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Student enrollment is steadily dropping Admission offices adapt to the impact of losing on-campus residents

**By Donovan Wilson
Reporter**

As COVID-19 roars on, enrollment in college continues to steadily drop each semester not only throughout the country and the state, but throughout southern itself. However, the overseers of enrollment on campus are looking to bring those numbers back up over time.

There are many reasons for the drop in enrollment and they all seem to tie to the personal struggles students are facing. One reason is juggling a job and an academic career in the middle of a global pandemic. This can be observed through community colleges around the world, they have been hit the hardest and are down the lowest in enrollment. Community colleges are more likely to have students that are balancing schoolwork and jobs. Another factor working against colleges is that many freshmen are struggling with whether or not they should take a gap year between high school and college. With a pandemic going on,

reasons for a gap year are heightened.

"I have college-aged kids and I have said this to them as well, one of the most important piece of advice is to make yourself aware of the resources on and proactively use them because students often suffer in silence and that's their biggest issue," said Julie Edstrom, vice president for enrollment management.

Edstrom was brought on during COVID-19 as a temporary replacement, originally as the associate vice president, but now remains in the role. She represents the four major departments involved in enrollment at Southern: financial aid, transfer students, undergrad admissions and the Registrar office. All of the information she learns overseeing these offices is brought back to the president and contributes to their enrollment efforts.

The most important of the four mentioned offices is undergrad admissions. The most obvious reason would be that the more undergrad students granted admission, the higher the

enrollment numbers. One of the biggest reasons is that it helps for the future of the university. Offices are able to keep an eye on first year and transfer students and monitor how their experiences could be improved to encourage more new students.

"I was supposed to have two in-person classes this semester but then they both switched to asynchronous online courses," said Wilkinson Hall desk attendant Ava Fernand.

Another thing low enrollment has affected is not necessarily the number of classes being offered, but how many classes are now completely online. Even leading into this semester, many classes switched from entirely in-person to either hybrid, online synchronous or online asynchronous. This was to cut down on in-person student presence and keep the campus as safe as possible. From the perspective of residence hall staff, the number of new freshmen entering the buildings has been significantly lower than usual. This may prove a lot of the aforementioned



PHOTO | ROMA ROSITANI

Admissions office is located inside of the Wintergreen building.



PHOTO | ROMA ROSITANI

Empty snowy path leading to Earl Hall and Buley library.

claims as to why freshmen are enrolling less during COVID-19. Fernand also

mentioned how many rooms are empty and how practically barren the

parking lots have become at residence halls on the weekends.

North townhouse renovations halted by COVID-19

**By Donovan Wilson
Reporter**

The townhouse construction begun last year and has been suspended this semester to allow for the use of every townhouse as a quarantining unit.

Construction on the North Campus townhouses began early 2020. Construction had then been completed on two of the four sets of houses. Townhouse A and Townhouse B are complete, but Townhouse C and Townhouse D remain untouched. The process has been halted until an indefinite date but most likely summer of 2021, after the spring.

"The construction

work on Townhouse B was almost identical to that of the construction on townhouse A and the same will go for townhouses C and D," said Robert Demezzo, director of residence life.

The major new additions to the townhouses during construction have been and will continue to be new kitchens, appliances, flooring and entirely new bathrooms. In addition to all of these more aesthetic additions, renovated units have new HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) systems. The Townhouse B units specifically received items including new microwaves, which was a need specific to those

units so it is foreseeable that tweaks will be done if needed.

The project is currently behind schedule, as Townhouse C should have already been under construction, per the original plan. The team working on these renovations had to ask for and receive extra time and bigger budget in order to ensure they will finish this project. Due to this halt on the renovations, the townhouses are expected to be done and hopefully open to students by the 2021-2022 academic year.

"One of the major additions that we are really happy about is improving the security concerns and making

all the doors on the townhouses autolock," said Nora Anderson, residence life coordinator and hall director of the North Campus Midrise and townhouses.

A major problem with the renovation was concerns of low security. The townhouses are essentially located on their own, away from the other residential spaces and does not boast much security. Outside of what you'd find in an already more secure North Campus Midrise room. Now, however, the doors will have auto lock systems which will automatically lock the doors behind you when you leave the townhouse.

In addition to that, the doors themselves are also entirely new.

As of right now, the townhouses are for quarantine use only so the students who live there cannot leave during this time. To help with this, food is stocked in the fridge prior to their arrival so they can eat when they arrive. There is also a large bin placed outside of the door that Sodexo, the campus's food supplier, drops food daily for the quarantined students.

"At least start it at a different time, we are about to be wrapping up and the cases are going up this week anyways," said history major Daniella Occhineri, a sophomore.

This was a comment made by a student during the original construction in November of last year. It is interesting feedback as it is proving to possibly be sound advice just one semester later, all progress has been halted. A lot of this is due to the aforementioned spike in numbers which has been insanely higher compared to when this interview was conducted.

The construction that has been completed on the townhouses has proven to be very worth all the time and money, the only thing that remains up in the air is if the timing was correct as students cannot currently live in the townhouse buildings as construction

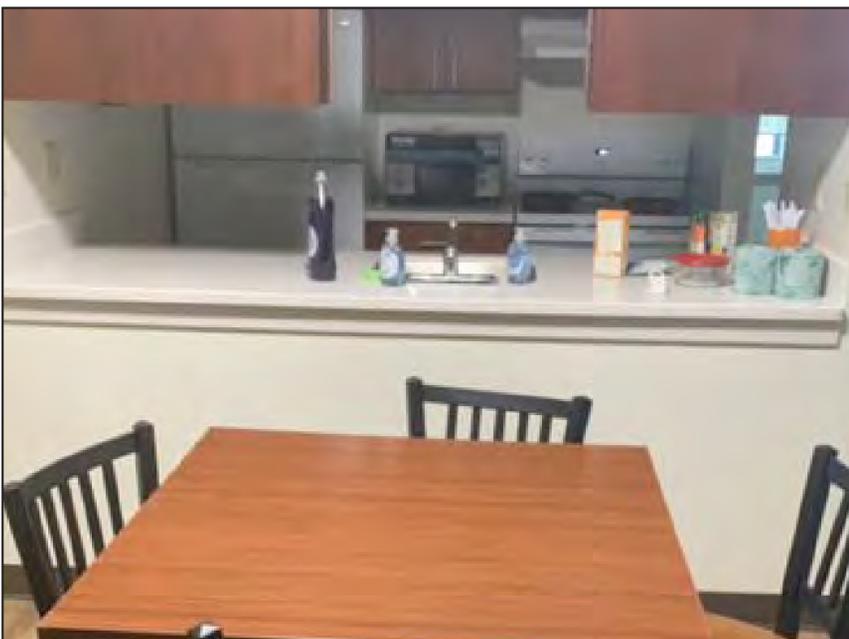


PHOTO | DONOVAN WILSON

Inside a renovated townhouse kitchen and dining area.



PHOTO | DONOVAN WILSON

Living room area of a renovated townhouse.

