

## The Results are in: Student Government Election

BY CHRIS BREWER & VALENTINA MASSONI  
Staff Writer & News Editor

On Feb. 1, the student government at Sacred Heart University held a winter election for the vacant positions for the spring semester. The theme for this winter election was “Looking for the BERRY Best Candidates!” The positions that were available to run for are as follows, Executive Board: Director of Public Relations, First Year: Class Relations Chair, Senate: Senator Positions, Judicial: Justice Positions.

The winners of each position were announced on Feb. 5.

Abigail Lyons was elected as Director of Public Relations. Nolan Baszkiewicz was elected as First Year Class Relations Chair. Ella Eagle, Annika Westra, Talia Torrens and Laurel Hanrahan into Senator positions. Annamarie Mirando and Madison McDonald Vitale were elected into Justice Positions.

Throughout the beginning of the semester, there were information sessions that students were able to attend if they were interested in running for a position.

“The information sessions that we hold, particularly in the winter, are relatively quick, but they are designed to explain to students who are interested in applying the basic structure of Student Government, eligibility requirements, what the purpose of each board/position is, and the timeline for the elections process and the regulations for campaigning,” said Maeve Cahill, Student Government President.

At some universities, including Sacred Heart, student government positions bridge the gap between the university and its students, in an effort to enhance student life on campus.

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Caleb Jean-Pierre, Sacred Heart University

Sacred Heart Student Government Banner for the Student Government Elections hanging up outside the Student Government Office located in the Hawley Lounge.



Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University

## SHU's New Distillation Science Certificate Program

BY LAUREN KEHRLE  
Staff Writer

On Jan. 8, Sacred Heart University recently announced a new 23-credit Distillation Science Certificate program during the Connecticut Brewers' Guild annual conference at West Campus. The program is the first of its kind within the state.

According to a SHU press release, the new program is designed to prepare students for entrance into the distillation industry. Besides learning the craft of producing, aging and blending alcoholic spirits and beverages, participants will be equipped with biology, chemistry, physics and engineering knowledge, as well as the business and operational skills to run a successful brewery

or distillery.

“The Brewing and Distillation program at SHU exemplifies the University’s pioneering spirit and ability to identify and fulfill a unique educational need,” said John Rehm, professor and Director of the Brewing Science Program. “The program will continue to elevate the brewing and distilling industry in Connecticut and beyond by offering a source of professional knowledge and training through SHU.”

Rehm began his career as a brewer twenty years ago and helped to institute Two Roads Brewing Company in Stratford in 2012. When SHU introduced its Brewing Science program back in 2020, Two Roads partnered

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## Graduate Student Remembered

BY VALENTINA MASSONI  
News Editor

28-year-old Marine Corps veteran, Mateo Gaviria, died as result of a car accident on the Merritt Parkway, on Dec. 23, 2023. Gaviria was an undergraduate student at Sacred Heart University, while also employed in the IT department.

Gaviria crashed into the concrete median of the highway and exited his vehicle around 10:30 p.m. A car on the highway crashed into the back of Gaviria’s stopped vehicle in the left lane of the highway. One of the involved cars struck Gaviria, where he was pronounced dead on the scene.

At 2 p.m. on Jan. 31, members of the Sacred Heart community and friends of Gaviria gathered in

the Chapel of the Holy Spirit for a memorial service in honor of him.

The service featured multiple speakers including coworker and friend of Gaviria, Santiago Cañas Jimenez.

The service was concluded with the reading of a letter from Gaviria’s mother to Gaviria, following his death. The letter was read aloud by Sacred Heart President, Dr. John Petillo.

“I will say now what I always used to say to you. Mateo, you are an eagle. Therefore, make sure you fly high and very far. And when you want to come back, remember that here is your mom to heal all your wounds, to listen to your adventures, to laugh alongside you and to repeatedly tell you how much I love you. So again, don’t forget,” Petillo read.

## SHU Celebrates Black History Month

BY EMMA RICOTTA  
Staff Writer

The Sacred Heart University Community Theater and the Office for Inclusive Excellence (OIE) are promoting and celebrating Black History Month with a series of movie screenings and other educational programs.

Throughout the whole month of February, both the theater and the OIE have scheduled events, as well as movie screenings, with the focus of educating students on and celebrating Black

History Month.

Robert Johnson, the Executive Director of Multicultural Affairs in the OIE, explained why students should attend the events run by the Multicultural Center. “People and students can get the chance to learn about things that they do not experience on a daily basis, and that is important.”

On Feb. 1, the Multicultural Center (MC) had their ‘Black History Month

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# News

## Election

BY CHRIS BREWER & VALENTINA MASSONI  
Staff Writer & News Editor

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The student government works to create a seamless process for these elections to occur.

“Student Government creates an elections commission for each election cycle. Anyone in all of SG is eligible to join the commission,” said Cahill. “Once the commission is formed, we work backward based on the ideal election date to create a timeline of what needs to be done.”

The applicants were required to submit an application packet in order to run for the position they were interested in.

“The application packet just requires students to indicate what position they are interested in, a short-written summary on why they would be good for that position, and a headshot,” Cahill said.

Table times, information sessions, and an engaging theme are all key to a successful election process, according to Cahill.

“There are a plethora of different reasons we have vacant positions in the spring, some people studied abroad, transferred, etc. College life is busy, and sometimes students need to prioritize other commitments, but we are lucky enough to have many great applicants to fill these positions,” said Cahill.

## Distillation

BY LAUREN KEHRLE  
Staff Writer

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with the university by providing space and resources for its Area 2 experimental brewery to become the SHU Brewing Science Lab.

Rehm cited his background in teaching on a collegiate level, passion for brewing and desire to give back to the local community as factors that drove him to pursue a position in the distillation education field. Since the program’s inception, he has taught several classes and was named Director last year.

