

SHU Honorary Doctorate Recipient, Vince McMahon, Resigns from WWE Parent Company Amid Sex Trafficking Allegation

BY BRENDAN WILLIAMS
Editor-in-Chief

On Friday, Jan. 26, Vince McMahon resigned from his position as Executive Chairman of the Board from WWE's parent company, TKO Group Holdings. The resignation came a day after a former World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) employee filed a federal lawsuit accusing him and another former executive of sexual misconduct.

McMahon received an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters in 2007 from Sacred Heart University, before delivering the commencement address.

The Spectrum reviewed the graphic 67-page lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court in Connecticut by former WWE employee Janel Grant, which accuses Mr. McMahon of sexual misconduct, sexual exploitation, and sex trafficking.

The suit includes allegations that McMahon forced Grant into a

sexual relationship in order for her to get and keep a job, and passed around pornographic pictures and videos of her to other men, including other WWE employees.

Grant claims she suffered psychological torture and physical violence as a result of being groomed by McMahon.

In a statement to Deadline, McMahon denied the accusations, claiming the suit is filled with "lies" and "obscene made-up instances that never occurred." McMahon expressed his intent to "vigorously" defend himself, and clear his name.

According to the suit, at the start of their relationship, McMahon stated that his marital status with his wife, Linda McMahon, was "only an agreement on paper, for business purposes."

The suit claims, in January 2022, McMahon told Grant that his



Contributed Photo

Vince McMahon (Left) receiving his honorary doctorate of Humane Letters at the 2007 Sacred Heart University Commencement. Board of Trustee Member Linda McMahon (Right) is presenting her Husband with a hood, moments before delivering the commencement address.

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Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University

2 Graduate Students Found Dead in Apartment

BY ERIN CLARK
News Editor

On Sunday, Jan. 14, two Sacred Heart University Graduate students, 21-year-old Sai Nikesh Rakoti and 22-year-old Gattu Dinesh, were found dead in their apartment in Hartford, Conn. Both students had come to the United States from India 16 days earlier on Dec. 28, 2023 to pursue a master's degree in computer science from Sacred Heart.

Sai Nikesh Rakoti came from Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh, and Gattu Dinesh came from Wanaparthy district of Telangana. Mutual friends had connected the two students, who decided to be roommates once they got to the U.S.

After friends of the students had not heard back from them since dinner the previous night, the police were called. After breaking through the door, the

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Injured Student Sues Student Driver, Car Owner, and University Over Sept. Crash

BY BRENDAN WILLIAMS
Editor-in-Chief

Freshman, Amanda Hanlon, is suing sophomores Tyler Delk, Jason Rinsky and Sacred Heart University following the September accident involving 5 SHU students and a Uber driver.

The Spectrum previously reported, on the evening of Sept. 29, four female students were in an Uber going westbound on Jefferson Street, when an eastbound car, driven by Delk, hit a curb, lost control and collided with the Uber, carrying Hanlon. The collision left the eastbound car on its roof, according to Fairfield police.

Rinsky and Delk were roommates at the time of the accident, housed in Sacred

Heart University student housing, Christian Witness Commons.

Hanlon's claim states that Delk was operating Rinsky's 2018 Audi S5 with permission at the time of the accident.

The October warrant for Delk's arrest charges him with driving under the influence, reckless driving and five counts each of second-degree assault with a motor vehicle and reckless endangerment.

Delk was released on a \$250,000 bond.

As a result of the accident, Hanlon claims she sustained a cerebral concussion, a collapsed lung, cognitive impairments, head lacerations and facial fractures.

The suit names Sacred Heart

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BY ERIN CLARK
News Editor

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students were found lifeless in their beds.

Although the cause of death is still unknown, it is predicted to be either carbon monoxide poisoning or a gas leak. Sacred Heart continues to be in contact with the Hartford Police Department as they determine the cause of death.

Friends of Rakoti and Dinesh called the families to inform them of the passing of their sons. It has been assured to the families of the students that their bodies will be brought back to the country at the earliest possible time.

Sacred Heart held a memorial service on Wednesday, Jan. 24 at 4 p.m. in the West Building at West Campus.

“Please join me as we continue to pray for these young men, their family, friends and our community,” said President Dr. John Petillo in an email to the university regarding the memorial service.

The Hindustan Times and Livemint news sources contributed to this article.

McMahon Resigns

BY BRENDAN WILLIAMS
Editor-in-Chief

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wife had found out about their relationship. In an attempt to avoid divorce and negative publicity, he pressured Grant to sign an NDA in exchange for payments.

Vince McMahon is married to Sacred Heart University Trustee, Linda McMahon.

From 2004 to 2017, she served as Board of Trustee Vice Chair before stepping down to serve in the Trump Cabinet as Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

In 2019, Mrs. McMahon left the Trump administration to serve as chair of the America First Action SuperPAC and America First Policy LLC., supporting the reelection campaign of President Trump. In 2021, Mrs. McMahon returned to the SHU Board of Trustees, where she was most recently honored at the 2023 Pioneer Gala.

The Linda E. McMahon Student Commons was dedicated in her honor, following a \$5 million donation to Sacred Heart, housing a fourth floor dining hall, “Linda’s.”

In a statement to the Spectrum, Sacred Heart University said, “We were disappointed to learn of the allegations against Vince McMahon. Honorary degrees are awarded (and would thereby be rescinded) by the University’s Board of Trustees, on the recommendations of the University’s standing honorary degree committee and the mission and culture committee of the Board of Trustees. Those committees have not met since the news of the lawsuit against Mr. McMahon broke, nor has there been any discussion about rescinding his degree at this point.”

The statement continued, “We would be unfair to evaluate Mrs. McMahon on the alleged actions of her husband, so we would not rename the Linda E. McMahon Student Commons or Linda’s nor ask her to step down from the Board of Trustees based on this lawsuit. Linda has been a longtime supporter of Sacred Heart and a



Contributed Photo

Vince McMahon delivering the 2007 Commencement address.

valued member of our Board. We look forward to working with her well into the future.”

