**  
Staff Writer

The Marvel Cinematic Universe has had a rollercoaster of a year, from the highs of “Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3” and season two of “Loki” to the lows of “Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania” and season one of “Secret Invasion.” Much like rollercoasters, some of these viewing experiences have made me want to relive the fun over and over again, while others have made me want to throw up.

When I heard “The Marvels” was coming to theaters in late 2023, I honestly didn’t even know if I’d make it to the theater to see it. I enjoyed 2019’s “Captain Marvel,” but I haven’t rewatched it once. I figured I’d be behind anyway since I never watched the Disney+ series “Ms. Marvel,” which dropped in 2022.

I decided to give “The Marvels” a chance despite my fears that it would be another MCU misfire. I’ve always loved Carol Danvers’ character in the comics as Captain Marvel, and I was intrigued, at the very least, to see what she would be up to four years after her debut solo movie.

In a year of so many disappointing pieces of media (once again, looking at you “Quantumania”), I was pleasantly surprised by “The Marvels.” I went in expecting a fun movie that would teach me more about characters I was super familiar with, not a film that completely reinvents cinema, and I think that was the perfect way to experience it.

“The Marvels” follows Danvers as she teams up with Kamala Khan (Ms. Marvel) and Monica Rambeau after the three superheroes start mysteriously switching places with each other during their own

separate battles. It turns out that Danvers’ past actions have led to a civil war among the Kree people, and their leader, Dar-Benn, is out for revenge.

Dar-Benn starts using a Quantum Band, a magical bangle that she wears, to tear holes in space. Khan has the other bands that Dar-Benn needs to reach her maximum level of power, and so the chase across planets begins.

I really enjoyed the fact that a few of the scenes took place in Khan’s home, in her bedroom and in her living room with her family. Seeing elements of the MCU, like her fellow heroes and the villains who were out to get her, pop up in her “real life” was super fun, and from all of the complaints I’ve heard about “Ms. Marvel,” the series could’ve benefited from more of that.

Speaking of the members of Khan’s family, they were an integral part of why this movie had so much heart. The relationship between her and her parents and brother was adorable, and it made the additions of Danvers and Rambeau to her “chosen family” even better.

The chemistry between Brie Larson (Danvers), Teyonah Parris (Rambeau) and Iman Vellani (Khan) reminded me of an older, middle and younger sister interacting with each other. They seemed to genuinely be having fun with each other, and as a result, I genuinely believed in their connection.

My biggest criticisms of the MCU lately have been underdeveloped villains and a lack of worldbuilding, but I’m happy (and relieved) to report that I couldn’t find either of those in “The Marvels.”

Dar-Benn is a villain that you can understand and sympathize with, and in moments where it seemed like she might actually beat the heroes, I was genuinely on the edge of my seat. Seeing the Marvels

going to other planets, exploring them and getting to know their people, was one of my favorite parts as well.

Another complaint I’ve had about recent Marvel movies has been the inability to balance humor with seriousness. The worst example of this to me was 2022’s “Thor: Love and Thunder,” where there were so many jokes I almost got tired of laughing, and all the silliness buried a villain who had the potential to be seriously scary and intriguing.

“The Marvels” had a solid amount of jokes and silliness, but it also knew when to take itself seriously and tug at the audience members’ heartstrings. Some people may have rolled their eyes at the lighthearted dialogue or a certain scene involving a bunch of cats, but I honestly ate it all up.

The reason why I think this film will be so important for years to come, in the MCU and beyond, is because of the way it empowers women without feeling performative. It’s clear that the days of all of the female superheroes lining up to fight one battle together for “diversity points” à la “Avengers: Endgame” are gone, and I couldn’t be happier about that.

The box office numbers for “The Marvels” haven’t been great, to say the least. It had the lowest opening weekend, steepest two-week drop and quickest exit from the domestic box office top-five in the MCU’s history, according to ScreenRant.

