

the daily campus

valentine's day

2025

GALENTINE'S: THE SUPERIOR HOLIDAY

PALENTINE'S DAY: CELEBRATING FRIENDSHIP

LONELY HEARTS VIDEO GAME LIST

RELATIONSHIP SUCCESS AND FAILS ROUNDTABLE

VALENTINE'S DAY SURVEY RECAP

A CYNIC'S GUIDE TO VALENTINE'S DAY

PICK-UP LINE TIER LIST 2025

A LOVE LETTER TO CHILI'S

SOME LO-FI FOLK WITH THE MICRO-PHONES FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

'TWIN FANTASY': REVISITING MEN-TALLY ILL AFFECTION WITH A MATURED LENS

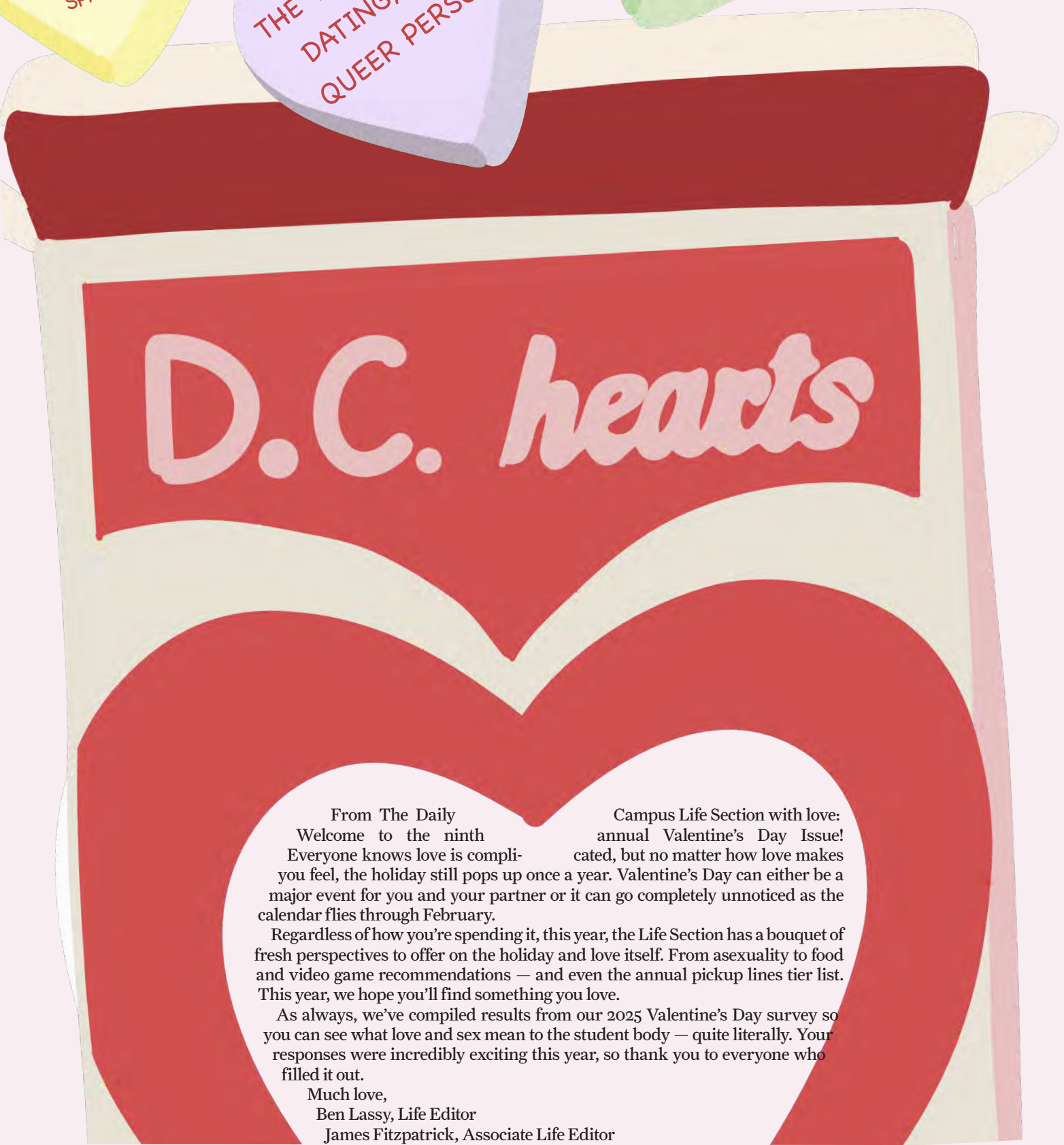
ASEXUALITY IS ACES

THE BEST ANTI-VALENTINE'S DAY SONGS

LOVE IN FILM: MOVIE RECOMENDATIONS TO MAKE YOUR VALENTINE'S DAY SPARKLE

THE THING ABOUT DATING, AS A QUEER PERSON

THE BEST VALENTINE'S DAY SONGS



D.C. hearts

From The Daily Campus Life Section with love: Welcome to the ninth annual Valentine's Day Issue! Everyone knows love is complicated, but no matter how love makes you feel, the holiday still pops up once a year. Valentine's Day can either be a major event for you and your partner or it can go completely unnoticed as the calendar flies through February. Regardless of how you're spending it, this year, the Life Section has a bouquet of fresh perspectives to offer on the holiday and love itself. From asexuality to food and video game recommendations — and even the annual pickup lines tier list. This year, we hope you'll find something you love. As always, we've compiled results from our 2025 Valentine's Day survey so you can see what love and sex mean to the student body — quite literally. Your responses were incredibly exciting this year, so thank you to everyone who filled it out. Much love, Ben Lassy, Life Editor James Fitzpatrick, Associate Life Editor

News

Student fee committee hears Tier III organizations' requests for funding

by Patrick Boots
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Disclaimer: This is a news article and does not show bias toward The Daily Campus as an organization.

Three undergraduate Tier III student organizations at the University of Connecticut are requesting more funding from student activity fees. Representatives from the Undergraduate Student Government (USG), Nutmeg Publishing and The Daily Campus went before the Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee (SASFAC) on Wednesday to officially request the fee increase.

Every student enrolled at UConn pays mandatory fees, which support university programs and services. One of these fees, the student activity fee, supports Tier III organizations, a group of clubs which the Department of Student Activities describes as having a "high accountability to a large constituency of students" and rely on the university for support services. There are six currently active undergraduate Tier III groups: USG, the Student Union Board of Governors (SUBOG), WHUS Radio, The Daily Campus, Nutmeg Publishing and UCTV.

The Office of the Bursar lists the student activity fee as \$96 per semester this year for students enrolled at the main campus in Storrs, regardless of credits. Each eligible student organization receives only a portion of that fee funding, with the highest two being USG at \$45 and SUBOG at \$23. The Daily Campus receives \$10, followed by WHUS at \$9, UCTV at \$5 and Nutmeg Publishing at \$4.

Nutmeg Publishing is asking for the largest fee increase, \$7 this time, from \$4 to \$11 per semester. USG has requested a \$5 increase from \$45 to \$50 per semester and

Daily Campus is asking for \$2 more dollars per student per semester, from \$10 to \$12.

These three student groups, along with UCTV, unsuccessfully requested increases in Spring 2024. Students vote on whether to approve the student activity fee increase as part of a referendum included in the annual joint elections ballot, part of the same mechanism to elect new representatives for USG. This year, students will be able to vote in mid-march according to the Trustee Student Organization Support office.

Every Tier III student organization had to submit documentation to the committee, regardless of whether they were requesting a fee increase. The groups' packets go into detail about why the fee increases are justified.

Nutmeg Publishing, the student organization which produces the annual yearbook, explained that they've "fallen behind" in printing and distributing the yearbooks to graduated seniors.

"The 2023 graduates just received their yearbooks this past summer in July 2024," wrote business manager Garrett Hutchinson in the group's document. "The 2024-25 book will be completed by June 2025, but won't be able to be printed until after the next fiscal year begins."

The group also explained that previous yearbooks were of a higher quality than the styles they are able to provide under the current funding structure, limiting page count and printing options and cutting staff in an effort to reduce expenses. Nutmeg currently receives the lowest cut of Tier III funding.

USG wants a fee increase to fund Tier II organizations, the group says in its SASFAC

attachment. According to UConn's "Blueprints" manual for student organizations, Tier II clubs are eligible to request funding from USG for events and club initiatives, but do not receive any separate fee income.

"We have received 646 funding requests from 140 different [Tier II organizations]," said USG comptroller Sydney Whittaker in their packet. "It is not feasible for all students to be able to enhance their co-curricular experience at UConn by paying out of pocket for all of these expenses."

USG had to discontinue offering funding to Tier II clubs last year because requests far exceeded the amount of available funding USG had to offer. They would also like the fee increase to go toward programs formerly supported by Praxis (PIRG) funding, including Wepa printing credit and access to the New York Times. Praxis, another Tier III student organization, was dissolved by the university in 2022 and its budget was re-allocated to USG.

The Daily Campus, the third organization to request a funding increase this year, said it may have to stop the daily printing of the campus newspaper and reduce news-gathering if it does not receive more fee funding.

"If we are forced to further downsize...we would no longer be a daily print newspaper," said business manager Naiiya Patel in the organization's submission. "We will be unable to meet student demands to cover critical issues such as stories on club events, administrative issues, or daily life on campus."

During the hearing, the

SASFAC committee questioned if The Daily Campus could receive alternative revenues from advertising. While not out of the question, Patel and Editor-in-Chief Sara Bedigian explained that keeping advertising prices competitive and retaining business relationships have suffered significantly since the choice to consolidate the organization's former paid staff roles in advertising and circulation into the business manager's responsibilities in order to save money.

Nationwide data from the News Media Alliance shows that traditional newspaper circulation and revenue have been down since 2013, as more people decide to consume news through multimedia platforms. In an effort to build up its digital adequacy, The Daily Campus has established webpage advertising rates — including a rate for students and clubs — to attempt to receive income from page views received on dailycampus.com.

SUBOG, WHUS and UCTV did not request a fee increase this year, but each group cited that they'd like to expand and improve the programs they conduct for students. Tier III organizations must also meet other eligibility requirements to receive more fee funding.

The Graduate Student Senate, a group receiving student activity fee funding from enrolled graduate students, was also heard by SASFAC. They are requesting an additional \$2 from \$16 to \$18 to fund graduate-level Tier II clubs and to support collaborations between interdisciplinary events and graduate students. Regional

campus students also pay a student activity fee, which goes to their campus' associated student governments. The SASFAC held a hearing on their allocations on Tuesday, Feb. 11.

The SASFAC committee is an advisory group that recommends changes to the university's fee structure. The provost and vice presidents for student life and finance receive their report and can choose to endorse or amend fee proposals, which ultimately get considered by the Board of Trustees. The committee is comprised of staff members, including the bursar and representatives from the Office of Budgets and Planning, in addition to student delegates. In addition to representing Tier III organizations, Whittaker and Patel both hold committee seats. David Clokey, the assistant vice president for student life and enrollment, chairs the committee and ran the hearing.

The general university fee will also be increasing, as part of a similar hearing conducted by SASFAC in the fall. That fee supports the Student Union, Student Health and Wellness, Athletics and other Student Activities-sponsored programs among other university services.

For more information on the Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee and for the hearing transcript and attachments, visit sfac.uconn.edu.



The Daily Campus, located on UConn's Storrs campus. Founded in 1896, The Daily Campus is the university's student-run newspaper.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

The Daily Campus

Printing since 1896, The Daily Campus is the oldest and largest independent student publication at the University of Connecticut. The Daily Campus circulates 1,500 newspapers daily and strives to serve the student body by delivering accurate, relevant and timely news and content, both in print and online at DailyCampus.com. Our staff is comprised entirely of students, with roughly 200 undergraduates gaining professional development while contributing to the daily production of the paper, with positions including writers, photographers, copy editors, page layout designers, graphic designers, advertisement representatives, receptionists, delivery drivers and digital producers. Thanks for reading.

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Thursday, February 13, 2025

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Want to write, photograph or draw for The Daily Campus ?

The Daily Campus welcomes writers, photographers and artists of all backgrounds, interests, majors and levels of experience. To get involved, it's as easy as attending section meetings on Sunday nights, all at the Daily Campus building, (1266 Storrs Road) or reaching out to an email below:

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The Science 1 Research center as the sun sets. The building holds classes and research labs for students. PHOTO BY SIHAM NEDLOUSSI, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

UConn 2024-2025 enrollment in numbers

by Gianni Salisbury
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Over the past few years, the University of Connecticut has seen record breaking numbers in applicants and enrollment. This has included some of the most diverse classes in history, according to the previous university fact sheets.

For the fall 2024 semester, UConn found itself with 33,554 enrolled students overall, with 20,056 undergraduate students at the Storrs campus and 5,248 undergraduates at regional campuses, according to the recently released 2025 Fact Sheet.

There are also 8,250 graduate or professional students enrolled. This includes graduate students pursuing their master's or doctorate, post grad law students, pharmacy students, medicine students and dental students.

These numbers show an increase in enrollment since the 2023-2024 academic year, as going into the 2023 fall semester, there were 32,332 enrolled students overall, according to

the 2024 Fact Sheet. This is an increase of 1,222 students enrolled overall.

The numbers for student enrollment on the Storrs campus, regional campuses, and graduate and professional students also saw increases since last year.

It was also found that more women attend UConn than men. According to the 2025 fact sheet, 54% of the undergraduate student population are female as well as 55% of the graduate and professional population.

Almost half of the undergraduate population of students are minorities, as 45% of undergraduates are part of a minority.

As for where enrolled students live, a large population of students live in Connecticut. According to the fact sheet, 73% of undergraduate students and 64% of graduate and professional students are Connecticut residents.

Only a small portion of both undergraduate and graduate students are international students as, 7% of undergraduate students and 21%

of graduate and professional students are from another country.

UConn has 14 schools and colleges with over 115 majors, according to the university website. Some schools are larger than others with different amounts of students pursuing majors in each.

For the fall 2024 semester, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences had the largest number of students pursuing majors, with 10,953 students enrolled, according to the Student Enrollment Public page.

The School of Fine Arts has only 658 students enrolled.

The business, engineering and Academic Center for Exploratory Students (ACES) schools and colleges are all similar sizes with 3,526 students enrolled in the School of Business, 3,628 students enrolled in the College of Engineering and 4,082 students enrolled in ACES.

For a deeper look at the schools and colleges of UConn, visit the Student Enrollment Public page.

SUDOKU

Level **1** **2** **3** **4**

				4				
		2				1		9
7	8						2	5
		7	3					4
	6		8		5		7	
8					4	5		
4	9						5	8
2		3				6		
				2		9		

Solution to Thursday's puzzle

2/14/25

5	1	6	2	7	9	8	4	3
7	8	9	3	5	4	2	6	1
4	2	3	8	1	6	5	9	7
2	5	7	6	9	3	4	1	8
6	3	8	4	2	1	9	7	5
9	4	1	7	8	5	6	3	2
1	7	5	9	4	2	3	8	6
3	9	2	1	6	8	7	5	4
8	6	4	5	3	7	1	2	9

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk.