Students say COVID-19 negatively impacts mental health

By Desteny Maragh
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Contributor

College students feel they have always had problems with mental health, but COVID-19 has intensified those issues. Since the pandemic hit, many students believe mental health needs to be a more prominent topic.

Dan Baronski, a psychology major and active member of the university's Active Minds club said there are many resources for mental health advocacy and awareness, but students feel reluctant to seek them out because of all the stigmas surrounding mental health.

"I see students dealing with the pandemic the same as I am, full of anxiety. I really sympathize for the first-year students whom I work close with, because not only did they get their senior year of high school stripped from them," said Baronski. "But they cannot even be a first-year college student without worrying about protocols and social distancing. It absolutely affected their mental health, and I can see it."

Communications major Amanda Arnold said as a freshman, coming into college during the pandemic has only made the transition to university harder.

"I don't know exactly how to be a college student," said Arnold. "Trying to figure out the ropes while in the middle of a pandemic hasn't been easy."

One in five college students said their mental health has worsened since COVID-19 began and 88.8% of overall college students significantly felt their mental health getting worse overtime with rising anxiety rates, according to the data collected by the national Active Minds organizations in September, 2020.

Baronski recommends all college students use Active Minds as a resource for any mental health related needs and information. Active Minds is a nationwide organization that focuses on removing the negative stigmas around mental health. It also educates the public on what is happening with mental health, using data collected around the U.S.

Stefany Vazquez, a junior and communication major explained her mental health has depleted since the pandemic started; Many things in her life that brought her joy, changed.

"I don't feel motivated to do things that I've previously loved doing before. I lost my job, lost friends, lost myself in the span of eight months. I used to love going to Target or the movies to destress but now it's not recommended to go," said Vazquez.

According to a study conducted in September of 2020 by Southern's counseling services, an average of 64% of students are experiencing increased levels of being overwhelmed by school work and being worried about the health of one or more close relatives, while 71% of students are experiencing an increased level of stress and anxiety overall.

Shaoshi Huang, a junior history student at SCSU, expressed how pleased he was with the help being provided by Counseling Services; while he is usually able to manage the feeling of being overwhelmed in past semesters, everything changed when SCSU switched to remote learning.

"I don't think people outside academia understand how much more work comes with online courses," said Huang. "I am a good student, but I went to the counseling center because, as any student will tell you,

this semester is different and tougher than anything I have experienced in my collegiate coursework."

Nursing major Martha Polanco, a junior, said she went to receive counseling services due to the stress she faced while completing her required nursing hours for her degree.

"I mainly went to go talk with someone about how what I've been seeing has been affecting me," said Polanco. "Patients come in with a variety of problems but it takes a real toll on a person's mental health, especially when COVID-19 patients come in and you have the stress of thinking about how your friends and family might be affected if you get the disease."

Director of Counseling Services, Nicholas Pinkerton, said that while clinicians at Counseling Services are working to provide high quality services to students, they are expanding services in a pandemic era to accommodate everyone.

"Following the spring semester, our team of clinicians made concerted efforts to provide additional mental health awareness and support to our students," said Pinkerton.

Counseling Services works towards providing quality services to students, even though this new

modality of online help.

The department uses social media running the THRIVE Wellbeing Series and Ask Me Anything campaign offered Mondays on their Instagram.

"While demand for counseling continues to rebound and grow, some predict that it will eventually outpace anything we have seen prior to the pandemic," said Pinkerton.

"Unsurprisingly, students report their primary complaints have been anxiety, depression, loneliness and isolation and relationship concerns," said Pinkerton. "The nature of this ongoing crisis is such that it has been more difficult to wrap-up the work and terminate services for students."

Pinkerton then pointed out the necessity of mental health support services moving forward, based on the initial toll the pandemic is having on students.

"We have really only seen the initial implications of the profound sense of grief and loss, loneliness and disconnection, and ambiguity and fear that this global pandemic has thrust upon us, and it seems likely that prioritizing mental health support will be increasingly important moving forward," said Pinkerton.

Enroue Halfkenny is a private practitioner at

Healing and Liberation Counseling, located in New Haven, which specializes in mental health, justice and spiritual working.

Halfkenny has worked with various schools, universities and organizations throughout Connecticut and has introduced solutions to try to help manage mental health.

"What's important is finding the things that are nurturing for themselves. Particularly when you're in college, there is so much pressure because this is a huge investment of time, money, and resources to be in college," said Halfkenny.

Halfkenny said it is really important to stay connected to the things that are nurturing for one's body and mind, such as exercise, talking to friends, spiritual and religious practices or even stress reduction activities.

"It's also about not undoing the stress but doing the thing that fills you up," said Halfkenny. "For me, being in nature is one way of doing that because it helps me connect to the world around me."

"Just paying attention to how things are changing and moving in a way that they always have can sometimes be really helpful particularly in a time where everything doesn't seem normal," said Halfkenny.



PHOTO | JOSE VEGA

Counseling services located in Engleman Hall on the second floor.

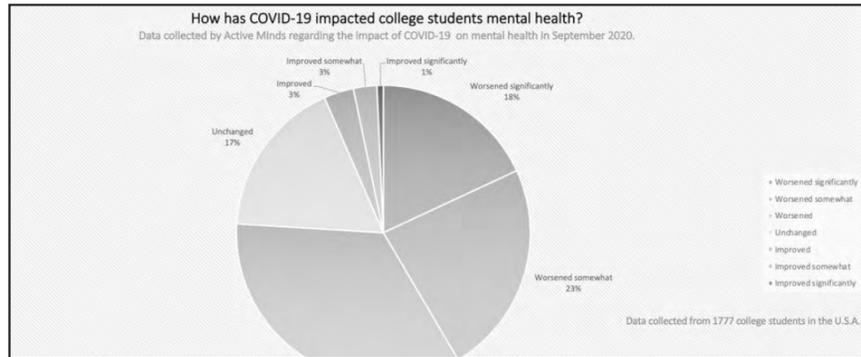


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION | RAFAELA MARTINEZ

Pie chart data by the Active Minds showing how Covid-19 has affected students.

University's sustainability through the pandemic

By Abby Epstein
Managing Editor
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Due to COVID-19, the university has experienced a pause in its sustainability efforts. There has been an increase in single-use products and waste produced from packaged foods.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hindered the SCSU community from being able to fully work toward a more sustainable environment.

"It stinks. I feel like we not took a step backwards but definitely paused our efforts and it's harder to restart again," said Sustainability Intern Derek Faulkner.

Faulkner said the idea of stopping usage of plastic straws at the Adanti Student Center is no longer a priority.

Through beach cleanups, virtual events, food service programs and facility maintenance, Southern has still been able to make multiple changes to stay safe and sustainable during the pandemic.

According to the Office of Sustainability's homepage, SCSU is a leader in waste reduction and recycling and part of a coalition of universities across the United States and internationally that have formally committed to climate leadership since

November 2015.

Daphney Alston, the assistant director for the Office of Student Involvement, said before COVID-19, clubs and organizations made small changes to adhere to the agreement.

