



TRUMP SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER CALLING FOR CLOSURE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

by **Samantha Brody**
SHE/HER/HERS
STAFF WRITER
sab23059@uconn.edu

President Donald Trump called for a shutdown of the United States Department of Education in an executive order signed on March 20.

This order is known by the name “Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities.” According to the order, the Department of Education will be responsible for its own termination under the direction of the secretary of education, Linda McMahon.

“Our Nation’s bright future relies on empowered families, engaged communities, and excellent educational opportunities for every child,” the order said. “Unfortunately,

the experiment of controlling American education through Federal programs and dollars — and the unaccountable bureaucracy those programs and dollars support — has plainly failed our children, our teachers, and our families.”

Although the Department of Education is an executive office and therefore falls under Trump’s control, its closure is not his decision. Congress has the power to dismantle federal departments, and a bill titled H.R.899 was introduced in late January, calling for the closure of the Department of Education in December 2026.

“True change does not happen overnight—especially the historic overhaul of a federal agency,” McMahon said in a speech posted on the Department of Education website.

“Over the coming months, as we work hard to carry out the President’s directives, we will focus on a positive vision for what American education can be.”

In terms of K-12 education, McMahon called for a departure from “divisive DEI programs and gender ideology” and making sure “parents are the primary decision makers in their children’s education.” She also noted that postsecondary education should allow students to achieve a well-paying career that aligns with the needs of the workforce.

According to the Department of Education website, the organization is responsible for federal aid for education (such as FAFSA), collecting data on America’s schools, identifying educational issues and preventing

discrimination in schools.

The National Education Association and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, among other groups, filed a lawsuit against Trump and his call for the closure of the Department of Education on March 24.

One of the main faults that the executive order found with the Department of Education is with the current academic performance of children, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

“Closing the Department of Education would provide children and their families the opportunity to escape a system that is failing them,” the order said. “Today, American reading and math scores are near historical lows. This year’s National Assessment of

Educational Progress showed that 70 percent of 8th graders were below proficient in reading, and 72 percent were below proficient in math.”

However, the Department of Education has a greater focus on higher education than K-12 education, and has very little involvement with the education of eighth graders. Their website states that the Department of Education is only responsible for about 8% of K-12 funding.

“Education is primarily a State and local responsibility in the United States,” the Department of Education website reads. “It is States and communities, as well as public and private organizations of all kinds, that establish schools and colleges, develop curricula, and determine requirements for enrollment and graduation.”

USG PRESIDENTIAL ELECTS ZHANG AND SUBRAMANIAN DISCUSS ADMINISTRATION’S PRIORITIES

by **Joey Gottlieb**
THEY/THEM/THEIRS
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
jvg18001@uconn.edu

The Storrs Undergraduate Student Government (USG) announced Andy Zhang (he/him/his) and Haritha Subramanian (she/her/hers) as the 2025 presidential elects on March 16. The pair sat with reporters from the Daily Campus last week to discuss their upcoming administration.

Zhang, a sixth-semester environmental science and economics major and Subramanian, a sixth-semester political science and music major with an individualized major in women’s reproductive health, were both overjoyed following the election.

“I did squeal when I found out,” said Subramanian. “I was very, very anxious. We had just met with the judiciary and were then outside of the room. We were anxiously waiting for the results. It took like an hour. Finally, the chief justice came out, I had left the room cause I was like, ‘this is just too much for me right now, I’m just gonna get out of here for a bit.’ Then the chief justice came in and told Andy we’d won.”

Zhang was excited as well, glad to be able to put a long month of campaigning behind the two of them.

“There was a lot of joy, of course,” he said. “Then afterwards I kinda just went home. I was excited for this chapter of campaigning to

end and then excited for the chapter of our presidency to start. We’ve been campaigning for all of February, and it’s very tiring. Campaigning is one of those things where you always feel like you can do more, so I was excited that that finally paid off.”

The presidential elects told the Daily Campus their plans for the beginning of their administration largely focuses on logistical work: building relationships with university administration and working with the current USG administration to ensure a smooth transition into their term.

“This whole month is going to be meeting with the current administration and the current advocacy directors, a lot of whom are seniors,” said Subramanian. “So, this is our last chance to learn what went well, what didn’t go so well. USG often works on projects that span over multiple years and we definitely want to make sure that we are carrying on all the hard work that they’ve already done. That’s very important to us.”

Zhang had a similar sentiment, hoping to bring some consistency to USG.

“One of the biggest things that I want to make sure of is that there is continuity within USG because everyone’s working one-year terms,” he said. “As a result of that, it’s very easy for knowledge to be lost... We’re making sure that we’re talking with them [the current USG administration] and

making sure we can support the projects they’ve already done and what we can learn from their wins and losses.”

To do so, the pair needs to accurately gauge the current climate on campus, according to Subramanian.

“The first thing we want to do is center ourselves within the environment we are working in,” she said. “Right now, we are working with a bunch of issues that students are directly seeing. On campus, you are seeing a housing shortage, you’re seeing threats to marginalized communities, especially coming from the federal government, a lot of mental health resources are needed.”

Subramanian continued, saying that considering these issues their administration will focus largely on social justice and sustainability on campus.

“Our two big themes, especially given the work we do outside of USG as well, would definitely be social justice and sustainability. Those are two issues that we are very much passionate about. We definitely hope to see that centralized throughout our work in this administration.”

Zhang, who is also the former USG director of communications, added how the pair hopes to make communication and transparency a central tenet of their administration, something he believes students see as lacking in USG.

“I think a lot of it is going to focus on community and communication. What we’ve

learned from being involved in all these different things is that community is so central. It is so central to be interdisciplinary and knowledgeable about the world outside of this USG bubble,” he said. “Something that we want to push for and work on is making sure we’re connecting to the broader UConn community. Working with university departments and academic departments so that there is some continuity throughout our initiatives.”

Zhang elaborated on his experience as director of communications and his plan to collaborate with his replacement.

“I previously served as the director of communications and one of my big things was, I wanted to increase transparency,” he said. “That’s something I want to continue to work on with the next director of communications. Making sure that we’re communicating, we’re talking and that students are aware of the impacts of our initiatives are having and what we are actively doing.”

Subramanian emphasized how crucial this first month is in developing that trust among the student body.

“One thing we tried to really emphasize during the campaign was trust and communication and how we build that,” she said. “This first month is just so integral to building the groundwork for that; rebuilding trust in a lot of places.”

However, the pair recognizes that these are promises

students have heard before.

“I was looking back at past USGs, and they’ve always run on the same campaigns, ‘we’re gonna rebuild trust, we’re gonna rebuild transparency,’” said Zhang. “Something we are going to try and do is making sure that we’re actually going to try and do these things so it’s not something we just repeat and say because we feel like we’re in a position to say it.”

To address these concerns, the pair is looking to enact an open-door policy for their administration.

“Something we want to implement is an open-door policy, so regardless of who you are you can always have a hotline to connect with me and Haritha,” said Zhang. “Something that we want to make sure Tier III orgs know, that RSOs [registered student organizations] know, that students know, is if they have an initiative, if they have an idea, if they want any support that we’re always here to work with them and support them in any way we can.”

USG is also currently accepting applications for open positions within its staff, according to Subramanian.

“This month will be filled with hiring; we are currently taking applications. So, if people are interested in working for USG they should totally apply,” she said.

Zhang and Subramanian will be sworn in this Wednesday, April 2.

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News

Drought, wind, and debris from recent hurricanes are stoking fires across the US

(AP) In North Carolina, wildfires stoked by unusually dry air and debris from last year's Hurricane Helene are burning out of control. In Florida, there are dozens of blazes, including one that scorched about 42 square miles in Miami-Dade County. And they continue to burn in Oklahoma, where four people have died this month due to wind-driven fires. Those states were just three of eight where large fires were being reported on Friday.

Some 14,800 wildfires have burned 1,105 square miles so far this year — well above the 10-year average, according to data released Friday by the National Interagency Fire Center. Most devastating were the Los Angeles wildfires in January, fueled by dry vegetation and howling winds, that destroyed entire neighborhoods.

Wildfires have happened with such frequency in recent years that many U.S. fire officials say there is no longer a "fire season," which traditionally ran from late spring through the fall. That is because climate change, caused by the burning of fuels like gasoline and coal, has raised average global temperatures, creating drier conditions that allow wildfires, which are mostly caused by humans, to burn longer and more intensely.

While major fires often happen early in the year — in February 2024, Texas experienced the largest wildfire in state history — this year is a bit unusual "because we're seeing it happen in so many places," said Brad Rippey, a

U.S. Department of Agriculture meteorologist who monitors drought.

This week, 45% of the country is in drought, when historically it's around 20% at any given time, Rippey said. That dried out lots of fuel just waiting for a spark — from freeze-dried grasses in the southern Plains to downed trees and brush from hurricanes that ravaged parts of the southeast and southern Appalachians in recent years.

The National Interagency Fire Center's significant wildfire outlook notes that several states still have debris from hurricanes Laura, Ida, Debby and Idalia in the past five years, as well as from ice storms and other severe weather.

Add in gusty winds and low humidity, "and you've got a pretty ripe situation for wildfires," Rippey said.

In Hurricane Helene-devastated North Carolina, power lines downed by strong winds have been blamed for two of three large fires that have burned for more than a week in an area where the mean relative humidity this month has been the lowest on record, officials said. Impassable areas and lots of toppled trees are making it difficult to reach intense and erratic fires that are spreading rapidly because of high winds and dry weather.

Many roads have either been covered with storm debris or "they have just been completely washed away," said North Carolina Forest Service spokesman Philip Jackson, who said the fire danger could plague the state

for years as more debris dries out.

Much of Florida also is in drought, contributing to an earlier-than-normal fire season that included a massive brush fire in Miami-Dade County that at one point hindered travel to and from the Florida Keys.

That fire is 95% contained while dozens of smaller fires continue to burn, according to the Florida Forest Service. Many counties are under red flag warnings, meaning conditions are favorable for fires to occur.

West Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Missouri and South Carolina also report large wildfires.