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News

CROSS

ACROSS

- 1 Clipped
- 6 Per
- 10 Binary pronoun
- 13 ___ trail
- 14 March Madness org.
- 15 Aviation prefix
- 17 "My love, borscht for the first course of our Valentine's dinner!"
- 19 Avian mimic
- 20 D.C. figure
- 21 Site traffic stat
- 23 "My love, ruby spuds as a side"
- 28 ___ loss
- 29 Balkan natives
- 30 Cybergiggle
- 31 "Whipped Cream" musician Alpert
- 33 Ceremonial pile
- 34 Strong cleaners
- 36 Princeton team
- 38 Ease
- 40 Actor Corddry
- 41 First name in animation
- 44 Touchpad toucher
- 45 "___ be an honor!"
- 46 Filmmaker Kurosawa
- 48 Moo goo ___ pan
- 49 "My love, sweet-and-sour chops for our entree"
- 53 Taking five
- 54 ___ mode
- 55 Free ___
- 56 "My love, I didn't forget dessert!"
- 62 Prefix between micro- and pico-
- 63 Colossal
- 64 Digestive aid brand
- 65 Winter hrs. in Utah
- 66 "Last four digits" IDs
- 67 Change channels?

DOWN

- 1 Hotel room sets
- 2 ___ Claire, Wisconsin

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
13					14				15			16	
17					18				19				
			20				21		22				
23	24	25				26	27						
28				29					30				
31			32		33				34			35	
36				37				38				39	
	40					41	42	43		44			
			45			46			47		48		
49	50				51				52				
53								54					
55					56		57	58			59	60	61
62						63				64			
	65					66				67			

By Daniel Hrynick

2/14/25

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

K	A	R	L		R	E	C		S	L	A	T	E	
F	L	E	A		E	R	I	C		A	S	I	A	N
C	A	L	I	F	O	R	N	I	A	G	U	R	L	S
	M	A	L	E			C	A	N	S		F	L	U
T	E	X	A	S	F	L	O	O	D		P	O	O	R
O	D	E		T	E	A			S	A	L	I	N	E
N	A	D	A		T	I	N	A		P	A	L	E	D
					S	T	A	T	E	B	A	R	S	
R	I	N	S	E		Y	E	A	R		M	I	C	E
A	V	E	E	N	O		T	C	M		N	H	L	
R	O	T	S		B	L	U	E	H	A	W	A	I	I
E	T	C		A	V	E	C			C	O	P	A	
G	E	O	R	G	I	A	O	N	M	Y	M	I	N	D
E	N	S	U	E		K	N	E	E		A	L	T	O
M	O	T	T	S			N	O	W		N	E	I	N

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2/14/25

- 3 WoW or D&D
- 4 Like the taste of cilantro, to some
- 5 Blunders
- 6 Chemistry suffix
- 7 Expert
- 8 Spine-stretching asana
- 9 Attacks
- 10 "Likewise!"
- 11 Repeated line in "Blitzkrieg Bop"
- 12 Orange Muppet who tries to learn the saxophone
- 16 Stout grains
- 18 Censors
- 22 Pico de ___: taco topper
- 23 Thai coin
- 24 Ordered room service, say
- 25 Spots for priced-to-sell items
- 26 Not at all humid
- 27 Beer letters since the 1800s
- 32 "Actually, bad idea"
- 35 Cut close

- 37 Touch up, as a fading salon job
- 38 Barely run?
- 39 Actor Estrada
- 41 Buildings without elevators
- 42 Alias letters
- 43 Fashion's Claiborne
- 47 Improvises

- 49 Instrument in a toot suite?
- 50 Wee hour
- 51 Stares slack-jawed
- 52 Advisory group
- 57 Max. opposite
- 58 Dells, e.g.
- 59 Kung ___ tofu
- 60 QB misfire
- 61 Goddess of the dawn

WORD

CORRECTION: Regarding the article "UConn Student Union extends its hours" from the February 13th edition The Student Union is open until 11:30 p.m. on Sundays, not midnight.



Opinion

The Daily Campus

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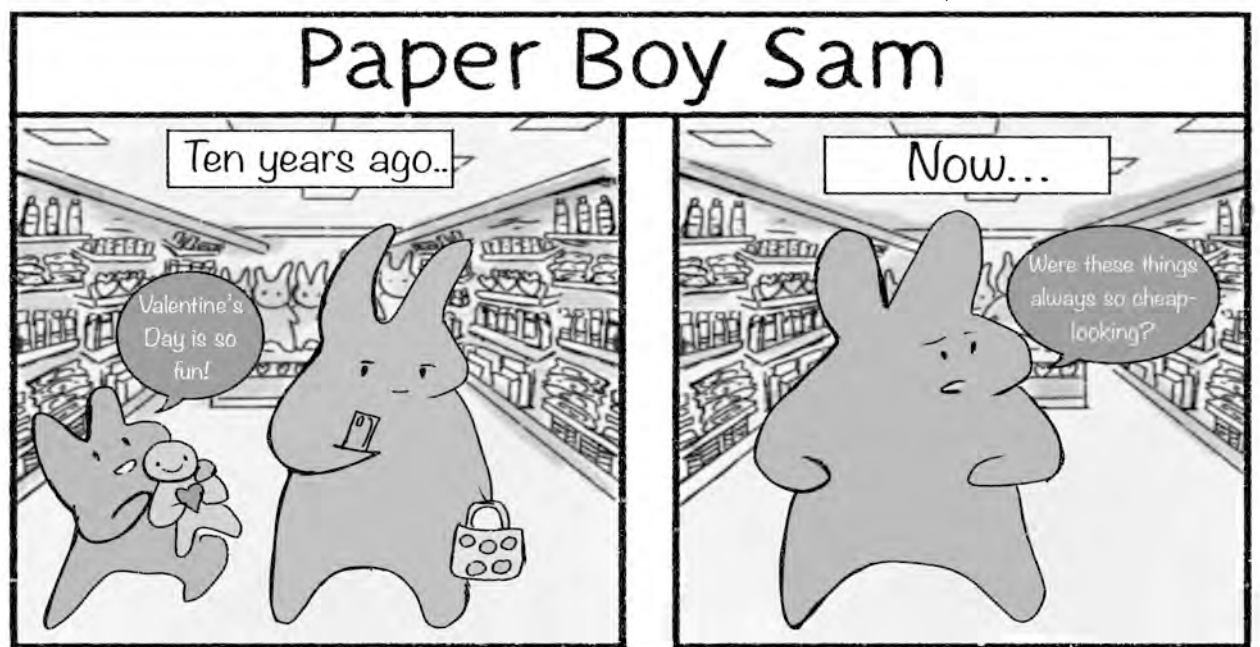
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COMIC BY LILLIAN LAFEMINA, ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



THE BITTERSWEET TRUTH ABOUT VALENTINE'S DAY: LOVE IS NOT A BOX OF CHOCOLATES

by **Julia Gillego**
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As millions of red, heart shaped and cheap memorabilia are spewed out to the public this upcoming Valentine's Day, here's one reminder: You can do better than a \$15 dollar box of chocolates. While the sentiment is definitely there, I'm sure your significant other would appreciate a handmade gift, a thoughtfully written card or anything personalized to show you're not blinded by the mass-produced gifts that CVS shoves in our faces. Is a greeting card with a pre-written "I love you" and throwing a box of chocolates and a bouquet of flowers together truly representative of romance?

I hate to be the one to say it, but Valentine's Day is undeniably cheesy. And trust me, I bear no hatred toward Valentine's Day (maybe a twinge of bitterness, but that's beside the point). We are told that over-the-top romantic clichés and mass-produced affection are the only ways to spend the day. The lack of originality is ultimately the root of the holiday's cheesiness. There is a distinct difference between an authentic, heart-

felt romantic gesture and one that's simply expected. Feeling as though someone is just going through the motions to check off the "romantic gesture" boxes is not only hurtful, but meaningless. I'd much rather cozy up to the new Ben & Jerry's chocolate covered strawberry ice cream. At least I can count on those two men to never disappoint me.

A box of chocolates is (quite literally) sweet, but not inherently thoughtful. Upon receiving my first chocolates from someone in my past—they didn't even know my favorite type of chocolate, nor did they care to ask—they gifted me the nearest chocolates on the clearance aisle. Minimal effort and no personalization, man did I feel loved! Decades of romantic comedies, commercials and television programming have conditioned the public to remember the formula:

chocolates, flowers, a big-old teddy bear and if you're really lucky, a \$10 card. The entire holiday thrives on and reeks of predictability, which is part of why it feels so cheesy. But does that cheesiness make it bad, or does it just mean we're stuck in an uninspired loop of gift-giving?

With an unspoken gift hierarchy, what exactly makes a gift "good"? Is it the price tag? The surprise factor? The practicality? A good gift isn't necessarily expensive or extravagant—it's something that reflects effort, thought and an understanding of who's on the receiving end. The best gifts show that you know the person well enough to choose something uniquely suited to them. Personalized gifts, like an inside joke turned into a custom T-shirt, a playlist of songs that remind you of each other or a handwritten letter

that captures feelings no store-bought card ever could, are great gifts. Even if you aren't the creative type, anything other than a pre-packaged red plastic box will suffice.

Other ideas for gifts can be shared experiences like a cooking class, concert tickets or a weekend getaway that creates memories that last longer than a box of chocolates. Handmade gifts are also a good route! Whether it's a photo album, a scrapbook or even a playlist, a DIY gift shows effort and sentimentality. A handwritten letter or a story can also be a great gift. Writing down what someone means to you carries a level of sincerity that no Hallmark card can replicate.

If your love story deserves more than a mass-produced holiday script, then maybe this Valentine's Day is the perfect time

to rewrite the narrative. And hey, if nothing else, at least you won't have to fight the crowds at CVS for the last sad box of chocolates.

Perhaps the biggest question we should ask ourselves is: Why do we only emphasize grand "romantic gestures" on this one day? Love isn't confined to Feb. 14, so why should our effort be? A great, lasting, relationship isn't defined by how well you perform on one predetermined occasion but rather by the consistent thoughtfulness and appreciation shown throughout the year. If Valentine's Day is the only day you're putting in effort, maybe the issue isn't the gifts—it's the relationship itself (or maybe, just maybe, you are the problem!)

So, this Valentine's Day, rather than defaulting and caving to the nearest drugstore display, take a moment to think: What would truly make my person feel loved? If the answer is still a box of chocolates, then amazing—at least you put thought into it. But if you're just buying it because it's "the day of love" and that's what you're "supposed" to do, maybe it's time to change it up. Your loved one deserves more than just a mass-produced, autopilot romance.



CLIPART COURTESY OF GREAZILLA

'STORKS' SHOWS THAT BIRDS HAVE FEELINGS TOO

by **Isaac Grad**
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"Storks" is an animated movie that stars Andy Samberg as the voice of Junior, an ambitious but lonely stork who masterfully delivers packages to humans. We learn right away that storks no longer deliver babies, as they are too

much of a hassle. After one stork went rogue and seemingly insane over a baby he was meant to deliver, they decided to end the practice and instead deliver packages.

The main plot follows Junior and Tulip as they deliver an unplanned baby together, while actively working against their boss Hunter, who is adamantly against baby delivery. The subplot consists of the young boy named Nate, who sent in a request for a baby brother, reconnecting with his workaholic parents as they prepare for the delivery of the baby.

While the plot is straight forward and pretty predictable, the characters are what set this film apart. The dynamic of Junior and Tulip is one of fighting and disagreements, but they share a love

and sense of responsibility for the baby they're delivering. Over the course of the film, Junior learns to accept love from those around him while also learning to allow himself to love others. He's adamant for the first half of the movie that he is simply delivering a package to maintain his future position as boss.

This movie covers a lot of ground, most notably family dynamics, which isn't surprising considering the plot. The young boy Nate, who requests a baby brother from the storks, is feeling lonely as an only child with busy parents. His parents, knowing storks no longer deliver babies but wanting to reconnect with their son, go along with his plan to prepare for the baby. In this process, they readjust their priorities which were previously their jobs. It's a very heartwarming subplot that I think they did a great job with.

The humor designed for kids and adults is balanced perfectly next to the true heart put into this movie. My credibility may be questioned after my article covering "The Cat in the Hat" live action movie, where I praised the adult humor and jokes for kids, but in this case it's undeniable. Even the jokes

for kids were funny as an adult. I will say, there are significantly less jokes that are inappropriate (compared to "The Cat in the Hat") and more jokes that would go over kids' heads.

They managed to create an upbeat and positive movie that deals with some more serious subject matter that never weighed it down, making it feel unsuitable for kids. The jokes kept the movie upbeat while still allowing for hardships to be faced and overcome.

The voice acting is amazing by everyone involved. Andy Samberg deserves more praise as a voice actor and did a great job in this. Katie Crown, the voice of Tulip, was amazing and one of my favorites. She did a lot of funny voices that elevated many scenes and brought out the humor in the writing.

The characters all feel very realistic, and all the serious moments that are broken up by humor are done in a realistic manner. When people are overwhelmed by emotion or upset about something, they more often than not respond unseriously or in a manner that is half-funny and half showing how they really feel. We see this with Junior throughout the movie and especially when

Tulip discovers she'll be able to find her "real family." Junior's response feels very real in that he doesn't respond with anger or sadness; he simply immediately pushes her away while trying to keep it light enough to hide his sadness.

This movie is very underappreciated, perhaps due to its timing after "The Lego Movie," as people went in expecting something similar to that. I personally find it to be funnier than "The Lego Movie," while also being much more heartwarming. The final scenes in "Storks" are so sweet and make me tear up every time. The storks feel like real people with complex emotions and reactions. I highly recommend giving this movie a watch, whether on your own or with your family.



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Opinion

Photo of the Day | Fresh Food, Freshly Open



UConn students enjoy açai bowls in the Student Union in Storrs, Conn. on Feb. 13, 2025. The dreary weather couldn't keep students away from the new açai bowl shop Sambazon. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Buying And Selling Love: A Gen-Z story

by **Tomas Hinckley**

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Today, Feb. 14, is Valentine's Day, and to be a bit cliché, it's hard not to feel the love in the air right now. This is a time of demonstrations of affection, personalized gifts, many flowers and extravagant date ideas for couples, many of whom have been looking upon and preparing for this one day for weeks on end. Even for those who don't have a special someone to spend the day with, it's hard to escape the discussion of the day's festivities and everything that comes with it. As such, for the purposes of this newspaper, it's a unique opportunity to analyze the ties that bind us. Recently, these pages have been fraught with discussion about the additional value, or lack thereof, that serious dating can bring to one's life and personal development, about how it should only add to and never take away from one's life or about how it can tie down those who participate in it. Yet, what's missing from this discussion is an investigation of why it is in those terms that we define the decision to date. If dating is meant to be a partnership between two people, why is our conception of its value only in terms of what we can gain from it?

It begins with American individualism, which is overtly present in this generation and our ways of relating to each other. We are in a time wherein people are no longer defining themselves through social integration, but rather through an "individuated paradigm," according to sociologist Joseph Veroff. We are overwhelmingly focused on our own direction in our lives and no longer understand our identities through roles we fill and we're focused on expressing our own unique inner voice and feelings. This has been an ongoing process since the 1950s and has led us to a society that is less empathetic, less socially connected and generally less interested in people other than ourselves. For one example, look at a recent Harvard study, which shows that children across America are reporting personal achievement as being more important to them than caring for others.