"For the past few years, we've been trying to find our place in being more mindful about sustainability and our impact just with simple things like with balloons during events, or using reusable tablecloths versus plastic or paper tablecloths and trying to reuse things and items for events, not just getting rid of things," said Alston.

"The fears brought on by COVID-19 have seen the reimplementing of certain single-use products that Southern had been shying away from in the name of sustainability," said Julian Saria, an intern at the Office of Sustainability.

"Just today, I had a bagel and I wanted to use peanut butter, but you have to use the single-use cups because that's all they really provide," said Saria.

According to research done by the International Food Information Council in May 2020, 36% of people have been purchasing more packaged food since COVID-19 hit which can lead to more waste, something Southern's sustainability promise is actively trying to fight against.

Interdisciplinary studies major Juliet Hrynyszyn, a senior, has noticed that the university keeps up with

sustainability by adding more recycling and trash bins outside due to the outdoor seating added because of COVID-19.

"They really enforce recycling and especially composting. I haven't seen a lot of schools do compost waste. They have trash bins all over the school that specify which is which to make sure people are using the right bins to help the environment," said Hrynyszyn. Alston said because of the circumstances brought by COVID, as of right now, safety and engagement is the focus of clubs and organizations over sustainability.

"We've just been trying to figure out, on our own, how to minimize our impact and get creative while still making sure students get the services that they typically expect from us," said Alston.

Southern's Geography, Environmental and Marine Sciences (GEMS) club hosted the East Haven Town Beach Cleanup followed by the Beaver Pond Cleanup during the fall semester. There was ample room to socially distance and create a healthier environment through direct action while also engaging students.

Due to COVID-19, transportation is no longer provided to the beach cleanups to ensure the safety of students. Charlene Cammarasana, the assistant director of fiscal administration at the Office of Student Involvement, said before COVID-19, clubs and organizations

could request the use of SCSU vans for carpooling to events.

"There is no travel funding right now because clubs are not allowed to travel out of state. They are not allowed to do overnight travel. They could do local in-state travel, but they must get themselves there," said Cammarasana.

Lack of transportation did not stop the beach cleanups from being a successful and engaging event, according to GEMS President Shayla Peterson.

"Surprisingly, we have had some of the best attendance at all of our events," said Peterson.

If people joined together to take action towards a more sustainable environment, Sydney Peacock, a GEMS member says, one thing can be expected: progress.

The residential halls have found their own ways to keep up with sustainability: they give out reusable water bottles and reusable shopping bags.

"Doing sustainability related programs and providing promotional giveaways certainly helps us draw attention to the initiatives and helps us to engage students who are also passionate and might have ideas of things they would like to see to make even more improvements," said Marvin Wilson, associate director of housing operations.

Events have been more sustainable, engaging and safe, according to Alston.

"For PB&J Thursdays, before we would maybe

have to discard the bread because nobody has used it. Or we would use a whole bunch of plastic knives, but now the PB&J's are the Uncrustables so we aren't throwing away as much plastic or bread," said Alston.

Since 2017, Southern has donated food to local soup kitchens, non-profit food pantries, and local churches. However, limited enrollment on campus has impacted the food recovery program, according to Southern's recycling coordinator Heather Stearns.

"I believe working together to achieve social and intergenerational equity is important in living sustainably," said Peacock.

Stearns said that Connecticut Hall typically generates 20,000 pounds of food every year. But with less food served this semester, there is less leftover food to donate for those people who depend on it.

"That's the biggest challenge. It's just a sadness in all these COVID-related issues; that people that are suffering the most to begin with even prior to COVID-19 are now suffering even more," Stearns said.

Due to proximity, Southern volunteers previously brought food to St. Ann's Soup Kitchen. Stearns said that they have worked with a church in downtown New Haven during the fall semester due to a temporary close at St. Ann's.

"They're further away

from campus so there's more commitment for the students to get the food over there. Often it is really challenging to find parking," Stearns said. "We've had hiccups along the way and COVID-19 certainly didn't help the process at all."

Working hand-in-hand with the campus food service company Sodexo, they have been able to donate food twice a week.

Less food has created less scraps for compost, which is converted to renewable energy. Stearns' office collected data on tons generated: In 2018-2019, it was 43 tons compared to 34.5 tons generated in 2019-2020, which included the campus shutdown period in Spring 2020.

COVID-19 has not slowed down the mission of the university improving its sustainability and the university continues to strive to be the green power campus it once was.

According to Southern's website regarding the energy master plan for buildings in 2014, the university spends less of its operation budget on energy, at 2.14 percent, compared to 2.67 percent, the average of the other three state universities.

The SCSU community has managed to implement more changes towards a sustainable environment.

"We must find a middle ground between those things," said Alston, "what's a safe way to do it, what's an engaging way to do it, and what's a sustainable way to do it."

No guests in residential halls still continues



By Abby Estein
Managing Editor

These are the opinions
of The Southern News
Editorial Staff

Socializing is a major part of college, but COVID-19 has taken much of that away. With recommendations from the Health Department, residence life has suspended guests in residence halls for the moment.

I understand the caution of residence life wanting to keep the students safe and healthy, but students being forced to meet outside of the dorms could possibly expose them even more.

To hang out with friends, students have to go out to restaurants or to friends' apartments. While residential students go to friends'

apartments even when it is not COVID-19, they are more likely to go more frequently now since commuters cannot come into dorms.

I agree with not having commuters inside dorms, because it is hard to judge where those students have been. Commuters are also not being tested as regularly as residential students, so if a commuter did come into the dorms there would be no way to know if they were negative or not.

With being a residential student, I can relate to the frustration of not allowing guests in residential halls.

It has been more difficult to see many of my friends since they do not live in the same dorm as me. The only way for me to see them is to meet outside of campus which could potentially increase the risk of me getting COVID-19.

Last semester, the rule was that residential students could have guests from other residential buildings but no outside guests. The testing was also done at random for residential students, which means one student could get chosen multiple times while another could be chosen once during the

whole semester.

This semester, all residential students are getting tested weekly, but the guest rules have become stricter with not allowing guests unless they live in the same dorm. I understand the recommendation for limiting gatherings came from the Health Department, but with having residential students tested on a regular basis, I think it is safe for residential students to be able to visit other residential halls.

Keeping students safe and healthy should be the number one priority, which I would say should be the

university's, but what also needs to be kept in mind is the mental health of the students, as the pandemic has been a difficult time for everyone. One way is to hang out and talk with friends.

While keeping an outbreak of COVID-19 from spreading on campus is important, students should still be able to have friends over.

There has been more caution put in this semester that the school should feel safer with residential students visiting other students at other residential halls.

Fire drills could be super spreaders among dorms

By Sam Tapper
Editor-in-Chief

So far this semester, the North Campus Midrise fire alarm has gone off three times, two of which were during snowstorms. I have been unfortunate enough to be at my North Campus dorm twice when this has happened.