Mark Beekey, Dean of SHU’s College of Arts & Sciences, was also involved in announcing the new certification at the conference and elaborated on its expected role and relevance across the campus community.

“Craft distilleries are experiencing growth in both sales volume and the number of locations each year,” said Beekey. “This certificate program has been designed to offer existing craft breweries hands-on training, enabling them to diversify into craft spirits if they choose.”

This training, which provides students with many professional skills, was made possible through the creation of a curriculum consisting of instruction on scientific brewing and distillation theory, ingredients, recipes, sensory analysis, sanitation, safety and quality control. Students can expect to earn their certification in just under one year over the course of three semesters, according to a press release from SHU.



Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University

SHU Brewing Certificate Students conduct a tasting of the beer they created during class.

“The Certificate in Distillation Science requires completion of the foundational core, advanced courses, as well as a field work class, operations course, and a working internship at a host distillery,” said Rehm.



Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University

SHU Students during the Brewing Certificate class at Two Roads Brewing.

Classes for the program will begin in late May and be taught by Rehm alongside Phil Markowski, co-founder and master brewer at Two Roads Brewing Company, decade-long industry professional Steven Andrews and co-founder and co-owner of Black Pond Brews in Danielson, Conn. Mike Teed.

These courses have been structured to help students succeed independent of their individual experience level.

“I’d never brewed before, but taking John’s class fully immersed me in the process from recipe development to the evaluation of our finished beer, all while shedding light on the scientific reasons for everything as we went along,” said former student Marissa Bentivoglio.

Bentivoglio was enrolled in Rehm’s BRS-111 Craft Beverage Brewing and BRS-211 Advanced Craft Beverage Brewing courses, where she learned both the “how” and “why” of the art. Since those seeking a career in this field now enjoy unprecedented opportunity, the university’s new certification is regarded as “a natural evolution,” according to SHU’s press release.

“The fermentation science we learn in the brewing program is applicable, and I think expanding to include distillation is a fantastic addition that is fulfilling a need while making students more marketable,” Bentivoglio said.

## Chi-O Goes to Chicago for Leadership Training

BY SONIA GUISTI  
Staff Writer

Two students with leadership positions within the Chi Omega sorority attended the 2024 Firesides Leadership Training. This training is specifically for members of Chi Omega and took place in Chicago over the weekend from Jan. 26-28.

The training has been on a consistent path of “educating our collegians and alumni since 1935. Over the course of time Chi Omega’s dedication to educating and supporting our Sisters has only grown more deeply rooted with every year that passes,” according to Chi Omega headquarters.

Morgan Craig, the sorority’s president, and Sydney Robinson, recruitment chair, were accompanied by recruitment advisor Jordan Hedeby to represent Sacred Heart University at the Firesides Leadership Training. The training was mandatory to attend for certain leadership positions, while the other positions could attend virtually.

The purpose of this training was to, “experience the encouragement and excellence of our Sisterhood as we learn from and with each other,” according to a document from Chi Omega regarding the Leadership Training.

Each of these trainings and workshops were focused on each individual’s leadership positions that attended the training in person.

Sophomore Sydney Robinson said, “I didn’t know what to expect when going into this training, but I learned so much about the mechanics of recruitment as well as how to be a leader and the concept of morale.”

The role of recruitment chair is to oversee the recruitment process, as well as planning and organizing all recruitment events alongside other leadership roles.

Robinson said, “I love it because it’s a good leadership role and you get to come up with creative ideas using people’s input from the chapter, as well as getting the chapter more involved.”

Because the training involved Chi Omega leaders from other universities, this allowed for intercollegiate connections to be formed. Robinson hopes to coordinate events with Chi Omega members from Quinnipiac University because of the relationship developed between the organizations at this event.

The Firesides Leadership training allowed Chi Omega sorority leadership members to learn more about themselves and their role in their chapter.

Craig said, “I feel that Firesides Leadership Training bettered me as a person and is helping to form me into the leader my chapter deserves.”

Although the training mostly had to do with leadership, there was a session that focused on the concept of values.

Craig said, “I am so thankful for the opportunity to reflect on myself. I learned a lot about myself and how to engage the chapter. I plan to use everything I learned to better my chapter and Executive Board.”

The president attended recruitment-based trainings, marketing sessions and workshops pertaining to Chi Omega’s rules and policies.

Craig said, “We learned a lot about the most effective way to market and interact with potential new members, as well as having the opportunity to bounce ideas off each other.”

Craig considers her role as president for the sorority an honor.

Craig said, “Being selected as the President of Chi Omega is hands down the best compliment I have ever received. To know that so many women believe in you and want you to be successful is so surreal.”



Sydney Robinson, Sacred Heart University

Chi Omega’s Sorority President, Morgan Craig (right) and Recruitment Chair, Sydney Robinson (left) pictured at the Chi Omega Event in Chicago, Illinois.

The Firesides Leadership Training has been held since 1935. Chi Omega members from different universities have consistently learned more about being leaders through this event.

Craig said, “I felt so lucky to represent Sacred Heart at this event. This really was a once in a lifetime experience, and I learned things that will benefit me throughout my entire life, not just in my leadership role.”

# Features

## FTMA At Sundance

BY JOSHUA ARCHILLA  
Staff Writer



Contributed by Eric Torrens, FTMA student

FTMA students pictured in Park City, Utah during their trip to the Sundance Film Festival.

sure everybody was getting into the right film, lining them up. I met a lot of people doing that," said first year Master of Fine Arts (MFA) student Mackenzie Caines-Balogh.

Lots of heartwarming and impactful films were put on display during the festival.