Despite all of the negative records the film has broken, if you’re looking for some laughs amidst the stress of final exam season, I’d definitely urge you to take a break from studying and head to the theater to check out “The Marvels.” This film may not tear holes in time and space, but in my opinion, it didn’t need to do that in order to be a success.



ILLUSTRATION BY CONNOR YOUNGBERG



# Jen’s Jams: The Recording Academy is the 'Anti-Hero' again on 2024 Grammy Nominations

By JENNIFER MOGLIA  
Staff Writer

On Feb. 4, 2024, the 66th annual Grammy Awards will take place, airing live on CBS and streaming on Paramount+. The Recording Academy announced the nominees for the biggest awards show in music earlier this month, and despite some changes being made to the selection process and categories, the feeling I got when reading them was the same as every other year: disappointment.

As I looked over the nominee announcements on the Recording Academy’s social feeds, the main thing I noticed was that the same few artists were nominated for nearly every category and a significant number of notable artists were left out. There were a few bright spots and unexpected (but deserved) nods in the mix, but as a whole, these nominations were as run-of-the-mill as they could get.

According to the Grammys’ website, three new categories will debut at the 2024 show: Best African Music Performance, Best Alternative Jazz Album and Best Pop Dance Recording. These were added as part of an effort to make the awards “more fair, transparent and accurate,” according to Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason Jr.

While I appreciate and applaud these efforts, they don’t seem to have had much of an impact on the selected nominees. When scrolling through the announcement, all I noticed was that the same few artists were nominated for nearly every category.

Five artists (Jon Batiste, Miley Cyrus, Olivia Rodrigo, Taylor Swift and SZA) were nominated for all three of the first three awards listed: Record of the Year, Album of the Year and Song of the Year.

Two artists, Billie Eilish and Lana Del Rey, were nominated for two out of three of them. While I was happy to see some of these artists get recognition, specifically the likes of Batiste and SZA, I was already starting to get sick of seeing the same names over and over again.

I understand that songs that get nominated for these awards are typically uber-popular tracks you’d hear on Top 40 radio, but what especially frustrates me is that nearly all of the artists nominated in these categories released better songs this year that were deeper cuts on their LPs. I would’ve loved to see picks like “River” by Cyrus, “get him back!” by Rodrigo, “F2F” by SZA or “Labyrinth” by Swift chosen in place of the singles.

The Best New Artist category was one of the few that I was actually satisfied with, as true breakout newcomers like Gracie Abrams, Ice Spice and Noah Kahan were recognized. However, I think there were a few clear snubs, including René Rapp, Sabrina Carpenter, Mitski, Laufey, Maisie Peters, Holly Humberstone and Chappell Roan.

Speaking of snubs, I was extremely shocked to see that two of my personal favorite artists, Hozier and Kim Petras, didn’t receive any nominations this year for

their respective albums “Unreal Unearth” and “Feed the Beast.” I’m not sure what categories these albums would fit in, but judging by how confusing some of the genre categories were this year (“ballad of a homeschooled girl” by Olivia Rodrigo in a “rock” category?), I’m sure some space could have been found for them.

What puzzled me is that it clearly wasn’t a situation of the artists being too small for the Academy to have recognized them. Daniel Nigro, producer of all of Roan’s singles and her debut album, “The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess,” both released in 2023, was nominated for Producer of the Year, Non-Classical. Justin Tranter, one of the writers on “Gemini Moon” and “Pretty Girls” by Rapp, both from her debut LP also released this year, got a nod for Songwriter of the Year, Non-Classical as well.

There was a bit more variety in later categories. Some of the nods I was particularly happy to see were “- (Subtract)” by Ed Sheeran for Best Pop Vocal Album, “Padam Padam” by Kylie Minogue and “Rush” by Troye Sivan for Best Pop Dance Recording and “This Is Why” by Paramore for Best Rock Album and Best Alternative Music Performance. I think the rock/alternative categories could have benefitted from some more modern names, though — as much as I love the Foo Fighters



and Metallica, newer rock bands like The Warning and YONAKA would’ve been way cooler picks for me.

