

The Daily Campus



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UConn ranks low among colleges for allowing open dialogue

by **Harika Goteti**
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The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, also known as FIRE, published its 2026 College Free Speech Rankings on Sept. 9. The University of Connecticut was on the list, earning an F for its speech climate grade. More specifically, UConn had earned a 53 out of 100, according to The Fire.

The Fire reported that UConn ranks 215 out of 257. FIRE's Spotlight database gave UConn's policies "a yellow light" based on the extent to which they restrict free speech. UConn is in the bottom 25 for both "Comfort" and "Self-Censorship," while "Openness" was placed in the bottom 50. Many students said they felt more comfortable keeping quiet rather than speaking their minds according to the database.

According to UConn's University Spokesperson Stephanie Reitz, "UConn encourages and upholds free speech on all of its campuses as a bedrock principle of our University and society."

"We would not typically comment on a poll for which we are not privy to the data and methodology, beyond noting that it appears to reflect less than 1% (329 responses) of our approximately 34,400-student population," Reitz said in an email.

Justin Silverman is an attorney who works for the New England First Amendment Coalition, where he leads regional advocacy for free speech, open government and press freedoms. He teaches media law as an adjunct professor at UConn and other institutions and contributes to commentaries about the First Amendment.

"[There is] a need for everyone on campus to be comfortable in expressing their opinions—particularly their political opinions—so they can get a better understanding of not only opposing viewpoints but have the opportunity to learn where maybe their own feelings could use some reassessment, where their own arguments could use some strengthening," Silverman said.

Amanda Crawford is a journalism professor at UConn and a political reporter. Her work focuses on media law, misinformation and free speech. She serves on the boards of several First Amendment advocacy groups.

"UConn, like any other branch or arm of the government, is restricted from enforcing any kind of punishment or regulation based on the content of speech," Crawford said. "That applies to any government: federal, state, local, or, say, a Board of Education. Public universities are the arms of the government. So, the government can't pick winners and losers based on speech content."

She continued to state that "FIRE's free speech scores rank religious, conservative schools lowest. Liberty can punish criticism of its beliefs; UConn cannot, as a public institution."

The website embedded students' voices as well, with a

member of class of 2027 mentioning, "I could tell my professor had different opinions than me so I wrote my paper to be more similar to [their] opinions so I could get a better grade."

Another member of the class of 2026 said, "the administration constantly emphasizes how we basically aren't allowed to offend anyone."

Silverman continued to state that a professor could require students to consider certain perspectives as a part of an assignment, but student self-censorship was different.

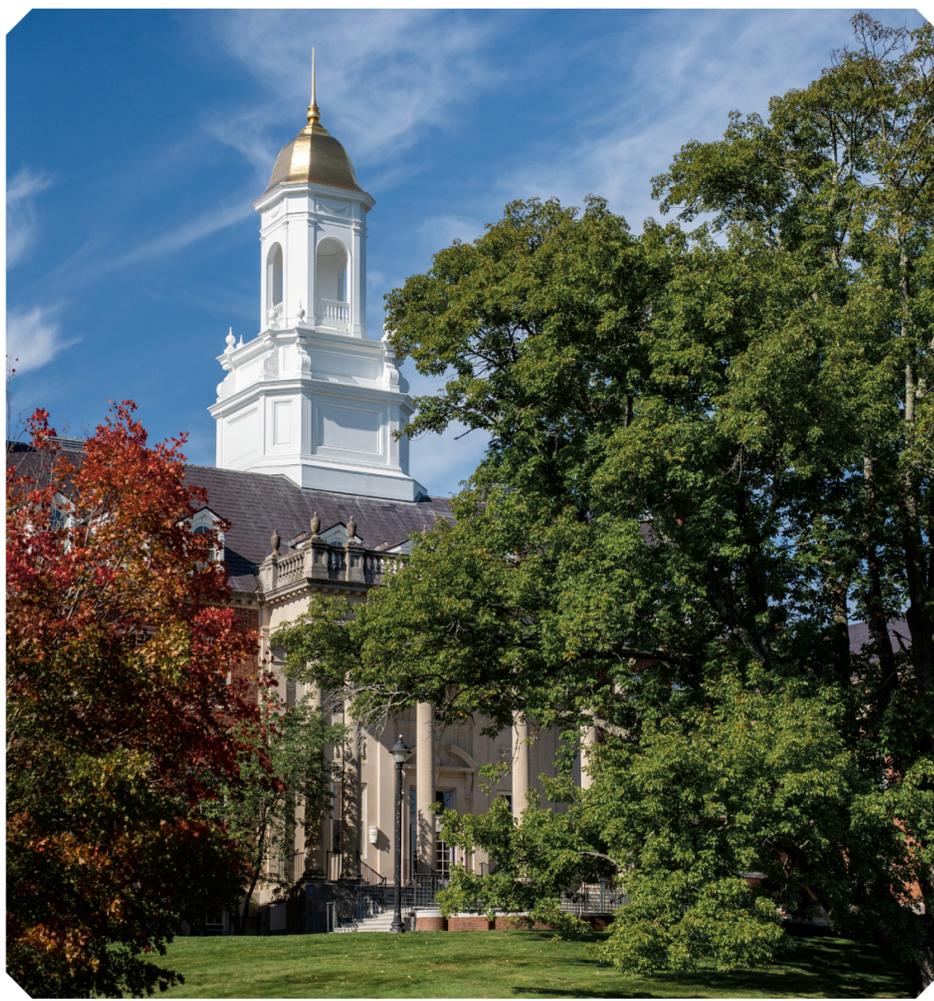
"Where things get problematic is when students are offering a certain perspective, not because they're required to as a matter of an assignment or trying to learn a different perspective or viewpoint and articulate that, but instead are articulating their own viewpoints... but doing so in a way to cater favor with a professor because they think that professor might be more liberal-leaning or conservative-leaning or politically inclined to agree with that message," Silverman said.

FIRE also highlighted that 43% of students state they have censored themselves on campus minimum once or twice a month, and 70% of students stated that shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases. Lastly, 34% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable in some cases.

In 2019, FIRE reported on a "UConn group to keep pursuing free speech initiative despite student government shut-out, threatening messages." A student named Mike Hernández was campaigning to be the University of Connecticut's Undergraduate Student Government (SG) president the year prior; free speech was part of the platform he got elected on. Hernández and fellow student senators Isadore Johnson, John "Jay" Mosely and John Ross worked that year to bring a version of the Chicago Statement that they dubbed "The UConn Statement" before USG for consideration. However, "efforts to even introduce the resolution for discussion became so contentious they had to stop." "Hernández and his supporters officially pulled their legislation from consideration after they said the USG violated its own procedures to keep the issue from even being raised for a vote," FIRE reported. "That's despite the group having gathered more than 150 petition signatures from students and faculty supporting it."

The article also mentions that Ross, a former USG senator, said, "I think higher education is the greatest opportunity for exploring what's out there, seeing other people have different lives than you, who come from backgrounds, different creeds, raised with different morals."

"We do ourselves a disservice by not being open to that," Ross said. "Even hearing opinions that you don't like, or hearing things that can even be offensive, actually help you grow. Because you allow yourself to distinguish right from wrong."



The Wilbur Cross building shines its golden dome over the University of Connecticut. The building offers services for student needs, all housed within one of 47 buildings at UConn on the National Register of Historic Places. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

GEU HOLDS RALLY KICKING OFF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

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

Chants of union power echoed across Fairfield Way the morning of Sept. 10, 2025, as the University of Connecticut's chapter of the Graduate Employee & Postdoc Union (GEU-UAW 6950) held a rally commencing contract negotiations with UConn.

"The negotiations come amid Republican political and fiscal attacks on higher education at the federal level, and public education budget shortfalls resulting from fiscal guardrails at [the] state level," read a press release from GEU-UAW 6950.

The GEU chapter at UConn is responsible for representing over 2,300 graduate and postdoctoral employees at UConn, including teaching and research assistants, according to the press release.

Union members and rallygoers gathered outside of UConn's Student Union around 9:30 a.m. where organizers delivered speeches to the crowd. One speaker was Ben Stumpf, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science, who spoke of degrading conditions in American higher education.

"Higher education is under attack," Stumpf said. "By the bosses on this campus and the bosses in the federal government."

Stumpf said that working conditions of graduate and postdoctoral workers directly influence the quality of education on UConn's campuses.

"Our working conditions are our students' learning conditions," Stumpf said. "We keep the lifeblood of this institution going with our labor. We need a contract which reflects that."

Another speaker, Lily Luo, organizing coordinator for the union chapter and a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science, spoke on the scope of the union's efforts, emphasizing that GEU's movements were not just about its members.

"This contract campaign is not just about me and is not just about the members of our union," Luo said. "It is about the quality of education here at UConn. It is about the kind of university we would all be proud to be a part of. And it is about coming together to stand up for our collective rights."

Luo spoke of violence committed against laborers in the United States, focusing on the intersectionality between that violence and federal policy.

"Labor rights have been under attack like never before," Luo said. "Fellow workers have been raided and deported en masse, all while grocery and rent costs continue to rise. All while our government is cutting funding from lifesaving research and continuing to support the ongoing genocide in Gaza."

Despite this, however, Luo said she is proud to be a part of a union fighting against these rights abuses and drew reference to UConn's controversial changes to its large gathering and outdoor amplified sound policies following the arrests of 26 protesters on campus in April 2024.

"I am so proud to be a part of a union that stands up for free speech, that stands up for workers' rights, that is brave enough to say enough is enough," Luo said.

The rally moved to the fourth floor of the Student Union, where negotiations were to be held, as attendees chanted "the people united will never be defeated." Shortly after arriving, rally goers were asked to cease chants and leave the building by a Student Union representative. The representative refused to identify himself.

Attendees dispersed following the request, as the elected bargaining committee entered into negotiations.

University Spokesperson Stephanie Reitz later said in an email to The Daily Campus that rally goers were disturbing the normal functions of the Student Union as they marched through its halls.

"The Student Union is a shared space in which students can gather, study, and socialize without undue noise or other interruptions," Reitz's email read. "About 60 people who had been demonstrating outside today on Fairfield Way in connection with the bargaining session moved inside the Student Union, where they continued to chant loudly in a manner that disrupted regular operations. Its representative had a cordial conversation with organizers to encourage them to move outside if they wished to continue with chants, and they chose to do so."

Joshua Newbend, a second-year graduate student in the art and art history department, said that asking rally goers to leave the Student Union only proved the efficacy of the action.

See GEU, p. 02

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"INVINCIBLE" | PAGE 6

Icon Michael Jackson channeled on stage for family weekend



EMPATHY | PAGE 7

Where has our empathy gone?



WOMEN'S HOCKEY | PAGE 12

UConn took on St. Cloud in Husky vs. Husky dogfight

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News

GEU, cont. from p. 01

“I feel that just shows that they recognize our strength and they don’t want us to show it, but we’re happy to show it to them any time,” Newbend said. Union organizers had originally invited attendees to observe negotiations, but the

ment of Molecular and Cell Biology and marshal at the rally, said that there is a specific reason employers wish to keep negotiations as closed as possible: information control. “We want observers in there, we want anyone from our membership to be able to go in to see how and what and why the uni-

hadn’t yet had the opportunity to meet to set those rules.” Negotiations are scheduled to continue later today at 10 a.m. according to GEU, with actions and events planned to continue through the coming months. “Our union is fighting for UConn. We are fighting for a future at UConn,” said Stumpf.



Members of UConn’s Graduate Employee & Postdoc Union. The union held a rally on Sept. 10, and have begun labor negotiations with the university.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNGEU

request was denied by university officials, according to GEU-UAW 6950 President Grace Easterly.

