



## Innovate Labs opens third location at UConn Hartford

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Innovate Labs has cut the ribbon on a new maker space location at the University of Connecticut's satellite campus in downtown Hartford. The Hartford branch is the third Innovate Labs location to open, after one each at the main campus and in Stamford.

On the program webpage, Innovate Labs describes itself as "an educational research lab providing students of all disciplines with opportunities and resources to learn, explore, and develop industry-valued skills outside the classroom around emerging technology and analytics."

The new Innovate Labs space in Hartford, located inside the Business Learning Center complex, offers students access to technologies like 3D printers, robotics and "tech kits" based around emerging technologies. They've identified a number of different fields related to technology, like data visualization, ecology and the "internet of things" and developed the kits with varying levels of difficulty — allowing students of any level of knowledge to learn these concepts according to

its webpage.

The program is an offshoot of the Operations and Information Management (OPIM) department of the UConn School of Business, and hosts numerous events and workshops designed around problem-solving and exploration of future technologies. OPIM uses Innovate Labs as just one pillar of the Digital Fron-

tiers Initiative, designed to improve workforce training and skills development.

One of the main goals of the Digital Frontiers Initiative is to serve Connecticut businesses through research and workforce development, according to UConn Today. The department joins extracurricular opportunities like Innovate Labs with the

School of Business curriculum, where students can take classes in emerging technology and artificial intelligence. As part of UConn's goals to solve complex problems in business, the Digital Frontiers Initiative allows students to explore different avenues and ideas in a sandbox environment through Innovate Labs.

Innovate Labs also regularly sponsors on-campus events designed to engage students to learn about new technology and how it could be applied to a variety of career paths and lifestyles. Previously, OPIM has sponsored a series of "coffee chats," which they describe as "an intimate, moderated conversation" between working business professionals and groups of students. Other events have focused on robotics, programming and workshops to teach students skills in new technologies.

Another element of the program is that Innovate Labs is managed in collaboration with several student's lab specialists, each of whom focus on different technologies and help support teaching and interactive learning with the program.

Students can visit the three Innovate Labs spaces at the School of Business building room 391 in Storrs-Mansfield, at the University Place complex room 310 in Stamford and at the new location in the Business Learning Center room 120 in Hartford.

For more information about Innovate Labs, visit [innovatelabs.business.uconn.edu](http://innovatelabs.business.uconn.edu) and for UConn's Digital Frontiers Initiative, visit [digitalfrontiers.business.uconn.edu](http://digitalfrontiers.business.uconn.edu).



UConn students prepare their VEX robot to download code at the RoboTalent showcase. The new Innovate Labs location in Hartford, Conn. offers access to robotics and other technologies. PHOTO BY SAMANTHA BRODY/THE DAILY CAMPUS

## UConn Hosts Raas competition with teams from all over country

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On Feb. 8, students from colleges all over the country traveled to the University of Connecticut to participate in the first annual "Rang de Storrs." Rang de Storrs is a Raas competition, which is a traditional folk-dance originating from Gujarat, India according to the Raas All Stars webpage.

This event was coordinated entirely by UConn students, stemming from the 34 members of the Rang de Storrs Board. This board was led by four directors: Samveda Menon, Pardhip Nair, Sidharth Masarur and Shravani Daptardar.

"Board members were involved as direct planners of this event, each with individual positions and roles. This event would not have been possible without their swift adjustments, especially when we made the call on Friday night to switch to a modified snowstorm schedule and had to rework all of our timings during an all-nighter with our entire board," said Menon, sixth-semester molecular and cellular biology major.

Additionally, 24 students were selected to be liaisons, who guided the competing teams and helped them navigate the Northern Connecticut and Hartford areas, according to Menon.

Eight teams arrived to compete in the competition: Northeastern Nakhraas, University of Florida Gatorraas, University of Central Florida Knightraas, Rutgers University Raga, George Washington University Raas, Purdue University Raas, University of South Florida SoFlo Raas and WashU Raas. The teams arrived on Friday.

The Rang de Storrs team had "organized a Friday mixer event where teams arrived, got to meet each other and played games to determine what order they would perform. On Saturday, teams arrived at the venue and put on a spectacular show for the audience of over 450 people from across Connecticut," according to Masarur, sixth-semester biomedical engineering major.

The extreme weather did require some changes in the schedule for the event, according to the board of directors. "The snow forced us to move up our timings across the board. We had to move up our morning tech (practice) times and then start our show earlier than the original time. It required constant and great communication from our entire board, which they were able to do seamlessly. We appreciate our entire 34-person board for their adaptability and putting this event on despite the challenges. Everybody worked to understand and give teams a five-star experience despite



The Rang de Storrs Raas competition was held in Storrs, Conn. on Feb. 8, 2025. Raas is a traditional folk-dance originating from Gujarat, India. PHOTOGRAPH FROM RAASALLSTARS INSTAGRAM

the snow throwing a wrench in our plans," said Nair, sixth-semester mathematics and statistics major.

At the end of the event, the judges crowned Purdue Raas first place, Northeastern Nakhraas second place, and UF Gatorraas third place, according to the Rang de Storrs Instagram account.

"Even Raas All-Stars themselves were all saying that this was one of the best

competitions they had been to," said Daptardar, sixth-semester analytics and information management major.

The event was such a success that plans are already being made for "Rang de Storrs '26," according to the board of directors.

"The whole experience [of the event] was surreal. As members of a Raas team ourselves, we had always been on the receiving end of these

competitions' hospitality and planning, so to be the one executing it all was an amazing experience. The weekend was a blur because of how much there was to do and how fast we had to make changes, but after the event was over, taking a step back made us realize that this was something we'd done, and our months of hard work had paid off, as teams and UConn students," Daptardar said.

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## News

# Doctors order ‘absolute rest’ for Pope Francis while he’s being treated for a respiratory infection

ROME (AP) — Doctors on Saturday prescribed “absolute rest” for Pope Francis and modified the treatment for his respiratory tract infection, the Vatican said, a day after the 88-year-old pope was admitted to a hospital following a weeklong bout of bronchitis.

On doctors’ orders, Francis won’t deliver his traditional Sunday noon blessing, which he could have done from his hospital room if he was well enough.

The Argentine pope, a known workaholic who keeps up a grueling pace despite his many ailments, was admitted to Rome’s Gemelli hospital on Friday after his bronchitis worsened. It was his fourth hospitalization since his 2013 election and raised questions about his increasingly precarious health.

Preliminary tests showed that he had a respiratory tract infection, which was confirmed Saturday. In a late afternoon bulletin, the Vatican said that Francis had no fever on Saturday and that tests showed improvement in some parameters.

Francis slept well during a quiet first night in the hos-

pital, ate breakfast, read the newspapers and received the Eucharist on Saturday, alternating rest with prayer and reading during the afternoon, the Vatican said.

The Vatican canceled his audiences through Monday at least.

Francis, who had part of one lung removed after a lung infection when he was a young man, has kept up a frenetic pace of late. He has packed his days with private audiences while taking on the added obligations of steering the Catholic Church through its Holy Year.

Starting at Christmas, he has had Jubilee events nearly every other weekend, including one honoring the armed forces last weekend in which he presided over a chilly outdoor Mass, despite having already been diagnosed with bronchitis, and advice to stay indoors.

On Monday alone, he met separately with the Vatican ambassador to Croatia, a group of visiting bishops from Madagascar, the European Union’s foreign policy chief, a candidate to be the next UNESCO chief, the rector of the grand mosque of Paris and Nikas Safronov, a Russian painter.

This weekend, he was supposed to have presided over a Jubilee audience for artists, celebrate Mass for them and then on Monday, meet with them at Rome’s famed Cinecittà film studios. Instead, they and thousands of other pilgrims gathered and prayed for the pope in a basilica on Saturday morning.

“Pope Francis is always pushing himself, he always wants to fulfil his commitments at all costs,” said the

Rev. Enzo Fortunato, communications director for St. Peter’s Basilica. “And then not to make the situation worse ‘Holy Father that’s enough now.’ And he obeyed, he obeyed.”

Francis, who is prone to respiratory infections in winter, was diagnosed with bronchitis on Feb. 6, but had continued to hold daily audiences in his Vatican hotel suite. But he handed off his speeches for an aide to read aloud, saying he was having trouble breathing.

“To facilitate his recovery, the medical staff prescribed absolute rest,” a Vatican statement said.