The most recent one occurred on Super Bowl Sunday, just a few minutes before noon. As I stood outside in the snowstorm in only sweats

and flipflops, I came to question something: is this potential for a super spreader?

The North Midrise is one of the most heavily populated residence halls on campus. As I came to think about it more, I concluded that yes, these fire alarm evacuations could be a threat to spread COVID-19 at a rapid rate.

According to the CDC's social distancing guidelines, to effectively social distance "means keeping a safe space between yourself and

other people who are not from your household." As far as these instances go in my experience, none of this can happen safely.

When there is a fire drill or a room's fire alarm goes off, everyone in the building has to flood the three stairwells in order to get out. Once outside we all stand off near the pathway leading to Jess Dow Field, and once the hall's staff is given the "all clear" by the fire department and University Police, all residents are asked to line up before

they are let in the building they are let in about four at a time.

While waiting to enter the dorm, the rest of us are quite literally clustered together, with no one really enforcing any of the COVID-19 guidelines we see so heavily preached across campus at all. While I was waiting to get back in this last time, I was standing next to one student who had no mask on. And on top of that, he was coughing. Suddenly, the flipflops in the snow didn't seem like the worst

part. From what I could hear, no staff said anything about the lack of a mask from that student.

As annoying as these fire drills can be, I bring this topic up because I am not sure there is a real way to effectively adhere to COVID-19 guidelines in these situations. Basically, it is safety versus safety. Obviously, we all should want to stay as safe as possible and far from the virus.

However, if there is a fire in the building or the threat of one, I would

like to get out as soon as possible and do not really care how I do it.

At the end of the day, I never truly feel safe regarding the virus when the fire alarm goes off. And that is a shame given how much sacrifice we have made already. The assigned capacity of our own newsroom is 11 people, which some university officials have said may be too much. But truthfully, I sometimes feel safer in the newsroom than I do in my dorm room.

Semester lacks transparency on community front

By Ellis McGinley
Copy Editor

In our first 21 days on campus, residents went to and from quarantine, a portion of campus lost power at the worse part of a day, we were hit by two snowstorms, and administration has no updates on testing procedures for commuter students.

Crises range from minor irritations to dynamic-shifting proposals, as university enrollment continues to decline and debts continue to rise.

It also seems as though the snow day is effectively dead, as all classes had digital

platforms for the first week of class. These are now expected to reactivate such as in the case of risky weather.

To put it lightly, it has been an intense start to an already convoluted semester. What hasn't helped: the information divide between administration and students.

I don't mean to sound naive, as if the nuance of these situations is lost on me: Sometimes we can't get quick answers because nobody has them.

That being said, in the six hours we were without power, it was never really explained what was going on. We did not know the

suspected source of the outage, or what we should prepare for in our hours without power.

Our clearest update was when we were told to leave.

Last Tuesday, it was not until 10 a.m. that it was announced all classes after 12 p.m. would be held virtually for a storm which didn't arrive until nightfall.

I don't know what's fair to ask a university presented with unexpected chaos in a time of constant unexpected chaos. I might have thought a century-old institution on the New England coast would have contingency plans in case of incidents like these.

And all the while, as if happening in the background, the university Board of Regents continues to propose budget cuts and changes to the faculty workload.

'Inside Higher Ed' described new contract proposals as "draconian" in a December headline. The Connecticut State University Association said in a statement from December that Connecticut state universities "will be compromised and state university accreditation will be at risk because the BOR proposals undermine the education we can provide."

And yet, it seems as if students may be lucky

to receive even an email from their respective departments about the apparently ongoing situation.

Then again, it's hard to focus when one's daily routine is at risk of changing half-way through, or they worry their residential building may be running off generator power.

There also seems to be a conception that sluggish bureaucracy is just part of the deal when one seeks higher education.

I am already sick of it. It's hard to propose a clear solution because there is no one clear issue, other than information on every issue at Southern, small or large, is never

forthcoming these days..

We attend a university that has literally hung a social justice banner from its tallest building. If we cannot self-advocate when we are struggling to understand the potential issues affecting our community, never mind the issues themselves, what does that mean?

I don't think this sense of frustration around these consistent miscommunications is just me. There is a conversation to be had around our community needs and what we can expect to in times of crisis.

Then again, perhaps that conversation in progress already. How could I know?

SOUTHERN NEWS

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Karaoke night, stress balls and donuts

By Roma Rositani
Photo Editor

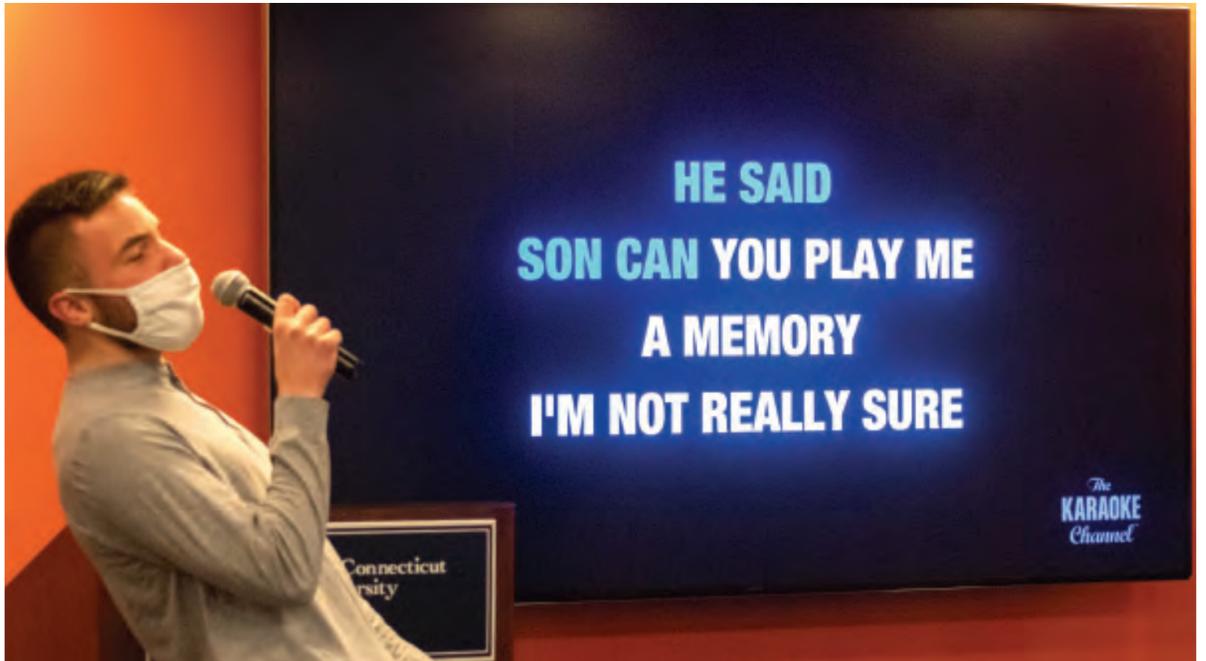
This past week, Farnham Programming Space had events like karaoke and make-your-own stress balls.