“We invited observers to join us today, the university said no,” Easterly said to rallygoers.

Easterly elaborated on the dynamic of open negotiations in a statement to The Daily Campus released after the rally.

“In general, employers prefer having negotiations as closed as possible while we prefer having negotiations as open as possible because we value democracy and transparency,” the statement read. “UConn’s faculty and staff unions, AAUP and UCPEA, who are also bargaining, have agreed with the university on a set number of observers, which means a certain number of their members can sit in on their negotiations. Our local takes seriously our members’ right to see the progress of negotiations and are hopeful that we will be able to invite our own observers in soon to ensure a fully transparent process throughout our negotiations with the university.”

John Briseno, a sixth-year doctoral student in the Depart-

ment of Molecular and Cell Biology and marshal at the rally, said that there is a specific reason employers wish to keep negotiations as closed as possible: information control. “We want observers in there, we want anyone from our membership to be able to go in to see how and what and why the uni-

versity wants to attack certain parts of our contract, whether that’s health care, wage raises, student fees, et cetera,” Briseno said. “If we don’t have open bargaining and it’s closed, membership gets a very edited, redacted, chopped-up version of what actually happens in the room. And the bargaining committee by law is not allowed to share with the membership what happened in there; they have to share the redacted, edited version.”

Reitz said in an email to The Daily Campus that the initial meeting on Sept. 10 was designed to negotiate ground rules to be agreed upon by both parties. “As with many labor negotiations, representatives from the university and union may begin with discussion of ground rules, including whether observers are permitted and if so, the parameters that determine the number of observers allowed per session, advance notification requirements, and other details,” read Reitz’s email. “Today’s meeting was the first session in this cycle with GEU, and the parties

“We need to stand together, all graduate students, all postdocs, all faculty, all students and demand to build a campus that we need and deserve. A campus that is committed to its mission which is education for a better future for all of us. That’s what we’re fighting for. Solidarity is the only way to get there.”

CONNECTICUT HOSTS PANDAFEST IN HARTFORD

by Victoria Esteves | CONTRIBUTOR | SHE/THEY | xtt24003@uconn.edu

For the first time ever, Connecticut welcomed over 600 food vendors, over 50 Asian merchant pop-ups and live performances to Hartford’s Mortensen Riverfront Plaza for PandaFest. The festival kicked off on Sept. 27 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and ended on Sept. 28.

This Asian festival is a celebration of heritages from Japan to Indonesia, and a destination for Connecticut foodies. Every ticket to the festival included an inflatable panda headband, a panda fan and a custom Connecticut pin.

Yixing Wang, a first-time worker at PandaFest, described it as “an Asian festival with Asian culture and tons of food.” She worked at the panda merchandise section, with everything from panda-themed keychains to stuffed animals. Her experience at the event has been nothing short of amazing.

“I really like it, the people are really nice,” she said. “I’m just having fun! Don’t think too much and spend all day here.”

The festival, originally a spin-off event from Dragon Fest in New York City, has expanded to cities all over the U.S. PandaFest was created by New York City native Biubiu Xu. She wanted to bring her love for food and Asian culture together, so for two years she worked to create a team that could fulfill her dreams of bringing Asian culture all over the country, Xu said in an interview with Vogue.

Attendees Makayla Quinn and Hannah Vu said they came to PandaFest for the wide variety of food.

“I feel like it’s making things fun while celebrating Asian culture as a whole. It’s

really nice to see everyone from different ethnic backgrounds come to try foods and experience different things. I think it’s a really beautiful and really fun thing and it’s very inclusive” Quinn said.

Some cuisines at the festival included sushi tacos, spicy chicken noodles and bao buns. In comparison to other cultural festivals, Quinn said, “This is definitely more upbeat and more welcoming in a sense, because there’s a lot more people here of different backgrounds. This is a much more family-friendly environment, which I really like.”

Walking through the festival grounds, people from all cultures and backgrounds were seen laughing and dancing together.

Vu said a moment she would remember from the event is “first walking in and seeing everything.”

“The headbands, too, are cute,” Vu said.



Connecticut’s first PandaFest took place this past weekend in Hartford, Conn. PandaFest featured food vendors, merchants and performances representing many different Asian cultures.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @PANDAFESTCONNECTICUT

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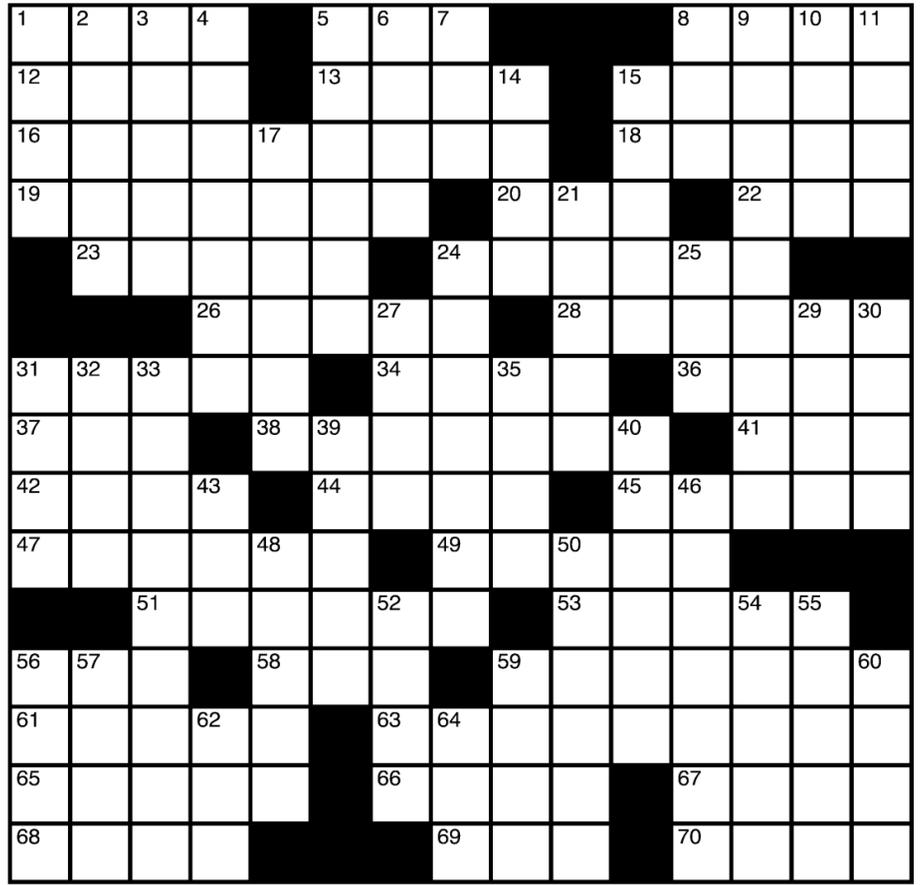
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The Daily

- ACROSS**
- Hushed "Hey, over here!"
 - "What ___ I supposed to do?"
 - The Beehive State
 - Flour for chapati and roti
 - Director Kazan
 - Love, in Italian
 - "Neato!"
 - Tangy bud in a piccata recipe
 - Multiplex array
 - "Sorta"
 - Spoiled
 - "How To Be an Antiracist" author Ibram X. ___
 - Indigenous name of Mount Rainier
 - Those people's
 - Bar purchases
 - Italian model on the cover of many romance novels
 - Spiritual guide
 - Move suddenly
 - Comedian Wong
 - "Mensch"
 - Opposing vote
 - Fireplace stack
 - Hankering
 - Utility bill info
 - Pendant with a photo
 - "Hamilton" actress Renée ___ Goldsberry
 - Zedonk or zorse
 - Loses, as fur
 - "___ willikers!"
 - Spanish sun
 - "Gnarly!"
 - One-named "Skyfall" singer
 - Marketing term for nutrient-rich fare, or what the answers to the starred clues are
 - Yellowstone grazer
 - Sailing
 - Like water surrounding a startled cuttlefish, maybe
 - Slow-cooker dish
 - Burnable data-storage medium, for short
 - Golf pegs

- DOWN**
- Campaign support gps.
 - Soup base
 - One of 500+ in the Mall of America
 - Gelato brand in clear jars with brown screw-top lids
 - Hot dog, casually
 - "Sadly ..."
 - Sloth, for one
 - Actress Thurman
 - *Head honcho
 - Vicinity
 - Group of buffalo
 - Nepal's continent
 - "Gesundheit" elicitor
 - Sleeper who takes all the blankets
 - "I dunno" gesture
 - Plodded
 - Coffee, slangily
 - "Young Frankenstein" assistant
 - "What a ___!"
 - Eyelid affliction
 - Autumn
 - Potatoes, in Indian cuisine
 - *Influential person
 - Instagram video
 - Closing section of a song
 - Productive oil well
 - Pie in the ___
 - Deems appropriate
 - "Breakfast at Tiffany's" actor Buddy
 - "Cross my heart!"
 - "Casablanca" heroine
 - Lorna ___ cookies
 - Chimney output
 - Chats on and on
 - Revise a manuscript
 - Mimicked
 - "Grand" ice cream
 - Burner setting
 - L.A. school



By Taylor Johnson

9/29/25

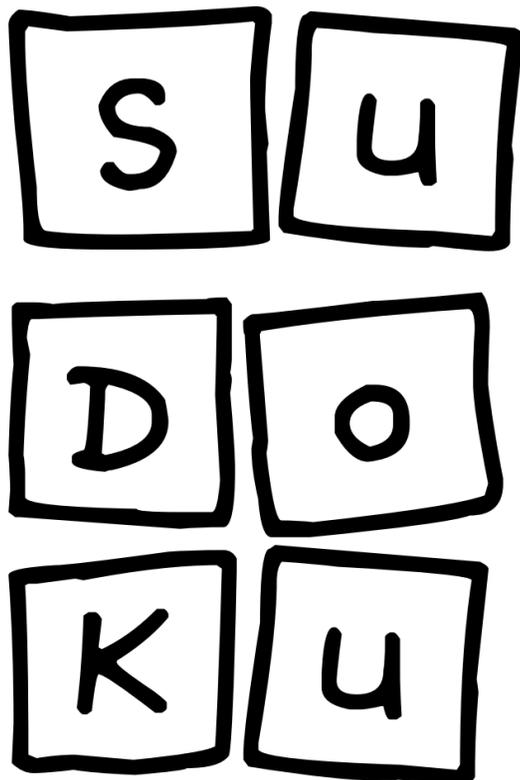
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Saturday's Puzzle Solved

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Solution to Saturday's puzzle

9/29/25

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

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

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CELEBRATE MANSFIELD FESTIVAL

BRINGS THOUSANDS TO DOWNTOWN STORRS TO CELEBRATE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



Visitors enjoy Celebrating Mansfield, Saturday, Sept. 28, 2025, in Mansfield, Conn. The festival highlighted local businesses, musicians, and family-friendly entertainment.

PHOTOGRAPH BY OF OLIVIA DICKSON, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

by Elijah Polance
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The 22nd annual Celebrate Mansfield Festival brought thousands of attendants to Downtown Storrs on Saturday, Sept. 27, for a day full of community bonding, music, interactive performances and more.

The festival ran from 2 to 8 p.m. and offered nonstop entertainment as far as the eye could see.

Dog Lane was transformed into the “Craft Corner,” where local vendors displayed and sold hand-made items. Those interested could find anything from knitted stuffed animals to clay pottery to pretty jewelry and more. It also featured a juried craft show and tables covered in paper for attendants to draw on throughout the day.