Francis has other health problems as well and this marks his fourth time in the papal suite on the 10th floor of Rome’s Gemelli hospital. He uses a wheelchair, walker or cane when moving around his apartment and recently fell twice, hurting his arm and chin.

In 2021, he had 33 centimeters (13 inches) of his large

intestine removed because of a narrowing of the colon. He had further abdominal surgery in 2023 to remove intestinal scar tissue and repair a hernia. During another 2023 hospitalization, he was diagnosed with what he later said was “an acute and strong pneumonia in the lower part of the lungs.”

Sometimes bronchitis can lead to pneumonia, a deeper and far more serious infection of the lungs’ air sacs. Doctors may detect pneumonia by listening for a crackling or whistling sound in the lungs while the patient breathes, but often other tests are needed including a chest X-ray and pulse oximetry that measures how much oxygen is in the blood.

Treatment varies by severity but can include providing oxygen through a nasal tube or mask, intravenous fluids — and treatment of the underlying cause of the infection.



A marble statue of late Pope John Paul II is backdropped by the Agostino Gemelli Polyclinic in Rome, Saturday, Feb. 15, 2025, where Pope Francis was hospitalized Friday after a weeklong bout of bronchitis worsened and is receiving drug therapy for a respiratory tract infection.

(AP PHOTO/GREGORIO BORGIA)

## Denver Public Schools sues to stop Trump administration policy allowing ICE agents in schools

(AP) — Denver Public Schools became the first U.S. school district Wednesday to sue the Trump administration challenging its policy allowing ICE immigration agents in schools.

Colorado’s largest public school district argued in the federal lawsuit that the policy has forced schools to divert vital educational resources and caused attendance to plummet.

“DPS is hindered in fulfilling its mission of providing education and life services to the students who are refraining from attending DPS schools for fear of immigration enforcement actions occurring on DPS school grounds,” the lawsuit states.

The federal lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem says the Trump administration hasn’t provided “good reason” for rescinding the rules nor adequately considered or addressed the fallout.

Last month, President Donald Trump lifted longtime rules restricting immigration enforce-

ment near sensitive locations, including schools. The announcement came as the new president seeks to make good on campaign promises to carry out mass deportations.

“Denver is standing up for its children and families and protecting the right of all children, regardless of their immigration status, to attend public schools,” Elora Mukherjee, director of the Immigrants’ Rights Clinic at Columbia Law School, said in an email.

Denver Public Schools serve more than 90,000 students — about 4,000 of which are immigrants, according to the lawsuit, which cites 2023-2024 school year numbers. More than half of the students are Hispanic or Latinx.

The city of Denver has seen an increase in migrants recently. Since 2023, about 43,000 people have arrived in the city from the U.S. southern border, according to the lawsuit.

“Parents across Denver enroll their children in public



An American flag hangs in a classroom as students work on laptops in Newlon Elementary School, in Denver, Aug. 25, 2020.

(AP PHOTO/DAVID ZALUBOWSKI, FILE)

schools believing that while at school, their children will be educated and enriched without fear the government will enforce immigration laws on those premises,” the lawsuit said.

The school district says it has had to devote a lot of time

and resources to adding policies that keep students safe and training faculty and staff on how to respond to people claiming they are conducting immigration enforcement at schools.

Denver Public Schools also want to see DHS publish the

directive publicly, saying that not being able to view the change in policy has impeded their ability to prepare for it, according to the lawsuit.

The Trump administration did not immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press seeking comment.

## 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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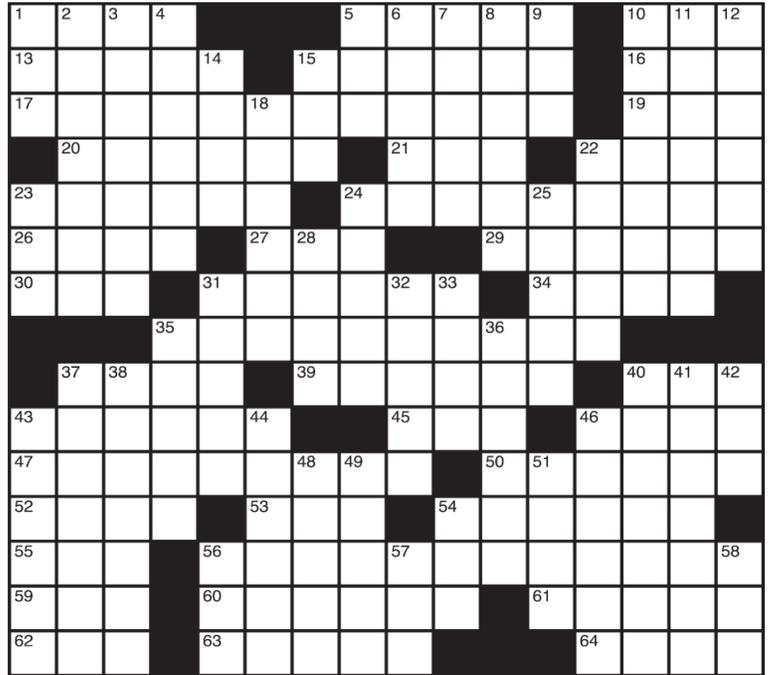
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# Study Break

## THE DAILY CAMPUS

# Crossword and Sudoku

- ACROSS**
- 1 Reading while propped up by pillows, say
  - 5 Peach
  - 10 Casual greetings
  - 13 Black bird
  - 15 "It's our time to shine!"
  - 16 German cry
  - 17 \*Completely and utterly incorrect
  - 19 Quilting party
  - 20 Texas city that forms the Petroplex with Midland
  - 21 Activist Yoko
  - 22 Venue
  - 23 Worldwide social welfare org.
  - 24 \*Cheat sheets
  - 26 Lease
  - 27 Meadow
  - 29 Expression of awe
  - 30 NFC East team, on scoreboards
  - 31 Pre-GPS navigation aid
  - 34 Rugrats
  - 35 \*Tries to uncover old scandals, say
  - 37 Wineglass part
  - 39 Pricey property
  - 40 Gas additive brand
  - 43 Like meat rubs
  - 45 Air marshal's org.
  - 46 Formal address
  - 47 \*Thai dish also called "drunken noodles"
  - 50 More svelte
  - 52 Midmonth time
  - 53 As well
  - 54 Groom-to-be
  - 55 Knock
  - 56 Change for a dollar, and what can be found at the starts of the answers to the starred clues
  - 59 "The Bear" Emmy winner Edebiri
  - 60 "Sense and Sensibility" novelist Jane
  - 61 \_\_\_ Lawrence College
  - 62 Acid
  - 63 Dough
  - 64 Actor Rogen

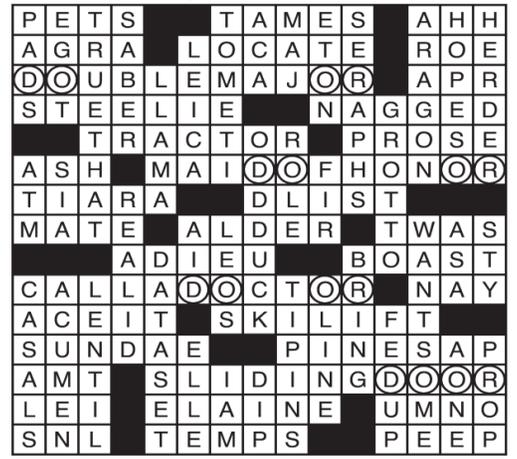


By Brian Callahan

2/19/25

- DOWN**
- 1 Sound in a vet's office
  - 2 "My eye!"
  - 3 Ducking
  - 4 Catch a hint of
  - 5 Sound in a vet's office
  - 6 Blunder
  - 7 Tea of "Madam Secretary"
  - 8 Chimpanzee kin
  - 9 "Sense and Sensibility" director Lee
  - 10 Savanna or steppe
  - 11 Lipton offerings
  - 12 "Puh-leeze"
  - 14 \_\_\_ ring
  - 15 Aryna Sabalenka's org.
  - 18 Pinned item on many a pol's lapel
  - 22 Übertrendy
  - 23 Continental breakfast vessel
  - 24 Literature Nobelist Albert
  - 25 \_\_\_ Dame
  - 28 Simplicity
  - 31 Pop singer Mann
  - 32 Likely will, with "is"

### Tuesday's Puzzle Solved



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2/19/25

- 33 Old-school organizers, briefly
- 35 Knocks to the canvas
- 36 Roma's land
- 37 Times for pampering
- 38 Procter & Gamble detergent pack
- 40 Genuine
- 41 Squirrel, in slang
- 42 Each
- 43 Feature of a well-thrown football
- 44 Way out of the way?
- 46 Seasonal mall workers
- 48 Menu opener
- 49 Major artery
- 51 Corn units
- 54 Good times
- 56 Terrif
- 57 Logician's letters
- 58 [Finger on lips]

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

Solution to Tuesday's puzzle

2/19/25

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

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](http://sudoku.org.uk).