Students were able to make the stress balls with lentils and balloons the event provided. It also had donuts that students took back to their dorms.

Reaunna Bartell, a graduate intern, ran these weekday events.



Reaunna Bartell, the host of 'do-nut stress', passing out donuts for students to take home.



Marketing major Christopher Parkin, freshman, singing Billy Joel's Piano Man at the karaoke event.



An assortment of donuts to choose from at the stress ball making event.



Balloons and bags of lentils handed to students to make stress balls.



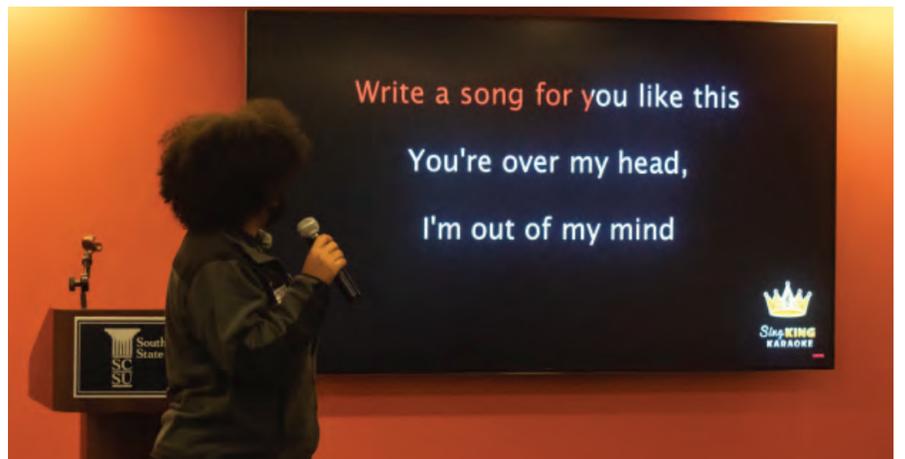
Marie Kane, sophomore, sings Year Three Thousand by the Jonas Brothers.



English major Dave Lee, junior, singing Can't Fight This Feeling by REO Speedwagon to students at karaoke event.



Students spaced out to follow COVID-19 guidelines while making stress balls.



Graduate intern Reaunna Bartell sings Classic by MKTO.

PHOTOS | ROMA ROSITANI

Lynch featured on Super 75 Womens basketball coach recognized as one of best

By Edward Rudman
Sports Writer

Women's basketball Head Coach Kate Lynch was recently featured on "The Super 75," a list of the region's best wings in women's basketball, sponsored by D2 East Hoops.

"I really don't look at it as an individual award because it's not. I wouldn't have had that opportunity and I wouldn't be where I am without my teammates," said Lynch. "To me, when I look back, I don't necessarily think about my career. I think more about the fun times that we had, on and off the court, how fortunate we were and still are to have the friendships we still have as teammates and to have been able to represent Southern Connecticut on a national stage."

During her four years at Southern, Lynch put together a storied career with many accomplishments, including being the program's all-time leading scorer, NE10 Player of the Year honors, and two-time All-American honors.

In the same year she won NE10 Player of the Year, Lynch helped lead the Owls to the program's first NCAA National Championship in 2006-07 and was named the NCAA Division II Tournament Most Outstanding Performer.

Lynch's playing days at Southern were only the beginning, as she has been the head coach of the program for five seasons now and guided the Owls to five straight NE10 conference Tournament

appearances and one NCAA Tournament in 2018. In total, the program has won 76 games under Lynch's tutelage.

"For me, when I'm recruiting student athletes, I just reflect upon on my experience because I'm fortunate enough to have that firsthand experience and I think that goes a long way when you're talking to recruits and parents," said Lynch. "My staff and myself, especially my staff, since

we were able to win the national championship together, we want that same experience for as many teams as possible."

Lynch's assistant coach for all five years of her stint as head coach, Stephanie Hiriak, was also her teammate on the 2006-7 national championship team.

Hiriak spent four years as an assistant coach at the University of Bridgeport from 2010-14, but when her old teammate came calling with an offer to

coach at Southern, it was a done deal.

"Coaching was always my big dream ever since I was little. I wanted to play college basketball and when that was over, I wanted to coach," said Hiriak. "Kate and I would always take about how cool it would be to be able to coach together one day and it just so happens that it's happening at the school where we played. I don't think there's anything better to coach where you played to give my players now the same experience that I had."

Lynch said having a former teammate and someone she's close to as her assistant coach was a "no-brainer" and when she was initially hired to be Southern's head coach, Hiriak was one of the first phone calls she made.

"She's my friend and teammate first and foremost. It's a very high trust level," said Lynch. "Once Southern called me and offered me the job, it was just like two seconds later and I'm on the phone with Steph and hoping that she'll say yes. It's crazy that you can say that you talked about this in college and now it's actually happening."



PHOTO | SAM TAPPER

Kate Lynch (middle) coaching in a pre-season game at Yale University in 2019.

Football recruitment has different look

By Edward Rudman
Sports Writer

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced everyone to get creative when it comes to regular, daily parts of life, and this includes Southern's athletic programs recruitment of high school players to attend and represent the university.

Football head coach Tom Godek announced the Owls' initial recruiting class for 2021 on February 5. There are 19 future student-

athletes who committed to Southern during the early-signing period with more to follow in the coming weeks, according to Southern's athletic website.

"With all the high school teams not playing in the fall, we were able to get a lot of guys earlier than we normally would've, so that's a bonus, and have a chance to get some guys up earlier to see campus, which was really helpful," said Defensive Coordinator Rob Eggerling. "I think we had a good amount of

guys come to visit, under the circumstances. Not your ideal visits, but still having the chance to see campus was the number one thing."

A challenge presented by high school teams not having the ability to play in the fall was the lack of recent film and the chance to go out and watch a potential recruiting during their senior year.

Eggerling said that only looking at junior film is not the best because high school players can mature dramatically in the span of one year,

especially going into their senior year, but they did their best to project what would've happened.

Godek added that the act of recruiting itself looked vastly different in comparison to before COVID-19, but it presented some advantages.

"It definitely was different, but a lot of thanks to our admissions staff, our financial aid staff and our campus police. None of this would've been possible without their help through Teams, Webex and campus visits. It

definitely made the process much more, in some ways difficult but in some ways easier," said Godek. "We were able to get in peoples' living rooms by these video meetings and not have to travel at night or leave your own home. You can be in the own comfort of your home and be talking to people at 10:30 at night or 7:00 in the morning."

Godek called last year's and this year's current and future recruits the "Super Class" because no competitive season was played in the fall, meaning the football program will see a massive number of first year players on the team next season.

When the 2021 fall season starts, the Owls will have two full classes of players who have never played a snap of NCAA football, as will all the other Northeast-10 football programs. It's something Godek is preparing for now.

"You would hope that on February 22, if everyone continues to do the right thing in the athletic department and on campus, we'll start training again for the fall 2021 season," said Godek.