The greatest wildfire potential is in the southeast and the southern Plains, and will be significant into April in most of Texas and parts of New Mexico and Arizona, as well as several southeastern states, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

La Nina — a periodic cooling of the Pacific Ocean that can shift the jet stream and lead to cooler, drier air — might have affected conditions in the southern U.S., said Tim Brown, director of the Western Regional Climate Center.

But there also has been long-term drying in the southwest as temperatures overall increase with global warming, said Rippey, who has

monitored drought for more than 25 years. Warmer temperatures have led to more erratic precipitation that tends to fall more heavily in short periods, leading much of it to run off rather than soak into the ground.

"I do think that contributes to more wildfires," he said.

The Associated Press' climate and environmental coverage receives financial support from multiple private foundations. AP is solely responsible for all content. Find AP's standards for working with philanthropies, a list of supporters and funded coverage areas at AP.org.



Andrine Shufman's burned home is visible in the Hidden Oaks neighborhood in Stillwater, Okla., March 17, 2025, after wildfires burned through the area. (AP Photo/Alonzo Adams, File)

The Daily Campus

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Derby, Conn.

For more information about getting involved as an editorial, business or digital employee:

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 - 20 "I'd like something that won't rust, something ..."
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 - 25 Game show prize, maybe
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By Jay Silverman

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- 3 Like milligrams and milliliters
- 4 Title said with the tip of a hat, perhaps
- 5 Tiny hooter
- 6 Side wager on a sporting event, informally
- 7 Blinking body part
- 8 Infomercial exhortation
- 9 Dueler's implement
- 10 Wasn't honest with
- 11 "Your point is?"
- 12 Coretta King, ___ Scott
- 13 Like 2025
- 21 Deliver a speech
- 22 Mythological ship
- 26 Valentine's Day flower
- 27 Kinds
- 28 Princeton Review subj.
- 30 Plane tracker
- 32 Name of two Monty Python members
- 34 Unserious font
- 37 Speech imperfection
- 38 North ___ Sea: Asian lake

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Life

The Orchestra (For Now) emerges with 'Plan 75'

by Elijah Polance

HE/HIM/THEY/THEM
STAFF WRITER
elijah.polance@uconn.edu

The process of deciding what single to drop before a musical release is an inevitable dilemma for many artists. Whether it's finding the right song or deciding how many to release, there are an endless number of variables to navigate.

For a smaller EP, one might question whether it's worth sharing a single at all. Dropping one single for a four-track EP reveals a quarter of the ideas expressed on the project. Delivering two is unconventional, giving away half of the entire vision and leaving little to the imagination. Releasing three? Pure madness.

But in the case of The Orchestra (For Now), an art rock band from London's "Windmill Scene," "mad" is a fitting compliment. The

seven-piece group, which formed in 2023, released their debut studio EP, "Plan 75," on March 28. On it, four songs come together for a running total of 22 minutes. Three tracks (totaling 17 minutes' worth of material) were dropped beforehand, a bold risk that paid off by getting their daring sound some well-deserved traction.

With seven members, the band subverts the traditional rock band lineups of guitar, drums and bass. They work in keyboards, violin and cello, adding textured layers and dynamism to their music. Between their instrumental lineup, angsty vocals from Joe Scarisbrick and blend of art rock, progressive rock and post-rock, comparisons to other artists in the "Windmill Scene" are inevitable but should not detract from the newer band's successes.

Take the beginning of "Escape From New York" — the project

opener and only song not released beforehand — as an example of the band finding their own stride. Wistful acoustic guitar blends with the string instruments, imbuing pure optimism. It would work as the perfect score for a panning exposition shot in an adventure video game as you take in the inconceivable surroundings. The feeling remains even when Scarisbrick starts narrating in a drawingly murmur about forgotten good times.

As the track progresses, electric guitars and aggressive drum patterns blast their way in as Scarisbrick's vocals morph into emphatic yells. The self-indulgent attitude he brandishes, with lines like, "I've been through all of Zadie Smith's books / I am very well read" is reminiscent of the early writing style of Black Country, New Road, with the instrumentals drawing many similarities as well. Towards the end, dense instrumentals start to drown Scarisbrick's voice in the mix, but it's a satisfying finale, nonetheless.

The band wastes no time getting into "Skins," a fast-paced track that details a disjointed, existential narrative. The electric instrumentals convey a sense of movement and despair, matching Scarisbrick's powerful delivery. The dramatic

lyricism stays prominent, with him announcing, "I've been sunken / Like a bloody fool," vocals quavering all the while.

Throughout the album, the band often switches between loud and fast instrumental passages with everyone playing, and slower moments where only one or two members take the stage. "Skins" does a wonderful job showing that dynamic, often making multiple switches within a few seconds to build tension.

"The Strip" is the most intense track on the project, veering into post-hardcore. Outside of a string-led section, electric guitars steal the show, tearing their way through the track with unmatched intensity. The rush of noise makes for an anxiety-inducing experience, but one that you can't help nodding your head along to.

The lyrics thread a more direct narrative this time, detailing someone getting murdered and the rush to detach from the scene of the crime. Scarisbrick sings incredibly close to the microphone, allowing his yelled vocals to instill a claustrophobic feeling.

The grand finale and debut single from the band is "Wake Robin," an eight-minute art rock opus. Upon release last year, it instantly

put them on a map as an artist to look out for, and for good reason.

The track weaves together a plethora of instrumental patterns, led by either the guitars, drums, strings or piano. Some are meditative post-rock moments that steadily build, while others have Scarisbrick singing alongside Erin Snape, the cellist, whose lighter vocals provide nice contrast. All of the main instrumental rhythms are wildly addictive and can get stuck in your head for days.

It also manages to be the most interesting lyrical endeavor on the EP. It centers around a decaying relationship, with Scarisbrick pleading, "There's no use in shouting at me, hold my hand instead / And the death-defying stunts that get us out of bed." But there's plenty of descriptive imagery and pop culture references to things like BeReal and Jubilee YouTube videos that make the track stand out.

The ability of The Orchestra (For Now) to release a project this memorable, in a genre already occupied by a plethora of artists in their local scene, is a testament to their wild creativity and instrumental prowess. Only time will tell how they will exceed expectations next.

Rating: 4.25/5



The album "Plan 75," released by The Orchestra (For Now) promises atmospheric and melancholic tracks. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ORCHESTRA ON SPOTIFY

No Skips: De La Soul will never die

by James Fitzpatrick

HE/HIM/HIS
ASSOCIATE LIFE EDITOR
james.fitzpatrick@uconn.edu

Hi everyone! Welcome to No Skips, where we see if an album has any skippable tracks from start to finish. The discography of hip-hop group De La Soul has had a renaissance in the 2020s, ever since they were finally able to put their albums on streaming services and claim ownership over their brand from record labels Warner Music Group and Tommy Boy.

Many fans will stand by their debut, "3 Feet High and Rising," as their best work, though their follow-up, "De La Soul is Dead," provides stiff competition. Both are produced by the legendary Prince Paul — also known for his work with Gravediggaz and Handsome Boy Modeling School — giving both records distinct and sample-heavy sounds.

I'll argue how their sophomore effort, while bloated with skits and interludes, is better than "3 Feet High and Rising," starting a prolific run of albums in the 1990s.

"Oodles of O's" begins the record with an impressive technical showing by Trugoy the Dove and Posdnuos, two of the group's three members. Prince Paul utilizes a descending piano line and drum break from James Brown to start this record on a less funky note than their previous record, yet the following tracks show there's nothing wrong with that.

"Talkin' Bout Hey Love" is a rapless interlude with an incredible Stevie Wonder flip. "Pease Porridge" mixes verses with skits, but the clacky beat, which has been rehashed by Prince Paul in a song featuring MF DOOM, makes it worth the while. Many of the rappers' first words in a line are repeated two or three times, possibly to mimic record scratching, yet it doesn't get old.

"A Roller Skating Jam Named 'Saturdays'" starts like a dream sequence, and when paired with the killer chorus from Vinya Mojica, the futuristic "Sonic R" soundtrack comes to mind. Q-Tip's verse is also a highlight, ditching conventional grammar to give context to the song's sto-

ry, "Girl meets boy on Thursday night / Boy was high, girl fly like kite."

"Bitties in the BK Lounge" is another conceptual cut, telling a romance and sex-fueled story like the previous track. The beat hasn't aged the best and neither has the line "Could be pissed 'cause she's clocking \$2.45 an hour." However, Posdnuos and rapper LeShaun change it up midway through by portraying a Burger King cashier and customer, respectively. The second beat switch is overkill, but this song is a far better advertisement for the company than the monotone guy "singing" the slogan.

"My Brother's a Basehead" revolves around condemning drug use instead of promoting it like many rappers do these days. De La still tackles this issue with nuance, specifically when Posdnuos creates a narrative where his brother gets hooked on crack and their mother's idea of healing him is to attend church, which doesn't work and leaves the brother on the streets.

"Let, Let Me In" sees Prince Paul's sampling skills peak with the best use I've heard of "Tramp" by Lowell Fulson. To shout out the final member of the trio, Maseo, the final four lines of his verse all start with "Boom!" pre-dating the Costco Guys by over three decades. Is Maseo the Rizzler Enthusiast, or is this a red herring? Read our "Scampus" issue on April 1 to find out their identity.

"Afro Connections at a Hi 5 (In the Eyes of the Hoodlum)" has some of the most pronounced bass on any song from the "Golden Age of Hip Hop," referenced in the line "But the fly tape let the car speakers shake." The song's emphasis on Black identity and the title may have inspired Digable Planets' future albums, especially 1994's "Blowout Comb."

"Rap De Rap Show" is another

song just musical enough to mention. De La Soul and many other guests make a mock radio show called WRMS headed by "The Doo Doo Man" to give the record some flavor.

Not much new commentary can be provided on the immaculate "Millie Pulled a Pistol on Santa," one of the album's three singles that is among the group's best songs.

"Who Do U Worship?" is an undeniable predecessor to "Rock N' Roll (Could Never Hip Hop Like This)" off Handsome Boy Modeling School's debut album, with its intense record scratching and screaming.