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# U.S. DEMOCRACY & HUMAN RIGHTS: AT A CROSSROADS?

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A panel discussion titled “U.S. Democracy & Human Rights at a Crossroads” was held in the Konover Auditorium in The Dodd Center for Human Rights on Feb. 18. Kathryn Libal, director of the Gladstein Human Rights Institute, and introduced the panelists as well as the moderator and Christopher Dodd Chair in Human Rights Practices, James Waller.

There were four panelists participating in the discussion: Jason Chang, the director of the American & Asian Studies Institute; Evelyn Simien, director of the African Studies Institutes; Sandy Grande, director of Native American & Indigenous Studies and Charles Venator-Santiago, director of El Instituto. Waller opened the panel with a discussion about how after the cold war, there was optimism that democracy would “March forward, not retreat.” Instead, a breakdown of democratic ideals ensued, and Waller fears that this breakdown has reached the U.S. “democracies fade like the end of the day,” Waller said.

After this introduction, Waller asked his first question to the panelists: Do they believe Democracy in the U.S. is at a crossroads? And what does that mean for the protection of human rights?

Chang answered first, saying that U.S. democracy has always been at a crossroads. He described that in order to have an effective democracy, we need to trust our peers, make effort in using our rights and find joy in protecting human rights. We should also continuously find new human rights frontiers to fight for.

Chang also highlighted how there is nearly endless money in the U.S. for the police and military. Chang also made the argument that the Democrats hold a supermajority in Connecticut due to their stranglehold over military contracts.

Simien used an analogy to associate U.S. democracy with that of someone who has a chronic disease. She says that the patient forgets that events like Jan. 6 happened.

According to Simien, there should be a debate about if democracy has a terminal illness, and what medication or therapy it would need to cure it.

As a political scientist, Simien views our democracy as her latest patient. She believes that while there are some symptoms that are reversible, they have been identified too late and there’s not much we can do about them. She recommends that U.S. democracy is put into a hospice care for this analogy.

Venator-Santiago plays devil’s advocate in saying that the U.S. is not democratic at all, as the president is elected via electoral college. He added that California has almost 10

times the population of Connecticut, but they receive the same amount of representation in the Senate.

As a Puerto Rican, Venator-Santiago said his family were considered terrorists for trying to build an independent Puerto Rico. He concluded his comments by running through the major actions taken by presidents like Thomas Jefferson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Richard Nixon during their administrations.

Waller moved on with his second question: Is there anything we could do to engage in a healthy dialogue and respectful disagreement at UConn?

Simien argued that education should be moved out of the classroom and into the community. She suggested this could be made possible by collaborating with grassroots social justice organizations. She stated that to “save democracy,” collective action is necessary. Americans must be invested to change democracy and make it accessible for everyone, including the most vulnerable, according to Simien.

Following Simien, Grande argued that it has become hard to enter intellectual spaces because you can’t find the information to do so. She cited several contributing factors to trend including the erosion of trusted and knowledgeable sources of information, book-banning and attacks on the universities and the press.

Grande emphasized the

widening wealth inequality between Americans as being the main factor for the dissolution of this discussion culture. There are 800 billionaires in the U.S. and the top three richest men in America have as much money as the bottom half of Americans. Grande argued that fighting against this polarized inequality should be the goal.

Venator-Santiago argues that we should take advantage of the skills we learn at UConn and use them in the service of others. He shared an anecdote of how a legislator asked him to find a way to decrease energy costs in Connecticut. Venator-Santiago gave the problem to a research assistant, who was able to find a way to reduce costs by 60%.

Chang went last and advocated for UConn to foster a discussion culture by increasing people’s “vocabulary of action.” According to Chang, one major action — like voting — will not completely save a democracy. UConn needs to work on funding programs, research and activists who can act for democracy, Chang claimed.

As part of a capstone program, Chang teaches Deepa Iyer’s work on a “social change ecosystem,” so that he can drill in her idea of doing things together because we are stronger together.

Waller moved on to his last question: Is there a possibility that the story of U.S. democracy can lead to a happy ending?

Grande went first, as she wanted to exclaim that to foster dialogue at UConn, UConn should stop arresting its students. The statement had the most rapturous applause of the whole event. As for U.S. democracy, Grande believes that if this democracy wants to survive, it will need to look at other democracies.

Venator-Santiago pushed for the idea of equality. Now is an opportunity to spring into action and fix a failing institution, according to Venator-Santiago. He added that this should be a collective endeavor.

Chang first remarked that the U.S. is an empire, and an entity that is very capable in creating violence. Likewise, so is Connecticut with how entrenched some Connecticut companies are within the military industrial complex, Chang argued. The resources used to prop up this complex should be shared, according to Chang. “We put [the resources] towards each other,” and help future generations. He concluded that it could take a lot of work, but it can lead to new paths.

Lastly, Simien responded that when she heard Waller’s question, she began thinking about a laundry list of problems that we could not solve. But she looks towards her students and their ideas, actions and strategies to find inspiration. After these students graduate, she hopes they value each other’s lives and hopefully work together for a better future.



The Dodd Center for Human Rights hosts “U.S. Democracy and Human Rights at a Crossroads” in Storrs, Conn. on Feb. 18, 2025. Event panelists conversed and reflected upon democracy.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS



**Life**

@dailycampuslife

# EAR 2 DA SKY: THREE OLD HEADS SHOW US THAT 'LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL'

by **Hayden Cromer**  
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Welcome to Ear 2 Da Sky! Each week, I will be going over topics within music culture and reviewing albums and EPs across genres, eras and artists that are submitted by readers like you and listeners of my radio show, ear 2 da ground, every Wednesday at 11 p.m. on WHUS 91.7 FM! For this week's submission, I got up out of my bed and blasted Larry June, 2 Chainz and The Alchemists' "Life is Beautiful" in my headphones.

This album is one of the more recent releases comparatively to the last few articles. Dropped on Feb. 7 of this year, "Life is Beautiful," sits at a humble 11 tracks, which clocks in at just under 37 minutes. It's an intergenerational link up between the three artists: The Alchemist, sprouting his career as a 14-year-old rapper in 1991, eventually pivoting to a producer a few years later, 2 Chainz, starting out in 1997 as "Tity Boi" and Larry June starting his career in 2006 on MySpace.

"Munyon Canyon" opens the album as track one with June greeting the listener with aggressive compassion. June and his music have become synonymous to self-love and motivation, "Never had a job, never had a GED / But I done pushed every V12 you can think." He loudly and proudly affirms himself through his tracks and this one is no different. 2 Chainz joins in on this self-motivational talk, but a bit crasser "If I put my mind to it, I'll get it eventually / Started off poor, but I'll buy a ho, potentially."

The Alchemist shows off his classic hazy production through his use of samples. The Alchemist's production makes songs blend into each other in a way that seems seamless. This can be a double-edged sword though; while blending creates a homogenous experience, it can

possibly remove the individual identity of a song.

"Colossal" is track two off the project. The Alchemist sets the tone with his production, as it's that same hazy sound, but a bit murkier paired with a more serious tone. June and 2 Chainz follow suit, while still rapping in a self-affirming, boastful and braggadocious tone. "Modern architecture in my condo, bike GP Motor / Floor to ceiling windows, K rate, 40 with extendos / Sip of green juice, mack a bitch, biscuit with the muzzle." The one thing that sticks out to me is June's delivery of his voice. It's very proper, sounding almost corporate. This can definitely be a conscious artistic choice, but it just takes me out of the song a bit.

Seamlessly transitioning into track three, "I Been" is one of the more popular tracks off the album. The beat is reminiscent of California weather and the Georgia sun beating down. Which is appropriate with June hailing from San Francisco, The Alchemist coming from Beverly Hills and 2 Chainz from Georgia. Comically, June will always find a way to uplift him and his people, "I put my team in position to win / Had to cut off all my ho's and just focus on y'en." The quality of a real team player.

