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NEWS

VP candidates debate institutional knowledge versus fresh perspectives



USG vice presidential candidates debate in Whig Hall.

Rohit Narayanan / The Daily Princetonian

Christopher Bao and **Nandini Krishnan**

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Candidates for Undergraduate Student Government (USG) vice president Chase Magnano '25, Srista Tripathi '25 and Warren Shepherd '27 faced off in the first-ever vice-presidential debate co-hosted by The Daily Princetonian and Whig-Clio. This marks a change from the traditional presidential debate given that the role of president stands essentially uncontested, with Avi Attar '25 as the presumptive president-elect, though Braiden Aaronson '25 will also be listed on the ballot.

Magnano is an economics major from Florida. Tripathi is a School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) major from Virginia. Shepherd is a prospective economics major from Georgia and first-year in Holder Hall.

The event was moderated by Whig-Clio President of the Senate Daniel Shaw '25, Whig-Clio General Officer Khoa Sands '26, 'Prince' Managing Editor Kalena Blake '24, and 'Prince' Associate News Editor Annie Rupertus '25.

Over 80 students attended the debate.

According to an entry poll conducted by the 'Prince,' 36 percent of respondents would not have attended the debate if it had been a presidential debate between Attar and Aaronson, indicating an increased level of interest in the vice presidential role following dramatic exit of Aaronson from the presidential race *yesterday*.

Throughout the debate, Tripathi and Magnano debated institutional knowledge versus fresh perspectives with relatively similar end-goals in terms of policy.

Candidates line up firmly behind Attar and Daniels

Candidates were asked about how they would work with the presumptive president-elect Attar, what parts of Attar's platform they would support, and what parts they would push back on.

Tripathi played up the fact that she is running on a ticket with Attar. She emphasized the differences in her and Attar's backgrounds, saying, "It's been very beneficial to hear his perspective and hear how his side, coming from the Social Committee and Undergraduate Student Life Committee, with [my] academic side, we were able to put our two heads together and understand how to make a very cohesive, very holistic approach."

Magnano emphasized that he would bring new ideas and areas of emphasis to Attar's platform. Magnano did not note any specific areas of disagreement with Attar.

Magnano said, "I'm looking to align my platform with [Attar's] but also bring in some of my ideas that might not be present on his platform right now. I think the combination of our two ideas from an experienced USG representative as president and someone who's coming in ... from a pretty fresh perspective."

"When defining the role actual of vice president, it's critical that the first thing is to serve the president," he added.



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"I think that it's important to have dissent among the administration," Shepherd said, "I think it helps for a better path forward for the University. Obviously, I would easily work in conjunction with [Attar], I look forward to doing so. But I'm not afraid to bring my own ideas to the platform."

Shepherd also did not name any areas where he disagreed with Attar.

Aside from aligning behind Attar, none of the candidates listed any areas of disagreement with the current USG administration led by Stephen Daniels '24 and Madi Linton '24 despite being asked directly.

"Some of my favorite aspects of [Daniels's] and [Linton's] administration have been their ability to prioritize and initiate Pay with Points, to prioritize mental health amongst the student body, and of course, to make the first genuine effort of bring back the Campus Pub," Magnano said.

"As Academics Chair, I had the honor of serving under [Linton's] and [Daniels's] very wonderful administration," Tripathi noted.

Tripathi and Magnano back Campus Pub

All candidates hoped to make progress on the campus pub — a bar and social space for students that would open during nights out. The campus pub was pushed by Daniels, who proposed bringing back the establishment where students could legally purchase and consume alcohol.

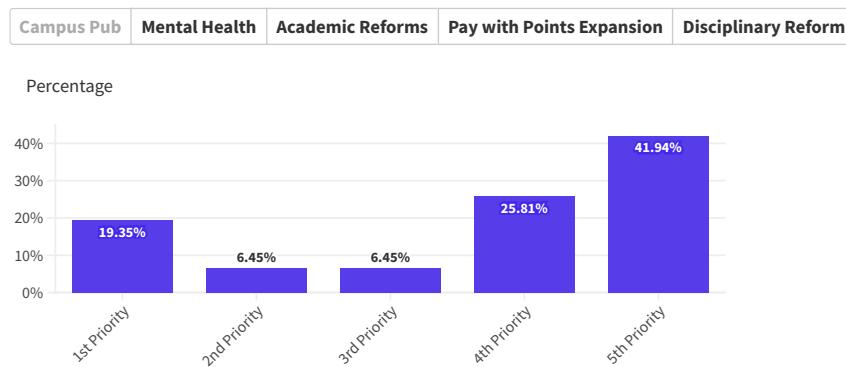
Candidates were asked to explain the campus pub proposal, given Tripathi and Magnano both included it in their platform. Tripathi emphasized existing USG efforts to advocate for the pub, mentioning conversations conducted with faculty along with a focus on "what students want to see in the pub, what it looks like when it existed, what is important to know about changes that might have to happen for it to be something that's actually meaningful for students."

Magnano, who described himself as the ideal candidate to bring back the pub, said it would be important as a "non-exclusionary" space for students where they could "gather together and enjoy a social situation in a scene that really isn't present on our campus right now." He mentioned that obtaining a liquor license would be a key step.

Shepherd said he would be willing to propose the Campus Pub if it was what students want, but said he felt it was "important to recognize, however, that many of our students on campus do not drink" and that the space should feel truly open to all.

Audience Priority Rankings

The audience was polarized over whether to reopen the campus pub, while few prioritized disciplinary reforms



Source: Daily Princetonian USG VP Debate Entry Poll
Chart by Lauren Zaidel and Kavla Xu

* A Flourish chart

In the entry poll, the audience had polarized views on the importance of the campus pub. The majority of the 31 respondents ranked campus pub as either their 4th or 5th priority. Specifically, 42 percent of respondents ranked the campus pub as their lowest priority, while 26 percent rated it as their second to lowest priority. Few ranked it as their second or third priority, while 19 percent indicated as their top priority.