"Kicked Out the House" is the best interlude-esque track with vocal sampling techniques akin to Public Enemy and frantic shouts of "Put it on vibrate!" "Pass the Plugs" contains verses from each member and Prince Paul, who creates sample-ception by sampling "Potholes in my Lawn" from "3 Feet High and Rising."

Although it takes a minute to get going, "Ring Ring Ring (Ha Ha Hey)" is groovy as hell, albeit with lackluster mixing. "Swing-alokate" somehow one-ups the grooviness, and the mixing is the same, yet the chorus hits harder because of it. The kick hits on the "three" in "On and on and three steps ahead," keeping the momentum going. Callbacks to other tracks are embellished here including "Feed me the donut, feed me the O."

The slower "Fanatic of the B Word" features more repetition of the same words in lines as "Pease Porridge," though this time it's a bit more grading. Nevertheless, the beat and chanted chorus make up for this shortcoming, with the "B word" being "baseball" and not "bitch" like one would expect.

"Baseball" itself means something else, as shown in the final track, "Keepin' the Faith." Posdnuos begins his verse with "I'll

never do the baseball with you again," followed by "Was it such a sin to let, let me in?" This track especially is an exercise in how interesting music and lyrics can be when the foundation is previously existing songs that Prince Paul samples, while dozens of lyrics are interpolations of other lyrics. To that, I'd say the boys prevailed here.

Reluctance to sample in hip-hop partially stemmed from a lawsuit by '60s band The Turtles against De La Soul for an unauthorized sample in "3 Feet High and Rising," and I'm unsure how The Turtles argued that De La's music wasn't transformative of their work. It's the same shitty argument that allows big companies to file unjustified copyright strikes on YouTube because this trio and Prince Paul created something truly unique here.

It's a relief that De La Soul won the war with their catalogue, despite their records hitting streaming services right after the death of Trugoy the Dove in 2023. Their music is anything but derivative of what anyone was making at the time — and ever since. What a paradox that they referred to themselves as dead back during their height, considering their music from the '80s and '90s is livelier than ever.



LOGO BY SAMANTHA HASS, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

They call me the 'April Fish': The history of April Fools' Day

by Benjamin Lassy

HE/HIM/HIS
LIFE EDITOR
benjamin.lassy@uconn.edu

Nothing interesting happened this week in history, so I'm officially cancelling the column here on out.

April Fools'!

Well, it's not April 1 just yet. For that special occasion, we'll be celebrating with a "Scampus" edition of the paper coming out on Tuesday. But for This Week in History, why not dive into the history of a holiday that I don't think many people know much about?

What do you think the historical origins of April Fools' Day are? Is it a religious holiday? Maybe it's the result of some British myth? Or is it a blend of several cultural trends?

These are pretty difficult questions to tackle even for experienced This Week in History readers. If you don't know the answer, then you're such a "poisson d'avril!"

Yeah, I ought to put a paper fish on your back and call you an "April Fish" in French. This very interaction is what some scholars consider to be the origin of this holiday. It's a

strange phenomenon, isn't it?

Like many of history's strange proceedings, the trouble begins with the introduction of a new calendar. In 1582, the French were shifting from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. The leap would help correct for leap years and the gradual desynchronization of the Julian calendar, but it would also reset the traditional start of the year.

You see, nature doesn't exactly have a starting or stopping point for the year. Most associate the chilly December months with finality, while others think of January first as some sort of fresh start. In actuality, the French under the Julian calendar may have been more in tune with the seasons: April 1 was the start of the new year, while the end was still nestled in December.

Of course, January still existed, but the actual start of the new year was celebrated due to both religious occurrences and seasonal changes in April. This honestly seems nice. Spring starts in late March, so by April 1, it really does start to feel like spring has sprung and a new year is here.

So why the "April Fish" insult? If you were a Frenchman who forgot that in 1582 the calendar switched to the Gregorian and officially set the start of the year to Jan. 1, then your countrymen would find you, plaster a paper fish on your back and probably fart in your general direction.

Now, don't take any of the above as the concrete origins of April Fools' Day. There are many other possible historical origins for the holiest of days.

Perhaps you're from 18th-century Scotland, so why not celebrate with some humor for two days? On day one, you get to send your friends on fake errands, making them do something reductive for no real purpose — except to get a good laugh. Then, on day two, you can celebrate Tailie Day, where you put a sign that says "kick me" on people's buttocks.

Ah, but every historian knows that all roads — and historical events — lead to Rome. Maybe April Fools' Day is actually Roman, as they celebrated Hilaria. Besides its top-tier holiday name, you'd get to dress up and mock fellow Ro-

mans. What joy.

So, there we go. This little overview was made possible through the work of writers at History.com and Rutgers.edu. I highly recommend you investigate more about April Fools' Day for one simple reason: People in history laughed.

When you read any book about history, chances are it discusses

wars, atrocities, racism, discrimination, chaos or tribulation of some kind. But when you realize that for over 500 years, people have been calling each other "April Fish," you can start to humanize your ancestors. They would have been rolling over laughing when one of their friends kicked their ass. I'll see you next week in history.



FILE LOGO
THE DAILY CAMPUS

Finding connection with sensational performances at Story Slam

by **Elijah Polance**

HE/HIM/THEY/THEM
STAFF WRITER
elijah.polance@uconn.edu

Six University of Connecticut students performed their stories, spanning topics of identity and connection, at Story Slam. The event was held at the Black Box Theatre in the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry on March 27.

Anna Mae Duane, director of the UConn Humanities Institute (UCHI) and an English professor at UConn, started by describing the program. The students were chosen as ambassadors for UCHI and came from different educational backgrounds. Each student was assigned to an experienced coach who helped them write their stories and practice their performances.

Then, the story coaches, Jonathan Adler and Gillian Epstein, spoke about the program. They emphasized how hard the students had worked and reiterated the relevance of stories for our growth and in our everyday lives.

The first student to perform was Hannah Dang, a sixth-semester English major. Her story, "Full Load," began by describing the convoluted process of getting laundry done in her house and the tension between her parents.

Dang then broadened the focus, examining gender dynamics in relationships. She concluded by bringing in her own college experiences, reflecting on the values instilled by her family.

Instead of a literary reading, she and the other students gave an animated performance of their stories, bringing them to life. Dang's reading came with a melodic cadence, but she embellished certain moments and dialogue from others with dramatic or humorous emphasis.

Next, Myles Tate-Alsgaard, a general studies major, performed his story, "Some Kind of

Blue." Tate-Alsgaard recounted his experience playing the bass and how it helped him find community.

It had allowed him to come to terms with his identity, and he reflected on how that changed after he stopped playing the instrument. He spoke with a poetic rhythm that worked with the introspective nature of the piece.

Martine Remi, a sixth-semester digital media and design major, then presented their story, "Quiet on Set." Their story focused on how the bustling energy of filmmaking nullified the unwelcome silences at home and the distance between them and their mom after coming out.

They took solace in the creative environment, surrounded by an accepting community, motivating them to help others distressed by alienating silences. Their reading was solemn, reflecting the seriousness of the piece.

Then, Aisha Hashimi, a fourth-semester allied health sciences major, presented her story, "With a Little Ginger." She recounted the many memories of making and drinking chai with her family, with moments like learning recipes passed down generation to generation from her mother and gatherings where everyone bonded over the drink.

Hashimi conveyed how being a first-generation college student can be isolating and scary, but she could always take solace in family, where chai makes everything easier. Hashimi got emotional towards the end, speaking to the power and personal nature of her story.

Natasha Khetan, a fourth-semester allied health sciences and disability studies major, followed with her story, "Houston, We Need a Doctor." She expressed her difficulties navigating her life with undiagnosed endometriosis, where people saw her as weird but would not

acknowledge her struggle either. She brought up how isolating it felt and the shortcomings of the healthcare system.

Khetan finished by emphasizing how her difficulties taught her empathy and inspired her to make a change in the healthcare field. While the subject matter was heavy, she infused the performance with enthusiasm and plenty of jokes to lighten the mood.

The final performance came from David Cabeceiras, who recently graduated from UConn with a degree in English, with his story "Punching Up." He related a story of when he shared a poem to a creative writing class about boxing and the criticism it received from a peer.

While the boxing narrative itself reflected on masculinity and his urge to fight, or lack thereof, the creative writing layer focuses on his writing itself, with a meta-approach.

Cabeceiras gave a brazen, im-

mensive performance. He spoke loudly and mimed the fight movements as they came up in the story, giving his words energy and authority.

After the performances, Khetan elaborated on her experience in the program. She said it started in January and performance practices were held online, which made the in-person event stressful.

"Learning to stand in front of people, stand at the mic, without having that actual practice for like weeks and weeks and only having those calls was definitely a jarring experience," Khetan said.

"This morning I had my rehearsal and I was like, man, this is not gonna go well, but then it did, it worked out," she said.

Dang said she felt similarly apprehensive about performing but also found the new experience fulfilling.

"Performing was probably the part that I was most nervous

about, but it was the most exciting for me because it's the part that I have the least experience in," Dang said.

Gabby Wincherhern, a copy editor for The Daily Campus and a sixth-semester ecology and evolutionary biology major, found the event impressive, as a writer who does not usually perform her stories in dramatic ways.

"I really like the part where they [said] anyone can do it, like this is something that you could hypothetically share," Wincherhern said.

"I was like, wow, everyone here is so cool, everyone has such cool things to say," she said.

Before the event ended and the audience got refreshments, Duane returned to the stage and asked everyone to reflect on something that stuck with them. She said Story Slam and other UCHI ambassador opportunities for students will return next year.



The Ballard Museum Black Box Theatre hosts "Story Slam" in Storrs, Conn. on March 27, 2025. Six students reflected on issues of social isolation and connection through personal stories. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Ninth Annual Maple Festival debuts in Mansfield

by **Maleena Muzio**

SHE/HER/HERS
STAFF WRITER
maleena.muzio@uconn.edu

Maple syrup, handmade gifts and food — despite the chilly weather, families, locals and college students showed up for The Eastern Connecticut Maple Festival on March 29 and 30. Over 100 vendors packed the parking lot of E.O. Smith High School for the ninth annual Maple Festival.