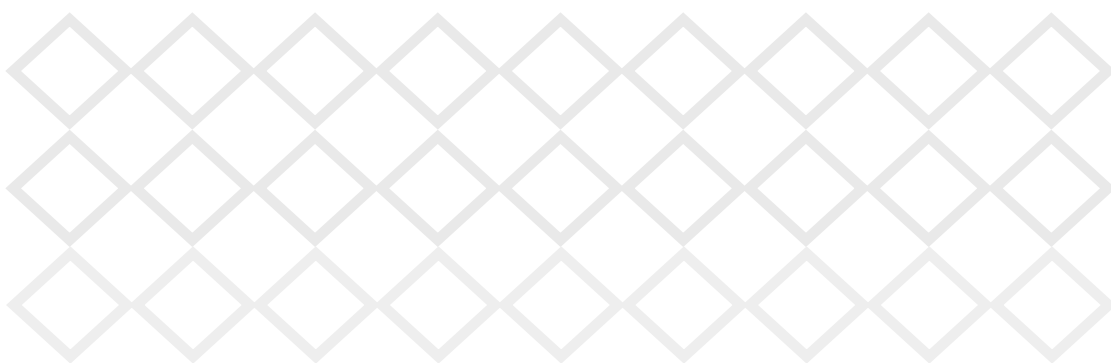
When we combine these findings with the lowering of societal coercion for people to get married, specifically through the political and economic enfranchisement of women, it creates a context in which dating (and, by proxy, marriage) becomes much more of a personal choice. On its face this

is not a bad thing, people should be free to choose or not choose whether to have such relations. However, the discussion then turns into a question of "what defines people's choices?" The answer is undoubtedly capitalism.

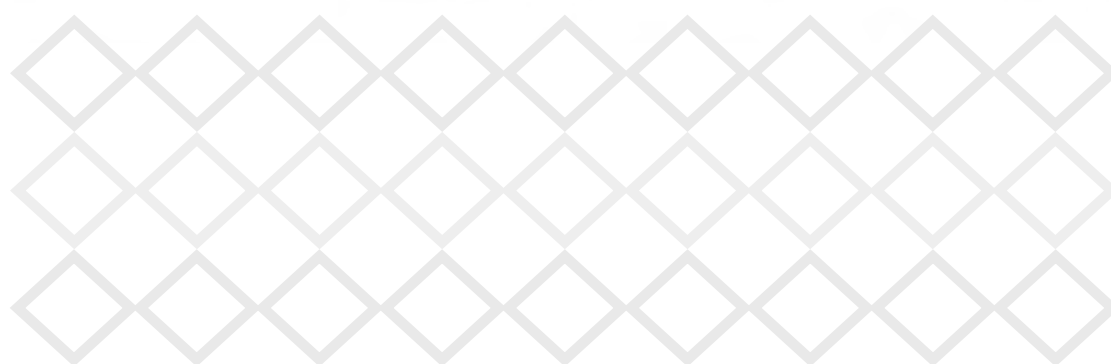
Social identities in a capitalist society, when shifted onto an individual level, are increasingly defined by consumption. We are what we buy, watch, listen to, wear and drive so much so that eventually the hierarchical status of such things begins to transition onto ourselves so much that our status is defined by them. The fancier our stuff, the more expensive, the more that we are as a result. We turn ourselves into an object that has an exchange value equal to the things around us, a commodification of the self.

As a result, our self-definition and goals become more instrumentally focused, specifically on how they can increase our own value and the wealth of things we can acquire. However, it doesn't stop there, because it gets to a point where this becomes the way we define our relationships too. If someone isn't there to help you become the greatest version of yourself, they can get out. If someone makes you sad sometimes, if they harm your self-discovery, if someone doesn't have the same quality of things you have, if they can't provide you with things that increase your value, then why keep them around? Self-optimization is the American Dream isn't it, and if it costs some relationships to get there then what's the real harm?

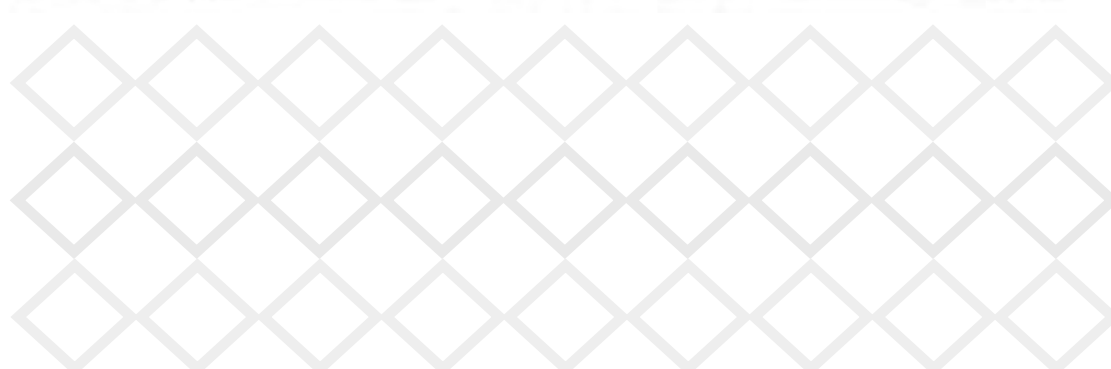
There's clearly some uncomfortable imagery there and it's undeniably a bit of a logical extreme, but the base logic is present in our everyday society. Yet, it fails to understand the point of relationships. A bond between two people, romantic or otherwise, is not instrumentally valuable. It's ultimately our relationships which keep us grounded in life to communities, to places and to sentiments that may not be useful in racing to the top of the ladder, but they are the things that keep us alive. When talking about relationships, it's about more than gaining from another person, it's about being part of something greater than oneself. As Valentine's Day comes and goes, understanding the importance of interpersonal connection and what should connect people is hopefully at the forefront of everyone's minds. As the great author C.S Lewis once said, "one doesn't realize in early life that the price of freedom is loneliness. To be happy is to be tied."



ART BY ALEXA PAPPAS, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST



ART BY CONNOR SZREJNA, STAFF ARTIST



Sports

THE BUCKET LIST: PILOT - INTRODUCTIONS, SNEAKY GOOD AND METRIC-LOVED TEAMS

by Jake McCreven

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Quick - whose offense is number five in efficiency this past month?

Wrong. Virginia Commonwealth, of course! The Rams have netted an adjusted offensive efficiency rating of 128.9 since Feb. 1 - fifth best out of 364 Division I teams.

What about this one: which team has compiled three top 20 wins in two weeks, is undefeated since Jan. 25 and ranks number nine in defensive efficiency nationally?

The 13-11 Kansas State Wildcats.

See, without those metrics listed as they are above, you probably wouldn't believe me when I told you that Joe Bamisile and Max Shulga have been one of the country's best scoring duos for VCU since the start of February, or that Jerome Tang has Kansas State playing at the highest level in America the past two weeks.

It's one thing to make a claim about your favorite mid-major team who will undoubtedly make a run to the Elite Eight in March. It's another to back up that claim with undisputable evidence.

That's what this column will be centered around. I will look to provide you - the future March Madness bracket pool champion that you are - with analytically fortified evidence as to how to build your bracket and bring home the bacon come April.

Trust me, I won't bore you. I'll keep things short - a handful of

little sections each week highlighting some of the trendiest analytical teams in the country with a side of March Madness bracket advice.

Let's get started, shall we?

Why: Do AP Pollsters hate the Houston Cougars?

Since losing three games in three weeks and starting the season 4-3, Kelvin Sampson's squad has won 16 of 17, ranks first in the nation in adjusted defensive efficiency since Dec. 7 (86.9) and has scored over 75 points eight times en route to a smoking 12-1 start in Big 12 play.

But the Cougars - who are 20-4 overall - are ranked No. 6 in the AP Top 25 Poll, receiving votes as low as No. 10 overall and sliding one spot from last week's poll. Why is that?

Well, the truth is, I don't really know. Houston matches up fairly well against each of the five teams ranked ahead of them in the AP Poll (Auburn, Alabama, Duke, Florida, Tennessee).

Using the Bracketologists' resumé comparison tool, I plugged all of these teams in and compared them. Houston ranks No. 2 in NET, No. 1 in Torvik's T-Rank and No. 3 on KenPom. The Cougars' BARTHAG rating (chance of beating an average D-I team) is a sterling .98, according to Torvik.

Houston is holding its opponents to an average of 57.3 ppg (No. 1 nationally), sporting the third best two-point defense (43%) and ninth best EFG% allowed (45.2) in the country.

Sure, Sampson's defenses are always wound tight and sure to give opponents headaches - the Cougars have finished top 15 in defensive efficiency seven of the

last eight seasons - but what about the other side of the floor?

Last season, the Cougar offense struggled tremendously from the floor (228th in 2PT%) and flopped in its Sweet 16 loss to Duke, scoring just 51 points. The unit scored 80-plus points just six times against high-major opponents.

The addition of Oklahoma transfer Milos Uzan this offseason has gone a long way in transforming Sampson's offense. The dime-running point guard has aided in Houston's three-point revival, as the team ranks seventh nationally in 3PT% (39.4) and has scored above 80 points against high-major opponents four times already.

Who: Are the Virginia Commonwealth Rams?

Ryan Odom's second season at the helm in Richmond has been an emphatic success up to this point. The Rams are 20-5 overall, second in the A-10 and have wins against Colorado State, Dayton and Saint Louis under their belt.

The only black eye: a three-point overtime loss to a 6-18 Seton Hall team back in November.

Regardless, the Rams are powering towards the large conversation with a little under a month remaining in the regular season.

Led by the terrific scoring duo of Bamisile (15.8) and Shulga (15.1), the Rams rank fifth nationally in adjusted offensive efficiency (points per 100 possessions) and are the best offensive rebounding team in America since Feb. 1.

The identity of this VCU team is engrained in its board-crashing, physical backcourt at-

tack that bottlenecks opposing guards on defense and forces contested shots - a heavy pill for high-major teams to swallow in March.

Will: St. John's improve on its worrisome shooting percentages? Is this style sustainable in March?

The salty defensive play of Rick Pitino's Red Storm has barnstormed the country, as the Johnnies - now notoriously known as a defensive juggernaut - have climbed inside the top 10 of the AP Top 25 Poll.

Yes, St. John's slipped up on Wednesday and dropped its first game of the 2025 calendar year at Villanova, but what the Red Storm have done defensively this season cannot be overlooked.

Ranking second in adjusted defensive efficiency (points allowed per 100 possessions) this season, the Johnnies' street fight style physicality has given the likes of Marquette, Connecticut and Creighton (all of whom scored 70 points or lower) trouble in Big East play.

St. John's pilots the nation's seventh-best two-point defense (43.9) and sports the 15th highest turnover percentage among all D-I teams (22.1).

The height, length and power the Johnnies put out on the court make interchanging the two through four positions effortless. Kadary Richmond needs a breather? In comes RJ Luis, Aaron Scott or Simeon Wilcher - all of which are 6-foot-4 or above.

The issues with this bully-ball style lineup can be seen when looking at SJU's field goal percentages. The Johnnies shoot - as a team - 29.2% from

three, 68.7% from the charity stripe and have an EFG% of 49.5 (239th nationally).

How are the Johnnies winning all of these games? The answer can be found in the catacombs of college basketball.

See, Pitino has drawn inspiration from the ancient cave drawings of players taking mid-range jump shots and long two-pointers.

Conventionally speaking, those days of the sport are behind us. The jump-shot philosophy of cash-grab two-pointers has been replaced with the analytically sound three pointer and lay-in strategy. Look at Grinnell College for instance, who attempts nearly half of its shots from three.

The Johnnies - to put it bluntly - stink at shooting the basketball... from three. Pitino has emphasized the importance of taking advantage of the shots a defense voluntarily allows.

Mid-range jumpers from the top of the key? Elbow shots off ball-screens from two feet in front of the three-point line? The Johnnies are pinning for those kind of looks.

See, defenses oftentimes leave looks such as these - traditionally viewed as low percentage - wide open in hopes of crashing the boards and running tempo the other way.

Pitino has encouraged his team to take these difficult shots - because they're open.

So, while the bedrock of this Johnnies team remains its defense (and rightfully so), the SJU offense, while not revered by the analytics, still has the ability to sustain itself come postseason basketball.

Women's Lacrosse: UConn hopes to continue their undefeated run as they kick off first road trip of the season

by Julia Sasso

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The UConn women's lacrosse team is heading down to Sparks, Md. to face No. 18 James Madison on Saturday, Feb. 15.

The Huskies are coming off a dominant 18-5 win over Fairfield on Wednesday, Feb. 12 in Storrs, starting the season strong with two straight home wins.

The match was one of many achievements for the Huskies. Redshirt junior attacker Rayea Davis reached a career high six goals in her second playing season with the Huskies. She now leads the team with nine goals in the last two games. In addition, sophomore defender Abby Beran and freshman attacker Megan O'Brien scored their first goals with the Huskies.

The Huskies will also bring another essential player to this match in graduate student Jenna Gardina, who leads the team with five assists.

James Madison on the other hand, has not found the same success. The Dukes currently stand with a 1-1 record. Starting their season off with 14-2 loss to North Carolina last Friday. However, the team redeemed themselves earlier this week after beating Virginia Tech 15-11. This will be the program's first

home game of the season stand they currently hand with a 1-1 away record.

The Dukes will bring junior attacker Maddie Epke, who leads the team in scoring with seven goals in the last two games. Epke also leads the team in assists with two and points with 12. Another crucial player for James Madison will be senior attacker Savannah Derey who is second in goals scored, with six goals and is tied with Epke with 15 shots on goal.

This is the 12th time the two programs come face to face. Their last match was in February of last year when the Huskies missed out on the win, but just by one point. UConn currently faces an eight-game losing streak against the Duke Dogs, taking their last victory in 2016 at home. This will be the first time the match-up is played in a non-neutral venue in nine years.

Connecticut will hope to continue their strong performance and maintain their undefeated status. The Huskies will also hope to beat James Madison for the first time in nine years. The Dukes, on the other hand, will look to continue their positive momentum and put their stretch of difficulty behind, continuing their winning streak in front of a home crowd.



UConn women's lacrosse takes on Fairfield University at Joseph J. Marrone Stadium in Storrs, Conn. on Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025. The Huskies took a massive 18-5 win over the Stags, with #6 Rayea Davis scoring a career-high six goals. PHOTO BY ZACHARY MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Sports

SOFTBALL: HUSKIES LOOK TO BOUNCE BACK AT JU-UNF INVITATIONAL

by Colette Doyle

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On Friday, Feb. 14, the UConn softball team is set to travel to Jacksonville to embark on their second series of the season. The invitational is co-hosted by Jacksonville University and University of North Florida, consisting of five games over the course of three days. The Huskies will take on Middle Tennessee State, North Florida, Jacksonville and Cleveland State.

Last weekend, the Huskies started off their spring season at the Elon Softball Classic in North Carolina. The team had a rough start to the series with a 14-18 loss to Ohio. They bounced back with an 8-2 win against Elon University in their second game. However, they stumbled in their third game with a 15-6 loss against UNC Greensboro. They were not able to bring back their momentum in the fourth game, losing 3-1 to Ohio State. They finished the series with a 1-3 record. The team will hope to improve and gain momentum in their invitational this weekend.

The Huskies have an impressive lineup this season. One key player is junior catcher Grace Jenkins, who was named on the Big East Honor Roll this week. Jenkins performed impres-

sively at the Elon Softball Classic and proved to be a powerful force along with her twin sister, junior Grace Jenkins. The duo started the classic off strong with H. Jenkins' drive-in allowing G. Jenkins to have the first run of the season. The duo will be a powerful force for the Huskies this Invitational.