Parts of Royce Circle became home for local food vendors with refreshments and meals. Further down the road came various community booths from local businesses, the town of Mansfield, the University of Connecticut, E.O. Smith High School and more.

The featured community groups ranged in their function, with different political, religious, environmental and cultural focuses. Others were more closely tied to sports or performance, like Villari’s Martial Arts and the Mansfield Academy of Dance, who both gave demonstrations during the event.

The festival did not just give attendants things to see; there was a lot to do as well. Tables had handouts to grab, prize wheels to spin and trivia to answer, which kept audiences engaged. Eastern Insurance Associates stayed busy by offering balloon animals and the E.O. Smith VEX Robotics team let

people control one of their robots within a small space. The town of Mansfield Fire & Emergency Services and Resident State Trooper’s office were set up at the end of Wilbur Cross Way with emergency vehicles for people to go inside.

Betsy Paterson Square served as the main stage for the live musical performances. Featured acts included the E.O. Smith and UConn drumlines, UConn Jazz Students and local alternative rock band Ruby Leftstep. Onlookers could watch from the comfort of tables and chairs as they ate while children played nonstop on the grass.

The square was also home to a community puppetry pageant called “Prehistoric Mansfield,” which was produced by the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry in collaboration with UConn’s Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. After the show concluded, you could still see people sporting prehistoric-themed costumes throughout the crowd, adding to the spectacle as the day progressed.

It cannot be underestimated how much there was to watch and do throughout the day. As Ruby Leftstep jammed out songs from their latest extended play at 5 p.m., you could walk a minute up Dog Lane to see singing performances from Waldron’s Studio 88, a local music school. Walking another couple minutes up Royce Circle would situate you by an interactive magic show from Bob Hale, which drew a large crowd of children.

The All Night Boogie Band came down from Burlington, Vt. to close out the night. Their bluesy approach to rock ‘n’ roll was a fitting way to end the festival, with a perfect blend of songs that were relaxing and

energetic with cathartic release.

Steven Ferrigno, the executive director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership, played a large part in organizing the festival. This was his first year with the role, and while he described the work as a “learning experience,” he said having an abundance of experienced staff and committed volunteers made it manageable.

Ferrigno said he was happy with the turnout for the festival. He said there were 10 craft booths, 10 food vendors and 82 booths from other organizations. While he did not have an exact attendance number, he estimated there were upwards of 5000 people throughout the day. His favorite part of the festival was getting to see so many people enjoy it all.

“We love our downtown, we love the vibrancy that it adds to our community,” he said. “It’s such a nice way for the residents and students to interact in a common way. We can bring the community together, it’s very positive.”

Joel D’aloia, a third-semester English and theater studies double major with a minor in puppetry, appreciated the local crafts and puppetry designs she saw at the festival.

“I thought it was a really good experience for my family and I,” D’aloia said. “My favorite part I would say was definitely the band Ruby Leftstep ... They are definitely going to be my new favorite underground artist.”

Ryan Krishna, a fifth-semester individualized major on the neuroscience of language, enjoyed getting to hear the All Night Boogie Band as the festival came to a close.

“Celebrating Mansfield was a wonderful chance to learn more about my local community and also support our small businesses,” Krishna said.

GEESE gets beautifully WEIRD on 'Getting Killed'

by **Bonnibel Lilith Rampertab**
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Geese flocks far away from your average rock band. The backing band rolls elements of classic, folk, experimental and art rock into a single pleasant sound that's energetic and also soothing to the ears.

The crown jewel of this band, however, is frontman Cameron Winter's uniquely deep, off-kilter and bellowing voice. It blends the boundaries of flawed and masterful, making for — at the very least — an artistically engaging sound to listen to. As you could probably tell, his voice is incredibly divisive due to how different it is from your average rock vocalist, but in an age of cookie-cutter vocals, such a voice can be incredibly rewarding to listen to.

"Getting Killed," released on Friday, Sept. 26, is Geese's third long-play. It precedes 2023's lauded "3D Country" and Winter's 2024 solo singer-songwriter soft rock-adjacent effort "Heavy Metal." If you don't like the dense classic rock sound of "3D Country," "Heavy Metal" provides an alternative and lighter soundscape while retaining Winter's voice.

"Getting Killed" is a natural evolution to Geese's sound, opting for a sound that's slightly lighter but arguably even more sonically intricate.

"Trinidad" sounds vocally adjacent to Layne Staley of grunge band Alice in Chains — that is, when Winter isn't screaming "There's a bomb in my car" frantically over off-kilter instrumentation, almost as if the song is exploding. Throughout the song, the bass looms over the mix menacingly

and enticingly. What any of these lyrics mean to the band is up for debate, but one could guess it delves into absurdism and surrealism. They probably want the audience to come to their own conclusions.

"Cobra" sounds like it was written as a soul song, if not for the glistening guitars that sound absolutely fresh and beautiful with how they're mixed. The entire song, arguably besides the first verse, is a sensually driven narrative with lyrics like "You should be shame's only daughter / What-

ever he's got in his hand / You can get it on your own, you'll see" and "Baby, let me wash your feet forever / Baby, you can stay in my house forever and ever." Furthermore, the cobras dancing and being held could be a sexual euphemism for penile arousal. This feels like something Car Seat Headrest would make back in its early days.

"Husbands" is a foreboding song possibly about divorce or becoming a widow with beautiful percussion. Winter starts the vocals off by singing, "I'll

repeat what I say / But I'll never explain / So you don't have to waste your time," which is a great philosophy for sharing and interpreting art. A stand-out line was: "And if my loneliness should stay / Well, some are holiest that way" for its possibly comforting effect on those who feel lonely.

The title song is probably a song depicting the feeling of "sonder," or the realization that everyone in the world has their own thoughts, worries, obligations and more beyond your own. The lyric "I can't even

taste my own tears / They fall into an even sadder bastard's eyes" and living a "pretty good life" speaks to this sense of worldwide emotions and different problems based on which part of the world you live in.

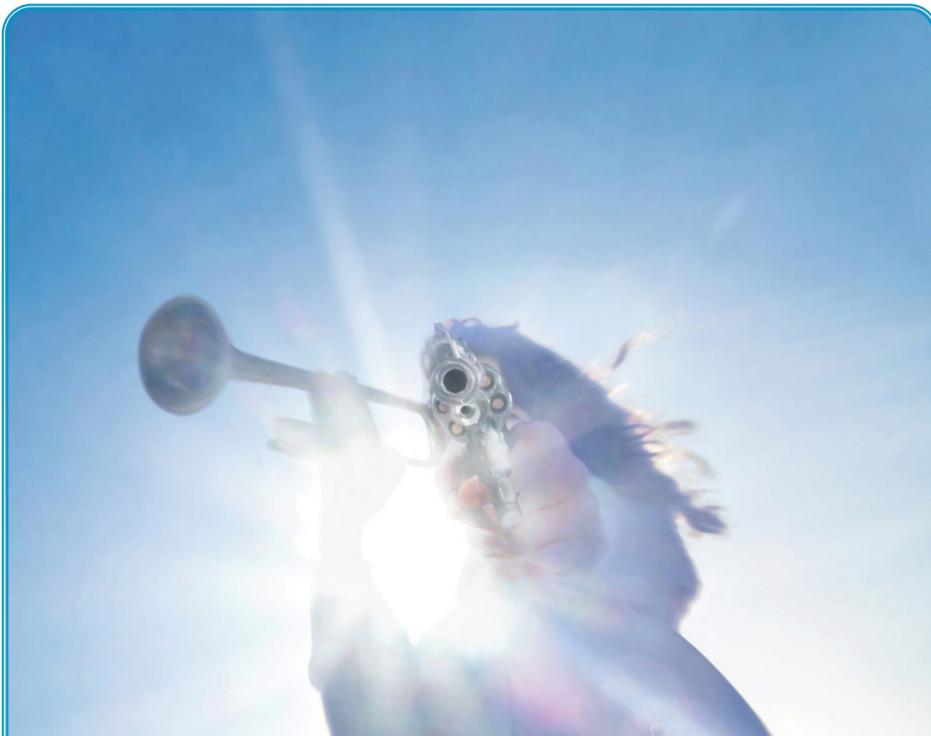
"Half Real" is contender for best song on the album composition-wise. All the instruments coexist in harmony in such a pleasant and beautiful way, which is surprising for such a despairing song probably about a one-sided relationship. Winter's lyrics play with the theme of halfness, culminating into the lyric about getting a lobotomy to forgot both the "bad times" and "good times."

"Bow Down" sounds like it could be rapped on or sampled with the densely-packed drum pattern. The guitars come in such a satisfying way on top of that. The biblical imagery in the lyrics referring to angels being down someone's throat and on King Solomon's throne gives a lot of ways to personally interpret the song.

"Long Island City Here I Come" is the other contender for best song on "Getting Killed." The instrumentation is chaotic and high energy, but sonically appealing. The lyrics read like poetry with the cryptic biblical and historical references. This song was the perfect pick for the last song of the album.

"Getting Killed" easily usurps "3D Country" and maybe even Winter's own "Heavy Metal." It sounds even more fresh and it's so exciting to hear a band evolve and mature in such a way. This is an exciting band to be following and they deserve all the success and even more with their artistic integrity.

Rating: 4.25/5



The album cover for Geese's latest full length studio album, "Getting Killed." The album was released on Sept. 26, 2025.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF @GEESEBANDNYC ON INSTAGRAM

SUBOG scavenger hunt kicks off homecoming



Students line up to for free merchandise during UConn's Homecoming Week. Events for Homecoming week will take place from Sept. 28 to Oct. 4, and will include a number of events for students to enjoy.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF @UCONN ON INSTAGRAM

by **Thaddeus Sawyer**
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Fairfield Way was the place to be on Friday, Sept. 26, as the UConn Student Union Board of Governors (SUBOG) held a scavenger hunt around the Storrs campus. The scavenger hunt was the first event put on by SUBOG for Homecoming Week, which is currently ongoing, and also coincided with Family Weekend.

The first five participants

to complete the hunt were awarded a free piece of homecoming merchandise, such as shirts and pullovers. Others were given other prizes like a stuffed husky or generic SUBOG merchandise.

"I was just really interested in the free merch, if I'm being honest," said Camryn Woodin, a second-semester animal science student. "Plus, it's just the fun thing to do during the day."

While the giveaways were a big draw for many students, SUBOG's main goal was to

spread awareness for the rest of the weekend's activities.

"I think a lot of people don't know about homecoming, so, to start it off, I just wanted to have something that would get people to see the merch understand this is a thing that's sort of happening right now," said SUBOG Major Weekends Chair Chi-Chi Onoh.

The scavenger hunt, which allowed participants to scan a QR code to access a list of clues, started outside of the UConn School of Business.

The list contained clues to 11 locations around campus, with each clue containing rhymes or puns about the location. The goal was to take a photo of each location as proof that the clue had been solved. Some places that contestants had to photograph included Gampel Pavilion, the Student Union Theatre and the former location of the university seal outside of the library. While many participants were students, there were also some families who took part in the hunt.

"My parents [and] a lot of my family are coming to visit, so I'll be here around campus, like, for all the events," said Audrey Glorioso, a third semester pre-teaching major.

Participants were allowed to work in teams for the hunt, as long as a group member was in the photo taken of each location.

"[The Homecoming committee] just wants to set the tone to have a moment for all of us to come together, for all Huskies to celebrate," said Onoh.