The Eastern Connecticut Maple Festival debuted at its new location in Mansfield, Conn. over the weekend, as it was previously held in Hebron, Conn. Local and small businesses presenting a handful of goods, such as jewelry, crochet items, artwork and clothing could be found at the festival. Other vendors and food trucks sold their famous items, with most offering spe-

cialties that incorporated maple into snacks or meals. All-natural maple syrup was also sold.

Families and friends flocked to the picnic tables outside, enjoying their maple treats with smiling faces. The vendors and sellers seemed to have a good time as well, with many showing off their welcoming attitudes.

"I think it is really nice that independent artists are getting to showcase their work," Laura Solomon, a fourth-semester education major at the University of Connecticut, said.

Artists sold paintings and crafts, and one even offered caricature drawings on the spot.

Vintage lovers flocked to booths selling secondhand items, with used rock and blues vinyls on display.

Shopping and eating were

not the only things to do at the Maple Festival, however. For those with kids, there were plenty of activities to keep the little ones entertained. Traditional fair games, with giant stuffed prizes offered to winners were part of the festival lineup. Inflatable bounce houses were filled with laughing children. Face paint and henna were also available.

"With these types of things, I just love the sense of community. Like walking around, everyone kind of appreciating art and culture," Laura Seifert, a recent graduate from UConn, said.

There was truly something for everyone at the festival.

One station allowed people to decorate their own cookies — maple-flavored, of course. Gluten-free options were also available for decoration and sale. Many of the food venues

at the festival catered to various dietary restrictions and needs.

Live music filled the atmosphere. Bands and performers switched throughout the days, playing a mix of popular rock and acoustic hits. The music added a sense of warmth to an otherwise cold weekend.

Locals presented opportunities to get involved with activities in the area, with representatives from towns such as Tolland.

Through the weekend, people came and went, visiting the festival even if they had no particular plans to do so. Some students stumbled upon the event on their way downtown.

"I love when they have little things like this here, or in Storrs Center. It just is nice to stop by like when they have stuff like this. I just think it's cool, I definitely enjoy it and

appreciate having it," Solomon said.

Maple sugaring demonstrations, cooking with the ingredient and presentations on the history of maple syrup also took place at different points during the two days.

The Eastern Connecticut Maple Festival was sponsored by The Windham Region Chamber of Commerce, who have been holding this event since 2016. The festival was free to all visitors.

"Having this available for students, people can go with their friends and hang out, and I think that is a really good opportunity. I think it brings community together and it connects the college students with the locals that are actually here," Briana Ashton, a sixth-semester speech, language and hearing sciences major at UConn, said.



The East Connecticut Mansfield Maple Festival Took place this past weekend with sweet treats and live entertainment. PHOTOS COURTESY OF VISIT CONNECTICUT.



Life

@dailycampuslife

Krista Mitchell's 'Joker Stardust' exhibit ponders life beyond consumerism

by **Bonnibel Rampertab**

SHE/HER/HERS
STAFF WRITER
LILITH.RAMPERTAB@UCONN.EDU

Disclaimer: Krista Mitchell is a staff artist for The Daily Campus.

Krista Mitchell is an eighth-semester art and creative writing student at the University of Connecticut. After receiving a Presidential Scholarship, which provided her with \$2,500 to fund a project, Mitchell collaborated with Associate Professor of Printmaking John O'Donnell to make an exhibit at the VAIS art gallery. The reception for the exhibit was on March 27.

"I wasn't really sure what to do at first, but last year I saw Irene Pham's exhibition in the gallery and after I saw that, I decided that this is what I want to do," Mitchell said.

"I only had one class with John O'Donnell before, but I felt like he would get what I was trying to do thematically," she continued.

"I went through a bazillion books to find all of the collage images, and then over my winter break, I made all the collages, and in February I turned all of it into a little book," she said, referring to the "Joker Stardust" art book. The art book is dedicated to Mitchell's grandmother, Catherine "Kay" Holloway.

"I went through her house, and I took a lot of her artwork, and I repurposed it in the collages to give it a new life and to celebrate her art as well." Holloway created some of

the art on display, such as the cloth circles, some stained-glass imagery of a gun and a turkey-like bird made to celebrate her husband's passion for hunting.

The book goes into detail about Mitchell's perspective while creating the art pieces and curating the multimedia project. The center of the exhibit seems to be centered around a certain quote from Mitchell in the book: "Is our world created from stardust by an omnipotent jester in the court of the universe, or is the divine intentional with its creation?"

It is in these pages that it becomes apparent that the majority of the art pieces are untitled, but the creations follow themes such as life, childhood, creativity, middle age and death.

The gallery was structured not by chronological creation of the pieces between 2024 and 2025 but rather the cycle of life and death. Accompanied by the art pieces is information on what materials were used to make the art pieces. The majority of the works are collages mounted on wood panels with a matte medium and sometimes acrylic paint.

Starting with birth, Mitchell used a cross-stitch of a baby her grandmother made. The piece next to it is a large wooden panel with cut graph paper. A shape similar to a baby's head is one of the pieces of graph paper.

Another piece is a small wooden panel covered in tin foil, with two collage images of baby doll heads

wearing hats pasted on. The piece next to it is much larger, having collages of human babies and four people presumed to be mothers holding babies.

In the childhood section, there are these beautiful paper flowers stuck onto the wood panels accompanying the images of children, some playing together. The natural imagery of the pieces could represent how childhood is a time of innocence before true corruption.

There was then a section addressing the concepts of life and death. Beyond the stained-glass art made by Mitchell's grandmother, the life section has two electric candles, two babies and an angel figurine. The death section has a miniature clock, a black dog figurine and a metal merry-go-round.

The creativity section has these cloth circles Mitchell's grandmother made, and Mitchell repurposed them for the exhibit. One wooden panel has the cloth circles hanging off it. On this, Mitchell said, "The idea of creativity interacts with the idea of consumerism and religion."

One of the questions she wanted to propose to the audience was whether or not it was in humanity's best interest to find intention in life and creation if they themselves believed they were created intentionally — for example, in terms of a higher power.

A particularly striking part of the exhibit was the collection of three shelves labeled from top to bottom: "Heaven," "Earth" and

"Hell."

For the "Heaven" shelf, there were two figurines of Amish people and then four monkeys covering various parts of their faces, a reference to the proverb of "See no evil, hear no evil, say no evil, do no evil." In between them resides an unlit oil lamp.

The "Earth" shelf has a miniature television set, a baby figure and a tiny pack of Coca-Cola bottles.

The "Hell" shelf is extremely peculiar. It has this red dog figure that operates as a coin bank. According to Mitchell, she found it in her attic, and it belonged to her grandmother. Other objects were sourced from antique stores. Even more peculiar was the snow globe with the character Snoopy inside of it from the comic series "Peanuts" and the "Charlie Brown" animations.

"Middle Age" features adults in the collages and the cloth circles make a return in one of the pieces.

One of the most beautiful pieces of the exhibit is this circular collage that looks like outer space, mostly in black and white but with touches of blue, pink and orange on the outer rim.

The final part of the exhibit is death, which is a bit eerie with the deteriorated and weathered image of a man's face on the first piece in the sequence. The final piece has a picture of a woman paired with lines of dominoes on the left and right edges of the wood panels. The plastic could represent a loss of nature in favor of industrialization.

"All of this work was really built over, I'd say, 15 to 18 weeks of conversation," O'Donnell said.

"It was a long, convoluted process but it all came together in a really smart show," he said.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEXA PAPPAS, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Krista Mitchell's Art show photographed on March 27th 2025. This event was Mitchell's first solo exhibit. PHOTO BY KYLYNN MONTS, DIGITAL EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

von der Mehden hosts a piano recital by Grace Nieh

by **Bonnibel Rampertab**

SHE/HER/HERS
STAFF WRITER
LILITH.RAMPERTAB@UCONN.EDU

The von der Mehden recital hall hosted a piano recital by piano performance student Grace Nieh on March 27.

According to the program distributed by the recital hall, Nieh has been involved with the UConn Symphonic Wind Ensemble and the Connecticut Youth Symphony. She is currently studying under Dr. Angelina Gadeliya and has received multiple scholarships.

The audience applauded for Nieh when she went on stage. Without a word, she began to play Joseph Haydn's three-part composition "Piano Sonata No. 62 in E-flat Major, Hob. XVI/52."

There was a feeling of tension and release with the shorter staccato notes and the longer legato notes fluctuating between each other. There was then a cascade of notes that felt like frolicking in a field. However,

the positivity and joy in the sound of the music would prove to be temporary in the piece.

There was a melody that sounded kind of like the "Hot Cross Buns" theme that kept appearing in the middle of the piece. In between these positive-sounding moments, however, there were darker and more sinister melodies.

Yet another beautiful melody was bookended by a more tragic-sounding melody. The different movements of the piece kept melding together since they all had mood fluctuations, making it difficult to tell when one part started and ended. The only hint the audience received as to when the next piece was being played was when Nieh briefly stopped playing.

The finale of the piece, "Presto," started off seriously. There was an incredibly impressive fast melody that displayed Nieh's technical prowess. There were also some purposefully unpleasant and discordant

notes. Like a hammer, a heavy bass note was played alongside the pre-existing melody, adding a level of harshness to the composition.

The audience applauded after Nieh got up and bowed. The next piece performed was Sergey Rakhmaninov's "Prelude in A minor, Op. 32, No. 8." The sound filled the room gorgeously. Right when the piece felt like it was getting started, though, the composition abruptly ended.

The next piece was Rakhmaninov's "Prelude in B minor, Op. 32, No. 10," which began even more gloomily. Heavy bass notes loomed over the rest of the composition. There was a lull afterward that felt like the calm before the storm, as the piece's sound grew into an explosion again. The sustain pedal helped to create a beautiful ringing sound, making depressing moments slightly hopeful before delving further into solemnity.

Sergey Prokofiev's "Suggestion diabolique" from "Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 4" was the next piece played. It had really loud high notes and Nieh's body moved with the force of the music, giving it more power.