I can’t ignore the fact that Dave Chappelle’s comedy album “What’s in a Name?” was nominated for Best Comedy Album despite the backlash he has received for transphobic and antisemitic comments over the past few years. Knowing that the Academy still allowed him to be nominated just makes me want to watch the show even less than I already did.

The Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media category was an unexpected bright spot for me, with “Daisy Jones & The Six,” “Barbie,” “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever” and “Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol. 3” all getting nods. The last notable nomination for me was the BADBADNOTGOOD remix of “Alien Love Call” by Turnstile being featured in the Best Remixed Recording category, as I was very happy to see the hardcore-adjacent band featured again in some way.

For the most part, all of this year’s Grammy nominations were a reminder that there are so many artists not getting the recognition they deserve, and there are also so many artists who the media has overexposed me to this year to the point where I’m sick of hearing about people whose music I once enjoyed. I guess it’ll be cool to see Taylor Swift win some more of these awards, but at the end of the day, in the (modified) words of her Grammy-nominated song “Anti-Hero,” it’s them, hi, the Recording Academy members are the problem, it’s them.

# Connor’s Capes: 'Marvel’s Spider-Man 2' falls short of greatness

By CONNOR YOUNGBERG  
Associate Multimedia Editor

Insomniac Games gave the Spider-Man fandom an absolute gem with 2018’s “Marvel’s Spider-Man.” Finally, a Spider-Man story with an adult Peter Parker and comic accurate characters. It’s made even better with its innovative gameplay and heartfelt story.

Then, it followed it up with the fun and festive “Marvel’s Spider-Man: Miles Morales,” which debuted with the long awaited PlayStation 5 in 2020. The game perfectly built off of the first installment, while making Morales the main focus and expanding on his character.

Fast forward to Oct. 20, the company finally releases “Marvel’s Spider-Man 2,” one of the most anticipated video games in recent memory. While it utilizes the PS5’s next-gen technology to its full capabilities and is still a great game, it falls just short of living up to the hype.

The main story revolves around Parker’s relationship with Harry Osborn, Parker’s best friend and son of this universe’s New York City Mayor Norman Osborn. Harry was lightly introduced through

various side missions in the first game, in which Harry was said to be “in Europe” during the events of the game.

However, the game’s post- credits scene reveals that Harry was actually sick with an unknown illness and has actually been in containment with the iconic venom symbiote. If this sounds familiar, it’s because it’s a nearly identical plot to “The Amazing Spider-Man 2,” which saw Dane DeHaan’s Harry in search of a cure for his random, unknown illness.

Now, while I personally enjoy “The Amazing Spider-Man 2,” I can also acknowledge that it is not great. In fact, it’s quite bad. So opting to go with an extremely similar storyline for “Marvel’s Spider-Man 2” and just swapping out the Green Goblin character for Venom was certainly a choice.

Venom is an interesting villain for the second installment. Despite being arguably Spider-Man’s most popular villain, it has failed to resonate on many adaptations. Until now, that is.

Insomniac Games doesn’t hold back on the aggressiveness of the Venom symbiote, which is shown in the gameplay, cutscenes and

the voice acting from legendary horror actor Tony Todd. When the symbiote inevitably bonds to Parker, voice actor Yuri Lowenthal does a fantastic job twisting his loveable Spidey charm into a darker, angrier tone.

While the storyline surrounding Venom is a little questionable at times, it also has moments where it’s easily the best part of the game. In one mission, you get to actually play as Venom, which makes for some awesome gameplay and an experience that’s much different from controlling Parker and the other Spider-Man in this game, Morales.

There’s a scene where Venom and the other main villain, Kraven the Hunter, go head-to-head and it’s undoubtedly one of the coolest moments in any Marvel video game. Kraven is also an extremely badass villain. His entire purpose throughout the game is to find someone of equal status, in terms of strength. Kraven is dying, but he vows to only die in combat, to an equal.

Is he the most compelling character? No. Is it one of the hardest character archetypes? Absolutely.