Once again, academics takes precedence in mental health discussion

When queried on providing students with mental health support, Magnano, Tripathi, and Shepherd largely agreed that some changes need to be made. Unlike the other two candidates, Shepherd did not think it would be valuable to relax academic standards for the sake of mental health.

Magnano mentioned priorities would be decreasing CPS wait times and ensuring that there are no deadlines for coursework over breaks. He also mentioned that supporting campus communities could be another way to support mental health.

Tripathi emphasized that mental health can impact different students, mentioning that for first-generation students, “various aspects that influence their student lifestyle [cause] them to feel unsupported at all times.”

“It’s really crucial that we understand which groups are already continuing these mental health efforts and how we can best channel their efforts and support them,” she added.

The debate shifted to academics, with Tripathi referencing President Christopher Eisgruber’s **statements** on mental health in a November 2022 interview with the ‘Prince’.

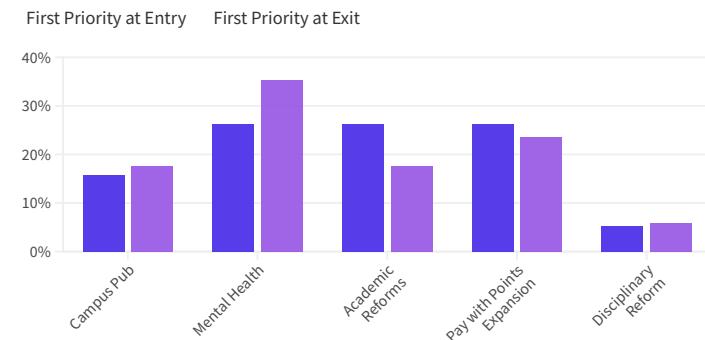
Shepherd, referencing mental health, said he doesn’t “believe that relaxing academic standards is a solution.”

“I got here without ever really dealing with many psychological issues and mental issues and which may be a special case, but I think that there’s a way to face this problem and still keep our academic rigor up,” he explained, to audible hisses from the audience.

“Unfortunately, I wasn’t that student. I was the opposite,” rebutted Tripathi. “Coming into Princeton, academics are difficult. The social life is tough,” she explained, adding “that students feel pressure from stigma related to mental health, related to finances” and emphasized decreasing the cost for mental health care as a way to better support students.

How Priorities Changed

After the debate, participants valued mental health more highly and academic reforms less



Source: Daily Princetonian USG VP Debate Entry/Exit Poll • Some participants ranked multiple priorities at a certain level, meaning percentages may not sum to 100 percent.

* A Flourish chart

The discussion of mental health in the debate — and the candidates’ differing levels of focus on the issue — engaged audience members, leading to an increase in the issue’s salience. While mental health was tied at 26 percent of the first priority rankings with academic reforms and Pay With Points expansion at the beginning of the debate, mental health rose to being the leading priority for audience members at 35 percent by its conclusion.

Magnano defends eating clubs in debate about the dining pilot

In the past USG term, there was debate about a proposed dining **pilot** which would open up meals at eating clubs and co-ops to all undergraduates. Among the debate audience, 68 percent supported changes to upperclass dining resulting from the dining pilot.

Candidates were asked about their views on the dining pilot. Shepherd appeared confused about the dining pilot, asking for clarification from the moderators, before stating that “I believe that this initiative is a good initiative.” Shepherd expanded on his views on dining policy by proposing an earlier start date to meal exchange and allowing eating club members to eat in dining halls during breaks.

Tripathi agreed with Shepherd’s point on starting meal exchange earlier, but highlighted the importance of student input rather than taking a firm position on the Dining Pilot. She stated, “We would like to make sure that students are aware of the dining pilot.”

Magnano stated that the “bottom line for what students want from the dining pilot is to simultaneously preserve the communities that we love and bring in more people and make it a more easy process to actually exchange between multiple communities.” He then called to expand meal exchange to independent and co-op students and make it an easier and quicker process.

“This should be a simple process that encourages us to go outside our normal circles,” said Magnano.

Magnano’s statement was **reminiscent** of the alternative proposal by student leaders in fall 2022 which would have expanded dining options for independent students and expanded programs like Pay With Points to upperclassmen without affecting the fundamental structure of the eating clubs.

All candidates back unprecedented further hike of student activity fee

One of the major events of the past year in USG has been the increase of the student activity fee, which more than **doubled** in the first increase in nearly 30 years. The measure raised over \$300,000 for USG programming. Among the debate audience, the measure was relatively popular, with 71 percent backing the activity fee increase in the entry survey.

All candidates raised their hand to indicate they supported another activity fee increase to fund their programs. An activity fee increase for a second year in a row would be unprecedented given the amount the fee was raised in the past year.

Tripathi backed her support of a further increase by saying the previous activity fee increase was needed to match peer institutions and provide the necessary financial support to USG initiatives.

Both Tripathi and Magnano noted that the fee increase was covered by financial aid. “For the students who might be paying full price, this represents less than a half percent increase in yearly tuition for something that can have a massively outsized effect on your experience here as a student,” Magnano said.

Shepherd backed his support by saying that an increase in the activity fee “helps spread the wealth of Princeton University around.”

“Let’s just be honest: these clubs don’t grow on trees. You have to have money to fund them,” Shepherd said.

Disagreements emerge over changing the academic calendar

Magnano and Shepherd centered the proposal to move the academic calendar one week earlier in the year in their speeches. Tripathi diverged from the two on this point, highlighting the practical difficulties.

Magnano compared the University to peer institutions, claiming that many have earlier academic calendars that allow students to go on winter break earlier, stating that “with exams finishing on December 23 … [there] is a critical period of seven days where flights will sometimes double or triple in price.”

Tripathi, however, cautioned that changing the academic calendar is not a simple endeavor, saying that “oftentimes the faculty have their reasons for [maintaining the schedule]. If you think about the freshmen that come two to three weeks in advance prior to the school year beginning for orientation period, moving that one week earlier, and accommodating that with a faculty schedule and the staff schedule … seems a little bit unlikely.”