The lawsuit seeks to void the nondisclosure agreement under the Speak Out Act, which prevents the enforcement of nondisclosure agreements in instances of sexual assault and harassment. Grant is also seeking unspecified amounts in compensatory and punitive damages.

There is currently no record of Vince McMahon delivering the 2007 commencement address, or receiving an honorary doctorate on the Sacred Heart University website.

Hanlon v. Delk

BY BRENDAN WILLIAMS
Editor-in-Chief

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University as a co-defendant, citing negligence for failing to monitor

underage drinking and failure to ensure the safety of students on campus.

The Spectrum contacted all parties listed in case Hanlon V. Delk et. al. The attorney representing Ms. Hanlon did not respond to a request for comment. The attorney

representing Mr. Delk and Mr. Rinsky declined to comment. Sacred Heart Officials say they do not comment on ongoing litigation.

On Jan. 19 the case was moved to U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut.

Madison Beekman Contributed

SHU Hires New Manager of LGBTQ+ Affairs

BY VALENTINA MASSONI
News Editor

In the fall of 2023, Sacred Heart University hired the inaugural manager of LGBTQ+ affairs, Kyle Humphreys. Humphreys identifies as trans-masculine and uses him/his/they/them pronouns.

“Kyle’s educational, professional, and lived experiences make him an outstanding person for this role,” said Maurice Nelson, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at SHU.

The manager of LGBTQ+ affairs is primarily responsible for overseeing the Sexuality and Gender Equity (SAGE) Center. They are also affiliated with the Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) and are involved with building a welcoming community for students, especially those who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community.

According to Sacred Heart’s website, “The SAGE Center is designed to center, celebrate and uplift the experiences of SHU’s queer community. Additionally, it promotes the inclusion of all identities through programmatic and educational initiatives.”

Humphreys said he hopes to prove to Sacred Heart students that they “are important and deserving of a community that welcomes and embraces” them.

Humphreys graduated from the College of Saint Rose in 2020, with a bachelor’s degree in communications. His education equipped him with tools for varying career paths which ultimately led him to accept this position at Sacred Heart.

“I actually published my own research after I had

graduated about social media as a tool for activism for transgender people,” Humphreys said. “It was that kind of work that further pushed me into being a more community-oriented person.”

One of Humphreys’ goals in the position is to increase the university’s involvement with local communities, especially with high schools and LGBTQ+ youth.

“I would really like for them to come here and explore campus, imagine their life in higher education, and talk with students and professionals who are LGBTQ+ in higher education to get the facts, dispel some fears, and give them some confidence,” Humphreys said.

“I think that’s something a lot of young people struggle with, especially considering the high rates of mental illness and suicidal ideation compared to their straight and non-transgender peers.”

According to a 2023 survey from the Trevor Project, 41% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide within the past year.

“LGBTQ+ people aren’t going anywhere. For institutions to implement policies, positions, and resource centers to support LGBTQ+ people is not only good practice, but it’s also a good retention strategy. If you make students feel like this is a place where they can bring their entire self, then they’re not going to bring that self elsewhere,” Humphreys said.

Sacred Heart is one of many universities striving to improve upon diversity and inclusivity. The leaders in the Office for Inclusive Excellence, including

Humphreys, are directly involved in this mission.

“If your institution is only serving a specific faction of people, you’re really not serving as many people as you could be. You’re really not doing the greatest amount of good with what you have,” Humphreys said.

“Our vision is to be a model for inclusive excellence in higher education. Notwithstanding, I am under no illusion that we have arrived,” Nelson said. “While operating with humility, I do believe that other institutions can be and are influenced by our inclusive excellence resources. Conversely, we will continue to learn from and be influenced by inclusive excellence efforts at other institutions.”

“One of the things I really want to do with my life is to leave the world a better place than it would have been, had I not entered it,” Humphreys said.

As manager of LGBTQ+ affairs for Sacred Heart, Humphreys is actively pursuing this intention.

“I don’t have to be the go-to person, but I would hope that any student, whether or not they’re LGBTQ+ knows that they can come to me if they need somebody to talk to because I know how valuable and important that can be,” Humphreys said. “I like being able to inspire students and make them feel welcome.”

In a Sacred Heart press release, Humphreys said, “I continue to meet so many passionate, enthusiastic people who are proud to be Pioneers. And it is such a pleasure and an honor to call myself a Pioneer alongside them.”

Features

SHU Professor Rediscovered Tomb on Dingle Peninsula

BY ISABEL HAGLUND
Features Editor

A lost 4,000-year-old tomb has been rediscovered on the Dingle Peninsula in Ireland. Dr. Billy Mag Fhloinn rediscovered the wedge tomb.

“I knew from local folk that there was something up there,” said Fhloinn. “I had heard the expression *Altóir na Gréine*, the alter of the sun, and it’s such an intriguing name, it’s not a usual kind of name for these places and I was slightly taken by the romance of the name and that made me curious to find it.”

He then researched to find more information about the lost tomb.

“I looked in the folklore archives from 100 years ago and they spoke about this place, and I have a friend who had some more knowledge about this antiquarian who had visited the palace in 1838,” said Fhloinn. “We started to build up a picture of the fact that this thing was there and the fact that people had still been mentioning it, people were still talking about it and suspected that there was maybe something of it left.”

Then Fhloinn began to walk around the hill near his home trying to locate the tomb.

“I live on a hill and the hill runs from east to west all the way up to the top of a mountain, and it’s located on the spine of that hill, so if I keep going on the hill, up the spine of it towards the mountain you eventually come across the tomb,” said Fhloinn.



Instagram, @shuindingle
Dr. Mag Fhloinn recently rediscovered a wedge tomb on the Dingle Peninsula by using local folklore.

Once Fhloinn rediscovered the tomb, he tried to uncover why it was destroyed in the first place, which is still a mystery.

“That is the one thing that I cannot figure out, so in 1838 we had a visit and a drawing, and by 1852 it is said that it was destroyed. So why this one got broken up, I don’t know,” said Fhloinn.

Historian and Sacred Heart University Prof. John Roney has been traveling to Ireland for over 20 years. He believes that tombs and cultural heritage sites are rapidly being destroyed.