Despite having two main villains, both get really awesome missions, which is something Spider-Man media has lacked in past iterations. In-fact, this is the first major Kraven adaptation outside of cartoons, just beating out Sony’s “Kraven the Hunter” film, which releases next year.

One character who doesn’t get much time to shine is Morales. Despite being established as an equal to Parker’s Spider-Man, this is still very much Parker’s story. Morales gets a small arc with “Marvel’s Spider-Man” villain Mister

Negative, but the scene really didn’t get the amount of time it deserved.

While the game’s ending makes sure we can expect a lot more Morales moving forward, it’s still a little disappointing that we didn’t get more of him in this game. However, the way the creators incorporated a two-Spider-Man game is really cool. Players can effortlessly switch between the two when swinging around the city by the press of a button, followed by a flawless in-game transition.

While Insomniac Games did a great job at making sure Parker and Morales can co-exist as Spider-Men, they nerfed Morales and buffed Parker so they didn’t have to create two different combat systems.

It’s widely understood that Morales is more powerful than Parker. He can do everything Parker’s Spider-Man can do, but can turn invisible and has venom abilities, electricity powers unrelated to the character of Venom. If that sounds confusing, it’s because it is.

Parker usually relies on gadgets and tech to keep up with Morales’ skillset, but both Spider-Men have the same amount of gadgets. While they’re both Spider-Man, they’re also very different in terms of style, and I don’t think the game fully captured that.

With all of that being said, I still think the game is fantastic. I truly don’t believe Insomniac Games is capable of making a bad Spider-Man game. However, the bar was set extremely high and I’m not sure “Marvel’s Spider-Man 2” was able to swing above it.







CAT MURPHY/CHRONICLE

# A championship is Near(is)

## ‘Big game player’ Julia Nearis putting it all on the line for a final shot at glory

By **COLIN KENNEDY**  
Associate Sports Editor

Julia Nearis was on a visit to Quinnipiac when she first met women’s ice hockey head coach Cass Turner. She was in awe of the rink and the program that has established itself as a college hockey powerhouse. Except it wasn’t her own college visit, it was her sister’s.

Ultimately, her older sister Abigail went 82 miles east for a successful four years at Brown, and Julia shipped up to Boston University for four years as a Terrier.

“I was a little intimidated,” Nearis said. “The one thing I really remember was being in the weight room and I was still figuring out training as a young athlete ... It was a little intimidating, but it was also inspiring to make me think I could be at that level one day.”

Turner remembers that day well, even if Julia wasn’t the main focus at the time.

“She was on a visit with her sister so it was kind of like a double-whammy,” Turner said. “I know her coach from Kent (her prep school) quite well. It’s a small world out there, we have a lot of connections.”

It was eight years before Nearis stepped foot in M&T Bank Arena again, but that doesn’t mean she didn’t find success along the way.

Hailing from Beverly, Massachusetts, the graduate student forward took a traditional hockey route, playing at a prep school before making the jump to college. Her plan? Play hockey at an Ivy League school like her older sister Abby.

“I wanted to see where I could go with the Ivy route, but that didn’t turn out,” Nearis said. “I looked at Hockey East schools and was choosing between BC and BU. Something about BU was so special, and playing so close to my hometown was pretty cool.”

Nearis went on to have a successful

career as a Terrier, despite the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. She finished her BU career with 31 goals, 33 assists and led the team in faceoff wins.

“I had a lot of fun (at BU),” Nearis said. “My freshman year was really awesome. I got to jump right into it ... It was just a whole different game.”

Putting all the stats and the city she loved aside, there was still something missing for Nearis. Something that no amount of goals or assists could fix.

The hunger to win a national title.

“Unfortunately, the last two seasons weren’t the strongest performances from our team,” Nearis said. “All in all I had a great (four years) there ... Boston’s one of my favorite places on Earth.”

So she began to test the waters, with her dad bringing up a place that was familiar with the Nearis family.