However, she did agree that exams could be earlier, mentioning that “there’s currently a financial final exam revision proposal already submitted by the academic committee to allow for the exams to be earlier, to be known a lot earlier, to also allow them to be balanced throughout that period of time.”

Shepherd agreed with Magnano, saying that “I came up here as a freshman, I believe it was August 25. And I was up at college about two weeks later than all my counterparts. So I don’t know that this is really an impossible goal. Plus, I believe many faculty prefer getting on Christmas break earlier as well.”

Candidates were also asked about their thoughts on the Honor Committee and Committee on Discipline. All candidates emphasized the importance of oversight and transparency throughout the process, as well as making sure that the mental health of students is prioritized.

Despite the focus on academics and disciplinary reforms in the debate, participants cared less about these topics in our exit than in our entry survey. The percentage of audience members who ranked academic reforms as their top priority fell from 26 to 18 percent, while disciplinary reforms remained relatively unchanged from five to six percent.

Candidates show whimsy in short-answer questions

In a question often asks of politicians, candidates were queried as to the price of a gallon of milk, which ranges between \$3.50 and \$4.50 in New Jersey. Shepherd and Magnano answered that it was \$4.00, while Tripathi noted it was \$3.00 in her home state of Virginia.

Asked for their drink of choice at the proposed campus pub, Shepherd and Tripathi picked different varieties of Coca-Cola, noting they were underage. Magnano said he’d get a Dirty Shirley, which is a Shirley Temple with vodka. He clarified that he was 21.

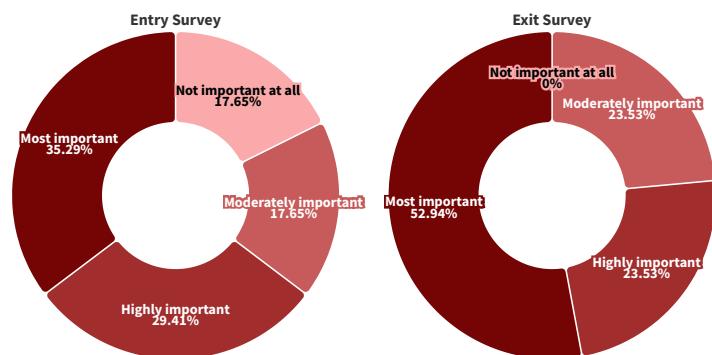
Asked about whether they’d consider having a live tiger on campus as a mascot, Magnano said he cared about animal rights, Tripathi expressed qualms about feeding the wild animal, while Shepherd expressed support for the idea, citing precedent at Louisiana State University (LSU).

Audience views shift on the value of previous USG experience

Tripathi referenced her previous experience as USG academics chair in her pitch to the audience on multiple occasions. Magnano mentioned his time working on the Campus and Community Affairs taskforce, though he also emphasizes his ability to bring a fresh perspective. Shepherd emphasized his youth and outsider status as assets to the vice president role.

How the Value of Experience Changed

After the debate, far more audience members said prior USG experience was important in a Vice President



Source: Daily Princetonian USG VP Entry/Exit Poll
Chart by Lauren Zaidel and Kayla Xu / The Daily Princetonian

* A Flourish chart

In the survey of audience members, participants found previous USG experience to be more valuable after the debate than before. In the entry survey, 35 percent of respondents believed USG experience to be “very important” to them, ranked five on a scale of one to five. Further, 29 percent ranked previous experience as “very important,” ranked four on this same scale. However, there were 18 percent of respondents who fell on the opposite extreme of the scale, believing that previous USG experience was not important at all.

After the debate, these percentages changed quite notably. Over half of the respondents responded that previous USG experience is “very important.” The outcome of the debate may have swayed attending students in favor of the vice presidential candidates with more USG experience.

Voting opens Monday, Dec. 4 at 12 p.m. and will close on Tuesday, Dec. 6 at 12 p.m.

Nandini Krishnan is a staff News writer for the ‘Prince’

Christopher Bao is a News contributor for the ‘Prince’

Kayla Xu and Lauren Zaidel also contributed reporting.

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NEWS

Jamal sketches alternative to institutional neutrality in sit-down interview



SPIA Dean Amaney Jamal and her Columbia counterpart Keren Yarhi-Milo in conversation with University President Christopher Eisgruber '83.

Miriam Waldvogel / The Daily Princetonian

Elisabeth Stewart

November 29, 2023 | 5:49am EST

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Institutions of higher learning are facing a question: what is the role of the university in highly contested political debates?

The ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza and responses to it on American college campuses has spurred increased **discussion** about institutional neutrality, the idea that universities should refrain from taking positions on contested issues. The idea has seemed attractive to some as universities have struggled to craft statements on the ongoing conflict.

As free speech advocates argue for universities to be more cagey on statements, in an interview with The Daily Princetonian, Amaney Jamal, dean of the School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA), presented a vision for universities to be facilitators in crafting meaningful dialogue, arguing for engagement rather than strict neutrality.

Jamal, a Palestinian-American, recently co-wrote a guest essay published in The New York Times with Keren Yarhi-Milo, her counterpart at Columbia.

“Universities should not retreat into their ivory towers because the discourse has gotten toxic; on the contrary, the discourse will get more toxic if universities pull back,” they wrote.

They continued this conversation at a Nov. 28 event moderated by University President Christopher Eisgruber '83.

Jamal’s view presents an alternative to strict institutional neutrality, which calls for administrators to take a step back on contested issues. Jamal has been criticized for taking positions in her official capacity in the past. In 2022, Jamal sent a memo following the not-guilty verdict of Kyle Rittenhouse, the teenager who shot three men during civil unrest in Kenosha, Wis.

“I fail to comprehend the idea of a minor vigilante carrying a semi-automatic rifle across state lines, killing two people, and being declared innocent by the U.S. justice system. Yesterday’s ruling sets a dangerous precedent,” Jamal wrote in the memo.