"I went to go see this really cool movie called Porcelain War (2024) which won the Jury Prize for Best Documentary. It was about artists who live in the Ukraine who are now soldiers in the

Students in Sacred Heart's Film and Television Master's program (FTMA) recently returned from their trip to the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah the largest independent film festival in the United States. At Sundance, Sacred Heart Film and Television students got to volunteer and immerse themselves in this massive event.

"I know everybody kind of had a little bit of a different experience. I personally was a crowd liaison, so what I did is I was in charge of making

war," said FTMA Program Coordinator Allie O'Brien. "There was a five-minute standing ovation, not a dry eye in the house, and then the whole cast and crew came out at the very end of the screening, and their daughters came out. It was really, really touching."

This festival sheds light on independent artists in the filmmaking industry who are enthusiastic to share their creativity with the world.

Professor Sally Ross, Director of the Film and Television Graduate Program, explained what she will remember the Sundance Film Festival for.

"It is a wonderful thing to see the passion of the filmmaking community. We saw both fiction films and documentaries that have the opportunity to change the world. The stories that we tell can have a huge impact. This festival is a reminder of that, of how powerful filmmaking can be," said Ross.

Once the films are shown, the creators behind them typically hold a question and answer session for the audience.

"Most of the screenings are attended by the director and often other creative crew and actors. It's really an amazing opportunity for the students to ask questions of the people who are at the top of the business and to learn from them," said Ross.

Students had the opportunity to meet many different people in the industry.

"There were a lot of directors, producers, writers, and actors. Everybody was there. There were panels, and there were so many people in and out. You are constantly meeting new people and making connections. You got to know these people as well as see what they have created," said Balogh.

The Sundance Film Festival featured artists from around the world, which allowed students to see life from a different perspective, expanding their cultural horizons.

"I met so many people from other countries. You just have to be very open to everything that everybody's saying, and you'll definitely learn how their way of life might be different than yours, and how maybe they are impacted by something that only they have experienced," said Balogh. "I feel like just having an open mind and an open heart really makes such a difference, because there are so many people from different backgrounds within our country and outside of our country. I don't know how else to explain it other than it's very eye opening."

## A Heartfelt Impact: Social Work Club

BY COLLIN MACLEOD  
Staff Writer

The Social Work Club (SWC) is one of many student-operated and led clubs at Sacred Heart University (SHU).

The club's mission statement includes "dismantling and resisting all forms of social inequality, specifically as it relates to social work practice," according to SHU Engage.

A large focus of the club is mentorship and networking within social work and other professions with the goal of advancing the rights of all human beings, especially those belonging to vulnerable populations.

All students are welcome and encouraged to join who are looking to work towards a common good and advocate for vulnerable populations.

"In addition to social work majors, we have a lot of members who are studying criminal justice and psychology," said junior Shannon Keenan.

Newer members are paired and guided by older or seasoned members upholding the mentorship focus of the program.

"The way I got involved is as a sophomore, I was taking two classes, and my advisor put me in contact with one of the upperclassmen," said senior Kayla Goncalves, Vice President of the SWC.

Goncalves was then able to connect with other members of the club and eventually, at the end of the year, she applied to be on the club's executive board.

The club meets bi-weekly on Mondays at 7 p.m. HC110 Main Academic Building.

The club's activities extend beyond the confines of academia, actively engaging in mentoring programs for fellow students and organizing community service initiatives. Through these endeavors, the Social Work Club not only educates but also embodies the values of compassion, empathy, and service to humanity.

"Each meeting we present a topic that is of interest to the members present at the time," said senior Kimberly Thorne, Fundraising Chair.

Thorne's role includes setting up fundraising events with local businesses. In the past, they have worked with JBC Bagels, and The Granola Bar to raise money for the club.

Members share assignments within their social work classes, collectively strategizing on optimal ways to support one another. They help fellow club members who may have concerns or worries about anything.

"Being able to share experiences, give advice on internships, regarding placements and application tips helped alleviate stress," said Kennan.

The SWC hosts table times outside of 63's in the Main Academic Building.

During mental health awareness week, the club handed out free stress balls, stickers, and candy to anyone who was walking by and wanted one.

"We're going to dive into more Social Justice Week topics, because we will be doing a lot with Social Justice Week in March," Goncalves said.

A diverse array of speakers and events are provided to members who share insights and perspectives of the profession.

Kennan said, "I enjoy having a club on campus that promotes mental health awareness and self-care. The Instagram account shares inspirational quotes and positive messages all the time, which is a nice reminder amid a chaotic semester."

Dedicated to addressing and raising awareness about social issues, the Social Work Club serves as a platform for meaningful discussions on the multifaceted aspects of social work.

"I love my major and being able to talk with people who feel the same way as me and being able to spread the word and joy of the SWC all throughout SHU's campus," Goncalves said.

Students who are interested in joining the club can stop by during table times and talk to club members, or follow the club's Instagram, @shusocialworkclub.

## Need To Get Your Nails Done?

BY JORDAN DORSEY  
Staff Writer

Do you need a new nail tech? Check out graduate student, Jen Pasram's nail business.

After Pasram got sent home due to COVID-19, nail salons were closing so she started posting on Instagram (@jens.nailbar) of her doing her mom and sister's nails.

"As I kept posting and got better, I thought maybe I could keep doing this at school as a side hustle and make some money for it. My Instagram started to blow up and I was meeting friends of friends," said Pasram.

Pasram has a mud room in her house off-campus where she has her setup. The price of an acrylic full set is \$40, an acrylic fill is \$35, a dip full set is \$40, and a gel set is \$30. She charges \$2 per nail for designs.

"My main goal is to become a physical therapist but it would be nice to continue doing nails even if it is just friends and family and keep my Instagram alive so I can look back at what I have done, because it is art," said Pasram.