“My dad actually mentioned Quinnipiac when we were thinking about schools,” Nearis said. “I was like ‘Oh my God, of course.’ I knew it would be a grind but it’s been great to be around people that are so committed and love winning as much as I do.”

The first step in rekindling the connection was to reach out to goaltender Corinne Schroeder, a former teammate who, much like Nearis, played four years at BU before making the jump to Quinnipiac for a fifth year in 2021-22.

“(Schroeder) was actually the first person I reached out to, to ask ‘Hey are they looking for a forward for next year?’” Nearis said. “‘If so, could you call Cass for me?’”

Luckily enough for Nearis, the Bobcats were looking to bolster their front lines, and not long after officially entering the portal, a Connecticut number popped up on her phone. It was Turner.

Despite the initial urge to make the jump, Nearis took her time in the portal, making sure she made the best choice for her last year of eligibility.

“We talked to her for maybe two months,” Turner said. “In a lot of the transfer portal processes, it usually happens pretty fast. We really got a chance to talk about what this experience was going to look like, what it could be and how we could make it work. I think that was really important because it’s helped her find success pretty quickly here.”

Turner never hesitated in her desire to have Nearis join her squad, constantly checking in on her to make sure she was aware of just how much she was wanted, and needed, in Hamden.

“She’s a big game player,” Turner said. “If there’s an intense moment, you want the puck on Julia’s stick. She wants to make plays to win hockey games ... to have her have that experience for four years of being a go-to player for BU, I think is important.”

In the end it was always a no-brainer for Nearis to join Quinnipiac.

“First off, I wanted to win,” Nearis said. “As much as I loved Boston I could tell that they’re in the midst of rebuilding. I didn’t want to partake so much in rebuilding as much as I wanted to win.”

The Bobcats are doing the opposite of rebuilding. They’re loading up to try and get over the hump that’s blocked them in years past, and Turner knows that a player like Nearis was exactly what they were looking for.

“She’s a playmaker. If there’s an opportunity to shoot or pass she’d much rather be the person to make the pass,” Turner said. “She does a nice job breaking the puck out. The patience that she has is huge, and definitely has helped our team a lot.”

Nearis’ passing ability has been on full dis-

play, tallying six assists through the first two months of the season. She’s also potted seven goals, with her best showing being a two-goal performance against UConn in the Nutmeg Classic semifinal game on Nov. 24.

For Nearis, she looked forward to playing in a much tougher league: ECAC Hockey.

“I wanted to test the waters with a new league,” Nearis said. “The Hockey East isn’t as strong as the ECAC. You want to have a tight game almost every time you go out there, and I wanted the experience of playing new teams.”

Luckily, Nearis views testing teams her speciality.

“I don’t know what it is, but making another team look stupid is kind of fun for me,” Nearis said. “I feel like I can be a step ahead of most people on the ice and I always try to use that to my advantage.”

Oftentimes the biggest challenge with a new veteran coming into a locker room can be the clashing of leadership styles. Just like on the ice, Nearis’ transition has been a seamless fit within the locker room.

“You’ll hear her on the bench when we need to pick it up a bit,” Turner said. “She’s not afraid to use her voice and be vocal to challenge our group when we need to be challenged, and the group has a lot of respect for that.”

Much like at BU, the goals and assists are nice, but it strays away from Nearis’ ultimate goal, one that she only has one last crack at.

“I want to go all the way with this team,” Nearis said. “When we’re on our best game it’s very hard to stop us.”

No, Nearis won’t end her Bobcat career as a career leader in any statistics, but she has the opportunity to lead the team to a place the program has never been, and if you ask her, that’s the only thing that matters.



# Fairfield crowd mutes Quinnipiac volleyball's repeat hopes

**By MICHAEL LAROCCA**  
Opinion Editor

FAIRFIELD — The Bobcats never stood a chance.

Exactly 365 days after Quinnipiac volleyball upset the then top-seeded Fairfield Stags to win its first MAAC title at the ESPN Wide World of Sports complex in Orlando, Florida, the Stags charged back. They took down Quinnipiac in four sets on their home court in front of what felt like thousands of rowdy fans to win their record 13th MAAC volleyball title.