There was a short intermission for the von der Mehden staff to set up a second piano for the final piece: Rakhmaninov's "Suite No. 2 for Two Pianos, Op. 17." Thomas Tarutin, a junior majoring in physics and mathematics-statistics, was the second player.

According to the program, although he hasn't pursued music as a major, "He commits a significant portion of his time to continuing his piano studies through lessons and chamber music, both at and outside the university." Beyond the piano, he plays the viola and is the organist at St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church in East Berlin, Conn.

With two people to help move the screens to the next page while the pianists were playing,

the final piece was performed. The first part, "Romance - Andantino," certainly sounded romantic. There was an absolutely beautiful cascade of mesmerizing notes. To counter this, however, there was a heavier moment that made it apparent that "beautiful" doesn't do this composition justice.

The second part, "Tarantella - Presto," started off heavier and more miserable than before. It was as if the pianos were communicating with each other. Within the chaos, there was an interesting melody. It was like an argument of sorts, which juxtaposed with the previous movement. The piece abruptly ended, and the recital was over. Nieh bowed to a standing ovation.

Recitals are always a joy to attend if you want to relax and daydream to the soundtrack of live-performed music. It's a nice change of pace to hear music being performed live instead of hearing recordings.

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We Will Not Be Silenced: Saving the education system of America

by Grace Donahue
CONTRIBUTOR
SHE/HER/HERS
grace.donahue@uconn.edu

Columbia University is currently at the center of a deeply troubling attack on student rights. The Trump administration recently stripped the university of over \$400 million in federal funding, citing its alleged failure to crack down on antisemitism amid student protests over Israel's war on Hamas. While the Manhattan district attorney's office decided not to pursue charges against "31 of the 46 people initially arrested," the "students still faced disciplinary hearings and possible expulsion from the university." Despite these actions, the Trump administration went ahead with defunding Columbia. In response, the university announced it would revoke the degrees of several students who had participated in the occupation of Hamilton Hall.

Historically, student protest has been a vital force for change in America — whether against segregation, the Vietnam War or apartheid in South Africa. As Nihad Awad, national executive director of the Council on American Islamic Relations, pointed out, these students "were technically violating the law when [they] refused the order to disperse," yet "we celebrate those students today." The same First Amendment rights that protected those past movements apply to the student protests at Columbia. By revoking federal funds and pressuring the university to punish protesters, the Trump administration reveals a dangerous willingness to silence dissent through fear, coercion and unconstitutional overreach.

This is not an isolated incident of federal overreach. Under Don-

ald Trump's leadership, the government is actively weaponizing education policy by not only punishing schools, but also threatening to dismantle critical support systems like the Department of Education. Eliminating the DOE would be devastating. The federal agency provides financial aid, enforces Title IX civil rights protections, supports HBCUs and HSIs and funds educational research. Without it, low-income students, students with disabilities and other marginalized groups could lose access to essential opportunities and protections.

Trump has already targeted higher education, most notably in the case of Columbia, where he called for the university to be defunded after students protested and expressed political views he opposed. This wasn't a neutral policy decision — it was a direct retaliation against students' right to free speech. And the effects of this approach don't stop at college campuses. When a former president uses federal influence to punish institutions for allowing protest, it sends a clear message: expressing dissent may cost you your education. That message trickles down, creating a culture of fear that affects not only college students but also teachers and young people in primary and secondary schools.

These attacks come at a time when the education system is already under immense strain — with recent data showing that "most fourth and eighth graders in 2024 are still performing below pre-pandemic 2019 levels in both reading and math." Now is not the time to withdraw federal support. Students, especially those who are already struggling, need more investment, not less. When Trump threatens to defund educa-



The U.S. Department of Education headquarters in Washington, DC. Trump promised during his campaign to abolish the Education Department. PHOTO BY CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

tion in response to free expression, he is undermining both academic recovery and one of the most fundamental rights in a democracy. Protecting education means protecting the right to speak freely. And that has to start at every level, from kindergarten classrooms to college campuses.

To prevent this kind of political retaliation from damaging schools and students, we need a fundamental restructuring of power in the education system. Currently, federal funding and influence is being weaponized against institutions that refuse to conform to political demands, threatening academic freedom, student activism and the core values of democracy. The implementation of structural safeguards is crucial now to insulate both K-12 and higher education from partisan pressure with independent oversight boards reviewing funding decisions, increasing legal protections for students and educators engaged in peaceful protest and establishing clearer boundaries that prevent federal funding from being tied to political ideology.

This shift is not just about protecting universities but instead about safeguarding education at every level. There is an academic crisis unfolding in elementary and

secondary schools and it is a clear example of why federal support is still essential. With national test scores showing an alarming drop between 2019 and 2024, now is the time to invest in evidence-based interventions like high-dosage tutoring, after-school programming and mental health support — not to dismantle the very department responsible for helping fund them.

The Department of Education must be strengthened, not shut down. It is crucial in ensuring access and equity, especially for students with disabilities, English language learners, and those from low-income backgrounds. While states and local districts manage daily school operations, the federal government should serve as a stabilizing force by offering resources, research funding and rights-based enforcement without political interference.

Ultimately, rebalancing educational power isn't about erasing federal influence. It's about protecting students from the consequences of political retaliation. Whether a college protester or a struggling fourth grader, every student deserves an education that is free from fear, grounded in equity and backed by systems that prioritize their success over any politician's agenda.

If it's broke, fix it

by Youssef Macary
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
youssef.macary@uconn.edu

On March 20, 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order stating that the "Secretary of Education shall ... facilitate the closure of the Department of Education." Education is primarily handled at the state and local levels. However, "the Federal contribution to elementary and secondary education is about 8 percent, which includes funds not only from the Department of Education (ED) but also from other Federal agencies." An executive order to close the Department of Education has many implications, the nuances of which can be argued endlessly. We could also argue about whether schools will continue getting funding because of the money that comes from other departments. However, on a

larger scale, this move makes an incredibly dangerous statement: the federal government no longer sees education as a priority.

President Trump also used very flawed reasoning to justify closing the Department of Education. FactCheck.org states that "President Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that U.S. schools are 'ranked 40 out of 40' in educational outcomes compared with other countries." However, the site claims that "We could find no international ranking of education outcomes that has the U.S. dead last, as Trump claimed." In fact, statistics show that "U.S. high school students performed above average in science and reading, and a bit below average in math, according to the latest data compiled by the intergovernmental Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development."

The United States may not be the best in education, but we are far from the worse, which begs the question as to why one would defund the Department of Education. The country is clearly doing very well in terms of educating its people, and such a drastic measure serves to do nothing but disrupt the current status of education in the department. Additionally, if you think the Department of Education is doing a poor job, getting rid of it does not fix the problem. A better approach would be to improve the department's efficiency and work to make the changes needed to better support education across the country.

One could argue, as President Trump has, that education is better in the hands of the state, and instead of funding a federal department of education,

the money should simply be passed onto the states. While this may seem to make sense, it ignores the fact that there are large disparities in the quality of education across states. According to the Education Data Initiative, Alabama's per pupil spending on K-12 education is \$13,461, which is roughly half of Vermont's spending of \$26,974 per pupil. We also see a disparity in outcomes. Looking at the Nation's Report Card, for fourth grade, Vermont's average math score is 242, its average reading score is 221 and its average science score is 165. Alabama, on the other hand, has a 231 in math, a 217 in reading and a science score of 145, all of which are lower than Vermont. Looking at fourth graders across the entire country, the highest math score is 251 and the lowest is 183, the highest reading score is 235 and the lowest is 207 and the high-

est science score is 166 while the lowest is 140. This shows that there are disparities in education quality across the states.

Not only can a federal Department of Education help promote education from a country-wide perspective, it also makes a statement that education is important to the United States. Education is meant to be a basic right, and the stepping stone for every child in the country to have the skills and abilities needed to succeed in the world. It is something that should absolutely be the highest priority of every level of government. For the United States to eliminate the Department of Education is to say that at our highest level of government, we do not care about the education of our students. This is a dangerous and naive message and says a lot about President Trump's priorities.

Opinion

Photo of the Day |



UConn defeats Oklahoma after a strong second half with a final score of 82-59 on Saturday, March 29. UConn moves on to the Elite 8 to play on Monday, March 31.
PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

A Wheatfield With Cypresses: Mental Health Day by Day

by James Watson

STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
mjp24003@uconn.edu

Mental health. Two words that get thrown around without people really knowing what they mean. The average person makes between 33,000-35,000 decisions every day. This is 24.3 decisions every minute. This puts a huge amount of stress on our brains, in a world where stimuli are both endless and everywhere, all the time. We too often fall into the trap of getting fixated on things that are transient. This has certainly been my experience.

There are a broad range of different conditions that can impact a person's mental activity. In 2019, 1 in every 8 people were living with some form of mental disorder. This was, at the time, 970 million people across the globe. These are just the cases that are known. There are many more people who may be contending with mental

health struggles and do not feel comfortable talking about it. This will only change if we make the time and space to put these issues at the front of our minds.

There have been times where I have let anxiety over trivial things creep into my life. Many people I know and love have experienced this feeling. Why, then, is there a stigma around talking or writing about it?

It is overwhelmingly likely that you know someone in your own circle that is dealing with something relating to their mental health. All of our mental health exists on a spectrum. Far beyond the realms of any clinical condition, there are good and bad days for everyone around their mental health. As a generation that prides itself on understanding social issues, it is time to we start talking about this more.

Growing up, my parents reminded me of two fundamental truths. The first is that you should

always promote happiness in your life. The second is that you should always work as hard as you can to achieve your goals. The problem with these is that they seem to exist in a sort of push-pull. It may seem like one is pursued in spite of the other, with your mental health taking the biggest toll. One thing I learned at university is that there is another way.

At the National Portrait Gallery of my hometown, London, there exists a painting I have a deep fascination with: 'A Wheatfield With Cypresses.' This was painted by Vincent Van Gogh in his first collection in 1889. What makes this particular painting stand out is that the brushstrokes are not particularly intricate. They are not uniform. Many are rather heavy-handed. The overall impressionist scene with a pure blue sky, golden wheatfield and forest green cypress trees is still beautiful.