Her favorite set she has done was on junior Erin Dunn, gel nails with a French tip style that combined dots of white and color for a

speckled design.

"I've never doubted whether she's using good products or keeping her instruments clean, you can just tell she runs her studio like it's a professional business and that duality is exactly why I love it," said Dunn.

Dunn prefers the atmosphere with Pasram over any other salon off-campus. "Since she's my age, I am more comfortable in her chair. I find it natural to speak up if I want something changed, which I find is difficult in an off-campus salon," said Dunn.

Junior Sam Gustin's favorite set done by Pasram was Valentine's Day theme with diamonds and hearts.

"With Jen, the hour and a half fly by because we're just having so much fun," said Gustin.

Pasram offers a punch card that if you go ten times, you can get a free set.

"I cannot encourage going to see Jen enough for girls looking for a new place to get their nails done," said Dunn. "It's cheaper and she's also extremely talented and willing to try almost any design you can think of."

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Contributed by Joey Okesson via Andi Elloway

Okesson soaring upside-down through the air in Mammoth, California..

## Meet 2026 Olympic Snowboard Hopeful and SHU Student, Joey Okesson

BY COLLIN MOURA  
Campus Life Editor

Professional snowboarder, Sacred Heart University student, and 2026 Olympic hopeful, Joey Okesson is already a popular name in the world of international snowboarding.

Hailing from Southbury, Connecticut, Okesson is the youngest member of the Men's US Pro Halfpipe Team, joining veteran Chase Blackwell and Olympians Chase Josey and Lucas Foster on the squad.

His passion for the sport began at a young age in the skate parks of Narragansett, Rhode Island. "I really liked skating and was able to find a community through that," said Okesson. "That was kind of my introduction to board sports and punk rock."

Transitioning to the mountain slopes happened soon thereafter. "I've been snowboarding since I was 8, this will be my thirteenth year," said Okesson.

Not long after taking to the snow, he joined the Okemo Mountain School in Ludlow, Vermont. This gave him the chance to hone his skills in the winter term, competing in amateur events through the United States of America Snowboard and Freeski Association (USASA).

"Through their guidance, I started competing, and it kind of grew to what it is now. At first, I did all the events. Racing, Boardercross, Slopestyle, Halfpipe, Rail Jam," he said.

When asked what led him to the position he is in today, Okesson praised his childhood coaches at the Okemo Mountain School, crediting them for his drive to compete and improve.

"In hindsight, I'm so thankful for the people that were around when I was super young," said Okesson. "All the coaches there were either ex-pros or grew up in the industry, they knew the ebb and flow of how snowboarding worked. I'm still friends with all of them today."

As one of the only athletes on Team USA who is currently enrolled in a university, Okesson has the unique challenge of balancing his course load with a busy schedule for The International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS).

Sacred Heart has given him the opportunity to take classes part-time, enrolling in two-to-eight-week AHEAD programs over the summer.

Being from the East Coast comes with a fair share of obstacles for winter sport athletes. Throughout the community, the region is well known for its infamous icy conditions, bad weather, and low levels of snowfall.

For Okesson, that's just part of the charm. He said, "I think it's just so pure. People are happy to be there, regardless of the situation, regardless of the weather. They're just down to shred. You get that feel for the passion of it, and once you get to go out west where the snow is good all day, you just flourish. You blossom like a flower."

And blossom, he certainly has. With two top ten finishes at the FIS World Cup and five top ten finishes at the NorAm Cup, Okesson has cemented himself among the top snowboarders on the planet.

At both the 2021 X Games and the 2022 US Toyota Grand Prix, he placed top five overall. Some of his other leading performances include high scoring runs at the 2022 Mammoth Grand Prix, 2020 Burton US Open and 2021 LAAX Open.

While he is no stranger to success, the scorecards are not what motivates this Conn. rider. He sees snowboarding as an art form, determined to present himself through his tricks on the pipe.

Okesson said, "There really are no rules to this. You can do it however you want. Oftentimes, the way you want to do it is going to be way cooler than if you were to be doing it for someone else."

While his sights are set on the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan, Okesson is dedicated to bettering himself as a snowboarder and creator in the meantime. "I have two years until that point, I just want to be the best all-around version of myself," he said.

The snowboarding competition will take place at the world-famous resort Livigno, located in the Italian Alps.

Qualifying for Team USA has given him the chance to compete alongside a number of his idols, learning from legends in the sport such as Zeb Powell, Taylor Gold, and Shaun White.

Being that role model for the next generation of young riders is the ultimate goal for 21-year-old snowboarder Joey Okesson.

He said, "I was once a kid on YouTube watching snowboarding videos, If I could be of service to some kid and inspire them in some way that would be really cool."

# CampusLife

## Finding Local Favorites

BY SARAH MARGERISON  
Assistant Campus Life Editor and Copy Editor

Sacred Heart students are not limited to choosing dining hall food, if they know where to look. Many students have their own favorite off campus dining options that range from breakfast to dinner to dessert.

Beginning with breakfast, bagels and coffee proved to be a go-to staple for students.

“I love JBC more than anything. I always order egg, sausage, hash brown, and hot sauce on an everything bagel,” said senior Danny Martoccia. “It is my favorite Saturday morning tradition.”

With JBC in Trumbull and Small Medium Large in Fairfield, there are multiple breakfast options in the area for students to conveniently find. Many students also raved about Bagel King, which has locations in Bridgeport and Fairfield.

“I love to go to Small Medium Large coffee in Fairfield,” said senior Meghan Haggerty. “My favorite coffee is the Yankee Doodle. They also have fresh bagels and pastries brought in every morning from a bakery in NYC.”

Lunch and dinner in the area range from comfort American food to local Italian spots.