It's an interesting album — a good one. The Alchemist's production will never not be good, 2 Chainz will always have a fun verse, June will always make me feel bad about how he and his friends are in better positions and that I am so incredibly broke (but in a good way). I think I just expected more as I definitely went in with high expectations, which ultimately ended up with me pulling the rug on myself, but that's my fault.

If you want to submit something to my radio show, ask for advice, hear your music on the radio and possibly even see an album or EPs you submitted get reviewed in the paper, submit it here: <https://bit.ly/ear2dasky>



LOGO BY SAMANTHA HASS, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



The album cover for 'Life Is Beautiful' by Larry June, 2 Chainz and the Alchemist. Released on Feb. 7, 2025, includes songs "Munyon Canyon" and "I Been."

PHOTO COURTESY OF @COMPLEXMUSIC ON INSTAGRAM

**RATING:**

3/5





# Opinion

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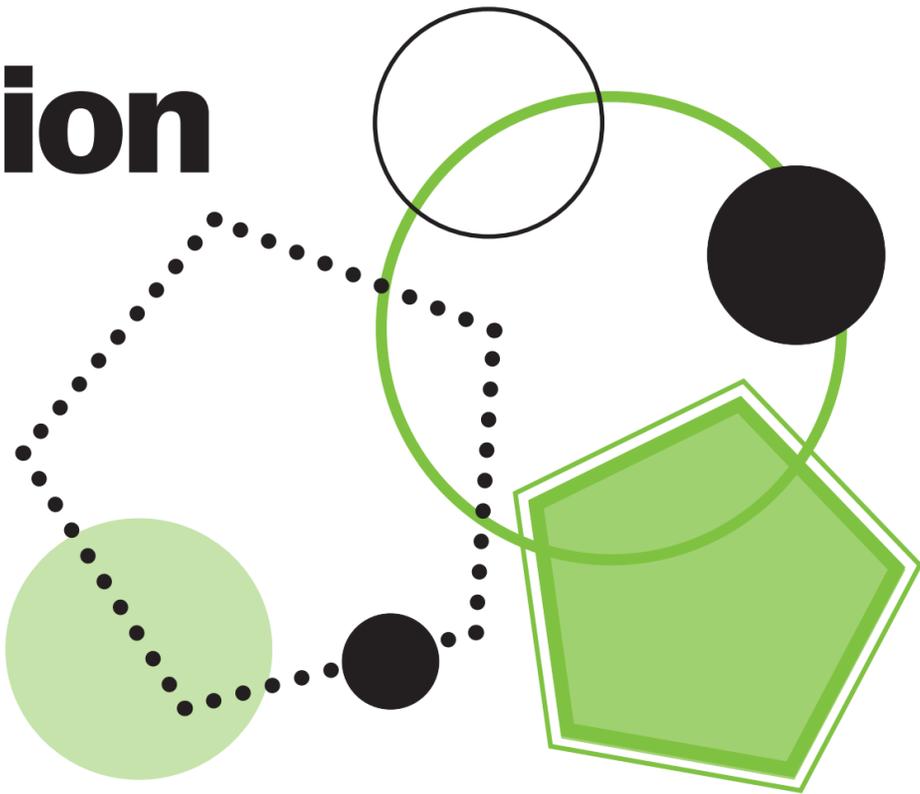
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### ► Editorial

# Trump administration grant cuts show a disregard for scholarship and innovation

by The Editorial Board | [opinion@dailycampus.com](mailto:opinion@dailycampus.com)

The National Institute of Health, a global leader in medical research, announced that they would be cutting research grants to universities, specifically the indirect cost rate to just 15% due to a rule change prompted by the Trump administration, according to their policy statement released on Friday, Feb. 7. The indirect cost rate is the percentage of a research grant that can be allocated to indirect costs like equipment, operations and maintenance. This new rate is a dramatic decrease from the University of Connecticut's current negotiated rate of 61% and UConn Health's rate of 66.5%, as reported by UConn Today.

UConn is currently considered a R1 Institution by the American Council on Education and Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This means that UConn is a leader in research spending and doctorate production, home to over 1,000 graduate students on grants and have won \$368 million in new awards in 2024. With significantly less funding,

UConn's research potential and status as a Research 1 Institution may be at risk.

With limited indirect funding from the NIH, university research programs are left with few options to make up for the loss. The funding is critical to maintaining labs, providing supplies and paying support staff. Should the change be implemented, UConn and other universities would be forced to cut programs or cut corners in their research process, according to Holden Thorp, chemistry professor and former chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Alternatively, the costs could be passed on to taxpayers, included in state appropriations or cause a rise in tuition for students, according to a statement by UConn.

The impact this will have on academia is incredibly significant. In each case, if tuition rises to cover research costs or if these costs are simply not encumbered by the university, this transition costs onto students and prospective researchers, effectively making it harder for those without

resources to enter these fields. It is not easy to participate in research while studying, especially for those who have costs that they must work to pay for. The benefit of grants and research stipends is that it allows for diverse ranges of students to be able to do substantial academic work while not having to stress financially or work extra time on other jobs. If only those with financial means are fiscally capable of doing research, then that will affect what questions are being asked and what research is being done. It is important for both the state of Connecticut and UConn to prioritize ensuring accessibility in academia as these events develop. These cuts are not the first movements made by the current Trump administration that affect higher education, but they are the first to directly impact funding for research. The decision to strip universities of millions of dollars in funding shows a lack of respect for academic excellence and the researchers who spend time advancing our country's medical knowl-

edge. The United States did not rank top ten in the 2024 World Index of Healthcare Innovation through discouraging research. UConn did not jump nine places in the annual Higher Education Research and Development Survey by reducing research expenditures. Universities and students nationwide deserve a dependable source of funding for their projects.

With a planned implementation date of Feb. 10, District Judge Angel Kelley temporarily blocked the rate cut after 22 states, including Connecticut, filed lawsuits. While UConn will retain its current rate for now, our research programs and status as an R1 institution remain in danger. It is imperative that lawmakers work toward finding sustainable policies that do not harm universities and students. We also encourage students, faculty and community members to stay informed and make their voices heard. Advocate for policies that support funding for higher education. The status of our school and our country depend on it.

# 'Moonlight' is better than 'Call Me by Your Name'

by Isaac Grad  
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Both "Moonlight" and "Call Me by Your Name" have been praised for their representation of same-sex relationships and growing up. They differ in various ways but have one common denominator: they both follow the coming-of-age story of young gay men, though in very different manners to the point that one may wonder: why bother comparing them at all? I view them similarly as they stand out from other popular movies that follow gay leads, most notably "Brokeback Mountain." Rather than ending tragically, these movies focus heavily on the characters and their love, although the ending of "Call Me by Your Name" is not a happy note to end the film on.

"Moonlight" has a very different setting than "Call Me by Your Name." "Moonlight" is set in Miami, while "Call Me by Your Name" is set in Northern Italy. Our main characters also come from vastly different backgrounds. Elio and Oliver come from well-off families; their struggles are few and far-between, allowing them to focus on their studies and upon meeting one another, their sexuality. Their journey, while beautiful, is less complex than those of Kevin

and Chiron in "Moonlight."

"Call Me by Your Name" allows the beauty of Italy to bring out the beauty in the relationship between the two men. Contrast this to what was done in "Moonlight," where the setting is harsh and scary, but still portrayed as beautiful, allowing the nuance of Chiron's life to be made apparent.