"You know, bringing back what was introduced to them in the fall with the small groups and social distancing. It is a good time to learn, it usually is slower paced in the spring anyways, but I think it'll be a chance to really digest what we're trying to accomplish offensively and defensively."



Chances of spring sports

Column By
Edward Rudman
Sports Writer

With spring sports seasons steadily approaching in mid-March, the next four to six weeks must see an incredible effort from staff and athletes to social distance and follow all of the protocols and guidelines set by the university to ensure these seasons can play out.

Spring sports have been the most effected by the COVID-19 pandemic up to this point, as their season was suddenly cut short last March when the university closed and sent all on campus residents and athletes home.

If there's anyone who should get a chance to play out a competitive season, it's spring sports. If the coming weeks of the three-phase plan does not work out as expected and a competitive season is deemed too high a risk and thus cancelled, spring sports will have then essentially missed two seasons.

It is for this reason that everyone involved in the athletic sphere should do their utmost part in social distancing and slowing the spread of the virus.

If everyone does their part, I think the university has put forward a well thought-out plan that can succeed, but it requires everyone's attention and effort.

The way the athletic department has planned out the start of training, with spring sports starting two weeks earlier than out of season teams, speaks to their commitment to doing all they can to be able to have a spring season take place.

It's also a plan that, if executed well, will work better than the three-phase system used in the fall, which saw all sports begin training at the same time. Which, naturally, would make it harder to social distance.

I think having a spring season this semester is very possible and it can be achieved, for we are in a different atmosphere than when everyone returned to school in the fall. Vaccines are on the way and administered to the most in need, and university testing for the virus has been increased this semester, making it easier to contain the spread in the community.



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Members of football team running onto Jess Dow Field during a 2019 game vs Franklin Pierce.

Martinez a leader on and off the softball field



PHOTO COURTESY | WWW.SOUTHERNCTOWLS.COM

Martinez taking signs from the catcher during a 2019 home game.



PHOTO COURTESY | WWW.SOUTHERNCTOWLS.COM

Martinez fires a pitch on senior day 2019 against Le Moyne University.

By Mike Neville
Sports Editor

From being an opposing figure on the pitching mound to a key member of Athletes Fighting Injustice, senior softball pitcher Jasmyn Martinez has left her mark on the Southern community.

Raised in Middletown New York, the discovery of Martinez was almost accidental, in the words of head coach Jillian Rispoli.

"We originally went to one of her games to scout her teammate, but we were so impressed with

her game that we decided to take a closer look," said Rispoli.

The decision for Martinez to come to Southern was not just based on softball but on the energy the community gave off.

"The diversity about the school reminded me a lot of home. The school really prides itself on social justice and felt like a great fit for me," said Martinez.

Beginning softball at the age of five, Martinez attributes her brother as a driving force of her game.

"Growing up my biggest influencer was my

brother. I wanted to make him proud, he's always led by example," said Martinez. "I wanted to show him he was a great role model and great big brother growing up."

Martinez took her brother's teachings to heart and has become a campus leader in her own right.

Besides being an athlete, Martinez is very involved with AFI and is a polarizing voice in the athletic department.

"When our athletic department was hosting a forum on racial injustice, I was one of first to sign up," said Martinez. "After

the forum I said I would love to plan something in the future. From there, we created AFI."

Each member of AFI is an athlete. Martinez said it is a great opportunity to speak on social justice issues.

Martinez has also been an important teammate and influenced the likes of Cailey Botteon to be her very best self.

"She has definitely made me a better athlete and always encourages me to go above and beyond," said Botteon. "She is always a very positive person and

motivates us all."

For Rispoli, the signing of Martinez panned out very well. She has had a very successful career at Southern.

"Her fastball and changeup are absolutely filthy," said Rispoli. "We see her as being an ace of the team and someone who can start and finish games."

Rispoli also said that she could see Martinez in the infield as well and a huge part of an already staked Owls' lineup.

"We have a great pitching staff. We have another returner who will also be vital to this season

and freshmen who have been putting in during the fall and over break so I'm excited for this season and what we can do," said Martinez.

She said she is confident that they are going to have a great season and go out and try her best for herself and the team.

Entering what would be her final season and final year at Southern, Martinez has a lot to be grateful for from what the University has taught her.

"Southern has taught me that everyone will have your back if they agree or disagree with

Halftime

"I watched some of his interviews and he did mention that this performance wasn't meant for a feature artist," Suresh said. "I think that just shows how he wanted to stick to the persona he's been building. He didn't have any features on his album either, so it makes sense to me."

Kane, however, was surprised that The Weeknd did a full solo show.

"I was shocked because usually there's more people there, like performing with them, so I was like waiting on someone to come out with him, but when they didn't I was kind of like 'OK that's it,'" Kane said. "I think it would have been a little better if he had someone with him. He's great, but I felt like it should have been like the other years."



PHOTO | SAM TAPPER

The Weeknd performing at Raymond James Stadium.



PHOTO | SOFIA ROSITANI

The Weeknd with his background dancers.

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Greek life has rush week virtually this year

By Donovan Wilson
Reporter

Rush week is a huge part of campus Greek life, as it is how fraternities and sororities recruit new members. And as we enter our second in-person semester during COVID-19, rush week hasn't gone away, it has adapted.

Rush week is when fraternities and sororities hold events to catch the interest of students and hopefully recruit them as members. Typically, this would include a wide range of fun in-person events to really engage with the future members of the fraternity or sorority. This has shifted a bit as everything moves to an online format, but the spirit and goal remain the same.

"The online aspect of rush week hasn't added anything. Truthfully it's only taken away from the usual experience," said Jedrek Wittenberger, president of Beta Mu Sigma fraternity.

As mentioned before, the major change to rush

week is its full shift to online which has caused a plethora of problems for the fraternities, due to difficulties which have caused problems for almost everybody.

Feedback so far shows that this experience overall has only really had a negative impact on rush week and the fraternities as a whole. This has been evident in a much smaller number of students rushing fraternities or sororities.

As previously stated, the decrease in interest can be evident in the new virtual version of Meet the Greeks, which is normally huge for the fraternities and sororities.

During the event, they will usually meet a lot of potential members, but this year they only saw about four people each. In addition to this, there are less events held in general as there are none of the usual in-person events. This year the only somewhat positive aspect in a way is that there are certain events that work online and are fun that would have never really worked in person, such as

trivia night.

"Even though Covid's been tough for all of us, we're trying to find new ways to stick together and help both bring and show new prospective brothers about the brotherhood we've already established that we've all grown to love," said Michael Formica, a brother of the Alpha Phi Delta fraternity.

Aside from just rush week, fraternities have gone entirely online in essentially every aspect that they can.

For instance, every meeting is virtual at all times for all Greek life groups which probably adds to the difficulty in reaching out. However, it also helps the fraternities to get creative with accessible at home events like the virtual gaming event that Alpha Phi Delta potentially may have.

A major aspect of the online world of Greek life and rush week specifically has been social media. Instagram has become an integral tool in how fraternities present what they're about to a wide audience as the virtual events see a large decrease



PHOTO | SAM TAPPER

Greek Life Council poster board in Student Center.

in attendance.