“The destruction of cultural heritage sites is rapidly increasing, because both climate change and population increase,” said Roney. “There’s 1.2 million tourists to Dingle every year and up until

1970 there were probably 400.”

Although Sacred Heart students studying abroad in Dingle haven’t had the chance to visit the rediscovered tomb yet, some students got to visit other tombs and heritage sites during the winter program.

“I took a class called Tombs Rituals and Traditions, so it was a lot of going to grave sites and it was a biology class, so it was learning about burials, and it was really interesting,” said senior Catherine Phillips.

Going to visit and see the tombs and heritage sites were her favorite parts of the class.

“I’d never felt more connected to ancestry because I have ancestry in Dingle, so it was really just a moment to feel like I was in a place where my ancestors could’ve been laid to rest or buried, so that was really nice,” said Phillips.

Every tomb and burial site are different in that not all of them are accessible to the public yet.

“We’ve got to find out whether they want tourists to come, and that’s to be determined,” said Roney.

Roney along with Fhloinn and other members of Sacred Heart faculty have created a deep mapping project and website where anyone can visit to discover the cultural heritage of the Dingle Peninsula. The website features holy wells, burial, and religious sites, and will eventually feature movie locations and coastal sites of pilgrimage, fishing, and trade.

“As you go on the website, we’ve got links to videos that people have made about it and Billy is going to go with a camera and do a 360 with maps and by having a website you can literally look at it now and say ‘oh that’s what we’re trying to find,’” said Roney.

Visit Deepmapskerry.ie to look at the project and discover the cultural heritage of the Dingle Peninsula.



Instagram, @shuindingle
Dr. Mag Fhloinn showing a group of students a natural well during a field trip to a site in Dingle.

Connecting Hearts Through the Office of Community Engagement

BY GERALDINE PAGLIA
Assistant Features Editor

In 2023, the Office of Community Engagement reported more than 115,000 hours.

Located in the Academic Center – HC 109, the Office of Community Engagement organizes regular events, workshops, and service projects that bring together students, faculty, and community members. These initiatives provide opportunities for collaboration, learning, and hands-on experience.

Erin Rederscheid, Coordinator of Community Partnerships, under the Office of Community Engagement, said, “When Sacred Heart was founded, it was a center point of the Fairfield community and as time evolved it was apparent the need that the Bridgeport community had for support.”

Students embark on immersion programs that take them to diverse communities within the United States and around the world. These programs provide a platform for students to engage in meaningful projects, fostering a deeper understanding of diverse cultures and traditions.

Annie Johnson, Director of the Office of Community Engagement said, “The work of the Office of Community Engagement is at the heart of the overall mission of the University.”

The university’s mission stands to educate the whole person and promote a sense of responsibility for the common good.

In alignment with the university’s mission, the office provides a diverse range of programs and initiatives that connect students with community service opportunities, service-learning projects, and volunteerism.

Community Connections is a pre-fall orientation program through the Office of Community Engagement, which accommodates 40 to 60 students. Over a week incoming first-year students participate in a variety of service projects at various locations across the city.

“I’ve been doing volunteer work since I was in elementary school, so when

I learned about the pre-fall program that the office runs called Community Connections, I knew it was right for me,” said sophomore Sophia Patterson.

The office coordinates transportation to volunteer sites to accommodate everyone who wants to volunteer from soup kitchens to working with children and many other diverse projects. Students have the ability to give back in any capacity.

“There’s over 450 freshmen, who have been volunteering this year,” said junior Lauren Pisano. “So just seeing everyone’s involvement and also the school showcasing the service weeks.”

Students can track and highlight their hours through GivePulse, a platform where weekly volunteer opportunities are consistently posted and tracked.

The office also recently rebranded itself to show more inclusion. The Office of Community Engagement focuses on multiple different opportunities rather than just volunteering.

“We are excited about this evolution in our identity and mission. The Office of Community Engagement embodies our commitment to fostering a sense of social responsibility and global citizenship among our students,” said Rederscheid.

Sacred Heart also offers service-learning courses, domestic and international service immersion programs, and student life service clubs. International programs include trips to Colombia, Greece, and Costa Rica. Each year applicants are accepted in September.

“The goal is to continue to put our footprint out in Sacred Heart and bring our students with us,” said Rederscheid.

Looking for more opportunities to get involved?

“Come to the office, they make it feel so welcoming, there is always someone at the front desk to greet you,” said Graduate Assistant, Tiara Gilchrist, for the Office of Communication Engagement.

Learning in the Age of AI: Exploring Impacts on Our Education and Careers



BY OLIVIA TEDESCO
Assistant Audrey's Corner Editor

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing various aspects of our lives, and its influence on education and careers is no exception. As AI technology continues to advance, both professors and students are contemplating its potential impacts on learning as a tool and its implications for future career paths. While AI offers numerous benefits, there are also concerns about its potential drawbacks, leading to diverse perspectives on whether it is ultimately a positive or negative force.

For professors, AI holds promise in streamlining administrative tasks and facilitating research endeavors. Some professors will tell you that they are either for AI or against it. For those professors who are against it, they will say that nothing can be better than what a human can do and that your essays aren't original and thus they will be flagged for cheating and plagiarism. Although it is true that students can abuse AI and use it to their advantage, the direction of AI is something that we cannot get ahead of.

Professor Greg Golda teaches classes focusing on Democratic Technologies, Comics, and Animation, Multimedia Field Production, and TV Studio Production, for the School of Communications and Media Arts here at SHU. His courses are project-based and engage students of all majors in the creation of media texts with multiple digital tools. I was allowed to speak with Professor Golda about his thoughts on AI.

Q: What do you say when people use the remark, "AI is going to take over my job"?

Professor Golda: That could very well be true because any dynamic technology is going to make certain things obsolete and automation has been, you know, crawling into every facet of our lives for 200 years. That's how long the Industrial Revolution has been going on. And, if you're not staying current, then, yeah, you could get paved over.

Q: How do you personally use AI in your life, in and out of the classroom?

Professor Golda: I consider myself an artist. So, when I create, I think it's incredibly important that I originate ideas. So I think of AI as a tool that might give me new avenues to explore.