Jamal came under criticism from members of the Princeton Open Campus Coalition (POCC), who criticized “the implications of a University administrator, speaking in her official capacity, promulgating to an entire community of students her moral evaluation of the outcome of a highly publicized and controversial trial.” Members noted the potential for Jamal’s memo to discourage students from expressing opposing views.

In the recent interview, Jamal defended the right of administrators to speak both in their capacity as faculty and in their roles as administrators. “So when you think about administrators like myself, what our role is in the University, in general, the first primary objective of our roles is always to foster engagement on certain topics,” she said.

Jamal did use the term neutrality, but in a very different way than is traditionally understood in free speech circles, describing it as defining a space where diverse perspectives are welcome.

“We are neutral in that we want the dynamic conversation to happen here. We want to educate, but we want to be able to pull in those different perspectives,” she wrote.



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So what kind of engagement does Jamal expect from administrators to foster an environment of open debate? Jamal was optimistic about the academic side of the University, and its potential to be the space for debate on contested issues.

“We have a lot of experts here in the school who work on this issue. A lot of our experts are being summoned to Washington D.C. to discuss this issue. A lot of our students care about it. Why don’t we have a specific program on promoting peace for specifically the Palestine-Israeli conflict, since we have such great expertise?” she said.

She suggested that students involved in activism could engage in the academic debate, thereby “building on that momentum of student activism and passion, but trying to channel it now into sort of concrete measures moving forward,” she said. She noted the potential for students to write their junior papers and theses on the issue.

Yet nationally, the attention is on student activist movements and clashes with counter protestors rather than the academic debate. While the confrontational nature of the clashes has been more muted at Princeton, protests and rallies have still drawn the most attention.

Jamal described a role for the University to play in moderating the activist scene as well. Jamal told the ‘Prince’ that this entails providing students with historical context, specifically during protests, when discourse is reduced to simplified chants and slogans. She referenced the need for conversations surrounding chants such as “from the river to the sea,” which has faced **backlash**.

Jamal said that the chant “probably emerged outside of the Palestinian territories, in the diaspora, and there’s different interpretations and definitions around it right now.”

“The way it was historically understood was that it was calling for the annihilation of the State of Israel,” she said, adding that the way activists are using it now is to say that “we want freedom for Palestinians within the the Israeli state or Palestinian-Israeli states, though it’s not about annihilation. But that’s not how people are hearing it, so this is why we need a conversation.”

When asked why she believed there to be fewer confrontations between opposing student factions on Princeton’s campus, compared to some of its peer institutions, Jamal cited a smaller campus size. But she also tied the campus environment back to academics and the role administrators and faculty members played in continued efforts to “foster dialogue across this ‘divide,’” including SPIA’s “Conversations About Peace” discussion series in collaboration with Daniel C. Kurtzer, the S. Daniel Abraham Professor of Middle East Policy Studies.

In addition, Jamal said that Princeton has had more “Muslim-Jewish cooperation” on campus.

“Structurally, for the longest time, as the Muslim student population was growing, the University was slow to bring on halal foods, so a lot of the Muslim students used to go to [the Center for Jewish Life] and probably still do, because kosher is also halal,” she said. “Muslims would be in the dining hall at CJL, and just by virtue of just being in the dining space, people would become friends. That’s another element of the Princeton on-campus presence and dining hall experience that I think enhances collaboration among the student body.”

Jamal described a “rupture” in that relationship in light of recent conflict.

“But it’s a different type of rupture. I’ve been here for 20 years. Sometimes when we had crises you’d see the divide be along Jewish versus Muslim, or Arab versus pro-Israeli Jewish students,” she said. “Now, the number of different groups is more dynamic and more diverse, which also means we need to think about new ways of fostering engagement.”

Jamal remained optimistic about the ways that the academic apparatus of the school could bridge those divides.

“It’s sort of understood that students might be more emotional [right now], might be driven to go out and chant and say things, and they might be screaming past one another or not listening to one another. But at some point, this is going to die down a little bit, and where are we going to be? What is our role as an institution to make sure that we can sort of capture those sentiments and move into something positive that fosters that analytical, policy-oriented engagement?” she continued.

"My point there has been 'why don't you do something in neutral space that's not what's traditionally seen as the pro-Israeli space, or the pro-Palestinian space, but something neutral and around an event about how do we foster peace?'" she said.

In general, Jamal was skeptical about the quality of the discussion at the protests and in the media.

"Everything has been reduced to zero-sum understanding of this conflict," she said.

"The more sort of unhinged voices have taken over this conflict and the silent majority around the bell curve has been silenced and pushed off stage," she said. "I think this is a moment where we want to reclaim our possession on the stage."

She cited the 2022 Caterpillar [referendum](#) as a positive example of student activism, as it was, in her view, centered on students educating themselves to form their own opinions.

Jamal herself has had to contend with outside actors, after Alums for Campus Fairness (ACF), an off-campus group, sent a truck with the [message](#) "DEAN JAMAL: WHY DO YOU CODDLE ANTISEMITISM?" Though the executive director of the group issued an apology to Jamal, saying he had sent the truck to pressure Jamal to condemn the Oct. 7 attack without knowing she had done so a week prior, she requested the ACF apologize publicly.

When asked about the incident, Jamal said that the "worry, as for any administrator, is you don't want outside groups with political agendas coming to impose their will on college campuses in the United States."

"That worries me because we in the University need to be able to do our job first and foremost, which is to educate and offer a diverse set of perspectives without trying to be conditioned by outside groups," she said, highlighting the potential of the University environment itself.

Ultimately, Jamal sees the role of educators and administrative leaders as being central in pushing students to engage with each other with reason rather than provocation. She tied this idea to the reality beyond college campuses in her conversation with Yarhi-Milo, citing the central role of academic collaboration in the genesis of the Oslo Accords and the beginnings of the Arab-Israeli peace process in the 1990s.