Now that all the confetti has fallen and the fanfare has died down, there's one major take-away from the 2023 MAAC Championship match. No matter what the team may say or feel, the Bobcats were not built for a game in an antagonistic environment.

"It was nothing special," head coach Kyle Robinson said. "I wasn't bothered or surprised by the crowd. I think it was standard for a championship match, standard for rival schools. The crowd was not a factor for us."

While Robinson may believe the crowd was not a factor, it clearly was.

How can a coach watch groups of unruly fans scream in his players' ears when they're trying to serve, run around the court with flags in between sets and see the other team reciprocate with their own antics and say that didn't play a factor? Yes, it was standard, but it definitely affected the team's performance.

First set, set point, Fairfield leads 25-24. The Bobcats receive the Stags' serve, sophomore setter Damla Gunes executes a backset to junior hitter Alexandra Tennon. Tennon's hit went too long. The Fairfield crowd erupted as its team took that initial set 26-24. Robinson even challenged the play, but he was wrong. The crowd boomed again. Watching the replay of the match online does not do the volume of that crowd justice.

The Bobcats dueled as hard as they could for that first set. Losing it was hard enough, but after that, the entire Fairfield crowd reached another gear and the few Quinnipiac fans in attendance piped down. The Bobcats needed the momentum of winning the first set to fight against the



CAMERON LEVASSEUR/CHRONICLE

Fairfield drew crowds of more than 400 people for its MAAC semifinal and championship matches on Nov. 18 and 19.

hostile environment. That was when the match unofficially ended.

The official attendance for the championship match was 497 people, but it felt just as loud as a Quinnipiac men's hockey game. What that says about Quinnipiac's own crowd culture and school spirit is for another article, but it would have been difficult for the Bobcats to prepare for that.

The only other time Quinnipiac saw a crowd of that nature was at the Wisconsin Field House in December 2022 when it played in front of over 7,000 Badger fans and scored only 28 points in a three-set loss. Quinnipiac knew that was coming, and it embraced the situation.

"It was one of the coolest things we could have experienced together," former Bobcat middle blocker Nicole Legg said at the time. "This incentivized us to make this community and this environment at our school back home."

The Bobcats were never expected to win that match, but they could have beaten Fairfield on Nov. 19, and they didn't pull it off.

If the crowd and the odds are both stacked

against a team, then all that is left is to rally with the people around it. Quinnipiac didn't seem to execute on that front.

Throughout the MAAC Tournament, most of the teams had lively, and sometimes obnoxious, benches. Marist players always cheer on their teammates, Iona chirps at the opposing team relentlessly and even Fairfield has some fun celebrations when its team gets a kill or other score. Quinnipiac's bench was near silent.

The worst part about the match is that besides a second set where Fairfield knocked down 19 kills on .563 hitting, Quinnipiac didn't play horrible.

The team was competitive in three out of the four sets it played. While things certainly could have gone better, they also could have been a lot worse.

"I was proud of what we did this season," Robinson said. "I was proud of our work, proud of our competition and proud of the way we played."

The Bobcats' culture throughout the Robin-

son tenure has been all-business. For a program that resided in the cellar for the majority of its history, that mindset helped it climb to relevance in the volleyball world. Robinson's all business style is what won the Bobcats the 2022 MAAC title. However, being serious when everyone around you is having fun and staying loose is one of the reasons why Quinnipiac lost the championship in 2023.

On the other hand, the 2024 MAAC Tournament will be hosted by Siena in Loudonville, New York, away from the home stadium of one of the best mid-major volleyball programs in the nation. When the Bobcats last played there in the 2021 MAAC Tournament, the crowds they saw were 53 and 32 people, respectively.

Quinnipiac might not have to face a big crowd like this for a long time, and it will succeed in the meantime. However, the moment it sees one like it did on Nov. 19, there should be a plan to counteract the chaos. The Bobcats' roster is too great to let a little noise beat it.