Q: How would you say AI is kind of hurting our education? In terms of plagiarizing and cheating?

Professor Golda: Every technology that comes along can be seen as an opportunity for people to exploit it and gain benefit from it. It's learning how to use it as a tool instead of a solution where people get confused. Right now The New York Times is suing OpenAI for billions of dollars because they have over 100 examples of chat GPT spitting out verbatim text from New York Times articles and not attributing the New York Times. So there's these chat GPT things, they're being sold as these independent brains that take all this information and create something new. But what the New York Times can prove is that they have examples where it's not true. It's not changing anything at all. It's simply taking content from what it's trained on and giving it as an answer.

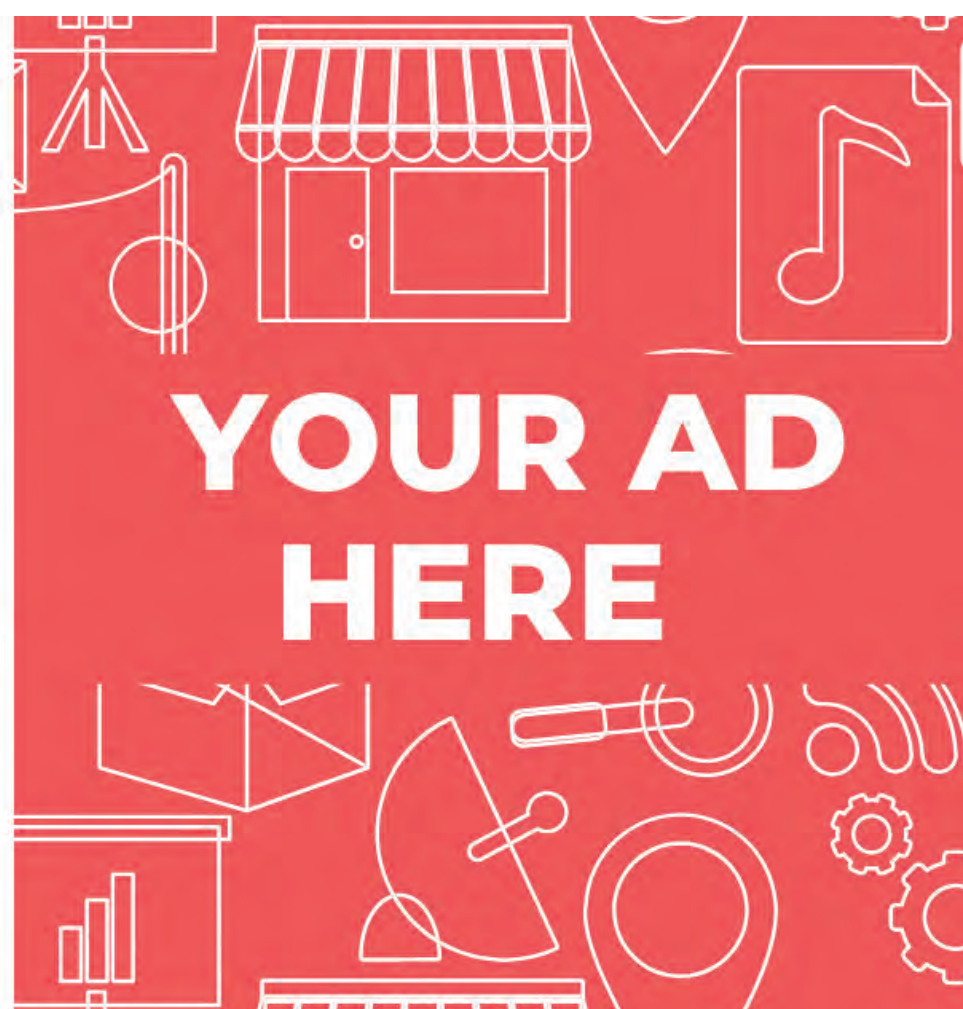
In conclusion, it is clear that artificial intelligence (AI) has a significant impact on professions and education as we navigate this new era of technology. While artificial intelligence (AI) has great potential to improve learning, expedite processes, and open up new possibilities, it also comes with drawbacks and moral dilemmas. Diverse viewpoints exist about artificial intelligence (AI). While some welcome its potential for transformation, others raise ethical and job security concerns.

Conducting interviews Professor Greg Golda gave insightful explanations of the advantages and disadvantages of artificial intelligence in education. His viewpoint emphasizes how crucial it is to keep up with technology developments and use AI as a tool for creativity and invention. But he also draws attention to the dangers of AI abuse, especially with regard to plagiarism and unethical behavior.

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CampusLife

Meet Kelly McGill

BY SARAH MARGERISON
Assistant Campus Life Editor

Sacred Heart University's new Dance Program Coordinator, Kelly McGill, began her position in Oct. 2023.

McGill is originally from Upstate New York, but has lived and worked in places like California, New York, and Washington D.C. She initially played collegiate lacrosse in Buffalo, N.Y. before transferring to Shenandoah University to pursue an education in dance, graduating in 2017 with a B.F.A. in dance.

She danced for a company professionally and taught dance classes when she moved to Washington D.C.

"That's also when I started really learning to teach dance and taught in smaller studios and began teaching all over the D.C. area," said McGill. "Mostly contemporary and modern and ballet, a little jazz and tap when I needed to. I worked professionally for about three years, but around that time I decided I needed to take my career to the next level and moved to California."

McGill attended UC Irvine and received her M.F.A. in dance, graduating in 2022.

"After I graduated, I was living in Southern California and was dancing professionally there for a company called Backhouse Dance," said McGill. "I danced with them for my first year out of grad school and was still teaching all over the place, driving all over Orange County and L.A. and the Huntington Beach area."

Various reasons, including family, brought McGill back to the east coast.

"I got extremely lucky when this opportunity at Sacred Heart became available right around the same time that I was going to be moving back to the area anyway. I applied and interviewed and I got very lucky with the timing of everything to land at

Sacred Heart."

Transition back to the east coast and to a new work environment was smooth for McGill. She feels as though the SHU dance program held an exciting new opportunity.