"It started with Israeli academics going to the West Bank to visit Palestinian academics in their home [when] it was forbidden to do so. Then Palestinians visited Israeli academics in their home, crossing the border into Israel, when it was outlawed."

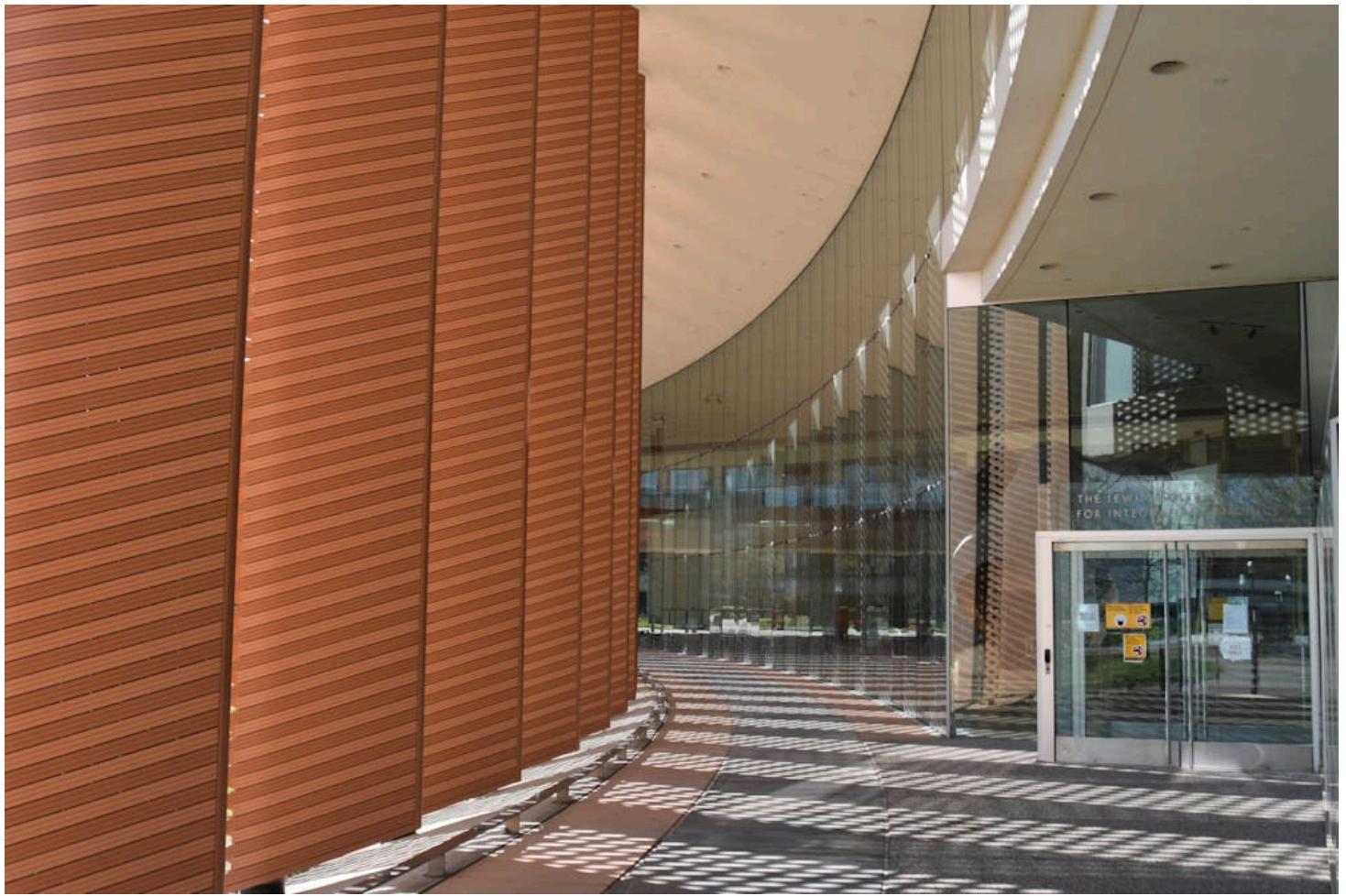
With a week of programming organized by pro-Palestinian student groups ahead, including multiple teach-ins culminating in a "kick-off" rally in front of Nassau Hall this Friday, Dec. 1, the test of whether Jamal's strategy of engagement can promote the type of debate she wants, will once again be put to the test.

Elisabeth Stewart is a News contributor for the 'Prince.'

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NEWS

Famously rigorous first-year science curriculum to be revamped with focus on data analysis



Mark Dodici / The Daily Princetonian

Isabel Connolly

November 29, 2023 | 5:01am EST

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The Integrated Science Curriculum (ISC) will not be offered this academic year, as the intensive science sequence undergoes “revitalization,” according to the Lewis-Sigler Institute (LSI) for Integrative Genomics [website](#).

Originally developed in the early 2000s, ISC has traditionally offered a cohort of first-years the opportunity to pursue the material traditionally covered by two semesters of introductory physics and chemistry and one semester of molecular biology and computer science in a condensed, four course program.

ISC is expected to return in its new form in Fall 2024 for the program’s 20th anniversary. According to Martin Wühr, Associate Professor of Molecular Biology and member of ISC faculty, the changes will primarily aim to increase focus on the intersection of biology, chemistry, and data science.

"We believe that incipient areas of contemporary research ... will require a rigorous, early introduction to computational and statistical methods in addition to a cohesive understanding of physical principles," he wrote in a statement emailed to The Daily Princetonian.

The new curriculum will still fulfill introductory requirements in chemistry and molecular biology as well as offer a foundation in calculus-based physics. The computational component of the course will be overhauled, replaced with a new program emphasizing scientific computing and data-oriented thinking, according to Wühr.

Among students, ISC has long been regarded as one of the most challenging academic programs offered by the University.