“When it comes to local pizza Colony Grill in Fairfield and Goodfellas in Bridgeport are my favorites,” said senior Kathleen Chiodo. “I love a classic cheese and pepperoni pizza from there but they have lots of options.”

Chiodo also described how much she loved Romanacci in Trumbull for great Italian food. She often switches between the Piccante pizza and Penne Vodka.

Kayla Goncalves described a more underground spot in Monroe for comfort food.

“My favorite off campus restaurant is MacDaddy’s Macaroni and Cheese Bar

in Monroe,” said Goncalves. “The whole restaurant is specialty mac and cheese. My favorite mac and cheese to get there is their penne vodka.”

Goncalves mentioned that ever since her friend brought her to MacDaddy’s last year, she goes consistently. The spot is just close enough from campus that students can order through DoorDash and get food delivered.

Haggerty’s favorite dessert spot is Main Street Creamery on Main Street in Bridgeport. Her favorite order is a chocolate mix-in flurry with crushed Oreos and cookie dough chunks.

“I love that I can get a 10 % student discount by showing my SHU ID,” said Haggerty. “I also love that it’s open all year and stays open late.”

SHU students will always have a wide selection of options with surrounding restaurants in Fairfield, Trumbull, Bridgeport, and Monroe.



Collin Moura, Campus Life Editor

Fresh Pizza being made at a local favorite restaurant, Romanacci’s, in Trumbull.

## Navigating the News: A Guide to Staying Informed in a Digital Age

BY CAROLINE CLIFFORD  
Campus Life Editor

In a time where being well-informed is crucial, navigating through the vast sea of news sources can be daunting. With abundant global and national events demanding our attention, staying up-to-date is more than just a choice—it’s a responsibility. While the bubble of our college campus may shield us from the outside world, being aware of current events is still essential.

Recognizing the importance of accessible and unbiased news sources, Sacred Heart University offers its students subscriptions to major newspapers like The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. These resources are accessible with a SHU email and provide reliable platforms for students to stay informed about significant developments.

Most news sources have some biases, so reading various sources allows you to form your own opinion with all the facts. Since most of us use social media as part of our daily routines, following accounts that report news on those platforms is an easy way to stay informed.

It is critical to seek information from various sources as news outlets often carry inherent biases. This practice ensures a more comprehensive understanding of events and empowers individuals to form their own opinions based on a

balanced view of the facts.

Social media has become an integral part of our daily routines. We can optimize its use by accessing news content as well. Accounts like @ridethenews on Instagram stand out for their engaging approach to breaking the news.

@ridethenews adopts a unique style, presenting news events in a meme-like format followed by concise bullet points summarizing key details. This innovative approach makes reading the news more engaging and caters to the preferences of younger generations for digestible content.

In today’s digital age, media literacy is more important than ever. With the rise of misinformation and explicit news bias, it is crucial to develop critical thinking skills to navigate the complex landscape of media. By staying informed through diverse and reputable sources, students can learn to engage meaningfully with the world around them.

Staying informed is not merely passive but an active engagement with the world: acknowledging our role as informed citizens in shaping the future. Whether through traditional newspapers or social media platforms, the news is more accessible than ever.



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Interested in contributing to Campus Life? Contact us at [spectrum@sacredheart.edu](mailto:spectrum@sacredheart.edu)

# Arts & Entertainment

## Bat Boy Sighting at the Edgerton

BY BELLA GENERAZO  
Staff Writer

For the next two weekends, the Theatre Arts Program (TAP) at Sacred Heart University will be putting on a production of "Bat Boy: the Musical." This is the first show of the Spring 2024 semester.

The production will start on Thursday, Feb. 8, and will run until Sunday, Feb. 18. The shows will be at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Sunday shows will be at 3 p.m.

"The show is made up of positive, talented people, and I think that brings an energy to the show that is unique to the Sacred Heart productions," said junior Sierra Sailer, the production stage manager.

A typical rehearsal for Sailer involves supervising the cast and crew, making sure everyone is doing what they need to do, writing down important notes from the director and making sure communication is strong throughout the team. Sailer uses her free time to book rehearsal spaces and communicate the dates and times of rehearsals to her company.

Sophomore Diana Martucci is playing her debut lead role at SHU as Meredith Parker in the musical. "I came from a very small town with little opportunity to get involved in productions. I have little experience with theatre, and I still have a lot to learn," Martucci said. "I think I am bringing a rawness to the production along with a moldable attitude

while actively learning from this experience."

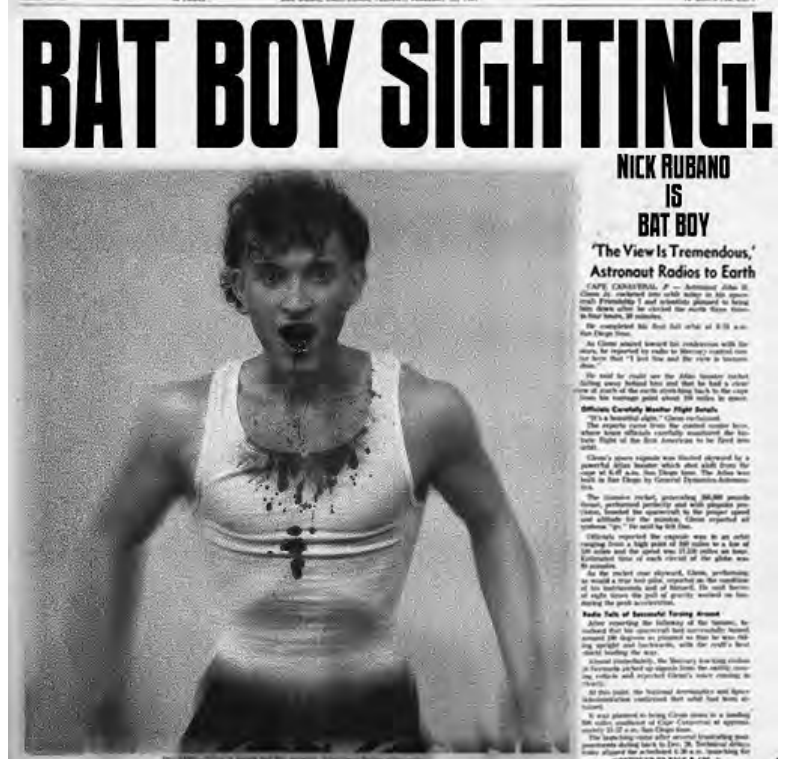
When talking about superstitions, Martucci is who to go to. She has to keep her script backstage in the same exact spot during every run. It is used as her comfort blanket, and she does not feel as confident if her script is in the wrong place.