"I felt very welcomed right away," said McGill. "I could tell right away how excited the dancers were about what they were doing which made me want to learn what it was all about."

McGill emphasized how welcoming not only the SHU dancers and students have been, but also the faculty in the Performing Arts program overall. She feels that with a small dance faculty of only three people, she's able to experience many different aspects of running the program.

McGill has various responsibilities as dance coordinator that branch out across the program. She coordinates travel, auditions, and teaches her own classes, among other responsibilities.

"This past season was my first time being here for shows but I help with distributing costumes, organizing costumes for performances, and work on the headset during shows for lighting and cues and the technical aspects of the shows," said McGill. "Half of the time I'm in the studio and choreographing, and the other half I'm in the office trying to pick up anything that needs to be done that Kari and Taylor aren't able to manage."

She feels that the many opportunities the SHU dance program offers sets it apart from other programs. Students' opportunities to choreograph and teach, as well as bringing in outside instructors from New York and Italy create a rare environment.

"We have so many dancers and they're all so dedicated and you can really tell that they love being in the program," said McGill. "I think the program is only going to continue to expand and that the caliber of professionalism and skill is just going to continue to rise as well."

In the Classroom: Exploring the Interesting Classes SHU Has to Offer

BY COLLIN MOURA
Campus Life Editor

Whether your passion is exploring the cultivation process of world-class wines or examining the current retail environment, Sacred Heart University has got you covered.

If you have extra room in your schedule, and are looking for an interesting elective or are still undecided, consider spicing things up next semester. Offering a plethora of unique classes, the university's course catalog has something for your most niche interest.

"There's so many courses on campus that seem really cool, I want to take better advantage of the available electives," said junior Bryan Garbutt. "I'm thinking about taking Sport Venue & Event Management or Introduction to Wine in my senior year."

Check out this list highlighting a selection of SHU's coolest classes to take next semester:

CIT-203 SPRINGSTEEN, SCORSESE AND SHU

What do Bruce Springsteen, Martin Scorsese and Sacred Heart University all have in common? Find out next fall through an interdisciplinary look into the relationship between Catholic thought and modern entertainment.

CIT-211 DO ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN?

In CIT-211 with Dr. Chelsea King, students discuss a very different theological perspective, considering the spiritual connection between animals, humanity, and God.

EX-102 INTRODUCTION TO WINE

Develop your wine tasting skills and overall food pairing literacy in Dr. Beau Greer's Introduction to Wine course. Students will have the chance to elevate their understanding of grape varieties and production techniques.

BRS-111 CRAFT BEVERAGE BREWING

Did you know that the first Brewing Science program in Connecticut is located here at SHU? Instructed by craft brewing leaders, fermentation scientists, and business professionals, students are given practical experience at partner breweries across the state.

SM-281 SPORT VENUE & EVENT MANAGEMENT

With an emphasis on the development of sports and entertainment facilities, students have the ability to take what they learn outside of the classroom. Taught

by Dr. Kristina Hoff, this class concentrates on venue operation and live event management.

FMM-345 FASHION BUYING

A follow-up to FMM-240 Fashion Marketing, coursework focuses on the market research behind customer buying patterns. While enrolled, students will have the opportunity to study the day-to-day functions of the fashion industry.

MU-119 HISTORY OF BROADWAY

Are you a Broadway superfan? Have you ever wondered about the history of musical theatre? If so, Dr. Joe Utterback's History of Broadway class is the perfect elective for you.

ESP-201 FOUNDATIONS IN ESPORTS

Foundations in Esports (ESP-201) with Prof. Sam T. Schelfhout offers students a chance to study the business behind gaming, researching topics such as esports sponsorship, athlete management, and intellectual property. "Video games have always been a big part of my life," said senior Stone Cofini. "Esports is a rapidly growing industry, and I was very interested in learning how it will thrive in years to come."

This is a short collection of the many interesting classes available in the university's course catalog. Next semester, look beyond the traditional curriculum and find something new that piques your interest.



Tracy Deer-Mirek, Sacred Heart University
Students producing media content for the 3rd annual CT Esports Showcase.



Interested in contributing to Campus Life? Contact us at spectrum@sacredheart.edu

Arts & Entertainment

From Campus to Canvas: Illustration Students Accepted to Competitions

BY ALANNA WUNSCH
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Two students from Sacred Heart University have been accepted to the Illustration WEST 62 competition, one of the top two major illustration societies' competitions in the country. Junior Marissa Mele and senior Rylee Turner were both recognized for their illustrations created in Prof. Jack DeGraffenreid's class.

According to their website, "The Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles (SILA) was founded in 1953 by a handful of Southern California advertising artists and designers primarily to promote the professional status of illustration art as well as foster both philanthropic and educational goals. From this small beginning it has grown to a very productive membership whose work is seen locally and nationally by millions each year in all printed media, television, films, the Internet and gallery exhibitions."

One of the pieces accepted to the competition was Mele's watercolor creation "Brushing Teeth." It was awarded the Gold Award - The Phillip Hayes, "I love it, I think it's terrific," \$1,000 scholarship.

"Although it is a snapshot of something as casual and simplistic as brushing your teeth, the reference photo felt so personal and as though you were looking into an intimate moment. I wanted to try to capture that nostalgic feeling in painting it and like to think that I did," said Mele.

Mele was also recognized for her colored pencils piece entitled "Bruins." "I chose the action shot of Charlie McAvoy from the Boston Bruins as I remembered all the fond memories I have with my dad, watching them play together. For me, this piece is a reminder of this and dedicated to my dad for all he has done for me," said Mele.

With both pieces taking around two months to create, Mele is ecstatic to be recognized for her hard work. "Winning these awards means the absolute world to me, it is a dream

come true," she said.

"In both Mele and Turner's illustrations, there is a masterful handling of the mediums," said DeGraffenreid.

Turner believes her achievement is a testament to the saying that "everything happens for a reason." She started her journey as an illustration on a whim, just trying to fill up her schedule after failing a nursing class. What began as an attempt just to fulfill a requirement, ended up being a passion.