While students have historically pointed to the value of the curriculum for those seeking an unconventional approach to the sciences, they have also noted its difficulty. "Everyone who decides to take Integrated Science is in some way, shape or form crazy," Jane Yang '11 said in a report by the 'Prince' from 2009. "At some points, you feel like your life is disintegrating, but the people always help you pull it back."

Six years later, in a blog post published by the Undergraduate Office of Admission about ISC, Avaneesh Narla '17 wrote of the curriculum, "it was one of the most academically challenging endeavors I have ever undertaken."

This reputation has held over the years. Will Roberts '26, a member of the final first-year cohort to pursue the original curriculum, reaffirmed its difficulty.

"ISC was by far the hardest class I've taken at Princeton, but also incredibly rewarding and interesting," he wrote to the 'Prince.' "The huge breadth of subjects meant we had to move really quickly and the labs required a ton of work to prepare for and then write up."

Information available about the curriculum's redevelopment shows no signs of making it less challenging.

Wühr noted that the changes aim to "[stay] true to the vision of ISC" and ensure "that Princeton stays at the leading edge of science education while continuing to bring talent to the frontiers of scientific research."



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The program's [webpage](#) on the LSI website claims that many of the over 400 students who completed ISC have launched research careers in academia and industry.

This focus on STEM's fortification is echoed in leadership across the University. President Christopher Eisgruber '83 listed the strengthening of STEM as a top priority for the next five years of his term as president in an [interview](#) with the 'Prince' last year.

Isabel Connolly is a contributing News writer for the 'Prince.'

Associate News Editor Tess Weinreich contributed reporting.

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OPINION

Learning to burst the Orange Bubble



The sun sets on downtown Princeton, across from Nassau Hall.

Louisa Gheorghita / The Daily Princetonian

Sarah Park

November 28, 2023 | 10:50pm EST

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When I first arrived at Princeton, I thought my only obligation as a student was to try my hand at every opportunity that presented itself to me. In my mind, this meant taking the most interesting classes and meeting as many people as possible. It meant doing anything and everything I could ever want to do. To me, college was a time to be selfish. I worked hard to get here — why shouldn't I make the most of it?

I've realized, though, that as much as the University feels like the center of my universe, there is more worth caring about than just myself and my immediate surroundings. As much as the University has a community of its own, Princeton cannot disentangle itself from the surrounding town. Indeed, many of the reasons I'm excited for my next four years lie beyond Princeton's campus.

I take for granted many of the things that I enjoy about the University. I often forget that the reason my bathroom is clean every morning and that I have food to eat for every meal is because of the people from the surrounding communities who work here. I find joy in newly paved pathways on campus and boba at every other event, but it doesn't register that it's thanks to the community around the University that we're able to enjoy them. In reality, every part of the University that makes it my home is tied to the community supporting it.

In fact, I owe it to Princeton, the town where I chose to spend my college years in the first place. The area was a big part of why my parents were happy to see me enroll here. Instead of spending the most influential years of my life in a terrifying megacity or the middle of nowhere, I'd be in a picture-perfect college town.

After coming here, I've seen how often students and administrators act like the town is a source of pride for the University, even when it has little to do with us and everything to do with the community around us. The University's [website](#) boasts about "the charm of Princeton," creating an image of the town as an idyllic haven with "tree-lined neighborhoods." Yet, all of this promotion occurs without any proposal of a deeper commitment to the town.

We Princetonians often fail to demonstrate care for the places or people beyond campus. We're not exactly flocking to town events or vying to work off-campus. We don't even mention the town beyond complimenting the color of the leaves and complaining about how little there is to do. More often, we're content to ignore the world outside campus entirely, even when it's precisely the community around us that makes life here possible. The town is our home for four years, and it offers us so much that we need and enjoy; surely we can do so much more for the place we live in, no?

Some of us already do. The Pace Center lists programs that work with [immigrants](#), [schools](#), and [conservation efforts](#). Other student groups, even those that are not centered around community service, integrate service into their clubs so that members can get involved with the community through their pre-existing interests. Princeton University Ballet heads a chapter of Ballet & Books, where students plan extracurricular activities for young children to improve their literacy. The Figure Skating Club leads a skating program with the Special Olympics of Mercer County. Even if it's through their membership in a club, students gain a sense of responsibility towards the community, and the community benefits in turn. However, too few students participate in these programs and stay siloed within the campus's walls.

It does not take being a member of a committed organization to contribute to the town; any number of personal choices can change the campus's attitude of ambivalence towards supporting the people who support us. Students could take more jobs off-campus; we'd see and meet more of the town than most of the University ever would. It would also be more meaningful to serve the members of the community in roles that are not always noticed but nevertheless essential. There are [classes](#) at the Arts Council and Pure Barre that provide us with enjoyment while bringing us closer to the community's institutions and its people. There are plenty of ways we can become closer to the town and local region. However, we don't act on them because we've grown comfortable with the way things are.

Recognizing what this community offers us is the first step toward finding gratitude. Acting on that gratitude is the first step toward giving a part of ourselves to the town in return. There is a great deal to enjoy about our experience on campus, but that doesn't mean we should seclude ourselves either. There's a wide world outside the campus we live in — a world to explore, contribute to, and leave our mark on. We can start with the one right outside the gates.

Sarah Park is a first-year intending to pursue a major in comparative literature. She is from Manila, Philippines, and can be reached at sarahpark@princeton.edu.



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OPINION

Letter to the Editor: How the Office of Religious Life handles funds



Murray Dodge Hall houses the Office of Religious Life.

Angel Kuo / The Daily Princetonian

Alison Boden

November 28, 2023 | 9:13pm EST

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The following is a letter to the editor and reflects the author's views alone. For information on how to submit a piece to the Opinion section, click [here](#).