The affluent background of Elios' family allows his journey with Oliver to solely focus on the two of them and what they're bringing to the relationship. This includes whatever prejudice they may feel, specifically brought by Oliver, whose family holds him back from pursuing a serious relationship with Elio. This also shows us the huge difference in the lives of the characters. There is a lack of representation for gay men who come from more diverse backgrounds, and while "Call Me by Your Name" does a good job of representing rich, cis, white, gay men, it

falls flat in ways that "Moonlight" doesn't. The ending further separates the two movies

apart. With "Moonlight" we have someone facing just about every struggle one can face and coming out the other end, still

allowing himself to love and be loved. It's showing viewers that no matter who they are or

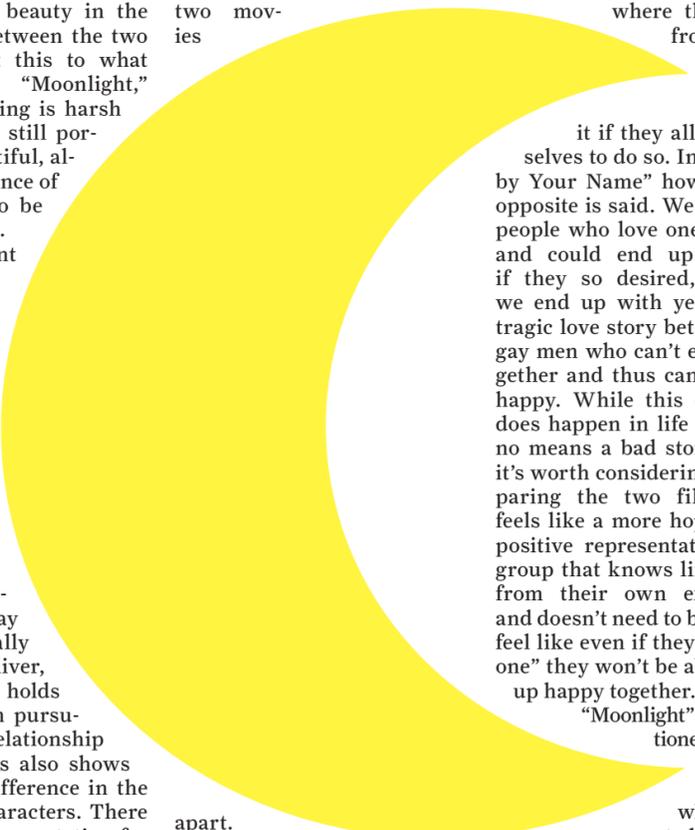
where they come from, they deserve love and can find it if they allow themselves to do so. In "Call Me by Your Name" however, the opposite is said. We have two people who love one another, and could end up together if they so desired, and yet we end up with yet another tragic love story between two gay men who can't end up together and thus can't end up happy. While this of course does happen in life and is by no means a bad story to tell, it's worth considering in comparing the two films. One feels like a more hopeful and positive representation for a group that knows life is hard from their own experience and doesn't need to be made to feel like even if they find "the one" they won't be able to end up happy together.

"Moonlight" as mentioned, feels more realistic, which is most likely due to its source material and the creators. It's based off of a play called "In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue" written by Tarell Alvin McCraney, which

was a semi-autobiographical story. The director of "Moonlight," Barry Jenkins brought in some of his own life story, also living in Miami not far from McCraney.

It's also worth mentioning that the representation in "Moonlight" expanded beyond what most popular movies following gay characters had previously done. There is a strong lack of representation for LGBT people of color, and "Moonlight" balanced the various issues that are present for those who are in multiple marginalized groups.

Both movies are beautiful in their own ways and I love both of them, but "Moonlight" is much more positive representation and feels more grounded in reality, whereas vs "Call Me by Your Name" is clearly more romanticized and doesn't feel relatable for most viewers, I'd imagine. Along with that, there are some aspects of "Call Me by Your Name" that are hard to ignore, such as the age gap between the two main characters, which does seemingly enforce stereotypes about love between two men that emphasize beauty and youth. It felt less like the film was created from direct experience than did "Moonlight," which features a plot created by the amalgamation of the lives of two men who worked on the project together.



# Opinion

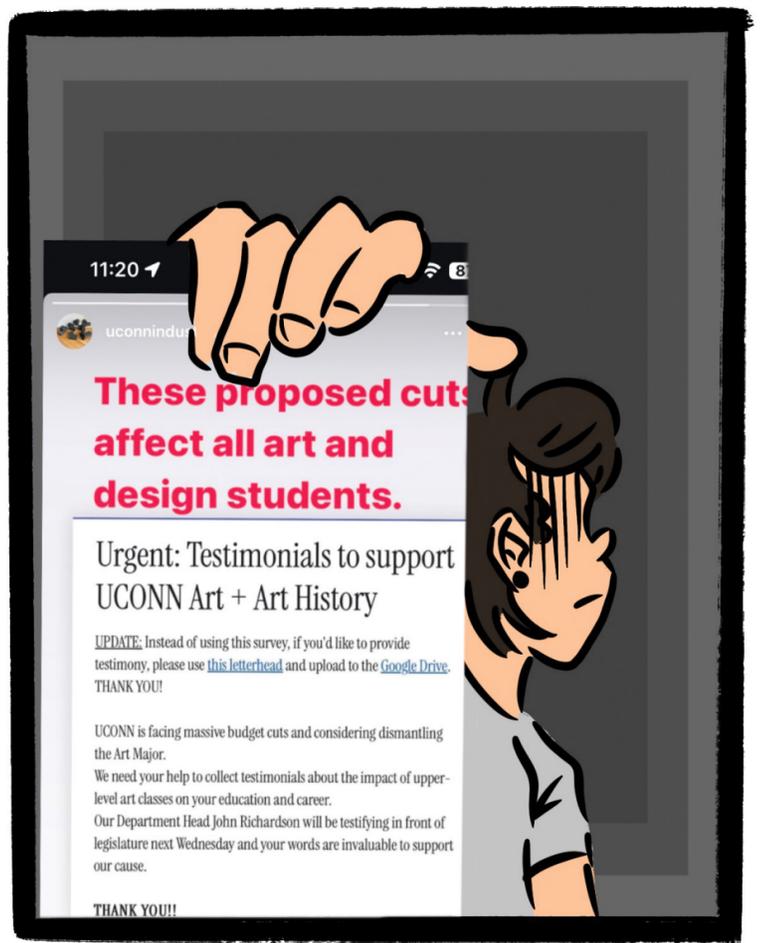
Photo of the Day | I would rather write a 10 page paper than go outside right now



UConn students spend the below freezing day in studying in Storrs, Conn. on Feb. 18, 2025. Homer Babbidge Library was crowded with people spending hours on their work. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS



# COMIC OF THE DAY



# by Connor Szrejna Staff Artist



# Lato's Lens: Biggest upsets, top performances and must-see matchups in men's college basketball

by Tyler Lato | HE/HIM/HIS | CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT | tyler.lato@uconn.edu

We are one month away from Selection Sunday. As the regular season comes to an end, teams are fighting for seeding, bubble teams are making their final push and Cinderella hopefuls are looking to build some momentum to make a late season run. This past week of the college basketball season has brought forth some unlikely upsets, utterly shocking the current landscape of the sport. In addition, several intriguing NBA prospects flew up the draft boards, showcasing their talent on the biggest stage in college basketball. Without further ado, here are some of the biggest upsets, top performances and must-see matchups for this week in men's college basketball.

## Biggest Upsets

### Texas 82, No.15 Kentucky 78

The now unranked Texas Longhorns came into their inaugural season in the SEC with expectations of dominating the league. Despite struggling to adapt to the ever so competitive SEC and winning only five of their 13 conference games, the Longhorns managed to secure a hard-fought 82-78 over a very good Kentucky Wildcats squad ranked in the top 25. Leading the charge for the Longhorns was none other than freshman Garland, Texas native Tre Johnson, who recorded a career-high 32 points and nine rebounds. Senior Tremon Marks also joined him, scoring a season-high point total of 26, catapulting the Longhorns to victory.

### Villanova 73, No. 9 St. Johns 71

With his team being down by one point with eight seconds left of a Big East showdown between No. 9 St. Johns and Villanova, sophomore guard Tyler Perkins drilled the eventual game-winning three-pointer for Villanova, winning the game by a 73-71 mark. With that, the Wildcats snapped the Johnnies' 10-game winning streak,

handing them their second Big East loss of the season. Perkins came off bench for the Wildcats and contributed a solid 12 points, all of which came from beyond the three-point arc. In addition, Wooga Poplar did a lot of damage as well, adding 22 points and six rebounds to the Wildcats' cause.

### Harvard 75, Cornell 73

Some of the best mid-major basketball that the NCAA has to offer is in the prestigious Ivy League, a tiny conference located in the upper northeast. I've said this before, but I'll also say it again: the league not only cultivates some of the nations' brightest individuals but also holds some ultra-competitive mid-major basketball games. After facing a 17-point halftime deficit, the now 8-13 Harvard Crimson rallied back to stun Cornell (13-8) within the final seconds of the game. Trailing by two points with three seconds to go, Cornell missed two free throws in a row which would have tied the game, ultimately sealing their fate. Harvard's Thomas Batties II scored 21 points for the Crimson, while his counterpart Cooper Noard scored 22 points as well.