She now has almost completed her minor in illustration and has been nationally recognized for her white pencil piece entitled "Miles." This portrait of Miles Davis was inspired by her grandparents' love of jazz. Turner chose the reference photos due to its visually pleasing nature and how she felt it connected her to her grandparents.

"Rylee's rendering of the legendary Jazz musician Miles Davis displayed a very dramatic use of lighting with her application of the wax based white pencil on a sheet of black Canson paper. Her illustration was not only recognized by the SILA WEST 62 competition but by the Society of Illustrators of New York's Annual Student Scholarship Competition as well," said DeGraffenreid.

"If someone would have told me three years ago that I would be a nursing student and an artist, I would have laughed at them. This achievement means a lot to me," said Turner.

"It speaks volumes about our illustration students and our Department of Art & Design to have multiple acceptances especially when you take into consideration our students are competing against major art colleges and larger universities throughout the country," DeGraffenreid said. "Since 2004 we have had 81 separate student acceptances into these two most prestigious illustration competitions in the country."

SHU Band Tours the Emerald Isle

BY SAMANTHA MARANO
Arts & Entertainment Editor

The Sacred Heart University (SHU) band traveled internationally from Jan. 2 to Jan. 11. The SHU Band started their trip in Dingle, Ireland where they spent three days and performed two concerts. One concert was performed by the full band ensemble while the second was a small ensemble concert.

The band then ventured to the Cliffs of Moher as a quick stop on their way to Galway. The band also stayed in Galway for three days and had a second full concert in Limerick. The trip concluded in Dublin which is where they had their final concert.

The performances took place at St. Mary's Church

and the Chapel of the Sacred Heart in Dingle, the Galway Christmas Market, St. Mary's Cathedral in Limerick and Windmill Lane Studios in Dublin. The band's tour also included performing the European premiere of composer Steven Rosenhaus' "JFK: A Profile," where Dr. Rosenhaus conducted the students according to a Jan. 4 post on @shu_band on Instagram.

The trip's performances consisted of SHU's main concert band ensemble along with a few SHU color guard members as well as string members from the orchestra.

"This was only my second time traveling internationally, so I was really excited to be exposed to different cultures outside of the U.S. The scenery was breathtaking and unlike anything I had ever seen before," said senior Ellie Brady. "I had a lot of fun getting to experience the different cities as

well. Galway was definitely my favorite. It had a really nice downtown area that was full of live music and great food."

The band travels internationally every other year and this same trip has been done in past years. The last time the band was able to do this exact trip through Dingle, Galway, and Dublin was the same time the COVID-19 pandemic was first starting in 2020, according to Brady.

As a senior, she was happy to be able to experience a trip like this one more time with the rest of her bandmates.

"I love being in the band program. Ever since I was a freshman, the people involved in the program and the instructors have felt like a second family here at SHU. I'm glad I was able to share this experience with everyone before I graduate in May," Brady said.

SHU Choir Takes Voices Across Borders

BY JESSICA BALOGH
Assistant Arts & Entertainment Editor

Over winter break, the Choral Program hosted a trip to Mexico where they performed in three sold-out houses. The tour spanned nine days, from Jan. 3 to Jan. 11, during which they traveled to several Mexican cities, exploring its rich history and culture.

Dr. Christopher Grundy, Director of the Choral Program, began planning this trip a year ago after inspiration from a program he introduced to the ensemble 4 Heart Harmony.

"Initially it was because we were planning this program with 4 Heart in the fall where half the program was Mexican Choral music, mostly composed during the Baroque period in the city of Puebla which was the biggest colonial city of New Spain," said Grundy. "And so, it got me interested in the city and I started researching all of the amazing things about Mexico and several students seemed really interested."

The group performed their repertoire for local audiences in several cities. Their concerts were held in Parroquia de San Lorenzo Diácono y Martir in Mexico City, San Pedro Museo de Arte in Puebla and Centro Cultural San Pablo in Oaxaca.



Contributed by Molly Teeter, '24

The choir performs at one of their three sold out concerts to an enthused local audience.

William Dawson, which included a soprano solo by junior Sydney Rountree.

The program was heavily influenced by student input, with Grundy making several revisions due to their requests.

When not performing, the group traveled to several unique attractions like the Frida Kahlo Museum, which is where the famed artist grew up and lived, including her studio.

"We all got to go to the Frida Kahlo Museum which was beautiful and an amazing place to go for anyone interested in art and the incredible life she led," said Dunn.

"The audiences were all incredibly supportive. Each one asked for an encore," said junior Joe Dunn.

"They were saying how impressed they were with our musicality. They just loved the music, and you can see it on their faces without them even saying it," said senior and President of the Choral Program, Arianna Visconti.

A crowd favorite was the African American Spiritual song "Mary Had A Baby" by



Instagram, @shuchoirs

The group explores a large pyramid in San Juan Teotihuacán, an ancient city outside of Mexico City.

The group also journeyed through the large pyramids in San Juan Teotihuacán, an ancient city outside of Mexico City.

They embraced the culture by walking through the food and artisanal markets in Oaxaca and Puebla, where students purchased various homemade items such as clothing and jewelry.

While the students explored the cities in their own groups, they often came together for meals even on days that were not required.

"I really valued that as a whole because I would be doing my own thing with my friends but then I got to hear the cool and fun experiences the others got to do and see," said Visconti.

Visconti was ecstatic to see an opportunity like this come about as it had been promised when she auditioned and enrolled in the Choral Program, but it was impacted by the rise of COVID-19 and directorial changes in the department.

"People should take advantage of these trips, these are experiences that you will never get again because playing music in a country whether they speak the language or not is a gift that is really hard to share," said Visconti.

The Choral Program has a tour in Dingle, Ireland planned for the upcoming spring break from March 3 to March 10.

"I haven't announced any tour destinations for next year because they are still under preliminary planning, but we are going somewhere really cool, and people who are interested in choir and traveling should look at the choir," said Grundy.