It also illustrates a very simple way to shoot a message to students and gauge their interest, without them even having to attend rush week events or to potentially make them aware of and interested in certain

weekly events.

For some organizations, the experience has been overall positive and has produced a pretty good turnout. Tau Kappa Epsilons "Meet the Brothers" event ended up running an hour longer than expected due to

engagement with potential members that were rushing.

"Things are going better than expected honestly," said Michael Anderson, president of Tau Kappa Epsilon. "Everyone is used to all these guidelines now, this is our new normal."

Math classes stay virtual with a faster pace set in place

By Mike Neville
Sports Editor

Remote learning has had its own set of struggles put in place by COVID-19 and now math classes have been added to that list.

For the spring 2021 semester, all of Southern's math courses will be taught online.

"It's very frustrating since I learn better in person and math is a very complex subject to begin with," said Jose Romero, a junior.

This is now the third semester in a row

students have had to deal with online courses since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic last March.

Professors of the math department have been all but sabbatical this semester, with many still teaching from home.

"We were scrambling the moment the decision was made. I had students on their smart phones, no computer, no Wi-Fi and no access to campus which made it very difficult," said math professor Ross Gingrich.

With over thirty years experience of teaching at Southern, Gingrich said that anything this is unlike

something the department has ever had to deal with before.

The same goes for the students who would be in class under normal circumstances.

"It is something that takes a lot of getting used to you can always do a Zoom or FaceTime meeting with your professor, but it is not the same," said Andrew Seaton, a sophomore.

Seaton said that he aspires to be a math teacher when he graduates and courses may make the process a lot harder, if they are online.

Math is already a

fast-paced and complex subject that many struggle with so the pace of the course allows for a struggle in its own right.

"Most of us are sensitive to the difficulties of online learning," said Gingrich. "There are technical problems that are involved we take into account."

There is also a fear that students will not absorb as much knowledge as they would if the classes were in-person in the form of tests and quizzes.

"I know a lot of students are using this an opportunity to take an easy way out through

certain apps to help them with the subjects," said Romero.

If students are using apps to assist them with problems and equations outside the classroom then the purpose of the class may be defeated.

"There are people who will take the easy way out, but at a cost," said Seaton. "When things go back to normal, and we are back in a physical classroom, some might be in for a rude awakening."

This raises the question of what to do in order to stop students from using apps and programs to assist them in online

quizzes and tests.

"How can you be sure students are doing their own work, how you can proctor tests, and this is one thing that appeals to online classes," said Gingrich. "Cheating is not a victimless crime."

The future and its uncertainty with his students is something that Gingrich said concerns him the most each day.

"A student could pass a class with flying colors but at a cost because when they are hired they will be less experienced in the job which will hurt them and other students in the long run," said Gingrich.

Students celebrate Valentine's Day with loved ones

By Abby Epstein
Managing Editor

Chocolate, flowers, and Hallmark cards are the items many people think of when Feb. 14, better known as Valentine's Day, comes around.

"I think it's nice to be able to dedicate a specific day to show extra appreciation for the people you obviously love and care about," said psychology major Lauryn Giuliano, a sophomore. "I think it might not be for everyone, but it's nice it's a thing though."

Valentine's Day is a day dedicated to showing your significant others how much they are loved and cared for. For some people who do not have a significant other, Feb. 14 is just another normal day.

"It depends on the year; I mean like you are in it or you're not, it just depends. I think every day you should love yourself and don't need a holiday for it or other people," said English major Regina

Misericola, a sophomore.

"I mean, I wait for after Valentine's Day when all the chocolate is half off and that's my Valentine's Day for myself."

Biance Troche also enjoys going and buying the discounted chocolate the day after.

"I like Valentine's Day because it gives me a day to just forget about what's going on in the world and just focus on me and my partner," said Troche. "Also, I really like the discounted chocolate the next day."

Communications major Zakai James, a sophomore, thinks Valentine's Day should be a holiday because it tries to bring a loving mood with colors, messages and traditions. One thing he does not like is the mindset people have when it comes to Valentine's Day.

"I enjoy the day, but I dislike the mindset of people that focus on the fact that they won't have a partner on this specific day, as if there aren't

any other days to find someone," said James.

Everyone has different ways of showing their appreciation and love for their significant other. Some people go out to dinner, some enjoy a night in, and some receive chocolates and flowers.

Biance Troche and her boyfriend are planning on watching movies all day or baking together. Jillian Valeta and her significant other are planning on going out to dinner and then watching movies. One thing Valeta and her significant other always do is buy fake flowers.

"[Live bouquets] are expensive and a lot of work to keep up if I wanted to preserve them. Fake flowers are inexpensive and last forever just like our love for each other," said Valeta.

Sport management major Rocco Veltri, a junior, is in a relationship but still is not a big fan of the holiday. "I don't like it as a holiday, but she [girlfriend] does, so we

are going out," said Veltri. Veltri and his girlfriend are going out to dinner and then to a hotel to celebrate Valentine's Day.

Veltri's girlfriend, communication disorders major Madeline Nazario, a junior, enjoys Valentine's Day because "it's nice to show love for the person that you love," said Nazario. She also did not know the plan was to go out to dinner and then to a hotel.

Sometimes significant others like to surprise each other and keep the Valentine's Day plans a mystery, but, the big mystery is how Valentine's Day became a holiday. There are multiple theories that all revolve around a St. Valentine, but the only similarity between the theories is the reoccurring theme that emphasizes that St. Valentine was a very romantic figure.

No matter how Valentine's Day came to be a holiday, it is the day of love and affection. While it



PHOTO | MEGAN DOMBROWSKI

Valentine's Day gift with flowers and chocolate

is mainly associated with couples celebrating their love for each other, the holiday is about showing appreciation to the people you care about even if not in a relationship.

"There are no Valentine's Day rules

saying you can't celebrate all types of love for partners, family, friends, etc.," said Valeta.

"As long as you celebrate Valentine's Day safely and respectfully it is an enjoyable holiday of romance."

SAGE celebrates Black Queer Excellence

**By Caitlin O'Halloran
Contributor**

Every Friday of February, the Sexuality and Gender Equality Center held an event with Black queer figures in celebration of Black History Month.

The SAGE Center began holding their celebratory events over a livestream on Friday Feb. 5.

On Friday Feb. 12, the SAGE Center held an event on their Instagram account celebrating "Black Queer Excellence" via livestream.

On the livestream, the person that SAGE focused on this week was Ericka Hart, a black queer activist as well as a sex educator, writer and model. She also does a lot to promote and support what she is standing for. "When she was

younger unfortunately, her mother died of breast cancer," said Aaron Morabito, SAGE Center graduate intern on the livestream, "and later on in her life when she was about 28 years old, she was also diagnosed with breast cancer."

Hart's work as an advocate for post-cancer body positivity is an aid to remind those who have gone through the same struggle as her and to remind others that "survivors can still be sexy."