Middle Tennessee State has started the season off with a 3-2 record. The team also started off their spring season last weekend with games against Louisville, Rutgers, Radford and Cleveland State. They lost their first game 11-3 against Louisville. They then bounced back with an 8-1 win over Rutgers. They did not maintain this momentum against Radford, losing 3-2. However, they were able to bring the momentum back to gain wins in the last two games against Cleveland State and Radford.

North Florida has started their season off strong with a 6-2 record. They started the season off with a tough 0-8 loss to the University of Florida. However, they were able to collect a series of wins against Western Carolina, Jacksonville State and Bethune-Cookman. The Huskies last competed against North Florida in the 2016 season, winning 4-0. The team will

hope to bring the same kind of dominance this season.

Jacksonville has had a shaky start to the season with a 4-2 record. They picked up wins against Jacksonville State and Western Carolina; however, they fell to Florida, Western Carolina and Jacksonville. They last competed against the Huskies in a home game in the 2018 season. The Huskies came away with a dominant win 7-0. The Huskies will hope to bring the same momentum to this season.

Cleveland State has also had a rough start to the season with a 4-1 season. They picked up a 7-1 win against Radford; however, they fell to Rutgers, Liberty, Middle Tennessee State, Louisville and Seminole State College of Florida. They last matched up against the Huskies last season. The Huskies dominated winning 8-3 and have won three out of four of the games against Cleveland State over the past seasons. The team will look to continue their winning streak against Cleveland State.

The first game of the invitational takes place on Friday at 9 a.m. Their second game is just a few hours later at 4:30 p.m. On Saturday, the squad is set to play two more games at 9 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. The Huskies will wrap up the invitational with a 10 a.m. game on Sunday.



Stony Brook at UConn on Oct. 24. The softball team will face the University of North Florida on Friday, Feb. 14.

PHOTO BY MADISON HENDRICKS, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY: HUSKIES GEAR UP FOR TWO-GAME SET AGAINST PROVIDENCE

by Jake Loomis

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The UConn women's ice hockey team comes into the weekend fresh off victories versus Boston University and Holy Cross. The program dominated last weekend and will look to do more of the same as they start a pivotal two-game set with Providence this coming weekend.

The Huskies sit with a 19-9-2 record and look to hit golden number 20 this weekend. Look for both goalies to get a start over the weekend in Tia Chan and Megan Warrenner, although don't be shocked if Connecticut sticks with the hot hand in Chan. Look for leading points-getter Jada Habisch to also be a factor in both games as she has the hot stick for the Huskies right now as they head into the final push. Also keep an eye out for Ava Rinker, who is the team's leader in the assists and is a true facilitator, as she consistently looks to pass over shoot.

Providence is coming into this game fresh off a loss versus Boston University and a win over Holy Cross the day prior. Their overall record on the season is 17-10-3 which is just on par with what the Huskies have done this year. The Friars are a talented

team, and it should be as good a matchup as earlier in the year, when Providence beat the Huskies by a lone goal. The Friars are led by Audrey Knapp and Reichen Kirchmair, who are the leading points-getters for the team and overall number-one options. The team plays through these two and if they are not firing on all cylinders, it could be a hard game. In net, they have a lone goalie in Hope Walinski, who holds down the fort allowing in just under two goals per game in 52 games played. She is one of the best goalies in the nation along with UConn's Tia Chan, who has been nominated for HCA goalie of the year.

The key to the game for both teams will be to get out to early leads, as when this happens, both teams are not prone to losing their lead. For the Huskies, getting star Jada Habisch involved early will be big as she draws much attention on the ice. For Providence, they will have to rely on their goaltending and defense in this one and hope that the offense can produce enough to get by the Huskies in the two-game weekend series. Chris Mackenzie has done a great job with the team this year, and this will be a big test as they look to make a strong final push into the postseason.



UConn women's ice hockey versus Holy Cross on Feb. 8, 2024 at the Toscano Family Ice Forum. It was National Girls and Women in Sports Celebration Night at Toscano, and the Huskies secured a 1-0 win versus the Crusaders. PHOTO BY BLAKE SYKES, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Photo of the Day



UConn men's basketball lost to St. John's on Friday, Feb. 9. After a tough game, the Huskies fell despite a strong start.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Sports

Sports

BASEBALL: HUSKIES GEAR UP FOR THREE-GAME SERIES IN PUERTO RICO

by Connor Sargeant

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After an excellent 35-26 campaign for the UConn baseball team, the Hook C will open their 2025 campaign in Caguas, Puerto Rico for a three-game weekend series against Stetson, Missouri and Penn State. Despite the tall task ahead of the program, they have a good chance of sweeping their opening weekend series.

Connecticut is coming off a 2024 season where they not only won the Big East regular season but where they advanced to the Tallahassee Super Regionals, losing to FSU. Coming into this campaign, the Huskies are predicted to win the Big East and will have some big names to help them make an even deeper run in the NCAA tournament.

Right-handed pitcher Ian Cooke was picked as the Big East Preseason Pitcher of the Year. The senior is coming off an excellent season, holding opponents to a .222 batting average. Not to mention, Cooke also logged 67.1 innings and ranked third in the conference with 85 strikeouts. As good as the pitching for the Huskies is, their bats are just as good, as they sport the Preseason Player of the Year Maddix Dalena.

The first baseman is coming off an All-Big East Second Team campaign, slashing .242/.358/.511 with 13 long balls and 43 RBIs. However, Dalena did most of his damage in games where he heated up, posting 13 multi-RBI and 13 multiple-hit games a season ago. Fans should be looking for how quickly the Pennsylvania native gets out of the gates, as he is a significant bat that should decide some contests this weekend. As good as Dalena is expected to be, Connecticut has four



UConn baseball defeats LIU at home on Oct. 6 with a final score of 9-6 over a 12 inning game. The team will face of Missouri in its Feb. 15 game. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

other Preseason All-Big East players rostered.

Third baseman Tyler Minick, shortstop Bryan Padilla, outfielder Caleb Shpur and reliever Brady Afthim will all make the trip down to Puerto Rico. However, as good as the Huskies are this weekend, the programs they will face are solid.

Stetson is picked to win the Atlantic Sun Conference again in dominating fashion; they will

rely upon some solid bats and pitching to do so. Despite being a second baseman, Yohann Dessureault doesn't embrace the "can't hit for power" stereotype, as the senior mashed a career-high 11 home runs. Dessureault also slashed an excellent .293/.369/.489 from the dish, proving that he was a threat to both leave the ballpark and get on base. The Canadian also ranks No. 26 out of all second

basemen in Division I, according to D1Baseball.com. The Hatters also retain their RBI leader from a year ago, Lorenzo Meola, who the Huskies will also want to be on the lookout for.

On Saturday, Feb. 15, the Huskies will clash with the Missouri Tigers. Missouri is coming off a bumpy 23-32 campaign, as their nearly 6.00 ERA a year ago got them into trouble at times. Howev-

er, the Tigers will retain a few crucial bats.

Jackson Lovich is a name that UConn fans will want to keep tabs on, as the junior is coming off an excellent 2024 campaign. In the Kansas native's previous season, he slashed .287/.277/.540 from the plate, belted 10 homers and drove in 35 runners. Considering that the program lost their best bat from a season ago, Trevor Austin, the Huskies need to limit the damage that Lovich does. Offensively, Connecticut must work themselves into deep counts. This is where Missouri pitchers struggled a year ago, and their opponents took advantage of this.

To close out the Huskies' weekend, the program will match up with the Penn State Nittany Lions on Sunday, Feb. 16. Penn State is coming off a 25-25 campaign where the offense was never an issue; their pitching staff was sometimes unreliable, sporting an ERA of nearly seven. Despite this, the Nittany Lions will retain redshirt sophomore Bryce Molinaro, who led the team in batting average (.329), slugging percentage (.560), home runs (11), RBIs (45) and steals (7). Molinaro was also named to the Preseason All-Big Ten team. However, Penn State has many new faces from a season ago, welcoming 24 newcomers, including Saint Joseph's transfer Ryan Weingartner. The junior was one of eight players in D1 a season ago to hit 15 home runs and steal 18 bags, earning him All-Atlantic 10 honors.

After a nearly six-month lay-off, college baseball is back. The Huskies finally return to action this weekend in a crucial series that will help them get back up to speed for all that this season has to offer, including stiff Big East competition and the NCAA tournament.

TRACK AND FIELD: HUSKIES TO TRAVEL TO BOSTON AND NEW HAVEN TO TAKE ON BOSTON UNIVERSITY AND YALE

by Alex Klancko

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The UConn men's and women's track and field teams are set to have two meets this weekend taking place Friday, Feb. 14 and Saturday, Feb. 15, as they prepare for the Big East Indoor Championships right around the corner.

On Friday, both squads are set to take on Boston University in the David Hemery Valentine Invitational.

The men's meet is set to commence on Friday at 9 a.m., with the track events ending at 2 p.m. The field events will kick off shortly after and end at 6:40 p.m.

On Saturday, the women's events open with the running events at 9 a.m. and field events at 10 a.m., ending with the field events at 2 p.m. and the running events at 6:30 p.m.

The men competing for the Huskies are Samuel Geisler, Alec Sauter and Griffin Mandirola in the one-mile run, Sean Ahern in the 3000-meter run and Mahamed Sharif in the 800-meter run.

The women competing for UConn are Danielle Adams, Calista Mayer, Ally McCarthy and Megan Perrotta in the 800-meter run, Sarah Trainor in the 1000-meter run, Loghan Hughes, Malin Rahm and Jenna

Zydanowicz in the 3000-meter run, Caroline Webb in the 5000-meter run, and Claire Paci, Madison Relyea and Rachael Woodruff in the one-mile run. Paci and Mandirola joined UConn this year and the rest of the team attending the meet have been at UConn for at least a year.

On Saturday, the Giegengack Invitational is being held by Yale University with the field events kicking off at 8:30 a.m.

and the running events kicking off at 12 p.m.

The field events start out with the men and women's shot put and end with the men and women's pole vault. The running events start with the women's mile at noon followed by the men's mile at 12:20 p.m. and ends with the women's 4x400 relay at 4:55 p.m. and men's 4x400 relay at 5:10 p.m.

Some of UConn's top performers from the 2024 Giegengack

Invitational were Damon Simpson and Noble Gongon who ran first and second in the men's 60-meter final. In addition, Travis Roux placed first in the men's weight throw with 20.02 meters. In addition, there's Sinclair Fryer, who placed first in the women's shot put, and Mia Dansby, who placed second in the women's 60-meters final.

In the USTFCCA regional TFRI rankings, UConn's men's and women's teams are top

two in the rankings. The men's indoor team has the top spot, while the women's indoor team is second in the region, only being led by Harvard.

The consistency of the event squads has led to the high rankings with the men's triple jump ranked second, men's heptathlon ranking third, and the men's long jump being ranked seventh. The women's pentathlon team have also been satisfactory, being ranked eighth.



UConn track and field on Dec. 6, 2024. The team's next meet is Friday, Feb 14, 2025. PHOTO BY FRANCESCA BAZIL, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

ASEXUALITY IS ACES

by Gabrielle Wincherhern

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Asexuality is, in my experience, one of the lesser-discussed identities that falls underneath the LGBTQ+ umbrella. It is also lesser understood, to the point where some don't believe it exists, including other members of the LGBTQ+ community.

So, what is asexuality? Generally, it just means that someone does not experience sexual attraction the way that allosexual people (or non-asexuals, who are understood to be the norm) do. It's important to note that asexuality is a spectrum — and honestly, so is sexuality in general, whether you are heterosexual, allosexual or neither.

Asexuality can co-occur with aromanticism (lack of experiencing romantic attraction in the way alloromantics/most people do, which also exists on a spectrum), but it doesn't always. What most people think of as asexual usually falls at the most extreme end of the spectrum: someone who does not want to have sex, ever. And this does cover some people. There are sex-repulsed asexuals who are uncomfortable with discussions or even book descriptions about sex, and those who truly never want, desire or will have sex. But there are also sex-positive asexuals and asexuals who make quite a lot of sexual jokes. Candidly, I am one of the latter. I have the sense of humor of a middle school boy, but I digress.

Asexual people can want and have sex, although not all do. Some asexual people can even experience sexual attraction at a different and lower rate than allosexuals, though usually only under certain conditions. For example, with demisexuality, which falls under the asexual umbrella, individuals only feel sexual attraction to people they know very well.

Asexuality can be hard

for even asexuals to understand. After all, asexuality is describing the lack of something you've never experienced (sexual attraction in the way other people do). This is made even more difficult due to most people as-

suming sexual attraction is something everyone experiences and therefore, don't feel the need to discuss what experiencing sexual attraction is like.

Because of this, I learned what asexuality was long before I considered that I might fall under that category. After spending an unholy amount of time online from the young age of 11 years old and onwards, and on a children's book forum for dragons no less, I learned what asexuality was. It was probably around the time I was in middle school.

It wasn't until I was 16 that I seriously considered identifying myself as asexual. In addition to how difficult it is to figure out if you're failing to experience something others do and don't often talk about,

I was raised and identified as Christian for a good chunk of my life. This meant I spent a lot of time gaslighting myself into thinking I was completely and totally straight, as anything else would be difficult to reconcile with my faith.

Retroactively, there were probably what should have been signs, such as a genu-

Of course, not everyone is Christian, but in America, there seems to be an increasing presence and expectation of sex in media, and in general. This isn't necessarily a bad thing — far preferable to slut-shaming and pearl-clutching at the thought of ex-

trum themselves (like calls to like, I suppose) or just not getting any action. No shade to them — they're all lovely people who will find someone in their own time — it just means sex isn't a topic that comes up much, so I've never



ART BY COLBI LORANGER,
ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

ine comment I made, "I'd be okay if I died a virgin," and remarking that people look better with their clothes on.

Also, sex as a concept just sounded gross to me. And frankly, it still kind of does. You're telling me smashing genitals and saliva with someone else is supposed to be anything but unhygienic?

Despite all this, I still didn't think of myself as asexual until later in my life because as a Christian, I was expected to eventually get married and have sex to consummate that marriage as God intended, even if I wasn't sure if I wanted to and was totally okay going my entire life without ever experiencing sex.

tramarital sex — but it's good to remember and leave room for asexuality too.

I've seen other asexuals discuss feeling isolated from their peers when it comes to sexual identity, partly because of how prevalent and expected sex is nowadays. Honestly, I can't relate too much, except on one occasion.

One time in South Dining Hall during my freshman year, my friend and her roommate said, "Wow, the guys here are so much hotter than at Northwest," and I just stared at them blankly.

In that regard, I'm lucky. Most of my friends are either on the asexual spec-

really had any significant experience of feeling isolated or disconnected from others as an asexual.

But I know that's not true for every asexual, and no one should have to experience isolation because of their identity. Just as it should be okay for other people to have and want sex, it should be okay for people to not want any of those things. So, this Valentine's Day, while we are celebrating love and sex, let us also remember that asexuality is aces.

If you'd like to learn more about asexuality, you can go to asexualityarchive.com.

THE THING ABOUT DATING, AS A QUEER PERSON

by Samantha Brody

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Dating is complicated, difficult, frustrating yet oftentimes incredibly rewarding. In those ways, LGBTQIA+ dating isn't any different from heterosexual/cisgender dating, but there are a lot of ways in which it's incredibly difficult or confusing.

For the purposes of this article, "queer," "gay" and "LGBTQIA+" are used relatively interchangeably. Although "queer" has formerly been an insult, positive usage of it takes away some of that power it has against people. The "queer community," to me, is a more casual way of saying the "LGBTQIA+ community."