Sports

Rowing with Heart: Saige Harper Makes Paralympic Team

BY MARISA MUSACCHIO AND SHANNON TUTTLE
Co-Assistant Sports Editors

On Jan. 17, U.S. Rowing announced who will represent Team USA at the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris, France. Sacred Heart University (SHU) senior Saige Harper secured a spot on the U.S. Rowing Paralympic National Team, making this her fourth appearance with Team USA.

The U.S. Paralympic athletes were chosen through a selection camp process in Sarasota, Fla. a few weeks ago. Before Harper secured her spot in the boat, her recruitment process dates back two years with the assistance of SHU women's rowing coach Lucas Wilhelm.

Wilhelm, in his third year of coaching at the university, reflected on his first impressions of Harper.

"The first handshake and introduction with Saige was one thing, but meeting her through her actions and practice I saw a whole other Saige," said Wilhelm. "She's a killer, a racer, and she has huge potential."

Harper was recruited to team USA in the post-olympic year. In the summer of 2022, she competed in her first World Rowing Championships in the Czech Republic.

This previous summer she performed at her second World Rowing Championships in Serbia where her boat placed second. This race qualified the boat for the Paralympics, but it did not guarantee Harper a spot until she attended selection camp at Sarasota.

"Everyone was there, some even from the Tokyo 2021 Olympics, all trying out for a spot," said Harper. "It was the most competitive it's ever been."

Harper successfully claimed a spot on the PR3 Mixed Double Sculls, a position she had not been in previously.

"It's really exciting, a brand new experience," said Harper.

Harper said upon hearing the news of her success, the first person she told was friend and teammate, senior Cara McDonald.

These women have watched SHU's rowing team evolve over the past four years, to which McDonald credits a majority of this growth to Harper's reliability and her motivation.

"From the time she started training with Team USA all led her up to this moment," said McDonald. "We are all super excited to see all her hard work pay off."

Wilhelm also witnessed growth and strength of Harper since becoming her coach.

"Her impact on the team can't be understated. She's a hype man and wickedly intense," said Wilhelm. "Even if she's having a bad day, she's still breathing fire."

In addition to Harper's impact on the team, Wilhelm said her accomplishment has influenced many young women. High schoolers have reached out to Wilhelm and his coaching staff to express their interest in the university's rowing program.

Wilhelm said this is a chance for Harper to prove herself as one of the first paralympians SHU has seen, and more importantly, a role model to young women.

Harper said she knows the popularity and significance her name holds for younger girls looking up to her, yet she is nervous of this role. She struggles to see herself as a role model when she still views herself as a regular college student.

Before Harper will attend the Paralympic games, she has a lot of senior-year milestones she wishes to achieve first.

"[I have] my graduation, the last MACC Championships ever, and other senior year things I want to do," said Harper. "I'm trying to only focus on that to not get overwhelmed."

Along with finishing her senior year, Harper will also attend her third World Rowing Championship in Poland and a training trip before the Paralympics in Italy.

"I'm taking it all one step at a time," she said.

Sacred Heart Athletics contributed to this article.

Cheer Clinches Third at UCA Nationals

BY VICTOR DIPIERRO
Co-Sports Editor

The Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA) held their annual collegiate national competition from Jan. 12-14 at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Fla.

Winners of four straight UCA titles, Sacred Heart University's (SHU) cheerleading team was invited back in hopes of capturing their fifth consecutive title.

In the Open All Girls Game Day division, which included 37 teams, SHU cheerleading placed third, and came within hundredths of a point of first place.

In the Division 1 All Girls competition, which featured 16 teams, SHU earned 87.4 points, which was 7.5 points behind the leader, earning them another hard-fought third-place finish.

Head Coach CJ Sereno gave her thoughts about her team's performance at UCA's this year.

"This is the most difficult routine this program has competed in," said Sereno. "It is always hard to win, and even harder to stay on top."

Taking over full-time coaching duties in 2021, Sereno reflected on what being invited to compete at UCAs means to her and the rest of her team.

"The experience and trip is great for us," said Sereno. "Our program is fortunate

enough to continue sending athletes to this competition and competing at the highest-level year after year. We are always so proud of the girls and how hard they work."

Senior Nina Campos, a co-captain of the team, reflected on her and her team's experiences at UCA.

"We always have fun with one another," said Campos. "Going to UCA Nationals these past four years has been an unforgettable experience, and we have always tried to put out the best possible routine we can."

Senior Ciara Doyle, the other co-captain of the team, reflected on her past four years as a member of the program.

"These past four years have been a lot of fun," said Doyle. "Since joining the team I have learned a lot about myself and changed a lot as a person."

Doyle also spoke on the impact that Coach Sereno has on her and the rest of her teammates.

"Coach CJ knows how to take the pressure off us," said Doyle. "Her style changed the way we approach cheer and competitions in general."

Sacred Heart Athletics contributed to this article.

An Update on the Men of the Martire Family Arena

BY JAKE CARDINALE
Co-Sports Editor

The Sacred Heart men's hockey team is currently 11-14-2 on the season. They are sitting in second place in the Atlantic Hockey Association (AHA) and are 11-7-1 in conference play.

If Sacred Heart wins the championship, it would be the first AHA title in school history.

"There is a lot of hockey to be played," said Head Coach C.J. Marottolo. "We are just worried about the next game in front of us. The results will take care of themselves."

One of the team's most consistent players has been graduate student Kevin Lombardi. Lombardi has nine goals, 10 assists, and 19 points this season. He is second on the team in goals and assists, and places third in points.

"There are a lot of new faces and younger guys and I am just trying to be someone that they can talk to, and just someone that they can come to for advice or whatever it is. It's something I take a lot of pride in," said Marottolo.

Lombardi is in his fifth year with the Pioneers, and is not the only graduate student to wear the signature pioneer silver helmet this season. T.J. Walsh is in his first season with the Pioneers, having previously played at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI).

"T.J. has been an awesome addition to our team. He's an awesome person. He fits in great with our culture. He's played very well all year. He is a highly intelligent player. He knows how to find pockets of ice, and produce offense," said Marottolo.

Walsh leads the team with 12 goals and 23 points. He is also tied for second with 11 assists this season.

Although the team is in first place, they have been a bit inconsistent lately. They are 6-8-1 over their last 15 games.