Life

“INVINCIBLE”:

ICON MICHAEL JACKSON CHanneled ON STAGE FOR FAMILY WEEKEND

by **Maleena Muzio**
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Iconic dance moves and electrifying hits took over the stage at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts as the King of Pop, Michael Jackson, was honored in “INVINCIBLE: A Glorious Tribute to Michael Jackson,” headlining the University of Connecticut’s 2025 Family Weekend.

“INVINCIBLE” was enthusiastic and passionate. An audience of all ages, ranging from grade school-aged children to senior citizens, were jumping in their seats, clapping and singing along at different points in the show.

“We want to keep the memory of Michael vibrant and in our hearts,” said Darrin Ross, the producer and director of the show.

Not one, not two, but three “Michaels” were showcased throughout the performance to accurately capture the essence of the late performer. Jeffrey Perez was the most prominent Michael, who sang the majority of the show live. Perez presented himself almost exactly as the singer did, down to the smallest details, such as the way he walked and the way he spoke. Perez is recognized nationally as a leading Michael Jackson tribute artist.

Pete Carter was the “dancing” Michael during the numbers that included more advanced choreography. He, alongside an incredibly talented ensemble of

background dancers, brought world-famous music videos like “Thriller” and “Beat It” to life. The choreography for the show was done by Lavelle Smith Jr., a longtime friend and choreographer for Jackson, going back to 1987 when Smith was hired as a dancer for the “Smooth Criminal” short film.

The dance-heavy numbers of the show seemed to be fan favorites, with audience members singing the lyrics loudly and super fans getting out of their seats to groove.

Jawad Chazbek, a first-semester biological sciences major, said that his favorite numbers in the show were “Thriller” and “Beat It” because of their choreography.

There was a third Michael in the show, who also happened to be a dancer. He received less stage time, but performed the iconic, “Billie Jean” with Jackson’s sparkly glove, an accessory made famous at the Motown 25 TV special in 1983.

“The three Michael Jacksons were a cool surprise at the very end,” said Chazbek.

The show did not only cover Jackson’s legendary songs from the 1980s but also flashed back to Jackson’s younger years singing alongside his siblings in The Jackson 5, also known as The Jacksons. This portion of the show included the hit, “ABC” and other lesser-known songs from the group, as backup dancers dressed up as Michael’s siblings accompanied him on stage.

“The whole Jackson 5 part,

that was awesome,” said Joshua Perrin, a first-semester mechanical engineering student.

Other amazing performances included the songs, “Dirty Diana” with a sensual dance performance, as well as “Man in the Mirror” as audiences stood up as the powerful music video for the song was screened in the background, showcasing a plethora of injustices throughout history in the world.

“I really enjoyed how enthusiastic the cast was,” said Perrin. He also noted “Man in the

Mirror” as one of the top performances of the night.

Special effects, costume design and the supporting cast members truly elevated the show to capture the essence of Michael’s top tier performances.

“Michael Jackson is the greatest of all time,” said Perrin. “To keep [him] alive, I never got to experience any of what he did, even to experience what is sort of was like, it was an amazing experience.”

The King of Pop was revived for the night for families and

students alike to enjoy as Family Weekend came to a close.

“INVINCIBLE” was one part of a series at Jorgensen Center’s “Eight Days a Week” exhibition, honoring both the 70-year anniversary of the theater itself and 70 years of the birth of rock and roll.

“Michael Jackson in particular, he’s just a huge part of pop culture, like a real defining moment in the history of music,” said Chazbek. “I feel giving tribute to [Michael Jackson] is giving tribute to music itself in a way, especially in his genre.”



A poster advertising “INVINCIBLE: A Glorious Tribute to Michael Jackson,” a show commemorating Michael Jackson. The show took place at the Jorgensen Center for Performing Arts this past weekend.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF @JORGENSENUCONN ON INSTAGRAM

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY:

EDITH WILSON, THE PRESIDENT NO ONE TALKS ABOUT

by **Isabella Kulawik**
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For this week’s edition of This Week in History, I would like a moment to commemorate the first female president of the US of A. Now, I know what you’re thinking: “Isabella, what are you talking about?” And perhaps I use the term “first female president” a bit too loosely, but nonetheless, I think the title fits this particular situation. On Oct. 2, 1919, Woodrow Wilson suffered a stroke, and from that moment on, it was Edith Wilson’s world, and we were simply living in it.

Wilson was, on the whole, an interesting president. He brought reform to the country, particularly in labor, through the passage of the Clayton Antitrust Act, the establishment of the Federal Trade Commission and the push for laws that prevented child labor. However, Wilson’s accomplishments in

that realm of government were tarnished by his racist beliefs. His policies led to segregation at the federal level, not to mention the well-publicized viewing of “The Birth of a Nation” in the White House, a film that is essentially a racist retelling of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

In his second term, he led the country through World War I. Although he campaigned on peace, Wilson felt he had no choice but to join the war, given the aftermath of the infamous Zimmerman Telegram. American involvement in the war ultimately gave the Allied powers the boost they needed to defeat the Central Powers in 1918. These events led to Wilson’s magnum opus: the League of Nations, an organization of international powers designed to maintain peace.

The League of Nations, or rather its failure, was believed to have contributed to the decline of his health. He ran a dizzying campaign to get the United States to join the league, but alas, no dice. It was shortly after this that he had a debilitating stroke that rendered him unable to move or speak during a portion of his presidency. This is where Edith Wilson comes into play.

Edith Bolling Galt Wilson was Wilson’s second wife, and they quickly fell in love. Throughout his presidency, she had a significant influence on his policy decisions. There was even speculation that Wilson attempted to dispel rumors about this by supporting the suffrage movement, which his anti-suffragist wife opposed.

Edith Wilson truly came into power after her husband’s stroke, as she served as his “steward” in the final duration



Edith Wilson, the wife of the 28th president of the United States. Her husband suffered a stroke near the end of his second term, leaving him unable to move or speak.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL RECORDS

of his presidency. Extremely protective of him in his delicate state after the stroke, she served as his only means of communication with the outside world, even going so far as to forge his signature.

Ike Hoover, an usher at the White House, even went so far as to say, “If there were some

papers requiring his attention, they would be read to him — but only those that Mrs. Wilson thought should be read to him. Likewise, word of any decision the president had made would be passed back through the same channels.”

This brings me back to Edith Wilson being the first female

president. Wilson couldn’t talk or move, and she was the only one who knew what happened behind closed doors; she essentially ran the country. While she says in her memoir that she didn’t take control of the presidency and only acted as a “steward,” I think we can all call BS on that one.



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



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COMIC BY SOFIA LOTOTSKYY, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST



COMIC BY SOFIA LOTOTSKYY, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST

Where did our empathy go?

by **Alexander Renzulli**
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I picked up the Daily Campus newspaper on Sept. 11, I picked up The Daily Campus and saw the front page —; the first segment was an article on the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk. The second was a professor's thoughts and opinions following the shooting at Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis on Aug. 27. This is messed up, right? It is not don't mean the fact that tThe Daily Campus is reporting on the matter — that aspect is completely normal and expected. But it is messed up that on a given day in September of 2025, the two biggest stories of the day are about horrific gun deaths. The year is 2025, the youth are literally dying in their classrooms, and as an anonymous peer told me in Whitney Dining Hall this morning, "I wasn't even phased."

The latter article about the school shooting isn't even the most recent of the year. That title belongs to Evergreen High School in Colorado, where a student walked into class with a handgun, shot two of his peers, and then himself at 12:30 PM. This marks the 47th school shooting of the year.

I'm beyond confused.

Why do we live in a place where it's normal to read about three shootings in one day? It is genuinely baffling, and I am beyond confused.

In theory, we (as a society) should be living in the time of the most empathy. In no other time in history have human beings been able to connect with virtually anyone, anywhere. In the contemporary era, it is unfathomably easy to access advice and care. Despite having so much potential empathy, in society today, a simple gesture of kindness is often deemed as "woke" or "performative.". The not -so -late and not -so -great Logan Paul summed this up perfectly in the (and I can't believe I'm writing about this) Paul American influencer show. In a moment we've all moved on from as a society way too quickly, he statedstated, "I don't want to come across like a woke asshole, but like, dude, women have it hard. Women have it f***ucking hard. And I empathize with them." The man fears so much that having empathy will get him "cancelled" that he has to preface he's not making an attempt to "be woke.". Huh? What is the point of the youth preaching love, wellbeing, and togetherness if we fear what the words we say

mean?

It certainly wasn't always like this. I live only a town over from Newtown, Conn.T, and I can vividly remember my own mother crying when 20 kids were shot 40 minutes from my own house. My six6-year-old eyes I watched cars line up for church, watched the somber faces of masses and watched my family engross themselves in wondering how the nation should act and react. For my parents, it felt like Newtown was just like Columbine, a horrific school shooting that occurred in 1999. Columbine and Newtown were mental scars on the nation. It seems to me no one cares about such acts of violence today.

I can hop on Instagram Reels right now (no, I'm not downloading Tik-Tok) and with complete certainty I will watch somebody get run over by a car on my little doomscroll device. It's so common, in fact, that I have a peer who calls the app "my little car crash app.". I'll watch perhaps the most heinous footage of my life in 480 pixels and shrug it off. Why? With the rise of social media and the quick and easy ability to post anything you want, we have curated and crafted a violent culture. Humans love to post atrocities today; that's what draws in the most

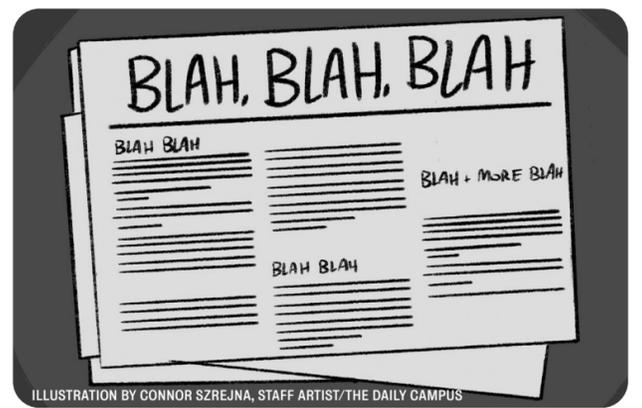


ILLUSTRATION BY CONNOR SZREJNA, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

shock value. That's what gets the most likes and hearts. It is a feedback loop: people see horrendous death over and over, and in due time they just don't care anymore.

Where does this put us, as a society, now? We are in a very scary spot. If America fails to bat an eye today at a school shooting today when 20 years ago, we mourned it, our empathy in the not-so-distant future is shaping up to be nonexistent. Like all the Reels and Tik-Toks, society has allowed school shootings, political violence, and unwarranted death to become so normalized that it is hard to believe any change to solve the myriad issues will actually occur. Does it not already feel like we have fall-

en into this mentality where truly awful events happen and the vast majority of people just say, "so it goes"?

Today it is so effortless to overlook and ignore tragedy, but it is vital to society to remember that it is our decisions that determine how empathetic and caring the next wave of Earth's inhabitants will be.

Steven Patrick Morrissey, former frontman of The Smiths, once said, "It's so easy to laugh, it's so easy to hate / It takes guts to be gentle and kind." If, starting today, we seek out the empathy that is at our disposal, a land where shootings and death are normalized does not need to exist.

"Sad Girl Autumn" and the Commodification of Women's Mental Illness

by **Gianna Cassino**
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Pumpkin lattes, knitted sweaters, and sobbing while listening to Phoebe Bridgers? Hot Girl Summer's gloomy older sister, Sad Girl Autumn, is upon us.