I realized I was gay about a week after I turned 14. I only called it "gay" — and sometimes "queer" — because the term "lesbian" felt wrong to me. It almost felt too simple, especially since I had always been tomboyish. It felt oddly... girly?

Two and a half years later, after I had started and ended my first queer relationship, I had developed a crush I didn't understand. I was 16, and I suddenly realized I was bisexual. While grappling with the idea of being a lesbian felt uncomfortable and restraining, bisexuality felt free and a lot

more open. I got to pick and choose exactly what "bisexual" meant for me, as opposed to feeling trapped behind door number one.

Being "out" in general was also very odd. I had come out a little early before I really knew what I was coming out as. I've also had short hair for years, so a part of me knew that when people saw me, they'd place a label on me immediately. They would assume they knew something about me. That felt even worse.

I'm a little sick of the "com-

ing out story," frankly. Sometimes it feels like every piece of queer media in the world wants to cover the same talking points of this near-universal situation for the gays of the world.

Coming out is important. It's not necessary, but it's important. It's a milestone, for some people. But it's not the only thing that matters to a queer person.

My "coming out story" is a bit of a mixed bag. My parents have been divorced for as long as I can remember. Telling my

dad and my stepmom was incredibly easy, telling my mom was tough but ultimately fine, and telling my stepdad and step sisters was awful. I don't even remember what they said. I just remember being laughed at.

The thing about dating as a queer person is you'll always get laughed at. If they're laughing, it means there's a part of you they don't respect.

Living life as an out queer person can be incredibly difficult, especially in a world where it doesn't seem like our rights are guaranteed. Sometimes, it feels like it's you against the rest of the world.

Here's the thing though: You are quite literally never alone.

It's important to keep in mind that the queer community is literally a community, with millions of people who have gone through similar experiences to your own. There's no shame in leaning on someone else for support or asking for advice.

The second, and more important thing, about dating as a queer person is the queer joy.

"Queer joy" is a bit of a more modern term, but it essentially boils down to a feeling of happiness and pride in relation to being a queer person. No matter who you're dating, there is something incredibly special about being able to feel

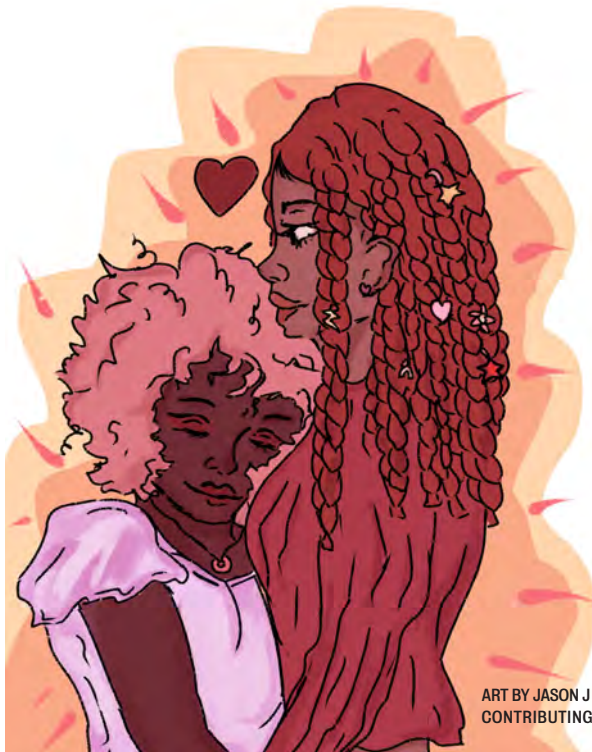
this level of pride with someone else.

Anyone who lives their life as a queer person is building up a greater system of support for the community. Even if you aren't able to live that life in your current situation, there will hopefully be a future in which you can.

When I first began dating, I was often incredibly confused. I felt lost. I felt like I didn't know who I was. But by embracing friendships with more queer people and by asking myself the questions that I needed to ask, I felt a lot more confident in the person I was becoming. It wasn't until later that I realized that by being happy and by experiencing queer joy, I was rebelling against a world that didn't want me in it.

Now, as I'm currently in a queer relationship, I find a lot of comfort in knowing that my partner gets what I mean when I talk about being confused or scared of who I was when I was younger. There's a level of queer joy to be found just by relating to people.

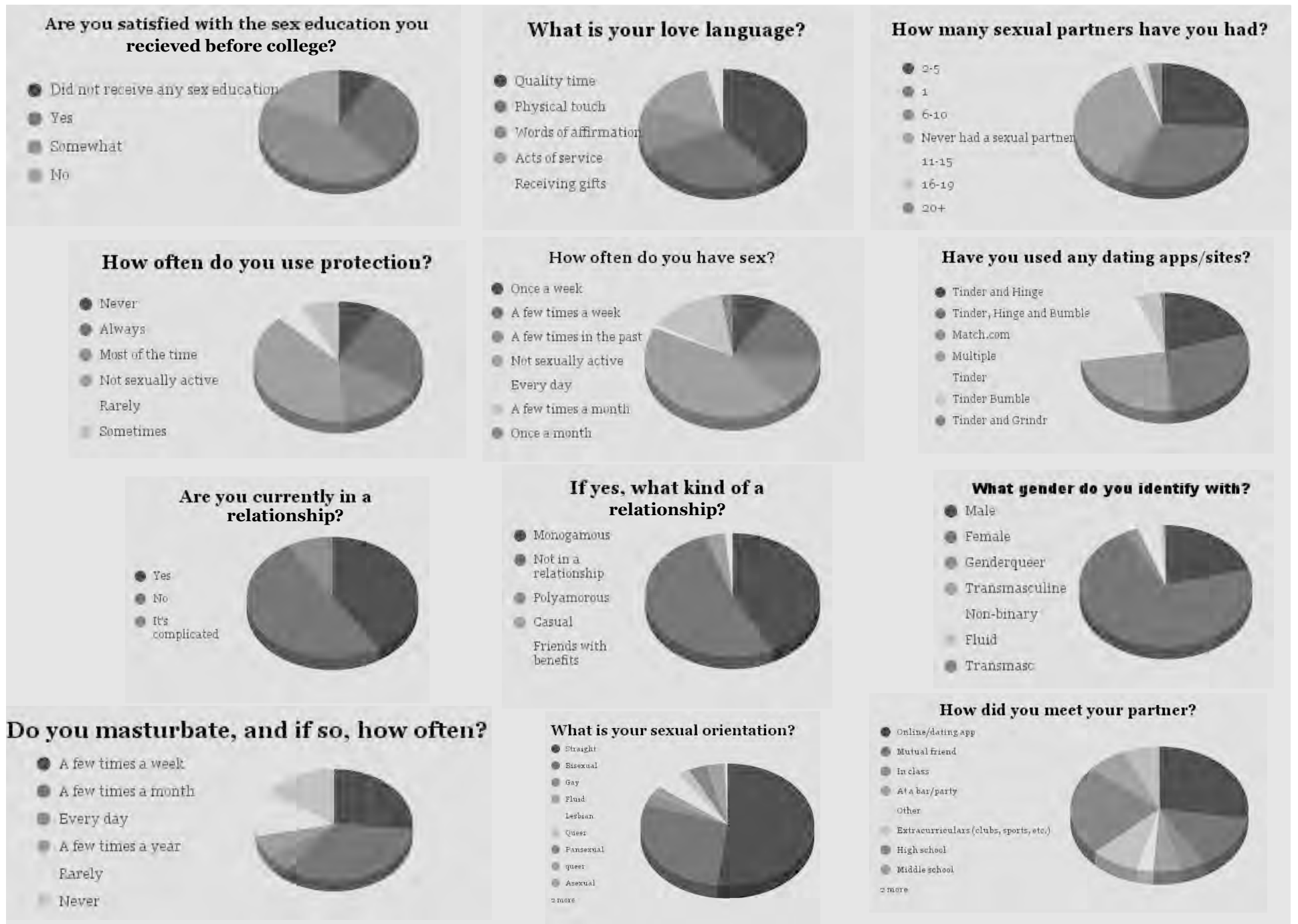
If you've been out and proud for a while, keep at it. You'll always provide support for those who wish to be in your position. And if you're still working on feeling comfortable, just know that you'll get there eventually. Things always get better.



ART BY JASON J SAMPSON,
CONTRIBUTING ARTIST

Valentine's Day Issue 2025 Survey Recap

by Benjamin Lassy | HE/HIM/HIS | LIFE EDITOR | benjamin.lassy@uconn.edu | and James Fitzpatrick | HE/HIM/HIS | ASSOCIATE LIFE EDITOR | james.fitzpatrick@uconn.edu



Every year, the Life Section's Valentine's Day survey gives us a remarkable — sometimes frightening — insight into what the student body is going through. This year was no exception. We've compiled some of the most exciting anonymous responses from the open-ended portion of our survey. Thank you to everyone who took part and spent a few minutes, or for some of you, an hour, typing your testimonials.

What do you believe is the most challenging part of dating or seeking a relationship?

It seems the student body has a lot of challenges when it comes to dating. Recurring themes include finding the right person, lack of time and even the difficulty of being vulnerable with another person.

- “finding someone who you can spend an unfathomable amount of time with”
- “Finding someone who wants the same thing, or shares similar values.”
- “Finding someone who is willing to commit and initiate plans”
- “Finding someone that wants more than hooking up”
- “Making time for eachother”
- “Making the first move”
- “Losing your identity”
- “high standards”

Another recurring theme was the tedium of trying to find someone normal. Maybe UConn students are all a little crazy.

- “finding someone and finding someone normal”
- “Finding the right person”
- “finding someone normal”

What do you believe is the most rewarding part of dating?

Dating can make life a little better when it's successful. From errands being a tad bit less stressful, to simply feeling loved, here are some gems:

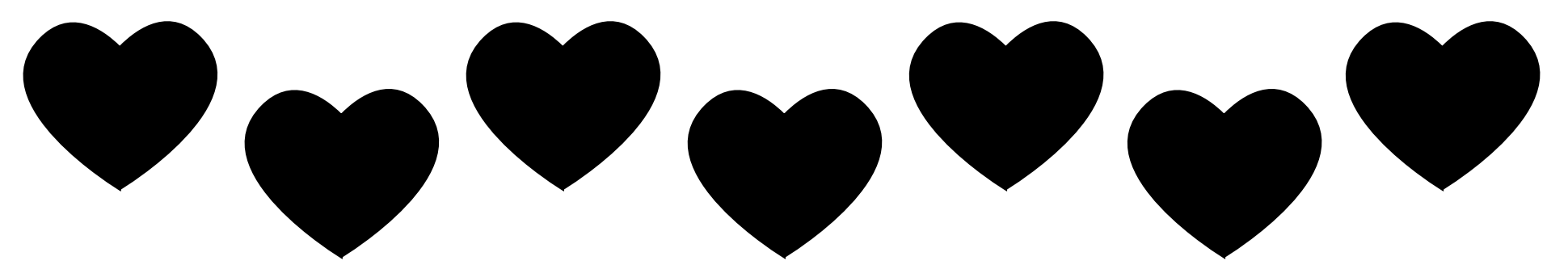
- “That no matter how bad my or our days are, to know that I can come home to someone who can instantly make the day shine into a good memory, that is the most rewarding part to me.”
- “I love having someone to share life with. Going to the store, doing chores, etc. becomes so much more fun when you have someone you love with you.”
- “The most rewarding part of dating, in my opinion, is being able to have one person that you feel you can always lean on and depend on.”
- “Having someone to bond with and spend time with you for who you are.”
- “Meeting someone that makes you feel a little less alone in the world”
- “Having a companion who loves you unconditionally”
- “Having someone know you better than anyone.”
- “Getting to spread love and feel loved.”

Before we get into the more risque content, here's some wholesome promotion of non-sexual physical affection!

- “Cuddles!”
- “Having someone there to hug you when you've had a bad day”
- “Having someone I can always talk to and rely on, and to hug and cuddle and keep warm with.”

Share any memorable/funny dating or sex stories!

- “One time my tinder date brought a husky costume and handcuffs to our hookup and I wanted to try something new so I made him wear the costume and put on the handcuffs while whipping him into submission until he wore my diamond studded collar. After we hit post nut clarity I took him on a walk around campus.”
- “My ex cheated on me with more men than I know women (14) and it was so bad but looking back it's so fucking funny like one wasn't enough, not two, not three, but 14! Crazy times innit”
- “I was making out with a guy I met from tinder and he smelled so bad. That cologne was STRONG!! After he left, my sheets still smelled like him. Jump scare!”
- “The first time my most recent partner and I had sex, we were switching positions and I elbowed him right in the nose. We both just laughed it off.”
- “one time my bestie broke up with their gf and then a week later my partner broke up with me, and then about a month later our exes got together”
- “having my roommate walk in to hear my dorm bed against the wall and texting the group chat to ask if i was in our shared room having sex”
- “Did it one time while her mom was in the other room, I fell off the bed on accident, and her mom came rushing in.”
- “My boyfriend and I met in chemistry class at UConn, so we always joke that we have chemistry.”
- “once told me i had broad shoulders like a linebacker thinking it was a compliment”
- “One time I peed on my boyfriend's face.”



Life



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTIAN BARBARA, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Lonely hearts video game list

by **Desirae Sin**
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Last year, I wrote an article listing various video games you could play with your significant other for Valentine's Day, but many of us are alone this year for various reasons. I for one can get disenfranchised by seeing the holiday merchandise at stores or seeing my friends spending Valentine's Day with their partners.

But fear not! I'm here with another list of video game recommendations. However, this time, it's for all you single people on campus. Let's buy ourselves chocolates and flowers to spend the day relaxing with my list of single-player games.

Balatro

This game was a surprising nominee for Game of the

Year in the Game Awards but lost to "Astro Bot." "Balatro" is described as a deck-building roguelike where players play multiple hands of poker. Rather than simply letting the hand of fate guide you, players can build their decks with various tarot cards to enhance their playstyle.

It follows the usual rules of poker but also includes a score mechanic. Defeat the enemy — referred to as a Blind — by beating the score laid out with a limited number of hands. Even though it's not as big of a title as its GOTY competitors, "Balatro" tickles the itch in your brain that craves smooth graphics, high scores and devastating combos.

Red Dead Redemption 2

Although it's a few years old at this point, "Red Dead Redemption 2" can still hold its

own against recent releases in its enjoyability and overall experience. Developed and published by Rockstar Games in 2018, "RDR2" allows players to adventure the fictionalized western area of the United States in 1899 as Arthur Morgan. Morgan is a member of the Van der Linde gang and completes various missions throughout the game.

Some missions continue the story while others are side quests, though there is a reason to complete everything you can in "RDR2." The open-world Wild West aspect draws players in, and it feels like there's always more for you to do. If you're lucky enough on one of your rodeos, you may encounter the Ku Klux Klan. Killing Klan members positively impacts Morgan's honor points, so there is a reason to enact justice.

Dredge

Black Salt Games created a masterpiece with "Dredge." The haunting single-player experience puts you in the shoes of a mysterious fisherman who fishes in dangerous waters. Many of the game's mechanics are centered around upgrading your ship and equipment, but there's much more to the story than that. Throughout the game, you'll meet unsettling NPCs with their own requests and stories attached to them.

As you continue to fish in the seas, you'll find that there's more to this nameless fisherman than you think. The game takes on a cosmic element and includes one of the most well-placed and well-designed twists that I've ever seen in a video game. Anyone who loves cosmic horror and Lovecraftian stories — besides the racism —

will definitely enjoy "Dredge."