Morabito went on to note that after receiving treatment, undergoing surgeries and fighting, Hart and her platform became more well-known and the activism work she does took off.

In the livestream, Hart's hard work to shine light on the institutional racism and oppression that affect queer people of color, was recognized.

Hart is currently a professor at Columbia School of Social Work and uses her platforms, like social media, to discuss issues regarding race, gender, sexuality, sex and much more.

Hart also co-hosts a decolonized podcast Hoodrat to Headwrap with her partner Ebony Donnelly, where they

discuss situations ranging from current events to political issues to personal interests and experiences.

"Part of what we do at the SAGE center is kind of raising the voices and educating others about the LGBT community. There's a lot of figures within the Black community that have been monumental in creating change in the work that they do for both the Black movement and LGBT movements," said Morabito.

Last week, Morabito hosted their livestream and dedicated it to Barbara Smith, a black lesbian who has influenced black feminism in America and is a scholar, author, publisher, professor and critic as well as an activist. The SAGE Center has hosted other events in the past for SCSU students such as giveaways, trans-ally workshops and food drives.

They have helped show support by hosting a variety of events such as Transgender Remembrance Day, Intersex Awareness Day, Pronoun Day, Women's Day, World Aids Day and much more.

"We definitely try to include as many people as possible," said

communications disorder major Sam Gontarz, a freshman.

Gontarz emphasized the importance of the SAGE Center trying to make sure students understand they are supported and there are resources available for them.

"We wanted to spread awareness and educate some people about important people," said Morabito on why they chose Black queer figures to focus on throughout the duration of Black History Month.

The SAGE Center's website offers a variety of easily accessible resources for students such as LGBTQ research, holistic health and media, as well as identity resources and support and peer-led groups. They also have a live chat available to students in their Instagram bio that students can use to reach out to a member from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. every weekday.

The SAGE Center will be hosting two more events throughout the month of February that you can find on their Instagram, celebrating and honoring Black Queers who have had a major and positive impact on our society.



PHOTO | SOFIA ROSITANI

Aaron Morabito, graduate intern for SAGE center livestreaming on Instagram

Halftime show becomes meme

**By Sarah Shelton
Contributor**

On Feb. 7, three-time Grammy award-winner Abel Tesfaye, also known as The Weeknd, headlined the Super Bowl halftime show.

The Weeknd started off his set with his 2018 song "Call Out My Name," which featured a skyline and a robotic orchestra, and he sang many of his other hits including "Earned It" and "Blinding Lights."

"I was like 'that is so crazy,' because he had the band in between the different layers of the skyline and I didn't notice them at first until I saw someone playing the violin, and I thought 'that is so cool,'" computer science major Siddhi Suresh, a sophomore, said.

Suresh is a fan of The Weeknd and only tuned in for the halftime show. She said she probably wouldn't have watched it at all if it was not for his performance, because football is not a sport she typically watches.

"I really liked it," Suresh said. "I mean, he spent seven million dollars out of his pocket to make his vision come true, which is absolutely insane to me. He's been building his persona after his album, 'After Hours,' came out and it's really interesting to see him bring that aspect to his performance. I think a lot of people were expecting it, but not to the extent that he did."

Communications major Alex Rice, a sophomore, said he figured The Weeknd was going to carry on this persona, but did not know how he was going to go about it.

"I thought it was really cool and definitely conveyed the story he was trying to tell," Rice said. "It was really well put together considering the times."

Communications major Marie Kane, a sophomore, said she was not expecting all the different setups and the performance itself was "a lot" to take in.

"I feel like some of the setups of his performance were a little too much, but at the same time, it went well with his music style," Kane said. "It's the Super Bowl, so I get it."

Kane mentions when he was looking around at the beginning of the song "Can't Feel My Face," she knew it would turn into something on social media.

"I was expecting a lot of memes," Kane said. "They're funny. There was one I saw that was like 'when you lose your mom in the grocery store as a kid' with him just looking around."

The Weeknd is the first person since Lady Gaga's 2017 show to have a solo Super Bowl halftime performance. Suresh said this didn't surprise her.

He is also the third Canadian to perform at the Super Bowl Halftime.

See Halftime on Pg. 6

Zendaya stars in new Netflix film

**By Desteny Maragh
News Editor**

"Malcolm and Marie" is explosive, romantic and tragic. The black and white film is nostalgic of an old-time couple with new age problems.

Netflix's \$30 million budget on the two-person cast and single setting film left much to the imagination, but portrayed everything the audience needed to know. Overall, the film is a one-hour and 45-minute-long toxic argument.

The stars of the film are what motivated much of its media buzz. Star Zendaya is an icon to most millennials. The Disney child has grown up in the eyes of many young adults and continues to reign as a fan favorite.

John David Washington

has also appeared in some great films, but he is mostly known as the son of the acting legend Denzel Washington. He even resembles his father.

The writer, Sam Levinson, also wrote Euphoria, a teen drama show that Zendaya also stars in. Levinson wrote the screenplay and directed the film during the pandemic.

Levinson, the actors and his small crew secluded themselves in the glass house where the movie was filmed, in Carmel, California. There, they were able to be secluded from society and keep safe from COVID-19.

The movie was set in present day, Malcolm is a young upcoming movie writer and Marie is his supportive girlfriend who is an actress with a past

history of drug abuse.

With just two actors occupying the screen for the entire movie, each gave a stellar performance. Truly, both actors dove deep emotionally and displayed a convincing passionate argument.

The couple had just returned home from Malcolm's movie premiere and tensions rise as Malcolm tries to figure out why Marie is upset; turns out, he forgot to thank her in his speech.

What women wouldn't want to be thanked? The worst part of it all is the movie was about a woman who had struggled with drug abuse and Marie felt he had used her as inspiration without crediting her.

The film really dissects the relationship between the couple and just how

something so miniscule to one party can be a huge problem for the other.

Malcolm, who constantly spoke in a loud and powerful tone, emphasized just how un-important he thought Marie's feelings were. His biggest scapegoat was emphasizing it was his movie premier night, and he should be getting his flowers; not arguing over a simple thank-you.

Marie, who is an aspiring actress felt as though her life struggles with addiction and drug abuse had been stolen from her by Malcolm and paraded on the big screen for him to receive praise.

Malcolm said he did not use Marie as inspiration for the main character of his film, but Marie drew endless similarities and knew he had studied her pain and actions.

Honestly, the acting in the film was so superb, I forgot I was not watching a real argument.

The inspiration from the movie came from the writers' own personal life. Levinson's wife, Ashley, is a producer on Malcolm & Marie, and was the associate producer on his previous feature film, "Assassination Nation."

In an interview, Ashley admitted it was during that film's premiere in Los Angeles at the Cinerama Dome where her director husband forgot to thank her.

Their real-life version of Malcolm and Marie was way more subtle and not a huge argument, but it is nice to see that the mistake Malcolm made was not a fictional occurrence; it happened.



PHOTO | SOFIA ROSITANI

John Washington (right) and Zendaya (left) as "Malcolm & Marie" on Netflix.