Coined in 2019 as an antithesis to "Hot Girl Summer," "Sad Girl Autumn" originated as a

community of young women coping with seasonal depression. Those who didn't fit the mold of outgoing summer party girl flocked to become something more attainable. Sad Girl Autumn is all about chai lattes, listening to calm indie music, journaling, and yearning. It centers on emotional regulation and processing. In 2021, the term took the internet by storm following Taylor Swift's release

of "All Too Well (Ten Minute Version)." (Sad Girl Autumn Version).". What began as a community coping with a common illness became a watered-down, romanticized hashtag labeling videos of rainy cityscapes and young women in thick scarves looking wistfully out of windows.

Seasonal affective disorder, more commonly known as seasonal depression, impacts 5% of the US population. A staggering 80% of those affected by seasonal depression are women. The issue with Sad Girl Autumn isn't rooted in those genuinely suffering, nor in the components of the aesthetic. What's problematic is the rhetoric surrounding it. For a generation with depression rates twice that of their predecessors, turning mental illness into an aspiration does more harm than good.

Social media algorithms create harmful echo chambers. If a teenage girl becomes stuck in the virtual loop of "Sad Girl Autumn," in which everyone recommended to her on Tik-Tok seems to be suffering from seasonal depression, she will be likely to adopt the label for herself. In doing so, she may begin to immerse herself in typical sad girl media: breakup songs, books told from the point of view of characters suffering from mental illness. Consistently putting oneself in the perspec-

tive of those experiencing negative emotions can be detrimental. While sad music has been proven to improve symptoms of depression, it worsens mood for those who aren't already experiencing negative emotions.

With hits like "Funeral" and "Waiting Room.," Phoebe Bridgers has been hailed as the internet's favorite "Sad Girl.". However, she outright rejects the label. In a 2018 interview with exclaim, Bridgers cites the Sad Girl movement as "so romanticized and so kitschy.". Too often, sadness is equated with profoundness. Fans crown Bridgers the "Sad Girl" to differentiate her from the "shallowness" elicited by bubbly pop music. We celebrate the emotional depth of sad music, but romanticizing it is harmful. Depression should not be an aspiration. Making it so hurts people who placebo themselves into seasonal depression, as well as minimizing the issues faced by those who genuinely suffer from SAD.

Emotion sells. Creating an entire subculture around a negative emotion meant it was only a matter of time before companies and influencers swooped in. Fabricating issues to sell a product is a surefire way to success, especially in our digital age. Once a young woman sharing her favorite teas and journaling prompts to spread comfort, the

"Sad Girl" is now an influencer screeching at her followers to buy the product of the week to "heal.". The commodification of SAD furthers the negative impacts on those experiencing it. Oftentimes, the "quick fixes" advertised by influencers are no more than a temporary dopamine boost and a way for them to make money. Overconsumption is no substitute for proper emotional regulation. Those experiencing symptoms of seasonal depression should turn to professionals for help, rather than salespeople and influencers selling lies to supposedly solve their problems.

As a former "Sad Girl Autumn" warrior, I was initially drawn in by the normalization of emotional processing through journaling and engaging with media that echoed my negative experiences. It was an appropriate coping mechanism at the time, but I've slowly let go of the label for my own well-being. Currently, I enjoy myself a lot more knowing I can romanticize autumn without the guise of sadness. I can read The Bell Jar and simultaneously understand that I'm allowed to engage with it without putting myself in the same mental state as the protagonist. Next time you find yourself too immersed in a certain kind of media, remember that it doesn't have to become a lifestyle.



C Barbara

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTAIN BARBARA



Opinion

Photo of the Day | A beautiful day in Storrs



It was a busy weekend at the UConn Storrs campus. Many parents were visting for Parent's Weekend leading to families walking around the UConn campus.

PHOTO BY BLAKE SYKES, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

When the First Amendment Falls Silent

by Grace Donahue

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Free speech is often called the beating heart of American democracy — and for good reason. The First Amendment guarantees us the ability to speak freely, protect against injustice and seek proper legal defense. It ensures that government power is kept in check through judicial oversight. These rights are what allow Americans to live as we do every day — acting and speaking freely — within reason — and holding power accountable.

Yet today, these rights are under threat. President Trump and his administration have launched a series of attacks that systematically undermine these protections, targeting students, universities, the press, the legal profession and even the courts. Despite the seriousness of these threats, the news has often failed to cover them fully — sometimes due to direct efforts to control what reaches the public. Americans are not nearly worried enough about what is at stake. Let's review what is happening and why it matters.

For one, the Trump administration has targeted protesters and students. He has revoked student visas from more than 300 people, "primarily targeting international students involved in pro-Palestinian protests." Secretary of State, Marco Ru-

bio, even admitted "Every time I find one of these lunatics, I take away their visas." In practice, it punishes students for exercising political expression, quieting dissent and threatening their futures.

Beyond that, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has terminated "thousands of SEVIS" records from international students who had encounters with law enforcement. While this sounds reasonable, many of these encounters were for minor interactions such as traffic violations — many of which were later dropped or dismissed. While the administration claimed this was about security, the effect was much broader: international students suddenly found their futures in jeopardy for trivial reasons. When students know even a small infraction could cost them their visa, many will avoid protests or activism altogether. Whether international or not, the result is the same — student voices are silenced.

Along with this, the Trump administration has also threatened to cut off millions in federal funding. Columbia University provides a striking example: earlier this year, \$400 million in research grants were frozen, citing the university's alleged failure to combat antisemitism during the Israel-Hamas war. To receive \$220 million from the government, Columbia had

to implement measures such as implementing disciplinary systems, shutting down programs tied to DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) goals and issuing reports proving programs don't promote "unlawful DEI outcomes." President Trump praised Columbia in ending these DEI policies and warned more universities that they would face similar scrutiny if they failed to follow suit.

The impact goes beyond Columbia. By using federal funds as leverage, the administration pressured universities to suppress speech, activism and academic programs that did not align with its agenda. Institutions meant to protect free expression and open debate were instead coerced into policing it.

The Trump administration has even gone as far as attacking the legal profession. Executive orders were issued targeting law firms that represent Trump's political opponents. On March 27, he targeted five large law firms and moved to terminate their federal government contracts, which would limit them from being able to enter federal buildings and bar their interaction with federal employees in some cases. Among those targeted was Robert Mueller, who had been appointed by the Justice Department to investigate connections between Russia and Trump after the 2016 election. Others have been at odds

with Trump or involved in investigations about him.

The pressure campaign escalated in early 2025, when nine major law firms struck settlements with the administration to avoid losing their government contracts. In return, the firms had to pledge nearly \$1 billion in pro bono legal work for causes Trump favored. This effectively weaponized executive power to punish lawyers for who they represented, undermining the independence of the legal profession and threatening the right to fair legal defense — another pillar of the First Amendment.

He has also defied federal judges who halted deportations and executive actions. For instance, when deporting hundreds of Venezuelan immigrants, the Trump administration invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to override a federal judge's order temporarily blocking the action. The last time this act was used was during World War II to justify the internment of Japanese Americans and detention of Germans and Italians. In doing this, the executive branch openly defied a court order and undermined judicial authority and the systems of checks and balances. Observers warned that this represented an expansion of unchecked executive power that threatens the rule of law itself.

This brings us to Trump's at-

tempts to restrict the press. He has gone as far as banning certain outlets such as the Associated Press from presidential events simply due to editorial decisions. Trump continues to publicly threaten broadcast television and news networks, suggesting that they should have their licenses revoked for unfavorable coverage. Most notably, pressure from the administration contributed to the suspension of Jimmy Kimmel for several days after the host made comments about Charlie Kirk's death. When the president suggests that networks or programs critical of him should be 'taken away,' it becomes clear that what happened to Kimmel may only be the beginning. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Taken together, these actions represent far more than isolated incidents. From silencing students and intimidating universities, to punishing lawyers, defying judges and threatening the press, the Trump administration has systematically chipped away at the First Amendment. The erosion of free expression rarely happens all at once — it is dismantled piece by piece, until the right to speak, protest, defend and report freely no longer exists in practice. If Americans fail to recognize and resist these attacks, we risk losing the very freedoms that define our democracy.

House M.D: Why the House finale is a great ending

by Isaac Grad

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SPOILERS FOR ALL SEASONS OF HOUSE M.D

The end of the beloved House M.D. series is one that offers contentious debate, with some despising the direction the show went in the last two seasons, and others appreciating what they see as a wonderful ending to a great show. While the final two seasons of the series aren't the best out of all eight, the decisions regarding how to bring the storylines and character development to a close were as great as any show could have done.

The House finale found what the true heart and core of the story was and gave that a resolution. While this resolution is devastating, it's also beautiful. The relationship between House and Wilson, a colleague of the titular doctor, was the most crucial element of the series; in this relationship we're able to understand these two characters and their development over the course of the show's run.

House starts off the show as a misanthropic, selfish, drug-addicted doctor that seems uninterested in forming genuine connections with other human beings. He willingly uses those around him to get what he wants, especially Wilson. We've seen House indirectly get Wilson fired, indi-

rectly kill Wilson's girlfriend and overall give Wilson an immense amount of stress. That isn't to blame House for Wilson sticking around for all of this, but to show that this relationship is tumultuous and toxic at best. As the series continues, we see various people come and go in House's life: his fellows, Cuddy, Stacy. Yet Wilson is the only constant. Even when he does leave, insisting he's done with House, he returns. The pair need one another; they quite literally can't live without each other.

This selfishness that we see from House, which seems to be core to his character, is proven to be inaccurate in the finale. When Wilson discovers that he has cancer, House takes care of him through his first round of chemo, honoring his promise to Wilson that he won't take him to a hospital, as Wilson's biggest fear is dying in a hospital bed alone. In this episode we see a side of House we haven't seen before: he's genuinely terrified. In all other situations, with anyone else, House knows he can survive without them. But for the past couple decades he wired his brain to think that as long as he has Wilson, he isn't alone. For the first time, he's confronted with the reality that he's losing the only person that matters to him, and it's completely out of his control.

This lack of control sends House spiraling. Selfishly, House needs Wilson to stay alive, even if it's miserable for him, because

he can't live without him. Wilson tries to tell House that there's nothing he can do, that he is dying and the least House can do is be there for him. House may logically understand Wilson's desire, but he refuses to acknowledge it.

Ultimately, Wilson decides to die on his own accord, and while it takes a lot of convincing for House to accept his decision, he does. It seems that everything House did wrong came back to bite him all at once, as he was due to return to jail after a stint that resulted in millions of dollars of damage to the hospital. This coincided with Wilson's last five months, meaning if House went to jail, he would lose his best friend forever right then and there. Naturally, House

fakes his death, only after spending hours weighing whether he should commit suicide. He does the selfless thing, however, and sticks around so he can spend Wilson's remaining time with him.

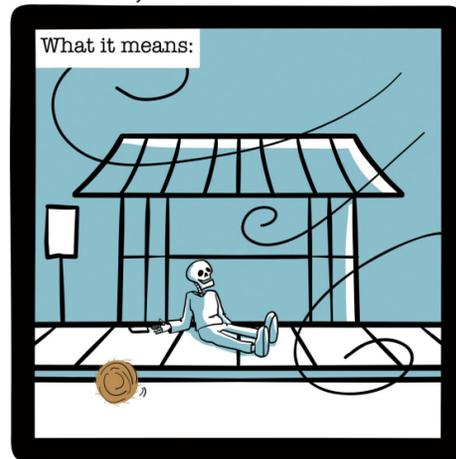
This is a level of selflessness we don't see from anyone else in the show. House sacrifices everything he values, not only in the world around him, but in himself. He believes he needs to be a miserable jerk to be of value as he figures that's what makes him good at his job. In the finale, he chooses to sacrifice the only thing he thinks he has to offer: his ability to solve medical cases. He chooses Wilson.