Papers, Please

As one of my all-time favorites, "Papers, Please" holds a special place in my heart as one of the most satisfying gaming experiences. You play as the new inspector for the border checkpoint in Arstotzka, a fictionalized authoritarian-communist country set in 1982. It's your job to check the paperwork of those passing through.

As the game progresses, the regulations and paperwork become more and more complex, but there are also stories attached to the people who are trying to cross. It quickly becomes apparent how human everyone, including the player, is. It's up to you to decide their fates and subsequently influence your own. The game contains many endings, so have fun.

'Twin Fantasy': Revisiting mentally ill affection with a matured lens

by **Bonnibel Lilith Rampertab** | SHE/HER/HERS | STAFF WRITER | lilith.rampertab@uconn.edu

Car Seat Headrest is an indie rock band that used to be a solo act by multi-instrumentalist Will Toledo with music made with charming lo-fi production and extremely personal subject material. However, after the album of re-recorded songs, "Teens of Style," the solo act became a full band, and the production quality became comparatively higher fidelity. Change is a huge part of growing up, and if there's anything that can symbolize that, it's the 2018 re-recording of 2011's "Twin Fantasy."

The 2018 re-recording — subtitled "Face to Face" — is Car Seat Headrest's most popular album for good reason. It shows that Toledo had great songwriting even when he was just some teen making music about his depression. However, with a full band, proper recording quality and a mature mind, the sound and messaging of the album was enhanced.

The twin albums complement each other, giving two similar yet different perspectives on the concept of love, sexuality and most notably, obsession exacerbated by mental illness. The album cover, for example, depicts two naked anthropomorphic dogs hugging, becoming one with each other. Despite how crudely drawn it is, it's iconic and fits the theme of the album, codependency, perfectly.

"My Boy - Twin Fantasy" is the intro to the album. The "boy" Toledo sings about on this album is assumed to be the artist Cate Wurtz, who identified as male when the original "Mirror to Mirror" version was written.

The song itself is simple and ballad-like, highlighting the complicated nature of this relationship with the lyric, "My boy, we don't see each other much, it'll take some time, but somewhere down the line, we won't

be alone." It only gets more complicated from here.

"Beach Life-In-Death" comes up next. There are many memorable and impactful lines in this 13-minute song. Some of my favorites being: "I pretended I was drunk when I came out to my friends, I never came out to my friends. We were all on Skype and I laughed and I changed the subject," "It should be called anti-depression as a friend of mine suggested because it's not the sadness that hurts you, it's the brain's reaction against it," "I don't want to go insane, I don't want to have schizophrenia," "Your ears perked up, I perked up when your ears perked up" and "The ocean washed over your grave, the ocean washed open your grave."

These lyrics are incredibly effective and mean so much to me. This is a great song to use when introducing someone to Car Seat Headrest.

"Stop Smoking (We Love You)" is a simple interlude-like song, but it is also incredibly important to the themes of the album. The song is a plea for Toledo's love interest to stop smoking because, in his words, "We don't want you to die."

"Sober to Death" is also a super important song for the story of the album. The lyrics "You can text me when punching mattresses gets old" and "I want to hear you going psycho, if you're going psycho I wanna hear" resonated a lot with how I love.

"Nervous Young Inhumans" uses a synth reminiscent of that on shoegaze band Panchiko's finished version of "Gwen Everest." The monologue at the end reminds me of when I write under my state of psychosis with anger seeping into words and the loose ideas behind them driving the narrative.

"Bodys" is certainly a high on the album, simultaneously be-

ing a cute, introverted love song and hypothetical gay party song with the pseudo-drunk lyrics like "Those are you got some nice shoulders." The only thing hindering the track is the outro by the drummer, 1 Trait Danger.

"Cute Thing" has Toledo singing about lighting his lover's cigarette, going against the rhetoric of "Stop Smoking." There is a tribute to Frank Ocean's vocal prowess and James Brown's presence on stage, and then there's a synth backing later in the song that sounds great.

The lyric "Healthy minds make sexy bodies" is humorous considering how Toledo is very vocal about his mental illness. "I would sleep naked next to you naked" is such an awkward line but it's still iconic, funny and representative of the lust Toledo has for his lover.

"High to Death" flips "Stop Smoking" on its head with Toledo singing "Keep smoking, I love you," which shows how Toledo would sacrifice morals for companionship.

"Famous Prophets (Stars)," the album's 16-minute magnum opus, begins with "Apologies to future mes and yous" and references "Beach Life-in-Death" with the lyric "The ocean washed over your grave, the ocean washed open your grave."

In "Twin Fantasy (Those Boys)," Toledo detaches from the narrative to remind the audience that these lyrics represent a past version of him and his love interest and that they live separately from the real world. He moved on.

Car Seat Headrest is near and dear to my heart as well as my girlfriend's. I tread the fine line between adoration and obsession. Will Toledo is proof I'm not alone in this complex yet addictive struggle. Thank you for sharing something so vulnerable with us, Mr. Toledo.

Rating: 5/5

A love letter to Chili's

by James Fitzpatrick
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Fast-casual restaurants are in a weird spot right now. Red Lobster is cooked, Olive Garden is in a good spot and Chili's is doing better than ever as of late. The latter intrigues me since it never quite left the zeitgeist, though it used to be some sort of joke with that "Welcome to Chili's" Vine. Side note: The creator of that, Adam Perkins, passed away four years ago, so rest in peace.

On that note, let's discuss my ideal Valentine's Day three-course meal from the resurging Chili's, which I indulged in this past Friday on my birthday with friends from The Daily Campus! Afterwards, Noa Climor will provide her own thoughts on the menu.

Chips & Salsa

Arguably the most iconic appetizer throughout the restaurant's history, the thin tortilla chips and mild salsa were a wonderful appetite rejuvenator after waiting 45 minutes for a table, which used to happen to my mom and me all the time. One may argue that an authentic Mexican restaurant beats this Tex-Mex emporium in the chip department — and you'd be right — but nothing wins over nostalgia.

Since my dinner pick surprisingly isn't the massively popular Triple Dipper, I'll go on a tangent here. The three-appetizer combo has urged many potential customers to try the chain again, and this flip on the traditional party sampler appetizer is genius, giving people a choice of spicy, savory and saucy items at a reasonable price.

While I enjoyed the spicy mozzarella sticks, "Big Mouth" mini burgers and boneless chicken, I didn't feel great after trying my first Triple Dipper.

Whether this is due to its ambiguous classification as an entrée or not, I rest my case.

Ultimate Cajun Pasta

Now, it's time to heat up that main. No, seriously, my only gripe with this dish is that my plate was room temperature, though I'd prefer that over a steaming hot fajita skillet. What the Triple Dipper lacks in sustenance is remedied by this full plate of pasta featuring grilled shrimp, chicken and Alfredo sauce, including a piece of garlic toast that rivals New York Bakery's "Texas Toast." That's high praise.

Unlike the snack food that comprises the Triple Dipper, this dish with a kick is a hearty meal that will leave anyone satisfied, though I suppose it's not shareable like everything else mentioned. Personally, this is a moot point since I'd want my own meal in a romantic or individual setting, yet the grand finale can be enjoyed by more than one person. If that sounds like an innuendo, it isn't, but happy Valentine's Day!

Chocolate Chip Cookie Skillet

I mentioned Red Lobster at the beginning of this for good reason. I savored their Ultimate Feast every visit and a chocolate chip cookie skillet with a scoop of vanilla ice cream would await me at the end. The dessert is generally a staple at casual joints but there's context for why I take this dessert over any others.

During the aforementioned Daily Campus Chili's run, a chocolate lava cake and a slice of cheesecake were also ordered, both receiving positive reception. However, the cookie skillet's arrival was preceded by a birthday song and lit with a candle, crowning it my favorite of the bunch. This Valentine's Day will be an ordinary day for me, but the previous Friday was

something special. Much love to my friends at the Daily Campus!

by Noa Climor

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James and I put a lot of thought into what would make the perfect fast-casual Valentine's Day Meal. Truthfully, it was a bit tough to assemble one; there are many options, and everyone has different taste and preferences. However, I was so inspired by James and his sincere appreciation for Chili's as an institution that I too decided to create what I see as the perfect three-course meal from the beloved chain.

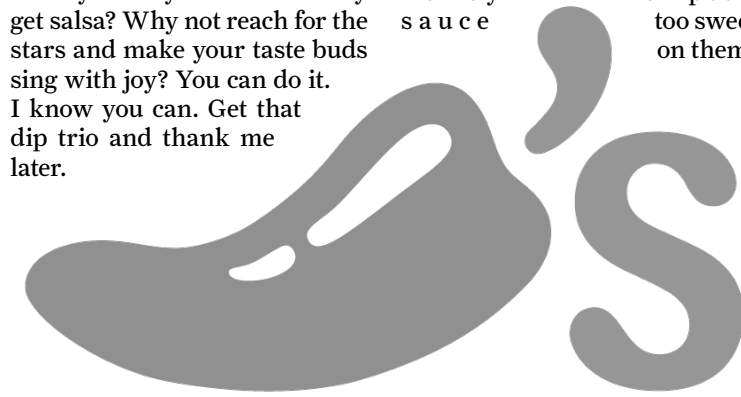
Dip Trio

James, I see your chips and salsa and I raise you this: the dip trio. I first tried Chili's when I went for my birthday last year, and I was thoroughly impressed by the dip trio ordered for the table. The crunch of the chips, the multitude of dips (always order the ranch) and the magic of dining in this mystical restaurant with my dear companions almost brought me to tears.

Love is in the air, so make sure the chips are there too.

Why limit yourself and only get salsa? Why not reach for the stars and make your taste buds sing with joy? You can do it. I know you can. Get that dip trio and thank me later.

essary, for they are beautiful the way they are. I find the honey chipotle sauce too sweet on them.



The main event: the Triple Dipper

Sure, it might be a little basic, but there's nothing wrong with a classic; when I order the Triple Dipper, I choose to get the honey chipotle mozzarella sticks, the southwestern eggrolls, and the classic Chicken Crispers. Ranch is a must, and so is the avocado one the southwestern eggrolls come with. I know perfection when I see it, which is why I don't think messing with the classic Chicken Crispers is nec-

Molten Chocolate Cake

A chocolate cake with a molten chocolate center and ice cream? Say less. I'm not usually keen on getting a dessert post triple dipper, not because it's bad, but because I end up too full. But for Valentine's? Only the best for the people; and I deem this lava cake as the chosen one. Maybe I won't be doing anything crazy, but I know I have a solid recommendation of food if I choose to leave the house.

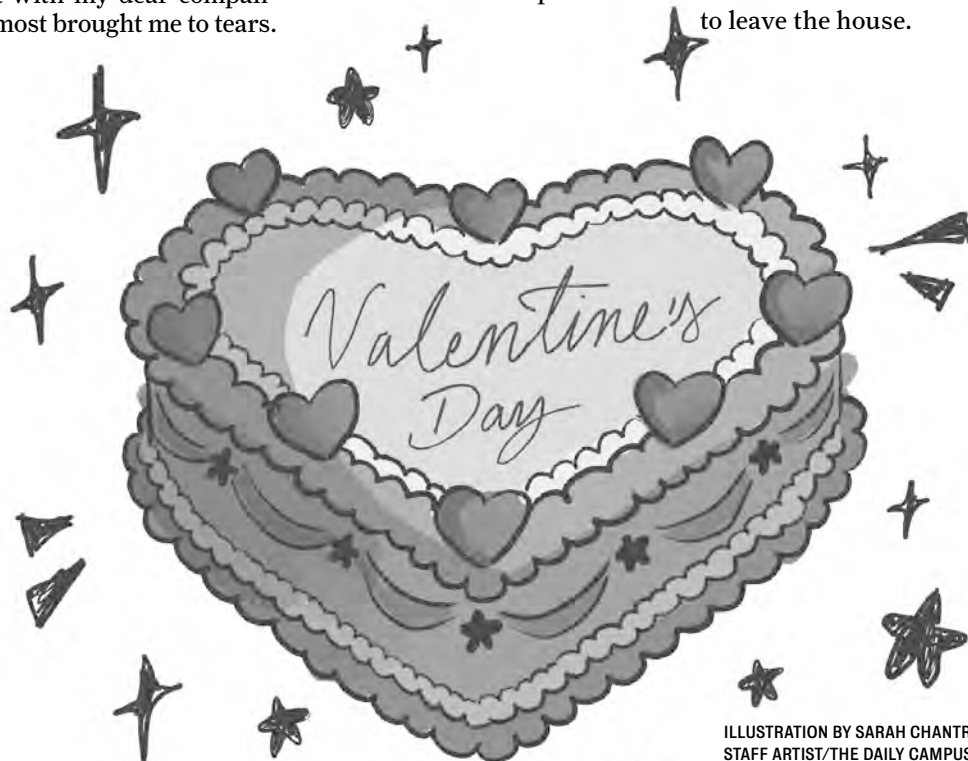


ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH CHANTRES, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Love in Film: Movie recommendations to make your Valentine's Day sparkle

by Noa Climor
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There's nothing better than watching a gorgeous, genuine romantic comedy on the day of love. Whether alone, on a date, hanging out with friends or doing whatever your heart desires, a good movie can transform the day, while a tacky one can ruin it.

"We come to this place for magic," says Nicole Kidman in an AMC commercial, clad in a sparkly striped suit and rocking an impeccable aura. She is correct; movies are an alternate dimension of sorts, where you enter one way and perhaps leave another.

You, my super fabulous readers of the Daily Campus, came to this place for movie recommendations, which I am more than happy to provide. In this unique ranking, you will find my favorite romantic comedies, my least favorite one and a wildcard or two that would be a fabulous watch on the day of love. Enjoy, and please, don't take this too seriously, as I am aware some are not actually rom-coms.

"10 Things I Hate About You" (1999)

We're starting strong with this modern retelling of William Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew." It captured the hearts of millions and is thought of by many to be the best romantic comedy ever made. The movie, starring Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger, is compelling, beautifully shot and involves just the right amount of teen angst for everyone to relate to at least one moment.

The music is curated well, with songs ranging from Joan Jett's "Bad Reputation" to Sis-

ter Hazel's "Your Winter." It is one of my all-time favorite movies and one I absolutely recommend for Valentine's Day.

"But I'm a Cheerleader" (1999)

You can't go wrong with Natasha Lyonne, who plays Megan, and Clea DuVall, who plays Graham. This satirical romantic comedy does break down more serious topics, such as gender norms, the harm of conversion therapy and feeling like you have to conform to society's expectations of you, but it also shows that it's more than okay to be who you are. The theme and colors of true directions, the camp, are overly bright and ring false, and the characters, in the end, discover more about their true identities. It is a wonderful movie for those of us who need a campy cult classic.

"Twilight" (2008)

"But Noa," you say: "Twilight" is not a rom-com!" which is technically true. However, who says you can't treat it like one? The faces Edward Cullen, played by Robert Pattinson, makes when Bella Swan, played by Kristen Stewart, enters his biology lab are priceless. The dialogue also made me laugh harder than some actual comedy films.

I think there's beauty in a cringe movie, and "Twilight" is absolutely that. And I'm not saying it's the worst movie ever. In fact, my 18th birthday party was fully themed around "Twilight": Everyone dressed up as one of the characters — I was Bella — and we had a blast. You, too, can have the day of your dreams with not one, not two, but five sparkly vampire movies.