Life is like this painting. We often get too fixated on perfecting

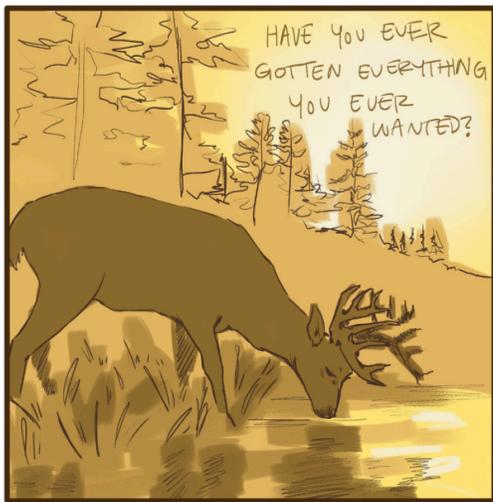
the day-to-day brushstrokes to sit back and wonder as to the bigger picture we are painting. There will be times in your life where you will experience intense pain. There will be times when you will experience overwhelming joy. Many of our days will be in the middle of these two bounds. Practicing good mental health is being fully aware of this and being at peace with it.

The only way to move forward, then, is to create a culture that breaks the cycle of stigma when it comes to talking about mental health issues that have existed for generations prior. The idea that you should not talk about your emotions is antiquated and one that most college-aged Americans now reject. The medical professionals all agree. Around two-thirds of doctors will ask Americans directly about their mental health.

Times have moved forward rapidly from 60 years prior, in the mid-1960s, when mental health

was just beginning to be understood. In the present climate it is important to acknowledge that protecting our health should be as important as anything else. It is not something that should be shunned or a last-minute add-on to daily routines. In our lives, our brains are used just as much of our bodies. We ask a lot of them, and they ask the same of us.

There will be a time when the message in this article will land, and this will be different for everyone. The fact that an article on the subject can be written and talked about is a sign of progress. In 1964, the Surgeon General published a report that smoking, one of the most popular habits in the world, was bad for you. Now there is not a single person on this earth who does not know its effects. Not talking about these issues is damaging us. Then, as now, we are looking but not seeing this problem. Then, as now, it is time to look in a different way.



COMIC BY
AH REUM KINDNESS
CONTRIBUTING ARTIST



COMIC BY
ALEXA PAPPAS
CONTRIBUTING ARTIST

SARAH STRONG: BASKETBALL'S JACK OF ALL TRADES

by Avery Becker

SHE/HER/HERS
ASSOCIATE SPORTS EDITOR
avery.becker@uconn.edu

During a press conference ahead of their game against South Dakota State, head coach Geno Auriemma recalled his first impressions of Sarah Strong.

The first time Auriemma went to watch Strong play with his coaching staff, she acknowledged Auriemma and said hello to him and his staff, but then kept on practicing with her friends.

"She has no time for me, you or anybody else," said Auriemma to the media. "So, whatever you get from her is what we all get as coaches. Her friends, her teammates? That's a whole different story. So, she's very, very bright."

However, from time to time Strong will show her personality, whether that be through her signature thumbs-up in photos or one-liners.

Fans may remember a funny moment between Strong and Paige Bueckers at the Champions Classic when Bueckers compared Strong to "Inspector Gadget." Strong did not get the reference to the 80s cartoon character, so Bueckers promptly said, "Kids these days," where Strong responded with, "I'm an adult, thank you."

All jokes aside, Strong keeps her fiery comebacks off the court and is calm, cool and

collected once she steps on the hardwood.

Kaitlyn Chen, Strong's roommate, said there's never really a "dull moment" in their apartment.

Chen mentioned that Strong plays the piano and guitar and thinks the fans should know that the 6-foot-2 forward is very multi-talented.

Along with her roommates Chen and KK Arnold, Strong's personality is appreciated by all of her teammates.

"No one really believes us when we tell you that that's how she is," said Azzi Fudd, "She definitely is super loyal, rides for her friends, rides for her teammates."

Fudd elaborated that Strong has a "goofy" side to her.

"She's a lot of fun and I remember the first time I was like 'Wait, this is the real her? Like, I was confused,'" concluded Fudd.

When asked to describe herself off the court to her fans, Strong said that she thinks she's "pretty funny."

"Yeah, I'm funny, I'm just like a regular person," Strong said.

Just like her roommate Chen mentioned, Strong's favorite hobbies include playing the guitar and piano.

"Anything on TikTok," Strong said when asked what songs she likes to play on her instruments. "I just got bored and got a guitar and started learning."

When asked about her go-to song once she picks up her guitar, she replied that it was "Sailor Song" by Gigi Perez, which has grown immensely popular on TikTok.

Aside from her hobbies, Strong has been making waves in her first run at March Madness.

The forward came into this season as ESPN's No. 1 ranked recruit and has made waves in her first-year campaign, with fans comparing her to UConn great Maya Moore.

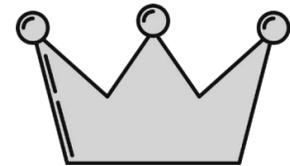
Strong made her NCAA tournament debut last week and racked up four consecutive double-doubles to get her first appearances rolling.

According to Alexa Philip-pou of ESPN, after Strong's first March Madness game against Arkansas State on March 22, Strong became the only player over the last 25 seasons to put up a stat line of 20 points, 10 rebounds, five assists and five blocks.

That stat line is just a testament to how consistent a player the North Carolina native is.

Next up, Strong is preparing for the Elite Eight in Spokane, Wash. on Monday evening but is trying to look at it like it's any other game.

"I'm just not going to try to think about it being the Elite 8. I don't need the extra pressure, so [I] just try to focus on whatever and stay present," Strong said.



Clipart courtesy of Creazilla
Photo courtesy of @UConnWBB on Instagram



COLLISION OR CORONATION: HUSKIES AND TROJANS MEET AGAIN FOR SPOT IN NCAA FINAL FOUR

by Jake McCreven

HE/HIM/HIS
STAFF WRITER
jpm23012@uconn.edu

A week after the Trojans waltzed into Hartford, Conn. four days before Christmas and escaped with a two-point victory over the Huskies, head coach Geno Auriemma spoke of his mettle to the media.

"I think that's what gets you through these tough times," the veteran coach said. "You don't dwell on them, and, you know, don't let it define who you are."

The tough times Auriemma described were taking a toll on a team exhausted by injuries and demoralized by two losses in nine days — one of which was to the program's bitter rival in Notre Dame. University of Southern California (USC) held a lead of 18 points on two separate occasions in December's top 10 dogfight, allowing just 11 Husky field goals to hit in the first 20 minutes while shooting

nearly 50% from the field and 64% from deep themselves.

Yet Connecticut held a lead over USC with under five minutes remaining in regulation, storming all the way back from 18 down. Paige Bueckers hit a scintillating transition 3-pointer to ignite the powder keg of Husky fans in the XL Center, and Connecticut looked almost destined to defend the den in Hartford.

JuJu Watkins then proceeded to account for each of the Trojans' last eight points over the final four minutes, hitting on three free throws to edge USC past Connecticut 72-70.

The loss pitted UConn in a tough spot; two losses in nine days, a litany of injuries infecting its roster and not a single ranked win opportunity until mid-February on the horizon.

Since that moment in late December, the Huskies have lost just once, recording 24 wins (22 of which came by 20-plus), a signature 29-point thumping

of South Carolina in Columbia and a tear through its first six postseason games. The team has also welcomed back a fully healthy Azzi Fudd, which has helped its offense climb to the nation's mountain top on Bart Torvik.

Fudd played eight minutes in December's game in her return from a knee sprain suffered against Louisville two weeks prior. The graduate guard didn't hit on any of the four shots she took, exiting the game with one rebound and one assist in her only outing this season with zero points.

Since then, Fudd has recorded over 20 points five times, including a lights-out 27-point, 10/13 showing against Arkansas State last weekend.

The team has also honed in on its rotation since last meeting the Trojans. The wiry KK Arnold has stepped into a pivotal defensive role, while sophomore Ashlynn Shade and redshirt freshman Jana El Alfy have

molded into tertiary scoring options for the third-ranked Huskies.

The Trojans, meanwhile, have suffered three losses since last meeting the Huskies; a seven-point drop at Iowa in February and a five-point blunder versus UCLA in the Big 10 Championship game. Undeniably the most debilitating loss, however, is Watkins' torn ACL, which leaves her out of the second rendition between the two juggernauts.

Watkins went down in an ugly, non-contact way against Mississippi State last weekend, ending her season prematurely in the Round of 32. The Trojans haven't missed a step without her to this point, rolling past the Bulldogs by 37 before defeating Kansas State in the Sweet 16 on Saturday.

How will the Trojans compensate for the loss of its All-American guard? The play of standout forward Kiki Iriafen and chippy, defensive-minded

guard Kennedy Smith will be paramount in USC's efforts to slow down the Connecticut buzzsaw.

USC could also see scoring from Avery Howell and Rayah Marshall, with both reaching double-digits in the team's win over Kansas State.

How the Huskies choose to defend Iriafen could resemble how Auriemma schemed his defensive against Raegan Beers on Saturday — collapsing in on the paint with the nearest backcourt player to help the one-on-one matchup down low. Connecticut has seen success with this scheme against the dominant frontcourt players it has seen this season (think Audi Crooks, Kelsey Ransom, Faith Masonius, Morgan Maly and Chloe Kitts).

The game is scheduled for 9 p.m., with broadcast available on ESPN. The winner will advance to Tampa Bay and will punch a ticket to the Final Four next weekend.

UConn women's basketball moves on in March Madness after beating South Dakota State in round two with a final score of 57-91. The team's next game will take place in Spokane, Wash. on Monday, March 31, 2025.

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



Sports

Photo of the Day | Huskies are on the move!