House even states that "cancer is boring" — and in House's mind,

boring is the worst of the worst. He only spends time on cases he finds interesting, and yet he still chose Wilson (an uninteresting medical case).

Many shows try to give a satisfying ending, oftentimes sacrificing realism in the process of trying to give the characters a happy ending. House M.D doesn't do this, opting instead to create a (relatively) realistic scenario in which House is finally confronted with the consequences of his actions, all while on the verge of losing the most important person in his life. The finale is able to show his development, which prior to this had been buried deep under the surface for only the biggest House apologists to desperately uncover.

DAILY CAMPUS COMIC BY ERIKA ECHEGOYEN, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST



VOLLEYBALL: Weekend adversaries hit Huskies hard

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UConn volleyball struggled this past weekend in their Big East opener. They fell to both DePaul University on Friday and Marquette University on Saturday. On Friday, the loss to DePaul was in four sets (29-31, 18-25, 25-14, 23-25). On Saturday, the loss took three sets (22-25, 16-25, 18-25). Despite continuous efforts, the team failed to find a rhythm against their competition.

On Friday night, UConn set out in Chicago to play DePaul University in the conference opener for both programs. Despite an initial lead from both Emma Werkmeister and McKenna Brand, putting the team ahead at 5-2, and pushing ahead to a 15-13 lead heading into the first media timeout. Unfortunately, DePaul's Blue Devils quickly tied up the game, leading to a 24-24 tie. Despite thrilling kills from the likes of Grace Maria and Werkmeister, DePaul took the first frame at a 31-29 win.

In the second set, UConn once again took an early lead, this time fueled by Audrey Rome's fearsome terminations, as well as Brenna Wyman's aces. The Huskies lost their footing shortly after this, though, and were forced into a timeout after multiple attack errors, ultimately losing the second set 25-18. The Huskies pulled ahead to a quick 25-14 victory, thanks to Werkmeister and Rome. Still, it was too little too late, and DePaul

quickly regained their momentum in the fourth set, winning the game.

Following the previous night's loss, the UConn Huskies flew to Milwaukee Saturday night in an attempt to redeem themselves against the Marquette University Golden Eagles.

Despite the expected early offensive from Werkmeister, the Golden Eagles quickly forced UConn into an early timeout. Maria and Brand closed the lead after this break and after

numerous service errors from both sides, the score was tied at 16-16. The Eagles broke this momentary stalemate with a 24-22 set victory.

The second set fared no better for the Huskies, with Marquette taking advantage of numerous UConn attack errors. The Golden Eagle's Hattie Bray, Isabella Haggard and Natalie Ring in particular fueled the effective offensive. Although Maria was able to fire in a notable ace, Marquette held on nonetheless

for a 25-16 victory. The third set served as the final nail in the coffin for the Huskies in the short-lived game, with the Golden Eagles easily winning the third set. Though they were staved off by both Isabella Suhy and Hanna Tylska, the combined might of Milwaukee's Ring and Elena Radeff were simply too much for the Huskies to handle. Milwaukee now advances to a 2-0 record in Big East play.

Despite an 0-2 record for this weekend, the women's team still

showed terrific strength.

Werkmeister showed prowess, leading both Friday and Saturday's game with 12 and 20 kills, respectively. Her steady stream of aces and kills made her an invaluable asset to UConn this weekend, and without her, it is likely that the team would have suffered an even greater loss. Besides Werkmeister, Rome was able to tie a career-high 14 kills, giving her a good start to her senior year season.

Still, the highlights of the few do not make up for the losses of the many. If UConn hopes to turn their losing streak, they must address key weak points in their play. Between both games, the Huskies made a concerning number of errors, amounting to 38 total. They must improve both their attacks and their serves if they hope to improve their record. Their number of kills, at 83 for the weekend, while solid, was not nearly enough to give them an edge against more competitive teams. Simply put, the team must become not only more aggressive, but must also become a more polished and refined team in the coming weeks for Big East play.

UConn's women's volleyball will return to Storrs to take on Seton Hall (0-2) this upcoming Friday. With luck, the Huskies will regroup to have a stronger united front in their upcoming game to turn around their record. The season is still young, and there is still plenty of time for UConn to come out on top.



"UConn women's volleyball player Audrey Rome goes up for a spike against Marist on Sept. 20, 2025. UConn women's volleyball talking in a timeout during their match against Marist on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025. The Huskies beat the Red Foxes 3-0. PHOTO BY TOMAS HINCKLEY, OPINION EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

FIELD HOCKEY: HUSKIES SHUT OUT BY NO. 5 LIBERTY

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The UConn field hockey team took the road to face No. 5 Liberty on Friday night. The Huskies were swept by the Eagles 0-1, having gone into the weekend standing at 3-4. and . R

The first quarter opened with Natalie McKenna in goal for UConn and Diane Saint Martin in net for Liberty. McKenna kept the Eagles scoreless, saving a shot from freshman midfielder Mia Santana early in the game. Just 14 minutes in, two shots on goal had been made, none finding their place in the back of the net. The period ended scoreless, with minor violations leaving Sol Simone and Julia Bressler for the Huskies, along with Maite Altamirano for the Eagles, each with a green card.

By the second quarter, UConn had fired up their offense, all shots on goal occurring during the first five minutes of the play. Forward Bressler pressed into the goal, only to be blocked. Simone followed suit six seconds later with two penalty corners ending without fanfare. In the remaining minutes of the half, Avery Pollock for Liberty made a shot, going wide.

With key starters Bressler and Simone driving the Huskies' attack and their defensive line holding firm, the Huskies



attempted to flip at flipping the script, hoping to secure a win after their loss against Ivy contender, Princeton, earlier in the week.

UConn began the third quarter with the Huskies racing to beat the stalemate. Freshman Lene Bujes seized an early opportunity, sending the ball flying toward the net before being saved by Liberty's Martin. Substitutions persisted without break during the period, both teams hoping to find the best combinations to secure a win.

The fourth quarter came barreling in with tensions running high. The frame opened quietly, until UConn took charge. At minute six, the Huskies fired a series of shots by sophomore Olivia Donahue, two by Bujes, ending with a final blow by sophomore Olivia McKenna, but Liberty's Martin turned them all away. A short two minutes after the play by UConn, Liberty came in with a penalty corner by Lou Combrinck and assist by Morena Giacosa for the first goal of the game. The period ended quickly after that with the Huskies attempting for the last time, two penalty corners at the hands of Simone, and a blocked shot by freshman Milou Heuker.

Looking ahead, the UConn Huskies will host Providence at home on Friday before hitting the road once more to take on UMass this Sunday.

UConn Field Hockey plays Rutgers at home in Storrs, Conn. on Sept 12, 2025. The Huskies ultimately fall in overtime with a final score of 3-2. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Sports

Photo of the Day | UConn v St. Cloud State



University of Connecticut women's ice hockey took on St. Cloud State at Toscano Family Ice Forum on September 26, 2025. Despite a lead in the first period, the Huskies fell 2-1. PHOTO BY EMMA MEIDINGER, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

FOOTBALL: FREEMAN'S FIELD GOAL GIVES HUSKIES FIRST ROAD WIN OF SEASON

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UConn kicker Chris Freeman has been reliable since coming in last season from Indiana. However, he had not kicked a game-winning field goal since his high school years at Zionsville High School in Indiana. That changed on Saturday to push the UConn football team (3-2) over the Buffalo Bulls (2-3, 1-0 MAC), 20-17.

The victory could have been sweeter had it been over former UConn quarterback Ta'Quan Roberson, who suffered a lower-leg injury in Buffalo's loss to Troy last week.

Injuries started to haunt the Huskies too, as defensive lineman Stephon Wright went down with 13 minutes and 29 seconds left in the first quarter, along with star running back Cam Edwards with 13:34 left in the first half.

The first pivotal play of the game came with 10:14 left in the first quarter. On 4th-and-4 at UConn's 35-yard line, Buffalo backup quarterback Gunnar Gray tried to keep the drive alive by targeting wide receiver Patrick Clacks III, but the pass was broken up by cornerback Devin Pringle to force the turnover on downs.

After an uneventful first quarter, the scoreless tie soon became a 7-7 tie in the second quarter. UConn quarterback Joe Fagnano led a 10-play, 93-yard drive down the field, capped by a 25-yard touchdown to star wide receiver Skyler Bell. It was the Huskies' longest scoring drive of the season, previously a 92-yard touchdown drive in the season-opener against Central Connecticut.

Buffalo answered with a touchdown drive of their own, this one being a 75-yard drive in just five plays. Running back Lamar Spering ran a career-

long 63 yards for a touchdown with 6:33 left in the first half to even the score.

On the opening drive of the second half, the Huskies got back to work on offense. However, there was a scare on the drive, as running back Oliver Lundberg Coleman fumbled the ball on an 8-yard carry to Buffalo's 8-yard line, but the possession stayed with UConn as second-string right guard Brady Wayburn got on top of the ball.

That ended up being a huge play for UConn, as the following play was an 8-yard touchdown run by Edwards to make it 14-7 with 11:16 left in the third quarter.

Every single drive that started and finished in the third quarter was a scoring drive.

The Bulls kept the following drive alive on 4th-and-3 from their own 46-yard line with a fake punt that allowed defensive end Malin White to not only se-

cure the first down but also gain 15 yards to move the ball into UConn territory at the 39-yard line. They ended up settling for a 39-yard field goal to cut into the deficit.

The Huskies returned the favor with a field goal of their own, also from 39 yards out, to give Connecticut a 20-10 lead with 1:31 left in the third quarter.

The scoring stalled for most of the fourth quarter, with five combined punts. In no man's land at the UConn 47-yard line, Buffalo went for it on 4th-and-3. Gray tried to connect with wide receiver Victor Snow, but the pass was broken up by safety D'Mon Brinson.

Buffalo searched for an answer with 3:52 left in the game. They had not been in the red zone all game. That was until, with 3:09 left in the game, Snow caught a quick pass for a 1-yard gain and a first down at exactly

the 20-yard line. They would not have been in that position if it were not for a 27-yard completion between Gray and Snow to get to the Connecticut 30-yard line.

With the game on the line, Gray found running back Al-Jay Henderson wide open for a 5-yard touchdown on fourth-and-goal with 1:04 left in the game.

"I wanted to vomit most of the fourth quarter," UConn head coach Jim Mora said after the game.

With the game tied at 17 with 59 seconds left, the Huskies had to get into field goal range from their own 25-yard line with no timeouts left.

On 3rd-and-8, UConn quarterback Joe Fagnano found tight end Juice Vereen for a 15-yard completion near the Connecticut 42-yard line to keep the drive alive with 42 seconds remaining.

Bell's fumble, which was recovered by Edwards, would have saved the drive if it had not been ruled an incomplete pass upon review. Ironically, the fumble would have helped UConn, as they would have been deeper into Buffalo territory instead of being near midfield.

On 3rd-and-10, Fagnano connected with wide receiver John Neider for a 15-yard gain to make it first-and-10 at the Buffalo 32-yard line. Connecticut quickly got to the line of scrimmage to spike the ball with 15 seconds remaining.

With 11 seconds to go, Fagnano fired a quick pass to Bell on an out route on the left side of the field, where he stepped out of bounds with 11 seconds left.

From there, Freeman knocked down the 44-yard field goal to give the Huskies a 20-17 lead with six seconds left. Despite a desperate lateral play by the Bulls, UConn came away with its first road win of the season.