"Bottoms" (2023)

It's perfection in a film, honestly. "Bottoms," starring Ra-

chel Sennott and Ayo Edibiri, is an absurd and raunchy comedy created by the brilliant mind of Emma Seligman, co-written with Sennott. Josie, played by Edibiri, and PJ, played by Sennott, start a fight club to get with their crushes before graduation. The only problem? Well, that's for you to find out.

While it definitely is not for everyone, it sure was for me. The humor genuinely had me on the floor, and it's so over the top and unapologetic for its content that you can't help but fall in love with the movie. From the bottom of my heart, I recommend this movie for today.

"She's The Man"

Also inspired by Shakespeare — this time, "Twelfth Night," "She's The Man" is witty, hilarious and charming. Some say that it is too predictable, but I say that we need to leave space for fun. What happened to comedy? What happened to laughter? Amanda Bynes displays a flair for comedy and can deliver her lines with the utmost skill and precision.

The number of one-liners I quote from this movie daily needs to be studied. Bynes, who plays Viola Hastings, also doubles as her twin brother Sebastian. Her skilled performance as both twins and the movie's overall plot should be more than enough to convince you to watch this!

All that being said, there is one movie that I truly don't recommend, which is:

"The Kissing Booth" (2018)

This movie does get a lot of hate, but what I dislike about it is the plot. Elle Evans, played by Joey King, and Lee Flynn, played by Joel Courtney, are childhood friends with a strict



ILLUSTRATION BY SAMANTHA HASS, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

list of friendship rules they follow to a T. Of course, one of the rules is that relatives of your bestie are off limits, and unsurprisingly, Evans has a massive crush on Flynn's brother, Noah, played by Jacob Elordi.

I'm not a fan of how the movie went, and I found it a bit cliché, especially since there didn't seem to be a point to some of the characters' decisions. This movie might be for you, but unfortunately, it wasn't for me!

And my final recommendation, my piece de resistance:

"Nosferatu" (2024)

I genuinely think it is better than watching the 2024 adaptation of "Nosferatu" on Valentine's Day. This movie has it all: an unauthorized rendition of "Dracula," gorgeous

scenery and Willem Dafoe. There is much more to be said about the most recent rendition of "Nosferatu," especially about Lily-Rose Depp's impeccable performance and Bill Skarsgard's terrifying Count Orlok.

The hauntingly beautiful scenery, the sickening dread you feel throughout the movie and the realization that you are pulled into something you should not desire to see is horrifying yet fascinating. Robert Eggers dares the viewer to feel a certain way, to feel seduced and to question their beliefs. That, for me, makes it an interesting choice for Valentine's Day.

Hopefully, you have some ideas for your next watch. Happy Valentine's Day!

PICK-UP LINE TIER LIST 2025

S

“MY FRIEND OVER THERE THINKS YOU’RE CUTE” (AND THEN YOU RUN TO WHERE YOU WERE POINTING)

ARE YOU A BEAVER BECAUSE... DAM.

YOU MUST BE TOAD BECAUSE YOU ALWAYS BRING A SMILE TO MY FACE.

ARE YOU A PROBOSCIS MONKEY? BECAUSE I’D LIKE TO NOSE-OME MORE ABOUT YOU SOMETIME.

A

HOW MUCH DID THOSE PANTS COST? BECAUSE THEY ARE 100% OFF AT MINE.



ILLUSTRATION BY KIERA MACDONALD, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS
ILLUSTRATION BY SETH WALLEN, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

B

ARE YOU A LOAN? BECAUSE YOU DEFINITELY HAVE MY INTEREST.

C

ARE YOU FROM TENNESSEE, BECAUSE YOU’RE THE ONLY 10 I SEE.

YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WOULD LOOK GOOD IN? MY ARMS

ARE YOU A BLAZE? BECAUSE YOU BURN ME UP.

HEY GIRL, ARE YOU A MAP? BECAUSE I JUST GOT LOST IN YOUR EYES

F

DID IT HURT WHEN YOU FELL FROM HEAVEN?

I GIVE YOU FIVE OUT OF FIVE BIG BOOMS

DO YOU HAVE A NAME? OR CAN I CALL YOU MINE?

BE MINE

by **Noa Climor**
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“My friend over there thinks you’re cute” (and then you run to where you were pointing). A-Tier. Now this. If someone said that line to me, I would be sold immediately. Honestly, I think the funnier the pickup line the better they are, and this one would make me laugh.

“Did it hurt when you fell from heaven.” F-tier. Uncreative, been done before, not funny nor cute and would not get me at all. I think you must look within yourself and find that creative spark and come up with something better. Don’t fall for this cheesy line, for they did not fall from heaven either.

“I give you five out of five big booms” falls in the questionable tier category. Unfortunately, I would not be able to take anyone that said this to me seriously, but I would laugh and maybe that’s the best thing you can get from this.

by **Mikayla Murphy**
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“Are you from Tennessee, because you’re the only 10 I see.” C-tier. It is overused to say the least, so it gets bumped down a tier. For a pickup line, I like the play on words, but it is not the most creative one out there. This pickup line could work but only if you say it with enough charm or swagger.

“Are you a beaver because... dam.” S-tier. 10/10. A+. I love this line. It makes me laugh every time I say it, so it gets extra points. I like the play on words, and I think it is more creative than the Tennessee one. Unfortunately, this line would work on me.

“You know what you would look good in? My arms.” C-tier. Cheesy and unoriginal. I think I am just not a fan of these types of pickup lines. There are better options if you are being serious, but I think this line could work if you say it in a joking manner.

by **Benjamin Lassy**
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“Are you a blaze? Because you burn me up.” C-tier. So, we begin my rankings strong with an amateur Minecraft pick up line. It’s great if you’re nerding out to blocks, but if your recipient hears this as “Are you ablaze?” instead, then pray they don’t call the fire department.

“You must be Toad because you always bring a smile to my face.” S-tier. I think I would faint if somebody told me this, it’s spot on love-filled stupidity. Now, it is a Super Mario reference, so there’s that caveat, plus the caveat that Toad is a little mushy dude. What are you saying about me, punk?

“Are you a proboscis monkey? Because I’d like to nose-ome more about you sometime.” S-tier. Proboscis monkeys are the primate with the longest nose, but they are also sweet animals. If she knows monkeys, she’s a keeper and this line will land you with a date. This would work on me as well. I love the proboscis monkey profoundly.

by **Maleena Muzio**
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“Do you have a name? Or can I call you mine?” This is simply F-tier. Of course I have a name. And no, sadly (or gladly) you cannot call me yours the second you meet me. Sorry, strong feminist approach, but I do not mess with this pickup line.

“Are you a loan? Because you definitely have my interest.” I give this one a B. Maybe B+ if I am feeling generous. It is FAFSA season, to be fair. But seriously, this one is cute and clever. It does come off as a little boring, lacking the boldness that makes pickup lines so funny. However, it unfortunately would probably work on me.

“How much did those pants cost? Because they are 100% off at mine.” A+. Amazing. Beautiful. Actually, a little creepy. Maybe even horrifying. I might call the police if it is said the wrong way. But if executed correctly, completely hilarious and a great conversation starter. The best way to impress someone is to make them laugh and this will definitely (hopefully) get people laughing.

by **Samantha Brody**
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“Be Mine”: F-tier. Okay, admittedly, this one is awful. It’s outright demanding and I wouldn’t call it much of a pickup line. So, it’s an F-tier — unless, of course, I’m the one saying it and it’s a clever reference to the bingo game I’m playing with my girlfriend (They just called B-9!). Then it’s an S-tier.

“Hey girl, are you a map? Because I just got lost in your eyes”: This pickup line and anything in the same lane is a solid C-tier. It’s uncreative, but if you say it with enough pizzazz and charm, I could see it working. Any lame pickup line is improved if you say it like a dork.

Falling/tripping followed by something related to “I just fell for you”: I’m obsessed, actually. Arguably, all pickup lines only really work if you already have some sort of rapport. This one shows commitment, which is what people like in a relationship (I think). B-tier since you need to do it right and because it’s bad, but bonus points if you keep falling over.

Palentine’s Day: Celebrating friendship

by **Gabrielle Wincherhern**
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I spent over 18 years of my life single. I was young, oblivious and stupid for most of it. To be fair, I largely still am, but I had a good few years when I was aware of the societal tragedy of being single and alone on Valentine’s Day.

Retrospectively, I think this is a bit silly. There are many benefits to being single, after all, and I’m not sure why being in a relationship is always touted as the goal.

In high school, I decided not to be bitter about it. Sure, I didn’t have a lover, but I still had people

I loved — hello to my beloved friends, because I know some of you are reading this. I was going to use Valentine’s Day as an excuse to celebrate them...and also annoy the shit out of them.

One might balk at the idea of this. Valentine’s Day is, after all, traditionally focused on romantic couples. Bringing friends into the mix is not romantic, usually. But to that I say: If you aren’t a little gay with your friends, are you really friends?

Secondly, Valentine’s Day is about love. That’s not limited to only romantic love, which is already constantly emphasized — so why should it hog it again on Valentine’s Day? Gatekeeping Valentine’s Day

isn’t very loving. Thus, I decided to turn Valentine’s Day more into Palentine’s Day.

There are plenty of activities one could do to honor your friends on Valentine’s Day. You could make chocolate-covered strawberries together. You could get them a little gift, like a goodie bag or something. You could go get coffee, boba or a lovely dinner together. You could print out 100 pictures of their celebrity crush and tape them to their door. It doesn’t have to be grand. You know your friends better than I do — think of something that they would enjoy or that you both would enjoy together.

Historically, I have made cards for my friends. It was kind of my

thing back in high school. I’d open up Canva, slap together a .PNG of something they were into at the time against a red background and type out “Happy Valentine’s Day” on the front. Then, I’d type out an inside joke or heartfelt message about how much I appreciated our friendship and them as a person on the back. Finally, I’d print and cut the whole thing out.

For the most part, even though they were just flimsy silly cards, people appreciated it every time. And I felt pleased that even with a gesture as small as a card, I’d managed to remind my friends how much they meant to me.

These past few years, though, I’ll admit it. I haven’t been cel-

brating Palentine’s as much. Not because I stopped being single, because for the most part, I haven’t, I’m just perpetually exhausted. Although I do have a partner now, I still think this year is as good as any to start celebrating Palentine’s again.

I still love my friends, and there still isn’t really another widely celebrated American holiday for showing love. Even if you or your friends don’t have someone who romantically loves you — you still have each other. You’re not totally alone. So why not remind them how much you cherish them — and how much you cherish any opportunity to annoy them — this Valentine’s Day?

Galentine's: The superior holiday

by **Maleena Muzio** | STAFF WRITER | SHE/HER/HERS | maleena.muzio@uconn.edu
 and **Noa Climor** | SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH COORDINATOR | SHE/HER/HERS | noa.climor_mizrahi@uconn.edu

Today might be Valentine's Day, but what we're truly celebrating today is the unsung hero of February: Galentine's day. Although technically it is celebrated on Feb. 13, nothing says true love like spending the day with your best friends.

Maleena Muzio and Noa Climor came up with some recommendations for the best way to spend your Galentine's Day. From fun activities to food, they have it all!

Noa Climor:

I see Galentine's Day as a way of showing appreciation for your closest friends. Is there a better way to do that than on the holiday of love? Personally, I will be spending today in classes and then on a call with some friends while we work on our D&D campaign.

I recommend putting together a list of your favorite things to do with your friends and spending the day doing exactly that although I know it's a school day. That might complicate things, but it's also a Friday! Which hopefully means time to relax and have a little bit of fun.

To start, maybe getting breakfast or a coffee together. I am not on the Storrs campus, so I do lack in the recommendations department for locations there, but what I can say is that no matter where you go, it's important to take the time to appreciate the people you are going with. True friends are hard to come by.

If you are not too busy with classes and other academic activities, I do think a fun walk with friends will help brighten your day. Perhaps you can make a shared playlist and listen together! Sharing things you love, such as music, can bring you closer to your friends and maybe even broaden your taste in music. There could be an artist out there that you have yet to discover that will change your life.

But if you are busy with classes and have exams to cram for, maybe the best way to motivate yourself is a study session with friends. Make Valentine's (or anti-Valentine's) themed foods, decorations and get to work! Taking breaks is important, of course, and what better way to do that than with your pals!

A Galentine's Day party, as Maleena is suggesting, is a lovely way to wrap the day up. Who says you have to go on a date? Society? Pshh. I say: Throw the best party ever with your friends and throw romance out the window (that part is a joke, but don't hesitate to throw a Galentine's rager or even host a chill get together).

Making food together, playing games and catching up are some ways to demonstrate that you care. I think that quality time on a day like today matters most, and it's less about doing something fancy and more about

finding what brings you and your friends joy. If you'd prefer to chill out and watch a movie or two, that's more than okay.

I think that in the end, happiness is different for everyone. If none of these suggestions suit you, that's totally okay! Only you know what makes you and your friends happy, the point of this article is to offer some ideas to get the ball rollin, but take this any way you'd like. What's important is that you have fun and feel the love!

And make sure to take care of yourself. I know that many people feel pressured to be in a relationship, especially today, but I promise you that there's nothing wrong with you if that is not the case. You are important to everyone, and spending the day with the people that care about you? That's the best way for love to shine through.

Maleena Muzio:

If you want to have a good time with friends this February, or you are eternally single, throwing a Galentine's Day celebration might be perfect for you. Even though the holiday is typically organized by groups of women, anyone can participate. Think of it as a sort of "Friendsgiving," but instead of eating food with your friends because you are thankful for them, you are celebrating a holiday about romantic love with your friends because you are alone — just kidding (or not)! Whether or not you were planning on attending a Galentine's Day celebration this year, hopefully this list of exciting activities will inspire you to get together with some friends over the weekend, even if you already have bae to spend the day with. Keep the hearts (and mental health) of your single friends in mind and come together to have a night free of stress and full of fun.

Personally, my girlfriends and I are getting together to throw the ultimate party Friday night. Although Galentine's can be celebrated all day, everything is more fun at night. To set the mood (yes, I am aware of how this sounds) start by putting on a Valentine's Day themed playlist. Send your friends an invite on Spotify to collaborate on a group playlist full of your favorite love songs — no matter how sweet or how outrageous they might be — to play in the background of the event.

Bring food! Homemade sweets, store bought cookies or takeout meals, anything works! Nothing has to be that elaborate, ordering pizza will do. If you are looking for something more creative though, try baking. Perhaps even the famous, "Hear me out" cake; when a group of people bakes a cake and sticks images of their most questionable crushes as toppers on the cake (usually celebrities or fictional characters).

Games can also be played to bring many laughs to a Galentine's party. Original card games, such as "spoons" and "BS" work great with large groups and can be played for a while. "Cards Against Humanity" or "For the Girls" can also be great. However, creating your own games can be just as fun too.

Playing your own version of "Guess Who" or "Headbands" but with people you have been involved with or have had a crush on will keep the group enthusiastically entertained. Another original idea is writing anonymous and ridiculous love letters, putting them in a hat and then having to guess who from the group wrote each letter.

Do not be shy to show your appreciation for your friends on this holiday. Put some effort into the party. Bring decorations: balloons, banners, lights and candles (unless you live in a dorm, obviously).

It is amazing how adding a little pink and red to the room can improve the atmosphere. Alongside that, consider bringing gifts for your friends! You would be surprised at how much somebody will appreciate a couple of chocolates, flowers or homemade cards. I plan to make each of my friends a card with their celebrity crushes and wildly inappropriate phrases on them. But if your friend group is a little more normal... I am sure a store-bought card will do.