Contributed by Maddie McCall, '27
Graduate student Kevin Lombardi has been a key player this season in the team's hunt for the AHA championship.

"We've had a lot of ups and downs. We've had some games where we've played really well and some games where we wish we could have played better and gotten a different result, but at the end of the day we are just trying to get better each day and continue to improve and get ready for the playoffs over the next few weeks," said Walsh.

The Pioneers have had some trouble staying out of the penalty box over their last 13 games.

"We are one of the least penalized teams in college hockey, but over this past week, that trend is going the opposite direction," said Marottolo. "You can't have success if you have undisciplined play. You gotta play whistle to whistle tough and that's what we have been talking to our guys about and I think they understand that."

The Pioneers will try and finish the regular season strong and head into the AHA

tournament, which starts on March 2.

"We want to take it each weekend one at a time, each game one at a time," said Walsh. "At the end of the day we obviously want to win a championship and we have the team to do that."

The Pioneers are back on the ice on Friday, Feb. 2 when they take on American International College (AIC) at the Martire Family Arena.

Sacred Heart Athletics contributed to this article.

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Backpacking through Hoyamoros...

BY COLLIN MOURA
Campus Life Editor

Deep into the heart of the Sistema Central mountain range of Western Spain lies a premier climbing destination known as Hoyamoros. With the highest concentration of world-class bouldering on the planet, the Iberian Peninsula is a must visit for thrill-seekers.

In October of 2023, I set out on a backpacking trip with two friends of mine (Alex Levine and Jim Martin) to traverse this expansive area and take in its wild beauty.

After arriving in the small village of Candelario (pop. 907) and loading our 60 pounds of gear and 50 pounds of crash pads onto our back, we were off.

Rolling green pastures with grazing cows made up the first 2 miles of our trek. At approximately 3000 ft, the scenery changed drastically. Dramatic glacial cirques and boulder fields became visible, as our hike suddenly turned into a mountainside scramble. A few hours later, we arrived into the valley, setting up camp in a flat space of grass, just a short distance away from a flowing river.

While the temperature started in the mid 80's, it quickly dropped as we gained elevation and the sun sank further into the horizon. As nighttime fell, the temperature had declined into the low 30's.

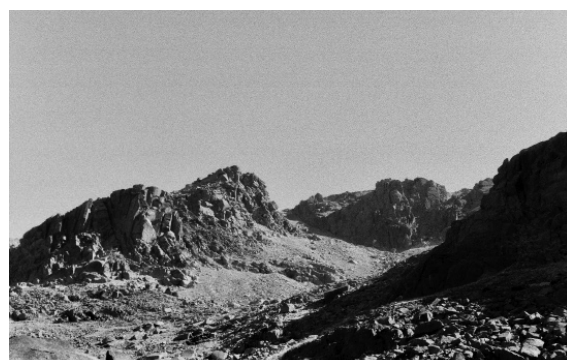
Luckily we were well prepared, utilizing several layers of clothing and multiple sleeping bags to stay warm. Despite the cold, this trip made for several of the most memorable nights of my life.

Directly under the stars, we were miles away from civilization or even human behavior. We went multiple days without seeing another person, living vicariously in the wilderness. The absence of light pollution created the most incredible night sky I have ever seen. Looking back on it is slightly hard to even believe. Thousands of stars lit up our field of vision, with the vibrant band of the Milky Way shining above us.

Each day, we found new bouldering problems to conquer, climbing a variety of granite slabs, overhanging faces and vertical walls. With over 1000 routes in the valley, there was no shortage of climbs for us to attempt.



Collin Moura, Campus Life Editor
Alex Levine tackling an 18-foot vertical face in the heart of Hoyamoros.



Collin Moura, Campus Life Editor
The rocky backdrop of the Sistema Central.



Collin Moura, Campus Life Editor
Jim Martin preparing for our 9-mile hike into the valley.

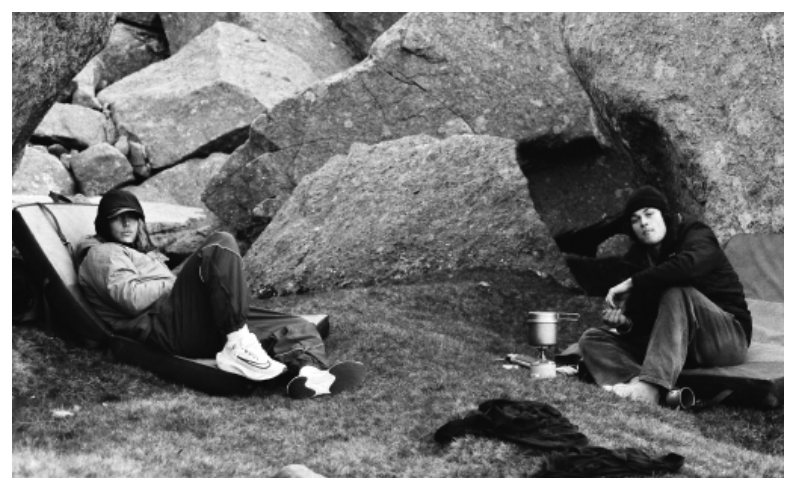


Collin Moura, Campus Life Editor
Refueling before we complete a scramble climb with a combined 110 lbs of gear on our back.

Alex Levine, a good friend of mine and an advanced climber, was our guide throughout the week, safely navigating us through our climbs.

With every sunrise came a new and exciting adventure. Totally disconnected from the outside world, we lived in the moment, enjoying the beautiful natural landscape. Whether that was bathing in an alpine pool, filtering the river for clean drinking water or waking up to the sound of the wind, I thoroughly enjoyed every second.

I wanted to capture this experience in its most raw form, but I had no electronics or cellular devices available to use. Instead, I brought my 1971 Canon FTb film camera and a roll of Ilford 35mm Black & White film. These captures sum up my week backpacking through Hoyamoros.



Collin Moura, Campus Life Editor
Preparing dinner on our electric burner. Chickpea Chili, Spanish Chorizo & Manchego, accompanied by hot tea.