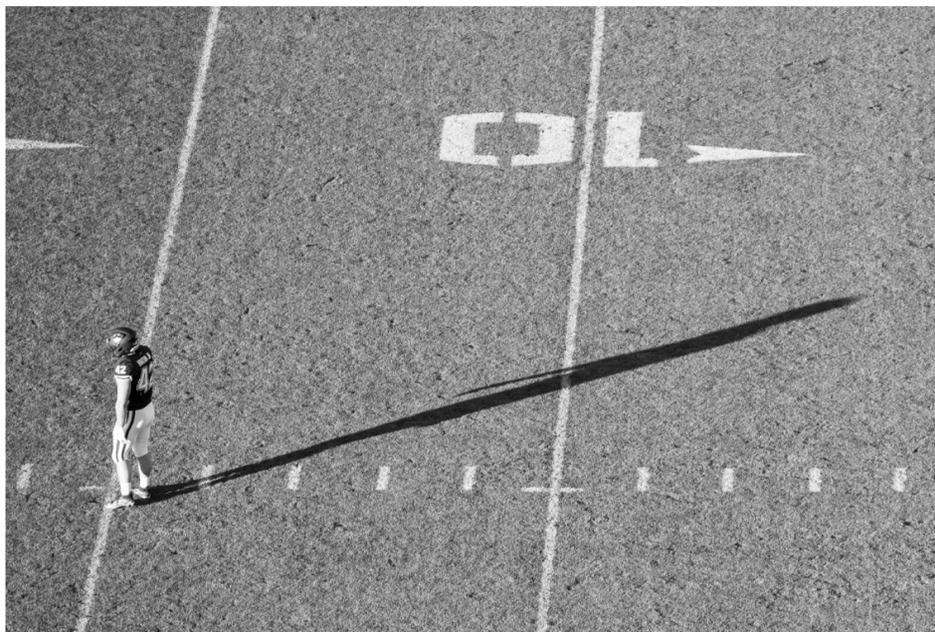
"I was hoping, just give me one more chance," Freeman said. "Getting a win, regardless of how you get it, is a big deal. I'm just proud of those guys and proud of my teammates."

It was the most important drive of the season thus far, with Fagnano leading the way. The former Maine quarterback had 219 total yards, including 64 on the ground, to lead the team, and a passing touchdown. He had the longest run of his career with a 38-yard run in the third quarter.

The offense had no turnovers, and the team itself had no penalties as they had their most unblemished game of the season.

UConn is now 18-5 against Buffalo, earning its first win at UB Stadium since 2011.

They turn their attention to Florida International on Saturday as the Huskies return home to open the month of October.



The University of Connecticut football team defeats Ball State at Rentschler field on Sept. 20, 2025. The Huskies defend a late attack from the Cardinals with a final score of 31-25. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

MEN'S SOCCER: VILLANOVA HANDS NO. 22 HUSKIES 1-2

by Avery Becker
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The UConn men's soccer program entered this past week unbeaten and standing at No. 22 in the Division 1 rankings. Husky fans could not have asked for a better season kickoff.

Hopes were high for Connecticut, heading into their matchup against the No. 14 Bryant Bulldogs. However, the Bulldogs handed the squad their first loss of the season, with the score ending 1-4.

On Saturday night, the program looked to redeem themselves against the Villanova Wildcats in front of a sold-out crowd, to kick-off Big East play. Although However, the Huskies could not capitalize, racking up their second loss of the season.

The Huskies' offense was favored in the first half of the match, with the Huskies having eight shots on goal, compared to the Wildcat's six.

Players like Balthazar Saunders and Sabri Hanni were the main catalysts for the Huskies' offensive possession in the first half, working to get a goal on the scoreboard.

However, even with multiple opportunities, neither team

could capitalize.

In the second half of the match, it seemed as if history repeated itself, with both teams struggling to break the deadlock, vying to get a goal up on the scoreboard.

In the 57th minute, though, Max Gummesson netted his first

of the season, giving the Huskies the advantage. Rebounding it off a player from Villanova, the midfielder found an opening in the bottom right corner of the net to get it past the Wildcats.

"I thought Max [Gummesson] did a pretty good job," head coach Chris Gbandi said in a

postgame interview. "I think, ultimately, Max [Gummesson] is there to keep the ball out of the back of the net and him getting a goal helped us."

With both teams' still attempting to get some more offense going, Connecticut still kept their 1-0 lead. But that only

lasted until the last few moments of the match.

In the 88th and 89th minute of the match, Villanova knotted the score at one, and then eventually scored the game-winning goal.

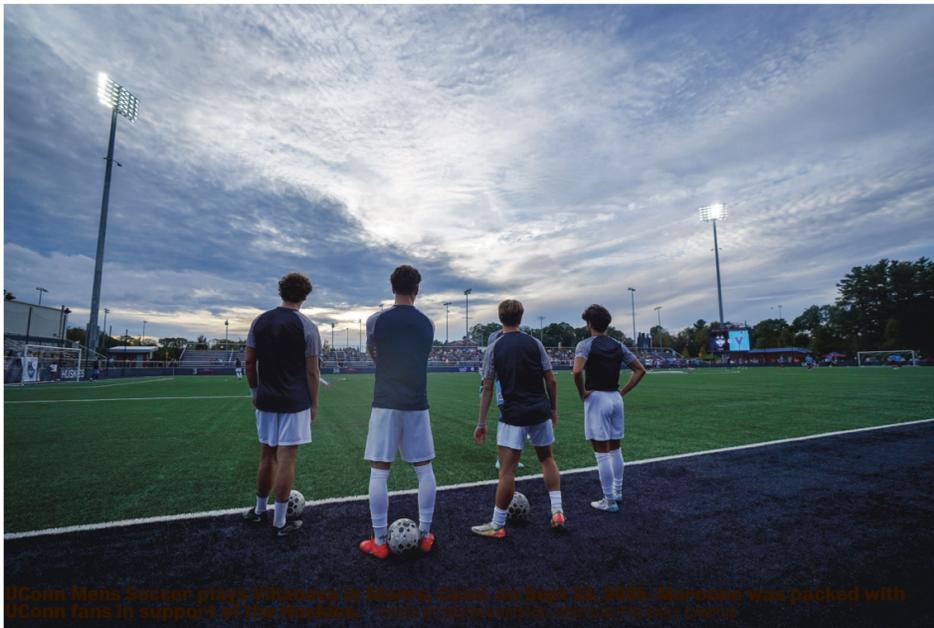
Brady Crampton of the Wildcats netted his goal in the top corner of the goal post, off the dish from his teammate Michael teDuits.

The second goal, which ended up being the game-winning goal, was scored in a similar fashion for the Wildcats, with Lorenzon Avalos also notching his goal in the top right corner of the net.

Despite this loss, the Huskies have proven time and time again their resilience that they bring every season.

"That's soccer and that's college soccer for you," Gbandi said postgame., "You can dominate a game and most likely should've gotten three points, but with how good some of these teams are, it changes the game."

Next up, the Huskies will take on the Creighton Bluejays to continue their Big East game slate. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. from Joseph J. Morrone Stadium and fans are encouraged to wear white for a white-out game. The match can be streamed on ESPN+.



UConn Mens Soccer plays Villanova in Storrs, Conn. on Sept 23, 2025. Morrone was packed with UConn fans in support of the Huskies. PHOTO BY DEVON CHRISTINI, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

WOMEN'S SOCCER: HUSKIES FALL SHORT IN BIG EAST MATCHUP AGAINST GEORGETOWN

by Colette Doyle
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The UConn women's soccer team took a trip to Washington, D.C. on Saturday to take on Georgetown University. The Huskies and Hoyas match-up was a Big East contest, making it the third in-conference game of the season for the program. The Huskies fell to the Hoyas with a final score of 0-2.

UConn is coming off another Big East matchup, against Xavier University that ended in a tie (1-1). Although the game ended in a draw, the Huskies put up impressive plays. Defensively, freshman goalkeeper Ava Yamas put up an impressive performance with a career-high five saves. Offensively, sophomore forward Farrah Stephens-Martin and redshirt freshman forward Se-Hanna Mars worked as a dynamic duo. Mars passed a perfect through ball to Stephens-Martin, allowing her to score for the second-straight game.

The first half of the game ended 2-0 with the Huskies experiencing challenges early on. The team experienced three fouls by sophomore midfielder Anaya Johnson in the first 22 minutes. These fouls interrupted the Huskies' rhythm and gave the Hoyas a chance to settle in early on. The Hoyas immediately created challenges for Yamas, forcing her to make several saves within the first 10 minutes. However, Yamas held her own, preventing graduate student Maja Lardner and senior Shay Montgomery from scoring. In the ninth minute, the Hoyas' persistence paid off with a corner kick that led to a goal by sophomore Lizzie Heller assisted by red-

shirt junior Mary Cochran. This play gave the Hoyas an early 1-0 lead.

UConn attempted to respond to Georgetown's goal; however, they continued to struggle as the first half went on. The Huskies attempted to adjust to the challenges with early substitutions of freshman Maree-Anne Van Doesburg and Ines Nourani to provide energy

both offensively and defensively. However, the Hoyas continued to impress, doubling their lead in the 37th minute. Yamas saved the Hoyas initial attempt at a goal;

however, junior Isabel Boodell came in and scored a successful goal for the Hoyas soon after. In the last few minutes of the half, Stephens-Martin and sophomore Naia Ocio attempted shots that were both unsuccessful. The first half closed 2-0 and the Huskies went into half-time without a goal.

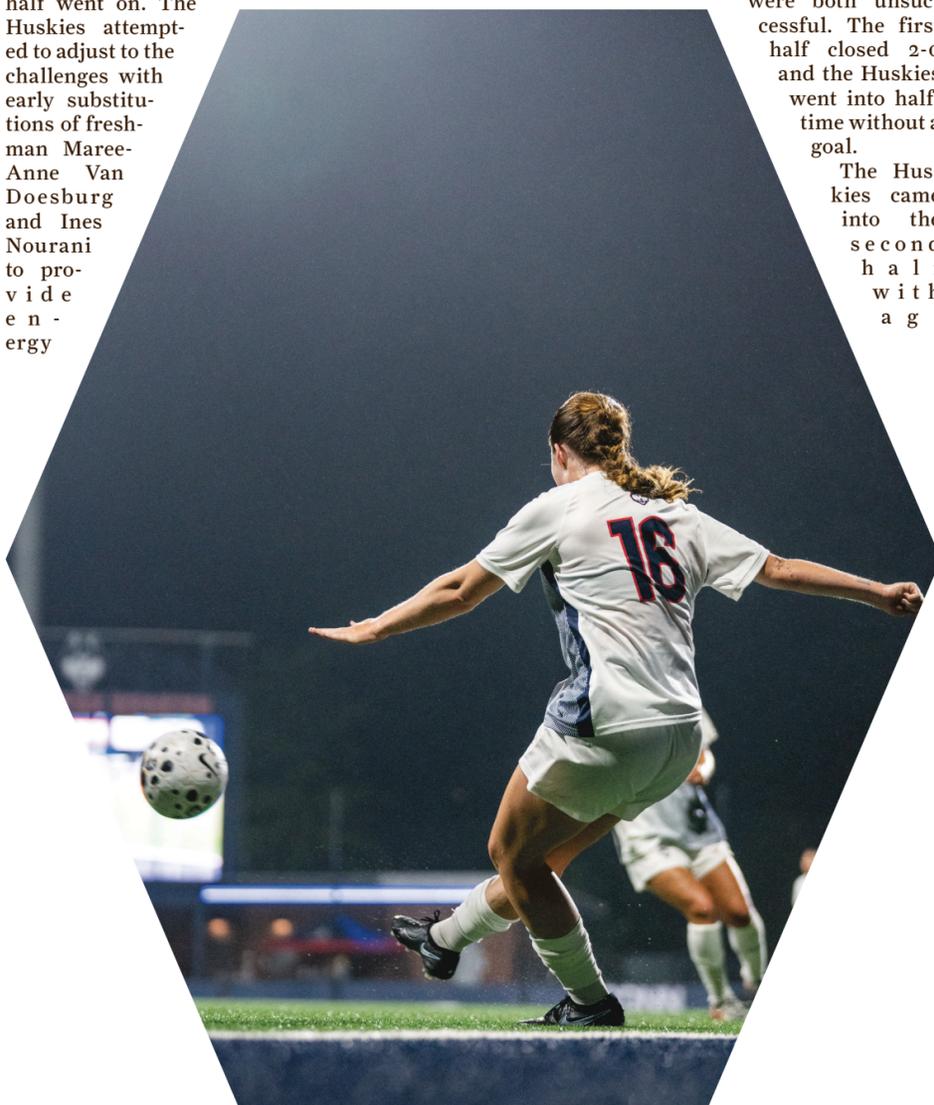
The Huskies came into the second half with a goal.