## Top Performances

### Liam McNeeley, UConn

It's a known fact that UConn and the CHI Health Center in Omaha, Nebraska don't really mix all too well together. Despite this, star freshman and potential lottery pick Liam McNeeley flipped this narrative. He drained 38 total points with 11 rebounds in the unranked Huskies' road win over No. 24 Creighton, avenging a loss from earlier this season. With four seconds left in the contest, McNeeley drilled two key free throws in a row to solidify the win for the Huskies, winning the game 70-66. McNeeley's 38 points were a season-high for not only himself, but for anyone else on the program.

### Cooper Flagg, Duke

No. 3 Duke Blue Devil's forward Cooper Flagg, former high school teammate of McNeeley, finds himself on this list yet again after an explosive performance in a win versus unranked Virginia. The freshman amassed his fifth double-double of the season, scoring a solid 17 points while hauling in a season-high 14 rebounds.

Duke Head Coach John Scheyer has a lot to look forward to in this young Blue Devils squad come March, and Flagg has solidified himself as the centerpiece for the teams' success. With his defensive presence and his freakish athleticism, Flagg will continue to prove why he's the nation's best college basketball player.

### Danny Wolf & Vlad Goldin, Michigan

For the first time in the history of Lato's Lens, two players are being acknowledged for their dominant performances in the same game. In then No. 20 Michigan's 86-83 victory over arch-enemy and bitter Big 10 rival Ohio State, the two big men recorded their own respective double-doubles, proving to be the driving forces behind the win. Danny Wolf scored 20 points, grabbed 10 rebounds and dished out five assists, while Florida Atlantic transfer Vlad Goldin matched him with 20 points and 10 rebounds. With Wolf and Goldin, the Wolverines are sleepers for not only the Big 10 tournament, but also the NCAA tournament.

## Games to Watch

### No. 6 Tennessee at No. 7 Texas A&M: Saturday at Noon

This Saturday will feature two matchups between top 10 teams. In the first of these matchups, the sixth-ranked Tennessee Volunteers will travel south to take on the red-hot No. 7 Aggies of Texas A&M. Led by senior guard Wade Taylor IV, the Aggies currently ride a six-game winning streak playing their best basketball of the season. Meanwhile, the Vols merely escaped a battle with in-state rival Vanderbilt, narrowly winning by a score of 81-76. This game is crucial for seeding within the SEC and could have insurmountable implications for the NCAA tournament positioning.

### No. 8 Iowa State at No. 5 Houston: Saturday at 2 p.m.

The second battle of the day between top 10 powers comes from the Big 12, as the No. 8 Iowa Cyclones take on the No. 5 Houston Cougars. While the Cyclones hoist a 20-5 record, the Cougars are having another incredible season themselves with a 21-4 record and a solid four-game winning streak. What's interesting about this Big 12 duel is that ESPN Analytics currently give Houston an 80.4% chance of winning the game. A big part of this is a rough, tough and rowdy Houston home-crowd who I would dare to say is a key component to the Cougars' success at home this season. Keep an eye out for Iowa State's Curtis Jones, who's averaged 17.6 points, 4.7 rebounds and 2.4 assists thus far this season, being a battery for the Cyclones.

### UConn at No. 10 St. John's: Sunday at Noon

We all know what happened the last time these two perennial Big East powerhouses matched up against each other. With a few seconds left in the game, RJ Luis Jr. hit an absolute dagger of a mid-range shot to seal the deal in a 66-63 back-and-forth Johnnies win over the Huskies. This game, however, is much different. While the Johnnies are currently ranked 10th within the AP Top 25 poll, the Huskies are unranked and fresh off a heartbreaking upset loss to now 7-18 Seton Hall. The game will also be played at the world-famous Madison Square Garden in New York (or more commonly denoted by the UConn faithful as Storrs South), which adds another layer of intensity to an already heated and toxic rivalry.



CLIPART COURTESY OF ARTDRAW.ORG

# Patriot Place: One Outside Free Agent the Patriots Could Target at Each Offensive Position

by Graham Wilker

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The Patriots looking outside their current room for a legitimate quarterback addition seems unlikely to me, but for the sake of the exercise we can entertain the idea of Joshua Dobbs. Dobbs has shown some okay play in spurts, most notably with the Cardinals two years ago: in eight games he totaled 11 total touchdowns and five interceptions. He also has ties to Mike Vrabel's time in Tennessee, as he made two starts at the end of the season there in 2022. The Patriots already have Drake Maye and Joe Milton under contract, and Jacoby Brissett would be a more likely third than Dobbs. Nonetheless, if they move on from Brissett or get a trade offer for Milton, he could be a name to watch.

### Running Back: Ty Johnson (Buffalo Bills)

Not only would Ty Johnson be a very exciting add in my eyes, but his loss would also deprive the Bills of who Josh Allen called the best third down back in the league. He had over five yards a carry and just shy of 300 receiving yards on the year while already sharing the backfield with star James Cook and rookie standout Ray Davis. Not to mention the aforementioned Allen took 102 carries himself.

While moving to a division rival may be rare, it hasn't stopped Johnson before. The running back spent 2020-2022 with the Jets in a similar role. His addition may be a redundancy when you consider Antonio Gibson's solid last season, and the running back class in the draft is thought to be very deep, but adding Johnson could supply the spark the offense needs to get back on track.

### Tight End: Johnny Mundt (Minnesota Vikings)

Tight end is one of few positions the team should feel reasonably comfortable about, with Hunter Henry on a long-term deal and rookie TE3 Jaheim Bell getting a handful of snaps last season. The issue may arise should Austin Hooper walk in free agency, whose 45 catches slotted him third most on the roster. If he walks, which is unlikely, Mundt could be a solid replacement. He's known as a blocker and if the team wants to see Bell ascend to TE2 and take the blocking pressure off, Mundt would fit that role nicely. Ironically enough, I wouldn't expect Mundt to leave the Vikings either, I'd expect this position to remain unchanged going into next season.

### Wide Receiver: Tee Higgins (Cincinnati Bengals)

Higgins to the Patriots has been a common theme for the past few months, but it does make sense. The Bengals will need to pay

Ja'Marr Chase shortly and already paid Joe Burrow, so cap is at a premium. Their defense also struggled and is in need of reinforcement, all while star pass rusher Trey Hendrickson is unhappy with his contract. All this boils down to Higgins likely leaving Cincinnati. A \$30 million per year contract is probably in the cards for him, and the Pats shouldn't have any issue paying that premium price tag. Injuries may be a concern, but if he can stay healthy, Higgins immediately bolsters this receiving corps.

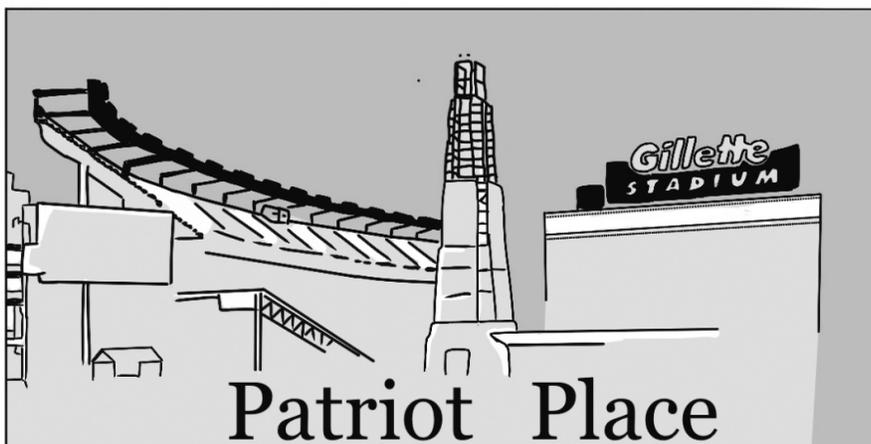
### Offensive Tackle: Alaric Jackson (LA Rams)

The reason Alaric Jackson may not be re-signed would also be the reason that I would steer clear of

him, which makes this option a bit paradoxical. Following Andrew Whitworth's retirement, the Rams signed Joe Noteboom to a three-year deal to be their left tackle, but he didn't work out as a pass blocker. In his first full season at left tackle, Jackson replaced him and played well, recording a 75.0 PFF rating overall. The issue of one-year wonders while protecting future Hall of Fame QBs like Matt Stafford are all too common (see Trent Brown 2018). Nonetheless, with the state the Patriots' line is in, landing a 26-year-old left tackle would be a huge boost to the unit and roster.