To the Editor:

I'd like to clarify some issues raised in the [recent column](#) entitled "The University needs more transparency in how it funds religious life." It is not the case, as the column suggests, that alumni donations are given over to the [Office of Religious Life](#) (ORL) to distribute amongst religious organizations. Student religious organizations do their own alumni fundraising independent of the ORL; we play no role in the solicitation or processing of gifts. Anyone who wishes to know about fundraising by student organizations needs to ask them directly. The campus accounts of every student organization, religious or not, are reported in SAFE, the student organization funding portal. Organizations' successful applications to the ORL for the small grants that come from our own annual budget are also recorded in SAFE.

Additionally, the [Fred Fox Fund](#), also referenced in the column, is not comprised of money that is given to the ORL to distribute but rather is an existing endowment, created by the Class of 1939, that generates annual income. The ORL volunteers the administrative time of one of its staff members to support the committee that disburses the funds. That committee is comprised of alumni from the Classes of 1978 and 2013.

As the column notes, student religious organizations receive generous support and as a result are thriving. We are endlessly grateful to the many alumni who make this possible through their donations, their time, and their prayers.

Alison Boden is the Dean of Religious Life and the Chapel.

THE PROSPECT

Shere Khan is Princeton's premier co-ed acapella group, and so much more



Courtesy of Daniel Wang

Laura Zhang

November 28, 2023 | 9:11pm EST

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The singing swells in the arch, reaching a crescendo of harmonies, claps, and rhythmic beats, only beaten out by thundering applause from the audience. After the cheering clears away, a member shouts: "We're Shere Khan, Princeton's premier co-ed acapella group!"

Although this is the tagline of every one of their arch sings, Shere Khan encompasses a lot more. Formed in 1993 as a Disney a capella group, Shere Khan now covers a range of contemporary and pop music as one of the most established a capella groups on campus. Gabby Veciana '24, who previously served as music director, described Shere Khan as having a more youthful feel compared to other a capella groups on campus.

"We're way younger than everybody else [and] we have less establishment but I think that's also kind of the spirit. It's the spunky young, pop music, new music," she said.

John Slaughter '25, the group's current president, emphasizes how "we really pride ourselves on being one of the most open minded and one of the most fun" a capella groups on campus. Reflecting on why he decided to audition for Shere Khan, he recalled an email that was sent to him with "some guy in a Shrek costume, and it said: 'do you like Shrek?' Shere Khan had something a little bit weird that I really liked."

Similarly, George Tidmore '26, the current vice-president, reflected on how after he went to Tiger's Roar during orientation, he was "just struck by how fun it seemed ... they attracted the biggest crowd of friends. I just felt such an energy in the arch that made me want to audition."

Shere Khan's reputation for being an a capella group that emphasizes its members' social experiences is reflected in the set arches that they perform every semester. Notable events mentioned by Slaughter and Veciana include the Christmas Arch, where Shere Khan performs Christmas songs and gives out hot chocolate to the audience, and Reunions, where Shere Khan alumni meet current members over a barbecue.

Beyond arches, Allison Jiang '26, the current music director, added that "some of my favorite memories from the group honestly are just moments in the Shere Khan room, which we call 'The Womb,' in Bloomberg. We [rehearse] for a while, and then it just kind of devolves into laughter, but it's the kind of laughter you can't recover from and then you're just standing there, everybody's in on the joke."

Shere Khan's close-knit nature is evident in their semesterly "newb" (new members) arch sing where the newbs don large hats and wigs, perform solos, and are cheered on by current members.

Though the newbs sing their audition songs during this arch, Shere Khan has a set collection of songs for other arches. The process of choosing new songs is through senior solos, which are performed during Shere Khan's senior arch — typically the last arch of the school year.

"During the spring, all the seniors will choose the song they want to sing ... that means that there's always a fresh source of repertoire coming in every single year," Jiang said. "I feel a trend that people can fall into a capella groups is [that] they were founded decades before. And the songs that they sing also feel like they were from decades before. But because of this system that we have, we're always having new songs come in."

Shere Khan's flexibility in music selection is also due to the fact that it is not affiliated with Acaprez, a coalition of a capella groups on campus. Groups that are part of Acaprez are not allowed to sing the same song as another Acaprez group. "We don't have those certain confinements ... we're singing what we want to sing," Jiang said.

Despite this formal separation, Shere Khan is still very much connected to Princeton's a capella scene. Recently, they collaborated with Old Nassoul in a joint arch sing. Slaughter similarly mentioned how "most of my friends are in other a capella groups. My roommate is in [the] Footnotes ... so it's very interconnected."



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As far as off-campus connections, Shere Khan boasts a close-knit alumni network. This year, Shere Khan celebrated its 30th anniversary with a show involving alumni. Jiang noted that they sang "Running to Stand Still" by U2 in "honor of an alum [who passed away quite young]. Everybody who was an alum in the audience was able to come on stage at the end of the performance and sing that song."

Tidmore, however, offered a slightly different perspective on Shere Khan's alumni community. "I think it's tough to say because the height of COVID and its disruption of student groups was right before I joined Shere Khan. There were a lot of changes that happened to the group and how it's run. So I think there's kind of a natural break in the alumni post- and pre-COVID, because there was less happening during that time."

However, Tidmore added that "I think that as we return to a more normal life, more people will be able to strengthen our alumni community." Similarly, Veciana mentioned how, when she was a sophomore, her friend in Shere Khan was "really afraid that it was going to die out because of COVID." She worked hard to recruit people to ensure its survival, demonstrating how past and present members have dedicated themselves to keeping Shere Khan strong and alive.

When discussing the audition process for recruiting new members, Veciana said that "we try to make the audition process fun; we try to make it reflective of who we are as a group. We ask people as soon as they come into the room if they would rather perc or twerk for us, although they are not required to do either ... we want to just like people and build community."

Slaughter shared this piece of advice: "Just audition. I think auditions can be super intimidating. I was rejected for Shere Khan the first semester and other a capella groups that I tried to audition for, but then the second semester, I just felt more confident. I think rejection is just a part of a lot of things at Princeton. And it just kind of sucks, but it shouldn't let you be scared."