Although Valentine's Day is primarily focused on romantic relationships, do not forget that it can also be a day to have fun with the friends you love most. Why not create your own version of the holiday? Feel free to follow any of these suggestions or do your own thing. Just remember, love can be expressed in different ways, and if that means showing up to your friends' dorm with a Luigi Mangione cardboard cutout, then go for it!

Relationship success and fail stories roundtable

We've all been there: You're either the protagonist in a doomed tale of cringey romance or the hero in a saga to finally go on a date with your crush. Love really makes life feel like a movie, although sometimes it's a rom-com and other times it's a horror. Let's see what the Life Section has to say about love stories, both good and bad.

by **Mikayla Murphy** | CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
 SHE/HER/HERS | mikayla.murphy@uconn.edu

This is my time to shine.

Arguably the worst relationship story I have is the three-year-long on-and-off relationship I was in throughout high school. It started as us fake dating, which I feel makes it even worse. It then became an on-and-off relationship and towards the end, it turned into a weird tension-filled friendship where we weren't just friends but not actually together.

Whoever said that your first WLW relationship is the worst thing you'll ever experience was right, because this relationship feels like it took years off my life. High school Mikayla was going through it, but at least that mess has ended since coming to college.

Some other bad relationship stories I have are when two of my friends got cheated on at the same time. Their partners got with each other, and now I was in three triangles throughout my junior year of high school — one of which was with said on-and-off relationship.

On the bright side, I'm in a much happier and healthier relationship now. My goals for 2025 included "no more situationships" and "make better choices" so I think I'm doing pretty good at achieving them.

by **James Fitzpatrick** | ASSOCIATE LIFE EDITOR
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I was going to write a whole article on why it's crazy that I'm helping oversee anything Valentine's Day-related, let alone an entire newspaper edition for the University of Connecticut, but I'll truncate whatever melancholy I have here instead.

Social anxiety has plagued me since the dawn of time, so working up the courage to ask anyone out has been a challenge. It's happened once or twice but didn't result in anything fruitful. I've also had a gnarly sweating problem that I've just been able to remedy, so I've always been hesitant about holding hands and physical touch as a whole.

I've had my share of one-sided friendships with manipulative people but none compared to one I had a few years ago. The first month of knowing her, all was well, until it wasn't. The hatred towards everyone and everything, including herself, was persistent no matter the day or what we were doing. Whether chilling at her place or across the country at Universal Studios Orlando, the glass wasn't half-full or half-empty. It was shattered on the floor and we were both rolling in the shards of misery.

Though there was a chance to take it to the next level, I soon realized I would've been dragged down the same hole she was wallowing in, so I restrained myself. And after the second expensive Universal trip and umpteenth visit to Six Flags New England, I Superman'd my way out of that and never looked back.

Am I the asshole for ditching someone I was that close to for almost half a year? Maybe, but I'm the only one who knows the full context behind this weird friendship-situationship hybrid, and I believe I was justified in saying goodbye and ghosting. Thanks for listening to my TED Talk, and above all else, don't bring me to an amusement park. They're only amusing for so long.

by **Benjamin Lassy** | LIFE EDITOR
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Oh boy, relationship stories. I've really only had one relationship in my life, which had its expected ups and downs and an unfortunate ending. Yet, most of my relationship stories come from relationships that never came to be: I'm sort of a chronic introvert when it comes to emotions.

First, in middle school — the funniest era for any relationship — I had a crush on a girl in my class. It was an innocent crush and having no social skills or a chance at a real relationship, I remember our eighth grade summer reading giving me a gift in disguise that was hidden so well I didn't see it.

Out of a long list of books we could pick from for summer reading, she and I picked the same book. Better yet, we were the only two who picked the book. While the book title has escaped my memory, I do remember it being about a sinking ship ... how telling.

We were in the book review class for the first week of class together, and though we only met in that room once or twice, it was the perfect time to shoot my shot. We did have a similar energy and vibe, but nope, middle school Ben decided to cower in fear at the thought and not pick up on any cues or even really consider that maybe it wouldn't hurt to ask.

Does that count as a fail? I mean, it's middle school, so what can you do? Another big fail for me came from an earnest attempt to flatter a girl through my beautiful songwriting skills. If you consider rubbing your ears with sandpaper beautiful, that is.

I sang about love like a prepubescent rooster who can't quite crow. She was kind enough to hold back the laughter, but wow, I am not doing that again, and I encourage anyone who is thinking of serenading a partner to attempt to serenade an actual audience first. If the audience claps, maybe, just maybe, you're good enough to play to your loved one. Though, I admit, maybe there's something sweet about being so naively vulnerable.



ILLUSTRATION BY ALEXA PAPPAS, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Special
The Daily Campus
Feb 14 2025

Valentine's Day Issue

ILLUSTRATION BY LILLIAN LAFEMINA, ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Life

The best anti-Valentine's Day songs

by Dan Stark | STAFF WRITER | HE/HIM/HIS | daniel.stark@uconn.edu

Last year, I wrote about the best songs to listen to on Valentine's Day, which featured numerous selections perfect for dancing the night away with your lover. This year, I'm taking a look at the opposite, assembling songs for all my fellow single warriors and hopeless romantics. Is it a more depressing list than last year? Absolutely. Are these songs still worthy of being blasted alone on Friday night? You bet. With that, let's take a look at the best anti-Valentine's Day playlist for 2025.

Fleetwood Mac - "The Chain"

It was hard to pick just one Fleetwood Mac song for this list given how most of their songs from the late 1970s are about their relationships falling apart. But no song is more emblematic of this than "The Chain," the centerpiece of the 1977 best-selling album "Rumors."

Built on a brooding dobro riff by Lindsey Buckingham, the song perfectly evokes the iciness of a breakup. The use of three singers — particularly the vocal interplay between Buckingham and Stevie Nicks in the chorus — hammers this home, sounding like two lovers breaking up through song. It's the perfect post-breakup song, especially if that breakup unfortunately happened right before Valentine's Day.

Smoking Popes - "Just Broke Up"

"Just Broke Up" by Smoking Popes, a 1990s pop punk band, is a song that's not vague in the

slightest of what it's about. The song is built on the repeated line "just broke up with my girlfriend," sung by frontman Josh Caterer in a way that sounds like he's doing his best Morrissey impression. This is contrasted with an upbeat, slightly up-tempo arrangement highlighted by a smooth guitar solo.

Clocking in at only two minutes and four seconds, it's the shortest song on this list. But it gets to the point and is incredibly catchy, which is everything I want in a pop-punk breakup song.

Nazareth - "Love Hurts"

When I was putting this list together, this was the first song that came to mind. Originally released by The Everly Brothers, the Scottish band Nazareth turned it from a folk deep track to an emotional power ballad in 1974 with incredible results.

Singer Dan McCafferty delivers a vocal performance for the ages,

belting the song's emotional lyrics with great intensity. There are times where you can hear the raspiness of his voice increase to hit the high notes, adding even more emotion and pain to the vocals. You can practically hear his heart breaking during lines like "I know it isn't true." Combined with an echo-laden guitar arpeggio, this is an all-timer about love and heartbreak.

The Rolling Stones - "Memory Motel"

Remember that summer fling that you haven't seen since then? Mick Jagger and the rest of The Rolling Stones reminisce on that in the 1976 deep track "Memory Motel." Built on a slow piano-driven arrangement, Jagger sings about a girl he calls "Hannah Honey," whom he spent the spring of 1975 with while the Stones retreated in Montauk, N.Y. He clearly misses her, but now she's "just a memory of a love that used to be" and "a love that used to mean so much to me."

It's the perfect song about missing a summer love, dripping with nostalgia with every chord and lyric.

The Police - "Every Breath You Take"

I can't believe we still need to have this discussion in 2025. But if you're with your partner and play "Every Breath You Take" on Valentine's Day, you need to get your ears checked. This isn't some song about being there for your partner no matter what. It's the biggest stalker anthem ever written.

It's not like Sting is trying to hide it either since it sounds like he's watching someone's house while singing it. It's mind-boggling to me how one of the most ominous-sounding songs ever made became so misinterpreted, especially when people have used it as a wedding song. Stay far, far away from this one.

John Mayer - "Heartbreak Warfare"

Fights are one of the worst parts of relationships, especially when there's a clear disconnect between two lovers. John Mayer explores this beautifully in "Heartbreak Warfare," the opening track of his 2010 album "Battle Studies." The lyrics speak of a man in the midst of a communication breakdown with his lover, and he's trying to hide how much he's hurting with the line, "Watch my face as I pretend to feel no pain." But he's resolved to work through what they're going through, singing, "I don't care if we don't sleep at all tonight, let's just fix this whole thing now." For anyone going through a rough stretch with their partner, Mayer reminds you in "Heartbreak Warfare" that there's still hope even in the darkest moments.



The best Valentine's Day songs

by Justine Pearlman | ASSOCIATE DIGITAL EDITOR | HER/HER/HERS | justine.pearlman@uconn.edu

For the perfect Valentine's Day, you'll need the perfect soundtrack. Luckily, love songs are far from a rare commodity. Whether or not you have a partner to celebrate with, there's an almost contagious romance to the holiday that can appeal to anyone willing to let the cheerful spirit infect them. To enhance your Valentine's Day atmosphere, I've compiled a list of songs that are sure to warm your heart regardless of your relationship status. If you love love, this is for you.

The Cure - "Friday I'm in Love"

This aptly named 1992 alternative rock hit is the perfect anthem for this year's Friday-falling Valentine's Day. Seemingly by pure coincidence, Feb. 14, 1992 — the same year that the song was released — also happened to fall on a Friday. The song's meaning has multiple different interpretations, but I find the most compelling argument to be that it signifies the healing brought on by the presence of one's lover.

Everything in the world might feel like it's going wrong but by being with the one you love, the good makes the bad disappear. In that moment, all you can feel is love. The message is simple yet beautiful.

The Flamingoes - "I Only Have Eyes for You"

The 1950s marked a golden age for love songs. From The Penguins' "Earth Angel" to Johnny Cash's "I Walk the Line" and The Everly Brothers' "All I

Have to Do is Dream," the music of the decade was immersed in a rose-tinted world of romance.

The imagery of this 1959 Flamingoes song is really what drew me in. "I Only Have Eyes for You" describes a love that is all-consuming; everything else falls away when in the presence of this person. When listening to this song, I'm immediately transported into a scene of two lovers looking deeply into each other's eyes as the background blurs and the music muffles. Nothing else matters except for the other person in that moment. This lyrically and sonically beautiful song makes for the perfect Valentine's Day slow dance.

Frank Sinatra - "Strangers in the Night"

When it comes to love songs, Frank Sinatra is the cream of the crop. His smooth crooning paired with a melodic symphony makes for a beautifully romantic atmosphere in his bal-

lads. Any of these songs could easily fit into this playlist, but there is a certain magical quality to this 1966 release that's sure to make your heart flutter.

The orchestral arrangement of this song conjures up a cinematic montage of a grand love affair. The lyrics romanticize the beauty of chance encounters, illustrating a scenario of love at first sight. If you wish you had someone to share in the romance of this song with, just remember: Love may be "just a glance away, a warm embracing dance away!"

The Beach Boys - "Forever"

This dreamy Beach Boys hit is reminiscent of the folk-rock genre that emerged in the '60s from Laurel Canyon, a neighborhood in Los Angeles, Calif. Singer/songwriter Brian Wilson briefly lived here, and there's something about this song that feels so comforting. It's the kind of love you feel in a long-term relationship when you feel

completely safe with your partner.

As the title suggests, it's all about going the distance. The lyrics "If the song I sing to you / could fill your heart with joy I'd sing forever" are a testament to his commitment to providing his lover with eternal happiness. If you see forever in your relationship, this is the song for you.

Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeroes - "Home"

Paul McCartney said it best: "Some people want to fill the world with silly love songs, and what's wrong with that?" This 2009 indie-folk hit is sickeningly sweet for sure, but even the most cold-hearted person in the world couldn't possibly keep from smiling at this sappy love ballad.

I liken the feeling of this song to warm sunshine hitting your face or those special moments shared with your partner when you're giddy in love and cannot stop grinning. This song is what love is all about — feeling at home with your partner.

Edison Lighthouse - "Love Grows (Where My Rosemary Goes)"

One-hit wonder Edison Lighthouse's claim to fame "Love Grows (Where My Rosemary Goes)" playfully encapsulates the spirit of unconditional love. With all the love interest's flaws considered, the narrator's infatuation remains steadfast. Even though "she talks kinda lazy / And people say she's crazy / And her life's a mystery," he insists that "love grows where my Rosemary goes / And nobody knows like me." Her flaws make her all the more unique and alluring.

Though the song is poppy and upbeat, there's an important message to take away: Love means seeing your partner for the good and the bad, but still choosing to love them anyway. So, this Valentine's Day, remember that what makes you different is part of what makes you loved.

A cynic's guide to Valentine's Day

by Stephanie Dickinson | CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT | SHE/HER/HERS | stephanie.dickinson@uconn.edu

There is nowhere as dangerous as a flower shop on Feb. 14. It is the last bastion of hope for the doomed and the desperate — the final stop before husbands and boyfriends hurl themselves into the judgmental abyss of a year's worth of expectations.

As a washed-up floral assistant, I know the ritual and I know it well. I've seen the carnage firsthand and miraculously lived to tell the tale. Here are a few things I've learned from behind the register:

The early bird gets the worm

9 a.m. — They're off to the races! The true romantics, the ones who've had their orders placed for weeks, waltz in with the confidence of men who have nothing to fear. These smug bastards sign their receipts with a flourish and

waltz out, confident that tonight will be a triumph of wine, candlelight and sweet nothings.

5 p.m. — The second wave arrives, convinced they can play off last-minute efforts as a grand gesture. They move with false confidence, trying to look as though they know what they're doing. It's the hesitation in their eyes that betrays them, the not-so-casual glances at the clock, the way they hover uncertainly over piles of cards, teddy bears and arrangements.

7 p.m. — A black cloud of gloom descends over the shop. The less said about this crowd, the better.

They wander through the aisles aimlessly, clutching credit cards like rosary beads, praying for salvation. Everything within reach is fair game — something, anything to take the pressure off.

What do women want, anyway?

The scene plays out in a familiar routine: men who couldn't tell a dandelion from a daisy stand slack-jawed in front of the refrigerator, eyes darting between seemingly endless options. Eventually their panicky gaze lands on me.

"What kind of flowers does she like?" I ask. The question

is invariably met with a look of dismay, as if they expected me to have the answer.

"Uh... red?" They finally manage, settling on the safest, most obvious option. It's a classic move, a Hail Mary in the fourth quarter. They don't know what she really likes, what would make her smile — hell, they probably couldn't even tell you her favorite color.

The bigger the bouquet, the bigger the mistake

Ah, yes! Because nothing says "I'm sorry" like \$200 worth of roses wrapped in enough cellophane to fill a landfill. Forgot an anniver-

sary? Got caught swiping through dating apps? Whatever the offense, the connection is unmistakable.

Guys who buy small bouquets are in love. Guys who buy the whole garden are in trouble. They're all the same: sweating bullets, asking me to "make it look really good," as if the overpriced floral monstrosity is their ticket off the living room couch.

Then again, maybe I'm being cynical. Maybe all these hopeless customers really are trying their best, in the only way they know how. Maybe it's not about finding the perfect combination of flowers or getting everything exactly right. Maybe, just maybe, it's the thought that counts — or maybe I've just inhaled too much pollen.