"Everyone has put in so much hard work to make this production what it is and there is so much talent on this stage," said Martucci. "Because the show is filled with difficult music and a unique script, it's amazing to see how everyone adds their own tactics to their scenes and songs."

Senior Nicholas Rubano is playing the role of Bat Boy in the production. Rubano said, "It is extremely over the top, crazy and gory, but underneath all of it is a lot of truth about being somebody that doesn't fit in, and underneath all of the music and lights and blood the show has a lot of heart to it."

Rubano loves being a part of this show and is excited to step into this unique role. He said, "It really is a lot of unconventional acting, and having to act like an animal creature is different from any person you might see on stage, while also still developing the more human parts to bat boy."

"My favorite scene is the last scene because it is where the story comes to fruition and it's fun to play such high



Instagram, @shutheatrearts  
Senior Nick Rubano as Bat Boy in the SHU Taps production of "Bat Boy."

stakes emotions in that moment," said Rubano. "I really just love performing, singing these songs, telling the story and being able to do it in an environment with friends, which is a super fulfilling way to round out my SHU Theatre Arts career."

For more information, visit [edgertoncenter.org](http://edgertoncenter.org).

## SHU Celebrates Black History Month

BY EMMA RICOTTA  
Staff Writer

CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Kickoff Event' where attendees played a game of Black History Month Trivia. "Everyone is learning about Black History while trying to win a Stanley Cup," said Johnson. "We try to make it fun."

Senior Nicole Sperling, president of Gender Sexuality Alliance has been attending the MC's events every year during her time at Sacred Heart. "I am most looking forward to the 'Don't Touch My Hair' event," said Sperling. "It helps me, and others learn about microaggressions that non-black folk might not realize is harmful or disrespectful towards Black people".

The 'No You Can't Touch My Hair' event with the MC took place on Tuesday, Feb. 6 in the Edgerton Atrium. "The goal was to get students started on the journey of understanding that everybody doesn't live in a world that they live in," Johnson said.

The MC is also hosting a Black Love Gala on Thursday, Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. located in the Guest House on West Campus. "Everyone should come with the intention of providing healing, love, and forgiveness," Johnson said. "That's what Black Love Day is about."

Sperling feels that she has learned a lot from attending these events run by the MC. "Through my years at SHU and attending the various events revolving around Black history, I have learned how to

support and raise the voices of my peers," said Sperling. "Through these events, students can learn about the lasting legacies and how to support the efforts of Black History Month."

The OIE and MC are partnering with the Sacred Heart Community Theater to celebrate Black History Month. Matthew Oestreicher, the Executive Director of SHU Community Theater, explained the importance behind this collaboration.

"It's largely about representation and visibility," Oestreicher said. "Besides the facts that these are great films by any standard, our goal is to establish an environment where everyone, no matter their background, can find representation on screen."

Films such as, "Get Out", "Crooklyn", "Dream Girls", and "Moonlight" will be shown throughout the month. "We are delighted to partner with the Office for Inclusive Excellence and the Multicultural Center to present great films that tell important stories," said Oestreicher.

Celebrating Black History Month is important. It is a time where everyone can focus their attention on the contributions of African Americans. According to Front Range Community College, Black History Month started as a week until President Gerald Ford proclaimed February to be a month of celebration.

"Through our dedication to inclusivity, we aspire to inspire meaningful conversations, help build understanding and play a part in building a community that is more fair-minded and compassionate," said Oestreicher.

For more information on Black History Month celebrations and screenings, visit [shucommunitytheatre.org](http://shucommunitytheatre.org).

## SCMA Alumni Win Big at the Emmys

BY THERESA TARTAMELLA  
Staff Writer

Sacred Heart University congratulates its alumni who won Emmys during the 2023 award season.

Eight alumni from the university took home an Emmy for their work at ESPN, Sports Center, NBC Sports and The Wisconsin News.

For some of these alumni, this Emmy was an addition to their preexisting collection of awards.

Each of these alumni studied at the School of Communication, Media and the Arts (SCMA), where they all took an interest in sports communication. Most of them were also a part of the graduate program, Sports Communication and Media (SCM).

Only two of the alumni were majors outside of the SCM program, consisting of Eric Diaz '14 who got his master's in communications, and Dario Melendez '08, a media arts major who both gravitated towards the sports communication world.

Alumna Victoria Balarezo '19 MA '20 got both her bachelor's and her master's degree from the university. For her master's, she was a part of the SCM program.

Balarezo currently works at NBC Sports Chicago as a video editor. Her job consists of creating the highlights for the pre-intermission and post-game show for the Chicago Bulls, Blackhawks, White Sox and Bears.

Balarezo won her award for Outstanding Live Special where she was involved in the coverage of the XXIV Olympic Winter Games in Beijing, China. There was an

online event hosted for the nominees but she missed the livestream and found out she had won through a text from her boss.