### Interior Offensive Line: Patrick Mekari (Baltimore Ravens)

Patrick Mekari's played all over the line since entering the league, as both a tackle and guard. A hallmark of great Patriots teams of the past has been versatility across the line - Mike Onwenu played both guard and tackle, Ted Karras played across the interior and Cole Strange has showed guard-center flexibility most recently. Especially in the event of a David Andrews retirement, Mekari would be useful. Strange would likely make the transition to center, leaving the left guard slot vacant. Alternatively, he'd have the flexibility to play at either tackle spot. While not as glamorous as Higgins, he's one of my favorite candidates available.



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

## Sports

## Photo of the Day | W's all around



UConn women's lacrosse takes on Fairfield University at Joseph J. Marrone Stadium in Storrs, CT. 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 ZACH MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

# Point/Counterpoint: Brady vs. Mahomes



FILE LOGO/  
THE DAILY  
CAMPUS

by **Jake Loomis**  
HE/HIM/HIS  
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Tom Brady is the best quarterback of all time. He has seven Super Bowl rings and played at a high level until the age of 45. Brady also dealt with his fair share of adversity in his career as he went from a fourth string QB to a starter and won a championship. When everyone counted him out due to his age, he also came back leading the Buccaneers to a Super Bowl blowout victory against Patrick Mahomes. Brady has never been blown out in a Super Bowl like Mahomes has; all of Brady's losses have been by one score or less. Brady also holds three regular-season MVPs and five Superbowl ones after shredding defenses for years. In his career, Brady had a 97.2 overall passer rating and 64.3 completed percentage which are both difficult things to achieve. More than all, Brady was a leader and

played with the hand that he was dealt. He has played with stars like Randy Moss and Rob Gronkowski. However, there have been years where he had no weapons and still took his teams far. He single-handedly organized the greatest comeback in sports history in a Super Bowl. Brady will go down as the greatest of all-time, not due to his number of rings, but because of how he carried himself and played the game the right way. Brady also proved that players are the reason teams win; coaches only do so much. The coach brings in the culture and designs the playbook, but at the end of the day the players on the field bring home the wins and are the ones making game-changing decisions. Mahomes is a star athlete, however he has not proven that he can win without Andy Reid and perform at as old of an age as Brady. The decision could change in future years; however, it is clear that Brady is still the GOAT.

by **Thomas Buckley**  
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Most NFL fans will say the GOAT is Tom Brady: the greatest quarterback and player at ever step on the gridiron. However, if there's anyone that can match Brady's excellence and prestige as the all-time best quarterback, it's Patrick Mahomes. At the age of 29, Mahomes has a convincing argument for being the greatest quarterback to ever play the game. Despite what may have happened in Super Bowl LIX, his resume speaks volumes.

Mahomes would get his "get back" the following season after losing to Brady in the 2018 AFC Championship. While not as statistically impressive as the previous season, he was winning when it mattered the most: in the playoffs. After a first-round bye, Kansas City beat Houston after a major comeback in the second half and got past Tennessee to reach the Super Bowl. In the game, Mahomes wielded the team to victory after a late game deficit to give Kansas City their first Super Bowl win since 1970 and the first of his

career. Some people will scoff and say that Brady won his first ring in his first season as a full-time starter, but Mahomes won his without any controversies linked to it.

Even with his legendary status, Brady still had moments where he succumbed to the pressure of trying to make history. In 2007, he led the Patriots to a perfect 17-0 record in the regular season, winning MVP and OPOY on the way to Super Bowl XLII against the wild card New York Giants. What could have been viewed as the greatest season in NFL history turned into one of the biggest upsets in all of sports as Eli Manning played out of his mind and led the Giants to a 17-14 win over arguably the best offense the NFL has ever seen. While fans clowned on Mahomes for blowing it, Brady also had the chance to go for a three-peat and fell trying. After winning back-to-back Super Bowls in 2003 and 2004, the Pats were going for three in a row in 2005. Despite most of their roster being injured, the team still finished with a 10-6 record and won the AFC East. After getting past Jacksonville in the Wild Card Round, they got stomped by

the Broncos in the Divisional, losing the game 27-13. Brady wasn't half bad in this game, throwing for over 300 yards and a touchdown, but he also had two interceptions that cost him a chance at a three-peat. At least Mahomes had a shot; a shot that he let go of, but still had, nonetheless.

All in all, Mahomes has done more in his first eight seasons than Brady has and many fans talk down on him for blowing a chance at history. However, Brady had his fair share of blunders and fumbles in history. Mahomes, Brady and many other legendary players have attempted three-peats before and all of them failed. To blame Mahomes for failing at something that many before him did as well feels a bit redundant. As of right now, Mahomes has a strong case for being the greatest quarterback the game has ever seen. He's not even 30 years old yet and shows no signs of slowing down. Even with a subpar performance in last year's Super Bowl, there's no denying that what Mahomes is doing is legendary, and it's almost certain that he's going to maintain this level of play for years to come.

# DAYTONA 500 RECAP

by Alex Klancko | HE/HIM/HIS | CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT | lvb24001@uconn.edu

The Daytona 500 was wild, exciting and chaotic. The race started at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 16, with the first 10 laps running smoothly until the rain came pouring down around 2 p.m. During the four-hour rain delay, there were various interviews with the drivers and team members.

After the interviews took place, the racing started and Connecticut's own Joey Logano dominated early on, taking a stage one win with by far the fastest car on the track. The first wreck happened on lap 63 between No. 38 Zane Smith, No. 11 Denny Hamlin, No. 2 Austin Cindric and No. 21 Josh Berry, ending Smith's race.

The next crash happened

on lap 71 between various cars including No. 1 Ross Chastain, No. 91 Helio Castroneves, No. 19 Chase Briscoe, No. 8 Kyle Busch, No. 35 Riley Herbst and No. 40 Justin Allgaier, with Chastain and Castroneves unable to continue.

On lap 130, No. 12 Ryan Blaney edged Cindric to the stage two win. With 36 laps to go in the race No. 23 Bubba Wallace was in second. Being one of the best drafters in NASCAR, it looked like Wallace would edge out Cindric for the win. The thing is, the "Big One" had not happened yet. If you do not know what the "Big One" is, it is a massive crash or two during the end of super speedways that make or break who wins and losses and nor-

mally the "Big One" ends up taking out half the grid.

With 15 laps to go, the supposed "Big One" happened with No. 47 Ricky Stenhouse Jr, No. 22 Joey Logano, No. 9 Chase Elliott, Gragson, Busch and Blaney all being taken out with Logano and Busch out of the race for good.

With five laps to go, another "Big One" happened with No. 20 Christopher Bell losing control of his car and hitting No. 5 Kyle Larson and Wallace along with No. 60 Ryan Preece, who did a wheelie and flipped over twice in one of the scariest crashes in the last couple of years.

However, the crash Preece had was not even the worst one he has had at Daytona. His crash in August 2023 had him flip al-

most a dozen times at 190 miles per hour with his car on fire at the end of the barrel rolls. Preece came out of the crash okay, was cleared by the medical staff and did interviews just minutes after his crash. In the interview, Preece stated that "something needs to be done" since this is his second major accident at Daytona in three years.

On the final lap of the race, Cindric led with Hamlin not far behind. With half a lap left, Hamlin took the lead. However, as quickly as Hamlin took the lead, No. 41 Cole Custer took out the top three in Hamlin, Cindric and No. 01 Corey LaJoie. The absolute chaos that unfolded with half a lap to go gave a go ahead for No. 24 Wil-

liam Byron to be a back-to-back Daytona 500 race winner, being only the fifth and youngest driver to complete that feat.

This Sunday at 3 p.m. is the Ambetter Health 400, which is a 260 lap, 400-mile race around Atlanta Motor Speedway. The Atlanta Motor Speedway is another superspeedway, but it is only 1.5 miles compared to the 2.5 miles of Daytona and Talladega. It is set to be a good race to watch, but the chaos may not be as much as the previously mentioned Daytona and Talladega.