UConn defeats Oklahoma after a strong second half with a final score of 82-59 on Saturday March 29. UConn moves on to the Elite 8 to play on Monday March 31.
PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

WOMEN'S TENNIS: UCONN SWEEPS THE WEEKEND AND REMAINS UNDEFEATED AT HOME

by Julia Sasso

SHE/HER/HERS
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
JULIA.SASSO@UCONN.EDU

The UConn women's tennis team continued their undefeated conference run this weekend as they beat the Providence Friars on Friday and the Butler Bulldogs on Sunday. These wins move the Huskies to 7-0 in Big East play, extending their winning streak to seven games.

Connecticut started the weekend strong, sweeping Providence 7-0 on Friday, March 27th. The Huskies hosted the Friars for the team's first outdoor matches of the season, held in Storrs.

Connecticut set the tone early in the day, winning all three of their doubles matches. The duo

of sophomore Victoria Matos and senior Olivia Wright took the first victory of the day, beating freshmen Alison Root and Flora Eidson 6-1.

The Huskies kept the streak going with the duos of freshman Chloe Lomans and senior Isabel Petri Bere and junior Cameron Didion and sophomore Isabella Asenov, both sweeping their matches and winning 6-0 over Providence.

The Huskies continued to dominate in singles play. Didion started the afternoon strong, beating graduate student Elise Leik 6-4 and 6-3, notching her sixth consecutive victory of the season. This moved her record to 12-3 in the season.

However, she wasn't the only one with a good afternoon per-

formance as Lomans beat senior Lauren Carson 6-1 and 6-0 to collect her 16th singles win of the season, becoming the team leader. Connecticut kept the momentum with Wright beating Providence's top player, Eidson, in a hard fought 6-4 and 6-1 win. The Huskies closed the afternoon strong with wins from Petri Bere, Matos and Asenov to conclude their sweep of Providence.

This was the fifth time UConn swept the Friars, it was also their sixth consecutive win over Providence.

Connecticut kept their momentum going on Sunday when they welcomed Butler to Storrs. The Huskies picked up yet another win, beating the

Bulldogs 6-1. This marked head coach Glenn Marshall's 500th career win at UConn. Marshall has led the tennis program for 33 years and became the Women's head coach in 1997.

The duo of Wright and Matos once again took control of their doubles match, beating Butler's Chase Metcalf and Brooke Arington, 6-1. Petri Bere and Lomans beat senior Norah Balthazor and sophomore Lauren Cook 6-3.

The Huskies didn't disappoint in their singles matches, winning five out of the six matches. Wright started the afternoon strong, beating Metcalf 6-3, 6-2. Butler fought back with Balthazor winning the second match, taking down Petri Bere 6-3, 6-2. However, the Huskies

didn't let that stop their momentum as they won the final four matches of the day.

Matos took down senior Katie Beavin 6-3, 6-3. Didion then went on to beat Arington 6-0, 7-5. As Lomans and then Asenov both won their matches in three sets.

This was Connecticut's seventh win in conference play and moved them to 13-2 in the season and extended their win streak to seven games.

Next up, the Huskies will host DePaul and Villanova next week to continue their conference play. The matches will take place at UConn's outdoor tennis courts. Connecticut will face DePaul on Friday, April 4th, and Villanova on Sunday, April 6.

MEN'S GOLF: HUSKIES PACK THEIR BAGS FOR GOLF WEEK INVITATIONAL IN SOUTH

by Patrick Minnerly

HE/HIM/HIS
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
Patrick.minnerly@uconn.edu

The UConn men's golf team will play in the Golfweek Invitational at the True Blue Golf Club in Pawley's Island, S.C., from March 31 to April 2. The Huskies are coming off an impressive third-place finish in the ECU Intercollegiate Invitational and will hope to continue their momentum on Monday.

Connecticut will face two fellow Big East teams, St. John's and Xavier, as well as 14 other squads: Fairleigh Dickinson, Georgia State, Jacksonville State, Kansas City, LIU, Marshall, Mercer, North Alabama, SIU Edwardsville, Southern Indiana, Stephen F. Austin St, USC Upstate, Valparaiso and West Georgia.

The ECU Intercollegiate showcased the play of several UConn golfers, including sophomore Alex Heard, who was recently awarded

BIG EAST Golfer of the Week. Heard tied for eighth place in the ECU Intercollegiate, shooting a 218 (73-69-76), just two over par. The top 10 finish was his second of the spring, following an excellent performance at the Dorado Beach Collegiate tournament, where he shot nine under overall to secure a second place finish.

Senior Ray Dennehy provided another strong presence in the Huskies squad. Dennehy finished in 24th place at the ECU Intercollegiate, making 10 birdies while excelling on the par-five holes. In the Surf Club Invitational, held on March 10 and 11, Dennehy posted a one-under overall score, tying for sixth place.

UConn will round out their lineup with junior Connor Goode, sophomore Bradley Sawka, and senior Vikram Konanki. Goode tied for 27th in the ECU Intercollegiate, while Sawka, a native of Ellington, Conn., placed in a tie for 46th. Konanki, who played as an in-

dividual in the last tournament, will make his first contribution to the team score this week.

The course for the Golfweek Invitational, True Blue Golf Club, is ranked 93rd on Golfweek's list of "Top 200 Resort Golf Courses in the U.S 2025" and was designed by the late Mike Strantz, the architect of several nationally recognized courses. True Blue is a par-72, 6940-yard course that starts golfers off with a challenge. The first hole is a par-five, 600-yard behemoth which features a sharp dogleg left and a green guarded by a creek. The par-four second hole isn't much easier, as a swathe of bunkers covers the area before the green. Hole three is a par-three over water, meaning accuracy will be needed to avoid the ball landing in the drink. The course eases up somewhat from there, but still poses a tough, twisty challenge with long, extensive bunkers and high rough at certain points.

UConn's mens golf for last year's Invitational, Sept. 29, 2024

PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNMGOLF ON INSTAGRAM



SOFTBALL: BRESLIN MAKES HISTORY AS HUSKIES TAKE SERIES FROM BLUEJAYS

by Tyler Lato

HE/HIM/HIS
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
TYLER.LATO@UCONN.EDU

The Huskies are hot.

This past weekend, the UConn softball team (18-12, 7-2) traveled westward for some Big East action against the Creighton Bluejays (12-18, 2-7) in a three-game series. After narrowly dropping game one, the team would go on to win the final two contests, snatching the series victory. It would be the Huskies' offensive firepower, once again, that proved to be the catalyst for their success.

Going into the bottom of the seventh inning of the first game of the series, the Huskies looked to be in the clear for their first victory of the weekend. Cat Petteys and Kaitlyn Breslin combined for five total RBIs from the likes of the long ball, giving the Huskies a firm 6-0 lead with three outs left to play.

However, what happened next was pure disaster.

Kaelan Schultz's solo shot finally wiped the zero off the board for Creighton, followed by an Ella Dalton two-RBI single to cut their deficit to three. Another run would score on a wild pitch, and soon after, catcher Lily West clobbered a double to left field to knot the score up at 6-6. The Huskies' ace Payton Kinney rendered the last out by way of fielder's choice, sending the game into extra innings.

A scoreless top of the eighth brought up the Bluejays' bats once again. With one out, star outfielder Sydra Seville solidified her case as one of the best players in America, driving in counterpart Avery Barnard to win the game 7-6 in walk-off fashion.

The next game, to the many UConn softball faithful, was utterly mind-boggling.

The Huskies would win by a score of 22-18, a score like that of a football game. What's more impressive? Well, Kaitlyn Breslin is your answer.

The sixth-semester outfielder left the yard a total of four times over the span of the first, second, third and fifth innings. Breslin tied the NCAA record for the most home runs in a single game, being one of only seven players all time to do so. This boosted her series home run total to five — a truly incredible feat, to say the least.

Breslin wasn't the only person to put a ball into orbit in this game. Petteys, Grace Jenkins and Savannah Ring all had home runs for the Hook C. As for the 'Jays, Seville, Barnard and Schultz all contributed with one home run apiece while Sydney Potter added two herself. However, 18 runs just wasn't enough to edge the fiery Huskies.

In the final game, the Huskies dominated from start to finish

in every facet of the game.

After the Huskies' pitching staff allowed 25 runs over the course of the first two games, Payton Kinney took matters into her own hands for the series finale, pitching five innings of scoreless ball, surrendering four hits and only two walks.

Kinney got all the support she needed from her teammates as well.

The Huskies took advantage of a walk and a Creighton error to score the first two runs of the game. In the following inning, Kaiea Higa laced a two-RBI triple to deep center field, scoring Grace Jenkins and Kaitlyn Kibling. A Breslin sac fly would bring Higa home, giving the Huskies a 5-0 lead after two innings of play.

Higa came through once again in the fourth, this time by belting a two-run home run to left field. Higa's heroics were followed by a Savannah Ring RBI single, stretching the score to 8-0. That was all the Huskies needed, mercy-ruling Creighton in just five innings. The win would improve their conference record to 7-2, sitting in second place behind St. John's.

The Huskies are back in action on Tuesday for a midweek out-of-conference clash against longtime rival Boston College. The game will be on the beautiful Brighton Field in Chestnut Hill, Mass. First pitch is scheduled for 6 p.m.

The UConn softball teams loses game one against Creighton. The final score was 6-7.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UCONN ATHLETICS



MEN'S HOCKEY: NO. 7 UCONN ADVANCES IN NCAA TOURNAMENT AFTER TAKING DOWN NO. 11 QUINNIPIAC IN ALLENTOWN

by Avery Becker

SHE/HER/HERS
ASSOCIATE SPORTS EDITOR
avery.becker@uconn.edu

The UConn men's hockey team captured their first ever NCAA Frozen Four Tournament win after defeating No. 11 Quinnipiac in the first round of the Allentown Regional. The scorers of the night for the Ice Bus were graduate student Hugh Larkin, freshman Ethan Gardula, junior Tristan Fraser and sophomore Joey Muldowney. Freshman goaltender Callum Tung made 21 saves in the net against in-state rival Quinnipiac.