PEYTON MCKENZIE/CHRONICLE

Quinnipiac volleyball finished the 2023 season with a program-best 15-5 record in conference play, including nine wins in its first 10 MAAC matches.

**NUTMEG** from 12

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tersweet. The season is far from over, yes. But this Nutmeg Classic was the Winnipeg, Manitoba, native's last.

Despite donning a Quinnipiac jersey for the past six seasons, Angers earned her first tournament start just two years ago, also against Yale.

But Angers wasn't the only Bobcat to make a name for herself on Nutmeg weekend.

Steigauf's goal against Yale was her second of the tournament. Graduate student forward Julia Nearis and senior defender Kendall Cooper

also notched two goals on the weekend, with Reilly and Cooper recording four points apiece.

Although Quinnipiac kicked off its season as one of the cleanest teams in the ECAC, the team has struggled immensely with penalties since late October.

Case in point, seven different Bobcats saw the sin bin over the weekend. And yet, Quinnipiac's penalty-kill squad — tied for eighth in the nation — never once allowed UConn or Yale to benefit from the 5-on-4 advantage.

And though Yale hosted the tournament, Quinnipiac fans turned out in droves to support the team.

The Bobcats faithful lined New Haven's Ingalls Rink on both Friday and Saturday, their goal celebrations and "Let's go Bobcats!" chants filling the 3,500-seat arena.

After Steigauf's empty-netter, for example, a man jumped up and screamed, "That's my sister-in-law!"

Quinnipiac President Judy Olian also attended the championship game, even joining the Bobcats for the on-ice celebration once the team initiated a "Judy! Judy! Judy!" chant.

It was quite the cat-and-dog fight for Quinnipiac — literally. But neither the Huskies nor the Bulldogs could manage to end

the Bobcats' reign.

For Turner, going home after watching her team snatching the trophy again was nothing less than "outstanding," she said.

It was the 11th time in the tournament's 20-year history — and the sixth time in Turner's nine-year coaching career at Quinnipiac — that the Bobcats earned a spot on the trophy's silver nameplate.

"(The Nutmeg Classic) is exactly the practice that we want and need," Turner said. "For us, it's about taking pride in the process that is going to get us the actual results, winning games and continuing to get better."





CAT MURPHY/CHRONICLE

# Fighting like cats and dogs

## Women’s ice hockey skates by UConn, Yale to fourth-consecutive Nutmeg Classic title

By CAT MURPHY and ALEX MARTINAKOVA

NEW HAVEN — It all ended with a hug.

Quinnipiac sophomore goaltender Tatum Blacker was the first Bobcat off the bench as the game clock hit double zeros and the final buzzer sounded in Ingalls Rink in New Haven Saturday night.

Her first stop: Logan Angers.

Blacker barreled toward the graduate student goaltender, who skated to meet her halfway between the bench and the net — a net Angers hadn’t let a puck see the back of all night.

With their arms straight up in the air in celebration and awe, the two stopped for just a split-second to take it all in. The moment. The game. The shutout. The tournament.

The two then collided into a mesh of goalie pads, embracing for a few seconds before 20 other Bobcats formed a pile of players around the 6-foot, sixth-year goaltender.

The massive old-fashioned scoreboard above their heads explained it all: Quinnipiac: 3, Yale: 0.

“Normally, she’s the one running to get the puck,” Angers said of Blacker. “But today, she was so excited that she got to come down and hug me first, so that was pretty awesome. We have a great relationship.”

The goalie hug marked the culmination of the 2023 Nutmeg Classic Tournament — and just like in each of the three tournaments before it, Quinnipiac women’s ice hockey ended the series with a shiny silver trophy to show for it.

It didn’t come easily. It took a come-from-behind win over UConn in the semifinal game and a hard-fought victory over Yale in the championship. But in the end, the Bobcats battled hard enough to take the trophy home to Hamden once again.

It may not be the NCAA Tournament, but the Nutmeg Classic Tournament holds a special

place in Quinnipiac women’s ice hockey’s heart.