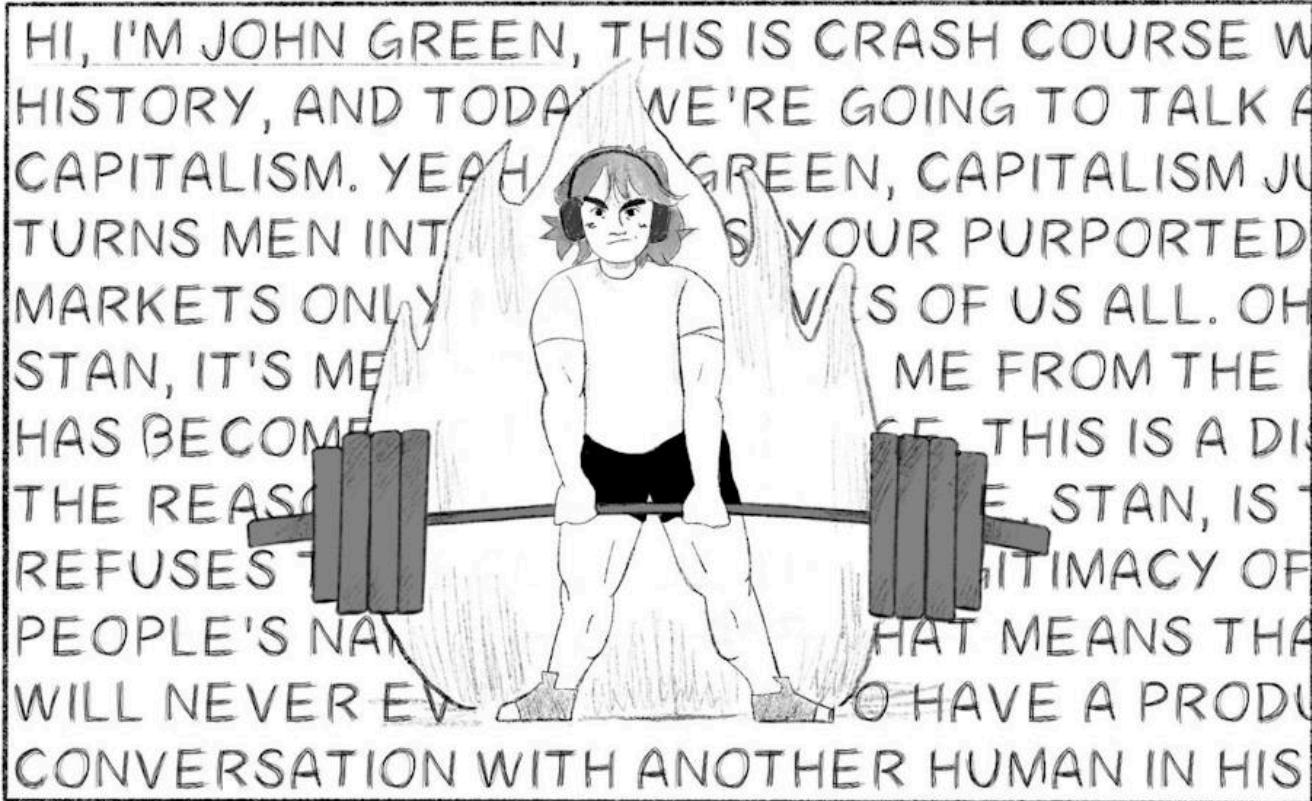
Just knowing members of Shere Khan makes you feel like a part of its community. Going to arch sings transforms into not just appreciating good music, but laughing, having fun, and getting a taste of Shere Khan's unique energy.

As George reflected, "I think the core of our group is enjoying each other while singing and making music, and the music is just a conduit for our joy."

Laura Zhang is a contributing writer for The Prospect from Sydney, Australia. She can be reached at lz8574@princeton.edu.

CARTOON

Gym Playlist



Luiza Chevres

November 28, 2023 | 11:10pm EST

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HUMOR

Princeton Housing Services involved in campus cover-ups, investigation ongoing



Construction crews have begun demolishing First College, which will be rebuilt as Hobson College.

Candace Do / The Daily Princetonian

Sawyer Dilks

November 28, 2023 | 11:07pm EST

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The following content is purely satirical and entirely fictional.

Earlier this month, a reporter for The Daily PrintsAnything, Walt Sun, requested to have the wardrobe in his dorm room replaced. In response, Princeton Housing Services said that they needed to first confirm whether the building contained asbestos before they drilled the new wardrobe into the wall. Shocked that his dorm could even have asbestos to begin with, Sun asked Housing Services when they could inspect his room for asbestos, to which they replied, “We just need to confirm on our online database.”

Following this interaction, the ‘Prints’ asked Housing Services whether they truly had an index of every dorm room on campus with asbestos. The ‘Prints’ did not receive a reply.

Consequently, the ‘Prints’ decided to launch a full-scale investigation into which dorm walls could actually be drilled into, in order to determine if they have asbestos. Headed by Cheryl Locke ’24, the team all submitted dorm maintenance requests under pseudonyms in order to find out just how much Housing Services really knows.

According to an early report from junior Brad Crum ’25, Housing Services was able to verify that his walls did indeed have asbestos without even entering the room. Piper Trale ’27 reports that her request was denied on the basis that “the weapon used in 1844 to assault University President James Carnahan Class of 1800 was hidden in the ceiling and ought not to be brought to light.”

Eva Dents ’26 said her request was denied because lurking in the walls of her Whitman dorm is supposedly a “sausage, egg, and cheese biscuit from Wawa left behind during construction.” When asked why this would cause an issue, Housing Services replied that “the biscuit is very old and definitely doesn’t smell good,” and that they would simply “rather not” put themselves in the way of such an odious odor.

Sawyer Dilks is a contributing Humor writer and member of the Class of 2027. For his safety, he has been writing this piece in the ‘Prints’ bunker which is totally not located in the basement of their office building.



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