The Huskies got the game started early in the first period generating multiple scoring chances. From the get-go, UConn prevented Quinnipiac from gaining any momentum on the offensive side of the ice which eventually carried over to their defensive game as well. The Huskies first-ever goal of the NCAA Tournament came from Larkin. The forward collected the puck in the center of the ice and launched it bar down and past Quinnipiac's goaltender Dylan Silverstein. UConn was up on Quinnipiac 1-0. Shortly

after, Huskies quickly doubled their lead as Gardula gathered up the puck in a turnover in the offensive end and went forehand, then backhand to beat Silverstein again for the Huskies second goal of the period. Tung made four saves as UConn entered the first period break leading Quinnipiac 2-0.

In the second period, UConn looked to extend their lead, but Quinnipiac's defense and goaltender prevented them from scoring. Midway through the period, the Bobcats collected the puck in their defensive zone and found the net on a two-on-one rush to cut the Huskies lead to one. Late in the period, UConn attacked again as they continued to add pressure to Quinnipiac's defense which led to Fraser finding the net. The puck bounced to the junior forward and Fraser was able to fire it past Silverstein. The Huskies headed into the period break with a 3-1 over the Bobcats.

Tung held down the fort for the Huskies, but Quinnipiac did not go down without a fight. The Bobcats best scoring chance of the game is when Quinnipiac fired the puck from

the point that bounced off the crossbar and slid behind Tung, however sophomore Viking Gustafsson Nyberg was there to reach his stick behind Tung to clear the puck off the goal line and preserve the Huskies two-goal lead. After that slick save from Gustafsson Nyberg and Tung, the Bobcats had another opportunity as a penalty was called on the Huskies to give Quinnipiac the man advantage. But like it has been all season long, UConn's penalty kill success continued and they killed their third penalty of the game over Quinnipiac. The Huskies defense persevered and as the time on the clock started running out, Quinnipiac pulled Silverstein out of the net in favor of the extra skater in hopes of finding the two equalizer goals. Muldowney scored on the empty net which sealed the deal for the Huskies in their first NCAA Tournament victory. No. 7 UConn defeated No. 11 Quinnipiac with a final score of 4-1 in the first round of the Allentown Regional.

"We're pretty excited to be moving on for sure," said Head Coach Mike Cavanaugh fol-

lowing the win. "That's a real battle-tested program [Quinnipiac] over there, they've been coming to these tournaments for a long time now and Rand's [Pecknold] built a really really impressive program and for us to play as well as we did tonight, was really proud of our guys and proud of our team. It was a really good win for us and as I said, we're excited to be moving on to Sunday."

"I feel like we were really prepared mentally as a group and in a game like this, where like you just said it's a first tournament experience, I feel like that's half the battle is the mental battle," said team captain Hudson Schandor. "You know, this group did such a great job of just focusing and buying into the right things before the game and I think it translated really well into that first period and onwards."

This NCAA matchup was Schandor's first game back from an injury that caused him to miss both the Hockey East semi-final and championship game which definitely hurt the Huskies in terms of where to look for leadership. Schandor

was back on the ice for the first round of the NCAA tournament and could not be happier to be back in the battle with the team.

"Being back out there with these guys is the best thing I've got going. I love these guys, and you know, going to war with them every day is special. It's something I would not trade for the world. So, to get back out there with these guys on a stage like this, it was special tonight."

After the victory, the Huskies awaited their opponents with the second matchup of the night between No. 4 Maine and No. 12 Penn State. The game ended with the No. 4 seed in the region, Penn State, taking the upset win over Maine which set the stage for the Allentown Regional Finals.

UConn will advance in the 2025 NCAA Frozen Four Tournament and will face No. 12 Penn State in the Allentown Regional Championship on Sunday, March 30. Puck drop is set for 4:30 p.m. in Allentown, PA. The game will be available to stream live on ESPN2 and on the radio at UConn Sports Network from Learfield - FOX Sports 97.9 FM.



UConn men's hockey takes on Northeastern at Toscano Ice Forum on Feb. 28, 2025. The Huskies secured a 5-2 win. PHOTOGRAPH BY EMMA MEIDINGER, ASSOCIATE SPORTS EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Sports

SEASON PREVIEW: 2025 HARTFORD YARD GOATS

by Thaddeus Sawyer

HE/HIM/HIS
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
THADDEUS.SAWYER@UCONN.EDU

The Hartford Yard Goats, the Double-A affiliates of the Colorado Rockies, will begin their 2025 season with Opening Day on Friday, April, 4 at 7:10 p.m. at Dunkin' Donuts Park. They will face the Somerset Patriots, an affiliate of the New York Yankees, in the first game of a three-game series (minor league series are generally a week long with off days on Mondays). It will be a rematch from when Somerset eliminated Hartford from the playoffs last September, stopping them from advancing to the 2024 Eastern League championship series. While the official roster has not yet been released, some top prospects who are likely to start the season in Hartford include utilityman Cole Carrigg, pitcher Gabriel Hughes and outfielder Benny Montgomery.

Despite the utility title, Carrigg is far from a bench bat. Ranked as the Rockies' third best prospect by MLB.com, it is Carrigg's versatility that plays him into that role rather than any offensive concerns. A contact hitter with some serious speed and a plus arm defensively, he played last season with the High-A Spokane Indians and batted .280 while stealing 51 bases. The San Diego State graduate also showed some pop, smacking 16 homers. The jump from High-A to Double-A is considered one of the toughest in professional baseball, so it will be a significant test to see how the former second-rounder's approach translates to a higher level of competition. He will have opportunities all around the diamond for the Yard Goats this season and could make it to the majors as soon as next season on the back of that versatility if he is able to keep up his previous offensive success.

Hughes, the 10th overall pick out of Gonzaga in 2022, made his debut for Hartford in June of 2023 for six games. In July of that year, the righty underwent Tommy John surgery and has not pitched in an official game since. Still just 23 years old, Hughes will look to get his career back on track, as he returns to Hartford to start 2025. After making six starts in the Arizona Fall League at the end of last season, he started the Rockies' Spring Breakout game against the White Sox prospects. He threw two scoreless innings, a continuation of a strong spring. Hughes could become the ace of the Yard Goats staff as he looks to put together his first full season of his professional career. The Rockies have historically struggled to develop pitching, in part due to playing at Denver's Coors Field, where the ball carries and pitches move less. Still, they have exciting prospects such as Hughes, 2024 Yard Goat Chase Dollander and 2024 first-rounder Brody Brecht on the horizon.

Montgomery started last season as a member of the Yard Goats, playing in 11 games before going down with a shoulder injury that required season ending surgery. In those 11 games, he put up some good stats with a .283 average, two home runs and a decent .313 on base percentage. Selected eighth overall by the Rockies in 2021, he has always had the raw tools to profile as a top prospect. He has solid raw power and near elite speed, but his contact will be something that he needs to

improve upon, as he hopes to reach his full potential. He has not been able to convert enough of that raw power to extra base hits as he has risen through the minor leagues to overcome the contact struggles. He had a decent .370 slugging percentage for Spokane in 2023, but started last year at .500 with Hartford. He won't be able to maintain that extremely lofty Hartford number. However, if the true number probably lies somewhere in the middle, it will allow him to regain some of the prospect status he has lost after battling through injuries throughout his career.

While he may not start the year in Hartford, the aforementioned Brecht has a chance to make it to Double-A this season, depending on how aggressive the Rockies are with his promotion. The 22-year-old has yet to make his professional debut though he was a standout in the Spring Breakout game. Another Rockies farmhand who is highly likely to be the 2024 third overall pick and MLB's 29th overall ranked prospect, Charlie Condon, makes an appearance in the Yard Goats lineup at some point this season. The power hitting righty drafted out of Georgia struggled in his professional debut with High-A Spokane after being drafted last season, but the small 100 plate appearance sample should not detract too much from the fact that he has some of the best raw power in all of MiLB.

Returning to manage these up-and-coming players is former big leaguer Bobby Meachum. The former Yankees shortstop returns for his second season at the helm for the Yard Goats after being promoted last offseason from his position as the Triple-A Albuquerque Isotopes bench coach. A former big league base coach, he had spent time as an MLB coach for the Marlins, Padres, Yankees, Astros and Phillies. In his first season as manager for the Yard Goats, the team sported a record of 76-60 and finished second in the Northeastern Division before being swept in the league semifinals. The team also led the league in stolen bases at 207.

Series Preview- Somerset Patriots

As mentioned above, the Yard Goats will begin their season with a three-game homestead with the Yankees Double-A affiliate. For Yankees fans looking to catch a glimpse of the future this weekend, the most recognizable name in the lineup will be Spencer Jones. Measuring in at 6-foot-7, the hulking outfielder has a rare mix of raw power and athleticism, but strikeouts remain the main detractor from his game. The Vanderbilt graduate will return to Double-A to start the season, after playing the entirety of last season at that level. For Somerset last season, Jones hit 17 home runs and swiped 25 bags. He also struck out an even 200 times, setting the Yankees record for most strikeouts by a minor leaguer in a single season in the process. This uneven play dropped the young outfielder out of the MLB.com's Top 100 prospects, and he will be looking to rebuild some of that stock with better contact stats this season.

Other players to look out for in the Somerset lineup include infielder Alexander Vargas, who had a power surge in major league Spring Training this year, and catchers Jesus Rodriguez and Rafael Flores. Rodriguez had his contract selected by the Yankees to protect him

from the Rule IV draft this past offseason and is now a member of their 40-man roster. Flores was named the Yankees minor league Position Player of the Year for 2024 and has gone from minor league depth to organizational top 10 prospect in short order.

Along with the festivities of Opening Night on Friday, the Yard Goats will also begin their celebration of the start of their tenth season as well. Saturday will feature the first "Bark in the Park" event of the year, where fans can purchase a special ticket in the outfield to take in some baseball with their canine companions in tow. Wrapping up the weekend of festivities, Sunday's game will see the Yard Goats honoring the Marine Corps, with the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation sponsoring the game. As an added bonus, kids are invited to run around the bases following the game. Friday's game will begin at 7:10 p.m., while both weekend dates are day games, starting at 1:10 p.m.



A beautiful view at Dunkin Park. Watch The Hartford Goats will take on the Somerset Patriots on Friday at 7:10 p.m.

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