Defensively, the Huskies were steadier in the second half. Yamas faced multiple goal attempts from the Hoyas but was able to tightly defend the goal and prevent the Hoyas from adding to their lead. Despite the defensive effort, the Huskies were unable to transition into attack and spent much of the half defending.

In the final minutes, the Huskies continued to attempt shots. Stephens-Martin had the best attempt in the 85th minute, but was unable to close the deal. The Huskies continued to have a strong buildup in the last few minutes but were unable to deliver on any of this momentum. The Hoyas, however, remained in control and kept their composure, preventing any opportunity for the Huskies. The Hoyas successfully held on to their lead to win the game 2-0.

Despite the final score, there were positives for the Huskies. Yamas delivered a strong performance in the goal, preventing a larger margin of victory for the Hoyas. Offensively, Ocio and Stephens-Martin created key attack moments.

The game demonstrated the offensive and defensive strength from UConn. Next, the Huskies will travel to Rhode Island on Wednesday, Oct. 1 to face Providence. The game will begin at 6 p.m. and Husky fans can tune into this matchup on FloSports.



The University of Connecticut womens soccer team plays Xavier at Rizza sports complex on Sept. 24, 2025. The Huskies look to make a strong start in conference play. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Sports

WOMEN'S HOCKEY: UConn took on St. Cloud in Husky vs. Husky dogfight

by Addison Riccoboni
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Over the weekend, UConn women's ice hockey took on the No. 13 St. Cloud State University Huskies at Toscano Family Ice Forum in two tight games that put both teams to the test. The UConn Huskies split their weekend series; St. Cloud took the first game 2-1 on Friday, while UConn closed out the weekend on Saturday with their own 2-1 win. Although UConn's incomplete passes condemned them in game one, their clean playing in the second game secured their win. As the first games of UConn's season, they now have a standing record of 1-1.

Friday's game started in UConn's favor but turned south halfway through the second period. Our Huskies took the first breakaway, and the first point was scored by Megan Woodworth in the first period. Following this, the senior from Nova Scotia spent most of the night dodging penalties from every direction. The second point was scored by Raili Mustonen in the same period. St. Cloud scored their second goal in the beginning of the third period.

St. Cloud's aggressive playing tactics — with Grace Wolfe as a key offender — shook UConn and they simply couldn't regroup. UConn held heavy possession on their half of the rink

for most of the game but was ultimately doomed by a great deal of incomplete passes and lack of puck control throughout this night. The fight to tie the game went on until the very end; a 1.2-second clock reset back to three seconds remaining gave UConn one last frantic opportunity for a point that they ultimately did not shoot for. They did, however, lead the night 35-27 for SOG.

Less than 24 hours later, UConn bounced back with a 2-1 win, defeating the St. Cloud Huskies. UConn once again took the first

goal — this time in a powerplay. Brooke Campbell scored halfway through the first period — thanks to St. Cloud's Sidney Jackel's minor penalty for hooking. St. Cloud's Sydney Bryant took the second goal on a penalty shot for interference just over three minutes into the second period. The winning point was scored by UConn's own Livvy Dewar, with five minutes remaining in the second period.

St. Cloud just couldn't get

past UConn's wall of a goaltender, Tia Chan. Although this game started off with the same passing issues as the night before, the Connecticut Huskies quickly composed themselves and played like the unit we remember from last season. Powerplays would become the team's best friend tonight — UConn played 5-on-3 for almost two full minutes after St. Cloud was called for having too many players on the ice and hooking under three seconds apart.

St. Cloud took a second penalty for hooking shortly after beginning

released from the box. Although no points were scored, this set a precedent for strong powerplays for the remainder of the game. St. Cloud pulled their goalie with 1 minutes and 40 seconds on the clock with the hope of a last-minute goal — but not even Wolfe could score against Captain Chan tonight. Contrary to the night before, St. Cloud led in SOG tonight, 37-31.

This weekend was also the host to the first annual "Hockey Night" in Storrs. The student section on Friday night was one to remember for our Women's Ice Hockey team — nearly the entire student section was filled with cheering fans. Attendance was boosted with several freebie opportunities — the first 50 people in line were given free chicken sandwiches from Jefferson Fry, and the first 250 students were given free "Hockey Night" T-shirts.

With the weekend split, the UConn Huskies showed both their weaknesses and strengths. However, if the team wants any chance against No. 7 Clarkson this Friday, they must improve their consistency, convert more shots into goals and take more advantage of their powerplays. Still, as long as they keep up with strong goaltending and resilience, this season is looking bright for our Huskies.

This weekend's dogfight lived up to all expectations: a true clash between dueling Huskies from puck drop to the final horn.



University of Connecticut women's ice hockey took on St. Cloud State at Toscano Family Ice Forum on September 26, 2025. Despite a lead in the first period, the Huskies fell 2-1. PHOTO BY EMMA MEIDINGER, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

THE MARCH TO APRIL: BIG 12 BASKETBALL PREVIEW

by Jake McCreven
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The Big 12's near-decade long reign as the top conference in college basketball ended in April when Florida defeated Houston by a single basket in the national championship game.

The SEC usurped the regular season throne in March (metaphorically, at least), finishing first on Ken Pomeroy's conference rating sheet after sending a record-breaking 14 teams to the NCAA Tournament. The Gators only further twisted the analytical knife by snatching the title from Kelvin Sampson and the Cougars.

It broke a three-year streak of first place finishes for the expansion-minded Big 12, which has swelled from 10 to 16 teams since 2014 (what was the first of nine first place finishes in 11 seasons for the conference).

Don't expect that trend to be bucked any further in 2025-26. The Big 12's first class comprises a handful of the nation's top squads while its "depth" is made up of a bevy of potential 20-win teams.

They've been cataloged below — in an incontestable and inarguable order, of course — to paint a picture of where the conference stands heading into the new season.

The Contenders (Houston, Iowa State, BYU, Texas Tech)

Houston enters 2025-26 as the frontrunner.

Sampson married three returning starters who averaged a combined 29.5 points per game with the nation's No. 3 ranked recruiting class, bejeweled by five-stars Chris Cenac and Isaiah Harwell. Milos Uzan and Emmanuel Sharp are potential All-Americans in the backcourt while Joseph

Tugler anchors one of the country's premier de-



Iowa State starting point guard Tamin Lipsey will miss four to six weeks after injuring his knee at practice Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2025. PHOTO COURTESY OF CREATIVE COMMONS

fenses down low.

Iowa State's returning core of Tamin Lipsey, Milan Momcilovic and Joshua Jefferson give the Cyclones one of the highest floors in the country. Whether or not the Clones can break through the third round of the NCAA Tournament may hinge upon the health of Lipsey, who was sidelined with a knee injury last week. TJ Otzelberger signed one of the top classes in program history to bolster the team's depth.

Kevin Young's BYU Cougars were the darling of the off season, signing top overall prospect AJ Dybansta in conjunction with the return of leading scorer Richie Saunders and the portal acquisition of Robert Wright III from Baylor. Young also poached Kenard Davis from Southern Illinois and secured Keba Keita for another season down low. It's by far the most talented BYU team in program history.

Texas Tech rebuilt its backcourt around Christian Anderson using the transfer portal, receiving commitments from marksmen Tereve Bryan and

Donovan Atwell. That shores up the backend, while JT Toppin and LeJuan Watts buoy what should be one of America's top scoring frontcourts.

The Second Tier (Arizona, Kansas, Baylor)

Arizona's freshmen class finished second on Rivals' Industry rankings (behind only Duke). That'll pair two top 10 prospects in Koa Peat and Brayden Burries with returners Jayden Bradley, Anthony Dell'Orso and Motiejus Krivas (who is finally healthy), forming a rock-solid scoring nucleus for Tommy Lloyd to work with.

Kansas' lethal inside-outside combination of Darryn Peterson (the consensus No. 2 recruit) and Flory Bidunga will keep it competitive in a tense second tier of the Big 12. The backcourt is stockpiled with depth, but the Jayhawks will have to find a reliable second scoring option behind Bidunga down low.

Baylor's roster was stripped naked this spring, juiced of every basket it scored by its 15 departing players. Scott Drew rebuilt the

roster with an emphasis on three-point shooting and rebounding, taking in a slew of players from the mid-major level who scored in earnest. Obi Agim, Michael Rataj, Dan Skillings Jr. and Juslin Bodo Bodo make up the core.

The Spoilers (Cincinnati, West Virginia, Kansas State)

Wes Miller did well in the portal to surround returning guard Day Day Thomas with talent, including Kerr Kriisa and Keyshuan Tillery up top and Moustapha Thiam, Jalen Celestine and Jalen Haynes down low. Cincinnati should finally be in contention for an NCAA Tournament bid.

Ross Hodge was ushered in to replace Darian DeVries as the Mountaineers' head man in March. He'll institute a salty defense (as he did at North Texas), but West Virginia's scoring core is inexperienced both with each other and at the high-major level. There could be some growing pains in Morgantown.

Kansas State's belly flop catalyzed a massive roster overhaul in Manhattan. Its top 10 scorers from a year ago were re-

placed by an infusion of transfer portal talent, including All-American PJ Haggerty at the two.

The Nether World (TCU, Oklahoma State, Colorado)

David Punch is the top returner for TCU, which went hard in the portal to upgrade in the scoring department. Top 65 prospect Kayden Edwards and a pair of transfers in Tanner Toolson and Brock Harding will add much-needed pop from the backcourt.

Steve Lutz built his first Oklahoma State team on a bedrock of blitzing defense last season. His offense wasn't so good, which spurred the second-year head coach to go portal hunting with points in mind. He came out with Isaiah Coleman and Anthony Roy (among others) to help in those efforts.

A nice influx of freshmen and a bevy of returners from last season should have Colorado in better shape than it was last season (when it recorded its lowest win total since 2009). Bangot Dak and Barrington Haynes form a reliable inside-out combo for Tad Boyle offensively.

The Basement (Utah, UCF, Arizona State)

Everything will be new for Utah, including its head coach. Alex Jensen is tasked with taking over a disheveled program in dire need of remodeling. He did just that, bringing in six transfers to pair with returning big Keanu Dawes.

UCF ended last season winning seven of its final 11 games. Then everyone left. The Knights will rebuild behind a pair of Milwaukee transfers in Jamichael Stilwell and Themus Fulks heading into year 10 of the Johnny Dawkins era.

Arizona State lost everything this off season after winning under 15 games for the fourth time in five years.