In addition, there are Xfinity and Truck series races this upcoming Saturday in Atlanta. The Truck series starts at 1:30 p.m. and the Xfinity series starts at 5 p.m.



Cars driving laps in the annual Daytona 500 race. It was held on Feb. 16, 2025 at the Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @ARCA\_RACING AND @DAYTONA ON INSTAGRAM

## Women's Basketball:

### Huskies look to put Big East in headlock with win over Seton Hall



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Tonight's Big East match-up in South Orange, N.J. has quickly become the toughest ticket in town, with average fares floating over \$1,000 per seat to get inside of Walsh Gymnasium.

I was curious as to why that was - a random Wednesday night game in February between two teams whose last meeting was decided by 60 points - so I posted on X asking for clarification.

Former Daily Campus UConn women's basketball beat writer Stratton Stave put it best:

"It's in South Orange at Walsh [Gymnasium] -- which is tiny (1,300 people) -- meaning there are very few tickets available and a lot of people who want to see Paige. \$1,000 seems steep though."

The redshirt senior grabbed seven rebounds, went perfect at the charity stripe and dished out 10 assists in the 29-point victory over the Gamecocks.

So, who stepped up in the scoring department if the team's leading scorer took on a facilitator role in Sunday's win? Graduate wing Azzi Fudd scored 28 points, hitting on six three-pointers and shooting 77% from the field in a third quarter where she scored 18 critical points.

Freshman forward Sarah Strong notched her sixth double-double of the season, snagging 13 boards and accounting for 16 points in 31 minutes.

Redshirt freshman center Jana El Alfy played her best game as a Husky in Columbia, scoring eight points while collecting six rebounds and acting as a blockade in the paint for the Gamecock bigs.

With a four-starter attack carving apart the South Carolina defense, Connecticut managed to play one of its most efficient and satisfying offensive games this season. The team shot 43.7% from the field and nearly 47% from three.

But Sunday is Sunday. It's Wednesday now. The Huskies travel to Seton Hall to take on the Pirates, who are coming off an impressive 21-point win over Providence at Alumni Hall. It was impressive that the Pirates shot 38.3% from the field and 19% from

three and still managed to score 59 points on one of the hardest defenses in the conference.

Since Jan. 25, Seton Hall ranks 42nd overall at Bart Torvik and 17th in defensive efficiency, creating turnovers at the nation's ninth highest rate (32.2%).

Forward Faith Masonius is averaging 15.7 points per night in her senior season, shooting 48% from the field and 34.7% from deep. The do-it-all Masonius takes on many faces as the team's leader, dishing 2.8 assists/game, snagging two steals/game and owning a +/- of +140 on the season.

Freshman guard Jada Eads has crept up on Masonius as a scorer, pouring on 26 points in the team's win over Marquette last Wednesday to bring her year average to 14.5.

The third scoring option is sophomore guard Savannah Catalon, who averages 13.1 ppg and 3.4 steals per game next to Eads in the back-court.

This is a guard-centric Seton Hall team who loves working the ball through Masonius at multiple spots on the court. Limiting Masonius' movement on the offensive end will go a long way in slowing the Pirate offense down.

**Keys to Victory for No. 5 Connecticut:**

Keep Jana El Alfy and Azzi Fudd hot. Work the ball to these two early and let them shoot into a lead.

The same blueprint that slowed down Masonius back in January should be the first thing Geno Aurriemma packs on his way down to Newark. Contest, contest, contest.

Control the tempo and draw fouls offensively - tempo will go a long way in offensive output.



UConn women's basketball takes on St. John's at Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn. on Feb. 12, 2025. The Huskies secured a 78-40 win.

PHOTOS BY EMMA MEIDINGER, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



# Sports

# Men's Basketball:

## Huskies go to battle for crucial 66-59 home win over Villanova

by Connor Sargeant | HE/HIM/HIS | SPORTS EDITOR | connor.sargeant@uconn.edu

Following a shocking 69-68 loss at Seton Hall, the UConn men's basketball team hit one of the lowest of lows all season long. After all, Liam McNeeley had just returned from injury and put together a 38-point All-American performance at No. 24 Creighton just four days before. Coming into their matchup, the Huskies needed to regain their lost momentum as significant March Madness seeding implications hung in the balance. To get back into the win column, the Huskies needed to avenge one of their losses from earlier this season on Tuesday night and they did just that, erasing a 14-point deficit in a major 66-59 win over Villanova.

Connecticut did not get out of the gates fast, as the program opened 2 of 17 from the field, scoring only one basket in the first five minutes. While it also took Villanova a minute to find their footing, they were lethal once they did. The Huskies didn't help their cause with some poor passes and defense later as the Wildcats opened Tuesday night up 16-6.

Eric Dixon thrived on drawing fouls, as the senior forward drew five in the first 20 minutes. This allowed Dixon to finish the half with 12 points, including a 6-8 line from the free throw line. This alone made up for his less than stellar 2-9 shooting slash, making him a significant contributor early on.

However, after a UConn timeout, the program came out swinging, going on an 8-0 run of their own. Whether it was Solo Ball cashing in on a three or Tarris Reed Jr. scrapping for a bucket in the paint, the Huskies were firing on all cylinders. It was as if a switch had flipped when they brought the contest within two points. It was the three-point shooting of Jordan Longino that gave the Wildcats the extra push they needed. The senior guard made both of his threes in the final five minutes of the first half to add onto an excellent 13-point first half.

As a team, the Wildcats finished the first half 7-9 from downtown while the Huskies finished 1-9. Ball cooled off after scoring a couple of baskets on UConn's best scoring run, finishing with five points on 2-7 shooting. These factors led to Villanova being up by eight points at halftime.

As the second half rolled around, it was the same story for the Huskies. The program was unable to find its footing and the Villanova offense excelled, going up by as much as 14 points with slightly less than 12 minutes to go. Wooga Poplar built off a five-point first half in a major way, putting up 14 points and five rebounds in 20 minutes of work, with a majority of his buckets coming in within the first 10 minutes. However, outside of the Philadelphia native, the program struggled to find a consistent scorer as all others had a combined 11 points. The story quickly became how fast



The UConn men's basketball team faces off against Villanova, taking home the victory with a seven-point lead. The game was held on Feb. 18, 2025 at the XL Center in Hartford, Conn.

PHOTOS BY ZACH MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS



UConn bounced back, and it was true team effort.

Reed was an integral part of Connecticut's comeback, putting up 10 points on 5-7 shooting, including snagging five boards in the second half. This was a stark contrast to the first half of the contest where Reed was not as aggressive. Reed attributes his performance to his religious practices.

"Honestly if I'm being real, I just got back in my Bible," Reed told the media. "I've been so caught up in my day-to-day life, so I woke up this morning and I was like man, It's been a tough month straight, coach has been on me, and it feels like the world was coming down on me. Sat and spent some time with the Lord and got my head straight, got my mind straight and ultimately, I get my confidence, so he was the one carrying me on the court tonight."

However, it was McNeeley who finally put UConn within striking distance and eventually reclaiming the lead. With five and a half minutes left, the freshman swished a massive shot from beyond the arc to bring the contest to within three points. This bucket finally got the XL Center crowd invested in the matchup. UConn's defense also implemented a full court press that threw Villanova's offense for a loop. This was a significant reason why Dixon struggled to carry over his excellent offense from the first 20 minutes. The forward finished with five points on 1-4 shooting, and Villanova Head Coach Kyle Neptune talked about how UConn's full court pressure affected everybody.

"They came after us," Neptune noted to UConn's press. "It was a press they hadn't used as much. They did a good job being physical, taking us out of what we wanted to do."

This press was like the defense that Connecticut faced on Feb. 7 when playing against the St. John's Red Storm and it similarly changed the momentum of the contest. This time around, McNeeley's efforts were not in vain. With nearly no time to go, the freshman hit the dagger free throws to cap off an excellent 16-point second half performance, including a 9-9 slash from the charity stripe.

Tuesday was a massive win for Connecticut as the program not only stays in contention for a higher Big East tournament seed but also avoids the negative long-term effects that would come with two straight losses. However, this team has been prone to playing better when down, as the Huskies have mounted 14+ point comebacks to win on four occasions this season, with Tuesday being no different. How fast the program can adjust to what their opponents give them will be something to watch, especially this weekend. The Huskies have a chance to avenge another one of their losses this Sunday, Feb. 23 in "Storrs South" against St. John's.