"It felt amazing. I feel like now hopefully this will help me grow even more to reach my goals and accomplishments," Balarezo said.

Balarezo is very thankful for all the professors who helped her along the way and feels they set her up for success. She also feels that her involvement on campus with The Pulse and the live broadcasting experience she has gotten as an undergraduate and graduate student helped her get to where she is today.

Dr. Andrew Miller, the Director of Communications at SHU, said he is thrilled to celebrate the success of the students and that it is a testament to all of their hard work. He said it reflects how the sports communications program has been built up at the university.

Dr. Miller explained, the SCM program strives to bring professionals with real-world experience into the classroom to help teach students the most up-to-date information to prepare them for their future careers.

"In particular I would like to point to full-time faculty members Paul Pabst and Brian Thorne, who walk off playing fields and television studios right into the classroom," Miller said. "Their great work with SHU students is the foundation of our sports communication program."

He wants all future and current students to realize that they are also capable of achieving this kind of success and wants all students to aspire towards these goals.

"With the dedication and persistence they can be award winners, too," Miller said.



Instagram, @vicbalarezo  
Victoria Balarezo showing off her Emmy for Outstanding Live Special.

Junior Helena Medici, a communications major, is inspired by the alumni's success because she is following a similar path in her studies. In the future, she hopes to work in the Public Relations industry.

"Seeing the success of SHU alumni is so inspiring because coming from a small school in Connecticut and seeing alumni making it to the big screen empowers me that I too can achieve great things," Medici said.

# Sports

## Women's Basketball Leading the NEC

BY BRENDAN MURPHY  
Staff Writer

The Sacred Heart University (SHU) women's basketball team currently sits on top of the Northeast Conference (NEC), with an over-all record of 14-9. The Pioneers finished with a 6-1 record in the month of January, with all of the team's wins coming by double digits.

Much of the team's success has come from the play of sophomore guard, Amelia Wood. Wood was named to the 2023 NEC All-Rookie Team last season.

"I realized I needed to pick my game up. I am going to the gym to get extra shots up because that is what my team needs," said Wood.

Wood is averaging 10.7 points per game this season. That is the second most on the team.

"I feel like Wood has a lot more confidence in herself this year. She has been that spark that we needed and she is going to keep her foot on the gas. She just looks to get better one play at a time," said sophomore Ny'Ceara Pryor.

When asked about this weekend's two matchups, Head Coach Jessica Mannetti said, "We have been doing so well in the league right now because we have really stayed focused on the next opponent."

The Pioneers won their last two games, defeating Stonehill on Thursday, Feb. 1, as well as Le Moyne on Saturday, Feb. 3. With sole possession of first place in the conference, the team has their sights set on another NEC Title, which would secure their spot in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) March Madness tournament for a second

straight year.

"March Madness was a great experience. Not a lot of people get that experience in their whole four years and the fact that we got there in our first year was amazing but we are just trying to get back there again," said Pryor.

Mannetti added that the squad feels that they have a "target on their back all the time" after being unanimously voted as NEC Champs in the preseason poll.

"We talk about it. We talk about how to handle that pressure and we know that we are going to get every team's best game," said Mannetti.

The Pioneers are back on the court on Friday, Feb. 9 when they take on The Central Connecticut State University Blue Devils at the William H. Pitt Center in Fairfield, CT

Sacred Heart Athletics Contributed to this Article.



Instagram, @sacredheartwbb

Head Coach Jessica Mannetti speaks to the women's basketball team during a mid-game

## Double Trouble on the Club Court



Team Picture of the 2023-2024 SHU Women's Club Basketball Team.

Instagram, @sacredheartwbb

BY JASON PILLA  
Staff Writer

The Sacred Heart Men's and Women's Club basketball teams are currently at the top of their conferences with winning records. The men's club team is 8-2 and the women's club team is 14-1.

The women have wins over schools like UConn, Rutgers, and UMass, while the men have wins over Fairfield, Iona, and Wesleyan. With their current records, both club teams are in good positions for playoff spots.

"Success has been great," said women's club basketball head coach Mike Murphy. "Last year, we had six seniors that made the transition to coaching here very easy. They believe in us, and that's attributed to our success."

As of right now, the men are just one game behind Fairfield for first place, whom they split a doubleheader with. The women currently stand in first place in their conference and are ranked seventh in the nation.

Men's head coach Whitney Taylor describes their team's success this season as being motivated by the mistakes that they make and improving on them.

"Uplifting, positive for the next group of guys coming in," said Taylor.

Taylor has been the coach for the club team for six years now and loves being able to make players learn from him.

"It's never been about the wins and losses, it never will be, it's about the lessons we learn," said Taylor.

In a doubleheader against Wesleyan, they lost the first game against them, but in the second game they were able to bounce back with a win, from being down 14 points with just three minutes left in the game, the men's team was able to pull off the comeback to win in double overtime.

"In that game, we had to learn as a team what it takes to get to the next level, and we came back and won in double overtime," said Taylor.

There is a ton of leadership throughout both teams. Junior Jack Colby, who is on Taylor's 15-man roster, makes sure the freshmen stay engaged with the team and that everyone brings something to the table.

"We have a lot of good players," said Colby. "Everyone is trying to fit into their roles. It's hard for someone to take a backseat, but it's a good problem to have because if someone gets injured, the next guy is going to step up and be just as good on the court."

On the other hand, the women's club team has an even distribution of talent on the court when it comes to gametime.

"Everyone brings a key element to the team," said Murphy. "They all work together, which is why we have great chemistry."

Senior Alissa Alfieri gave her thoughts on her team's chemistry and how they always have each other's back.

"We're very competitive," said Alfieri. "Being a small school, people tend to look past us, but beating big schools makes us stand out to everyone, and gets Sacred Heart's name out there."