“We take a lot of pride in the Nutmeg,” head coach Cass Turner said after her team’s fourth-consecutive tournament victory. “It’s a lot of fun and nice to see our group win it again.”

The team’s immense pride in the annual tournament became immediately clear when the trophy arrived rink-side. Graduate student captains Sadie Peart and Kate Reilly tossed their gloves and sticks to the ice, hoisting the cup above their heads before being swallowed whole by a rowdy mess of navy and gold.

It was a Battle of Whitney Avenue-style Nutmeg Classic final — just like in 2019, the year Quinnipiac’s win streak started.

But the team that took the ice on Friday and Saturday was far from the same team that took

the ice back then. Only four current Bobcats were even there to witness the 2019 tournament win: Angers, Peart, Reilly and graduate student forward Alexa Hoskin.

And while Angers may not have played in that Nutmeg Classic, she certainly made her mark in this one.

The netminder — whose 68 total saves and unmatched goalie gymnastics carried the Bobcats through the weekend — was the tournament’s MVP for the second straight year.

“I’m just taking it one puck at a time,” Angers said. “I usually try to stay pretty stress-free, but we all really wanted to win this Nutmeg.”

For Angers, though, this victory is likely bit-.....

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Quinnipiac women’s ice hockey goaltenders Tatum Blacker (left) and Logan Angers hug after the Bobcats’ 3-0 shutout over Yale on Nov. 25.

# ‘Point god’ Savion Lewis leading charge for 5-1 Bobcats

By ETHAN HURWITZ  
Sports Editor

When fellow Quinnipiac men’s basketball captain and MAAC Preseason First-Team guard Matt Balanc takes to social media to call you “point god,” you must be doing something well.

And graduate student guard Savion Lewis isn’t just playing at a high level; he’s playing at a level few Bobcats have sniffed in program history.

“Sav’s the best point guard I’ve ever played with,” Balanc said. “I truly believe when Sav has the ball in his hands, we’re going to score ... Playing with him is just fun.”

As of publication, the Bobcats’ starting point guard is leading the country in assists per game (8.2) and is third in total assists (49) through six games.

“I started off the season passing the ball a lot (and) getting my teammates involved,” Lewis said.

Getting his teammates involved has been an understatement.

The scoring hasn’t been what’s put him on the map — he only surpassed double-digits twice so far this year. It’s his passing that has Quinnipiac racing out to a 5-1 start to begin out-of-conference play.

“I realized that I have a really talented team, we have a lot of pieces,” Lewis said. “So as a point guard, that just makes me excited to get them involved. I just use my intelligence, my experience to get everybody involved and they’re the ones making the shots, so I can’t really take credit.”

It’s a good feeling for the Long Island native in his sixth collegiate season. After tearing his Achilles in a December 2021 matchup against Manhattan, Lewis was limited in his return to the court last year.

Now with a new bounce in his step, he’s leading the Bobcats — in the weight room, the locker room and on the court.

“He’s a veteran, so he has the ability to control the game,” head coach Tom Pecora said. “He’s making great decisions, it’s all about decision making.”

Lewis is in good shape, telling the media that he was fully healthy before the season, and has become one of the best guards at the mid-major level, something Pecora knew would happen based on his redshirt junior year.

“When he got injured two years ago, he was playing at the highest level he’s ever played,” Pecora said. “(He was) playing at a level where he could have played a lot of places in America.”

It’s not a complete surprise. After all, Lewis was New York’s Mr. Basketball during his senior year of high school.

Now just two years removed from his injury, he’s back to his full ability to be at the top of college basketball. His return is fueled by his off-court work ethic.

“I watch a lot of film,” Lewis said. “I think that’s what separates a lot, I get the answers before the test.”

That first MAAC title still eludes Quinnipiac, but with a healthy Lewis back out on the floor, he knows what his end goal is. It’s still the same one he had when he committed.

“I committed here and I had a goal,” Lewis said. “Due to injuries and a few obstacles, it set me back a little bit, but I just want to see it through.”