## Women's Track and Field Setting the Pace for a Strong Season

BY WILL RATH  
Staff Writer

The Sacred Heart University (SHU) women's track and field team had a very successful showing at the annual Boston University John Terrier Classic, which took place from Jan 26 to Jan 27.

The Pioneers had seven top ten finishers in the John Terrier Classic, with five of the seven being in the pole vault event.

"The Terrier Classic is a huge meet, tons of teams, lots of entries," said Head Coach Christian Morrison.

Morrison, who oversees both the men's and women's teams was impressed with the performance of the women's team at the Terrier Classic

"For any athlete to place in the top ten means they did pretty good. I was happy with the results we had in the meet," said Morrison.

As the spring season is coming to an end, Morrison emphasized the importance of closing out the season on a high note.

"We still have the outdoor season after this, but we're hoping to put a punctuation mark on the indoor season by having good outcomes at the conference championship and the New England Championship," said Morrison.

Senior Kaylee Stenderowicz, who competes in jumps and sprints for the Pioneers

was one of the university's top performers, finishing in seventh place in the triple jump event at the Terrier Classic.

"I was happy with my performance. I still feel there is more to work towards, but it was a good stepping stone to where I want to be," said Stenderowicz.

Stenderowicz offered high praise for the team and credited the Pioneers success with the hard work they've put in throughout the season.

"We've been at lift and practice every day working as hard as we can. Everyone's making an effort to take care of their bodies. It's important we do everything we can to get to where we want to be," said Stenderowicz.

Another one of the Pioneers top performers was junior Jenna Engels

"I am very excited, along with everyone else, since we all have a good feeling about the last few weeks of the season. We've worked hard for months and have the same end goal in mind, now it's time to execute," said Engels.

Engels also credited her strong work ethic towards placing 4th in the pole-vaulting event at the Terrier Classic, along with four of her other teammates finishing in the top 10.

"We all want the best for each other and push each other to do better than we think is even possible for ourselves," said Engels.

The Pioneers strive to continue their excellence at the Northeast Conference Indoor Track and Field Championships on Sunday Feb 18 and Feb 19.

# Editorial

## *A Love Letter to Dingle*

BY ISABELLA FABBO  
*Photo Editor*

Studying abroad was the one thing I told myself I needed to do while I was in college. When I was a senior in high school searching for schools, I made sure to only apply to ones that had impressive study abroad programs. I was determined to travel during my college career. Flash forward about three and half years, and my time is almost up. I'm in my senior year and I haven't traveled abroad, haven't experienced another country and culture on my own. This year more than ever it was on my mind; not only because my last chance to make it happen in college was fast approaching, but also because the more I thought and dreamt about my future, the more I saw myself traveling overseas and even possibly living there for some time.

I finally made the decision to go to Dingle for the winter program over the summer. I was a bit nervous about spending the money, but as I've mentioned in a previous editorial, spending money on experiences is always worth it for me. I made sure one of my close friends was going, constantly checking up and confirming he was applying and even reminding him of every deadline. I did not want to go alone. Little did I know my fear of not making any friends this trip would completely dissipate the second I stepped off the bus in Dingle.

Just as I had suspected, this experience was completely worth it. It was everything I had hoped it would be and more. What I was most looking forward to in the months leading up to my departure was the walkable city and beautiful landscape that I would be surrounded by every day. When I think about my environment here in America, I am immediately saddened by all the industrialization I see around me. Highways, big gray buildings and traffic lights. Tall fluorescent signs for fast food or stores. Modern bland architecture. Concrete barriers and potholes on roads that seem to go on forever. I was looking forward to seeing something different, seeing a part of the world that was simpler than the busy, claustrophobic world around me in America.

Dingle was refreshing, a gust of fresh air that blew all my worries away. It really is true what they say about walking and being outside. I felt happier even though it was cold, even though at some points I couldn't feel my toes and my face hurt when the wind would whip against my skin. All things considered, we got lucky with the weather. It was mostly sunny, something unheard of for the typically wet Januarys.



Isabella Fabbo. Photo Editor  
Dick Mack's, a popular pub in Dingle, is situated across the street from a Church.

I already look so fondly on my short two weeks in Dingle, and I'm already trying to plan my next trip there. The friends I made there, ones that I'm lucky enough to still see around campus; the sites I saw while lugging two cameras around my neck; Lidl, my haven before class; Foxy John's and Dick Mack's and Dingle Pub, places where I will hopefully live on forever with my name carved into their bathroom stalls.

Dingle, you were a dream.



Isabella Fabbo, Photo Editor  
Cliffs on the coast of the Slea Head Drive on the Dingle Peninsula.

The physical features of Dingle were breathtaking. In addition to the green hills and mountains that towered over the town, with sheep scattered throughout like specks of clouds, every building was unique and incredibly vibrant. Bright yellows, blues, reds, and greens plastered the town like a paint palette. Each building had its own personality, with its older architecture as if nothing had been touched in decades, maybe even centuries. The locals were friendly, and so were the bartenders. Being twenty-one, going into pubs and ordering drinks didn't feel exactly special. What did feel special was the environment inside the pubs. The music, the conversations, the seats and tables, the décor on the walls. I was fascinated just sitting inside and staring at anything I could. Everything about Dingle felt like a home.



Isabella Fabbo. Photo Editor  
A string of colorful buildings, pubs, restaurants, and shops, that sit across from the Dingle Bay Marina.

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*Letters to the editor should not exceed 600 words and should be emailed to [spectrum@sacredheart.edu](mailto:spectrum@sacredheart.edu). The Spectrum does not assume copyright for any published material. We are not responsible for the opinions of the writers voiced in this forum.*

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