

THE PITT NEWS



FIRST WEEK OF CLASS EDITION

COVER BY RYAN YANG

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STUDENTS, PROFESSORS ADAPT TO ONLINE LEARNING

Elise Roessner

Staff Writer

Pitt's fall semester kicked off last week, but the Cathedral of Learning was empty as students largely connected in Zoom meetings instead of classrooms. The Zoom meetings had their own set of glitches though — literally.

For Melanie Good, a lecturer in the physics department, the first week of classes went about as well as she expected. Good, who teaches Introduction to Physics I and II, said one unexpected problem during the first week was the strain put on her laptop while using Zoom to conduct synchronous lectures. Both of Good's classes have about 200 students in them.

"Large enrollment classes demand a lot from my computer, so the battery drains at an alarming rate, and I have to constantly keep it plugged in," Good said. "But that's a minor thing and it's only for a couple hours a day."

The University began its first week of classes virtually last Wednesday with instructors and students using several different platforms to conduct and attend classes in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pitt experienced a "major outage" on My Pitt that affected access to the site on the first day of classes, and Zoom suffered a partial outage that affected many U.S. users on Monday. Both were resolved within a few hours.

In-person classes have not been cleared to start until at least Sep. 14, but faculty are not required to teach courses in person. Pitt is implementing the new Flex@Pitt teaching model, which allows students to experience classes "in person, remotely, synchronously or asynchronously."

Some students are noticing positives in classes held over Zoom, though. Lauren Keller, a junior psychology major, said her classes being held synchronously over Zoom helps in structuring her day and making her feel more connected to her classmates.

"My professors are all posting the lecture recordings just in case anyone can't make it to the real-time lecture, which is also really nice," Keller said.

Keller said even though Zoom meetings are helpful in feeling somewhat connected, she misses seeing her professors and fellow students in person. She added that she is look-

ing forward to the University allowing some classes to move into physical classrooms.

"I'm actually really excited about my Morality and Medicine class because it'll be in-person and in the Carnegie Music Hall," Keller said.

Amy Colin, an associate professor who teaches Germany Today and Reading Literary Texts, said she had trouble conducting her classes with some of the limitations inherent in Zoom.

She said switching back and forth between YouTube and PowerPoint, while watching her students on Zoom, was frustrating. Colin also said it was difficult to concentrate with several

on technology glitches with Canvas.

"I had some issues with Canvas resetting a bunch of settings in some of the courses, and at first I couldn't get my recitation page published," Good said. "Eventually I got a hold of support personnel, and in the end it all worked out."

Other professors had a different experience with Canvas, though. Colin also said learning to use Canvas has made grading easier for her, as answers are all condensed into specific assignment response folders rather than individually submitted over email or in person.

"In Canvas, things are no longer lost be-

Despite technology problems and the loss of in-person classroom experiences, both Good and Colin said the start of remote learning went much more smoothly than the shift to online classes in the spring.

Good said she was able to take time over the summer to focus on solving some of the problems she encountered at the end of the spring semester. To troubleshoot, she said she made a frequently-asked-questions page to cut down on the number of emails she receives.

"It's not like students can just drop by my office and ask me a question. We're all new to so much of this that I found it to be really helpful," Good said. "That's one of the things my experience in the spring helped me to create."

Colin said she spent the summer watching videos on how to use the different features of Zoom, Panopto — a service that allows users to record lectures and classes — and Canvas, because she had no experience with any of the platforms prior to the shift to remote learning.

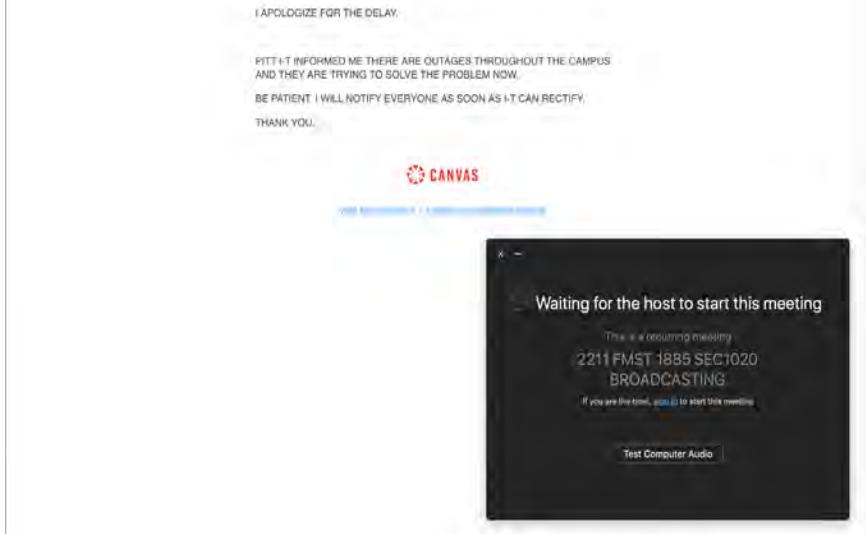
"It's a learning process for the teacher as well as for the students as we adapt to the situation and get better," Colin said. "The spring was really hard, but things are improving."

Another problem Good said she encountered in the spring was students cheating on online exams. Good said she decided to divide up her final exam into short quizzes students will take over the course of the semester to hopefully reduce the amount of cheating that happens in online tests.

"With short quizzes there's less temptation for the students to Google the answer. It's not as high pressure for them, but it also still allows me to see what they know," Good said. "They just have to focus on one thing at a time and I can still assess them remotely."

For Colin, teaching classes online also comes with some unexpected benefits. She said seeing the names of students under their images on Zoom makes it easier for her to teach classes with students she has never met before.

"Zoom has some advantages being in a classroom cannot offer that actually make it easier for the teacher to learn names and communicate," Colin said. "Of course, we all miss the more personal experience of being in the classroom, but this period will eventually come to an end." ■



Pitt experienced a "major outage" on My Pitt that affected access to the site on the first day of classes, and Zoom suffered a partial outage that affected many U.S. users on Monday. Courtesy of Kaycee Orwig

things condensed into one screen.

"Zoom needs to further develop and improve, because there are certain things you cannot do that slow you down when teaching an online course," Colin said. "They could make it easier to access videos from PowerPoint presentations while also using Zoom."

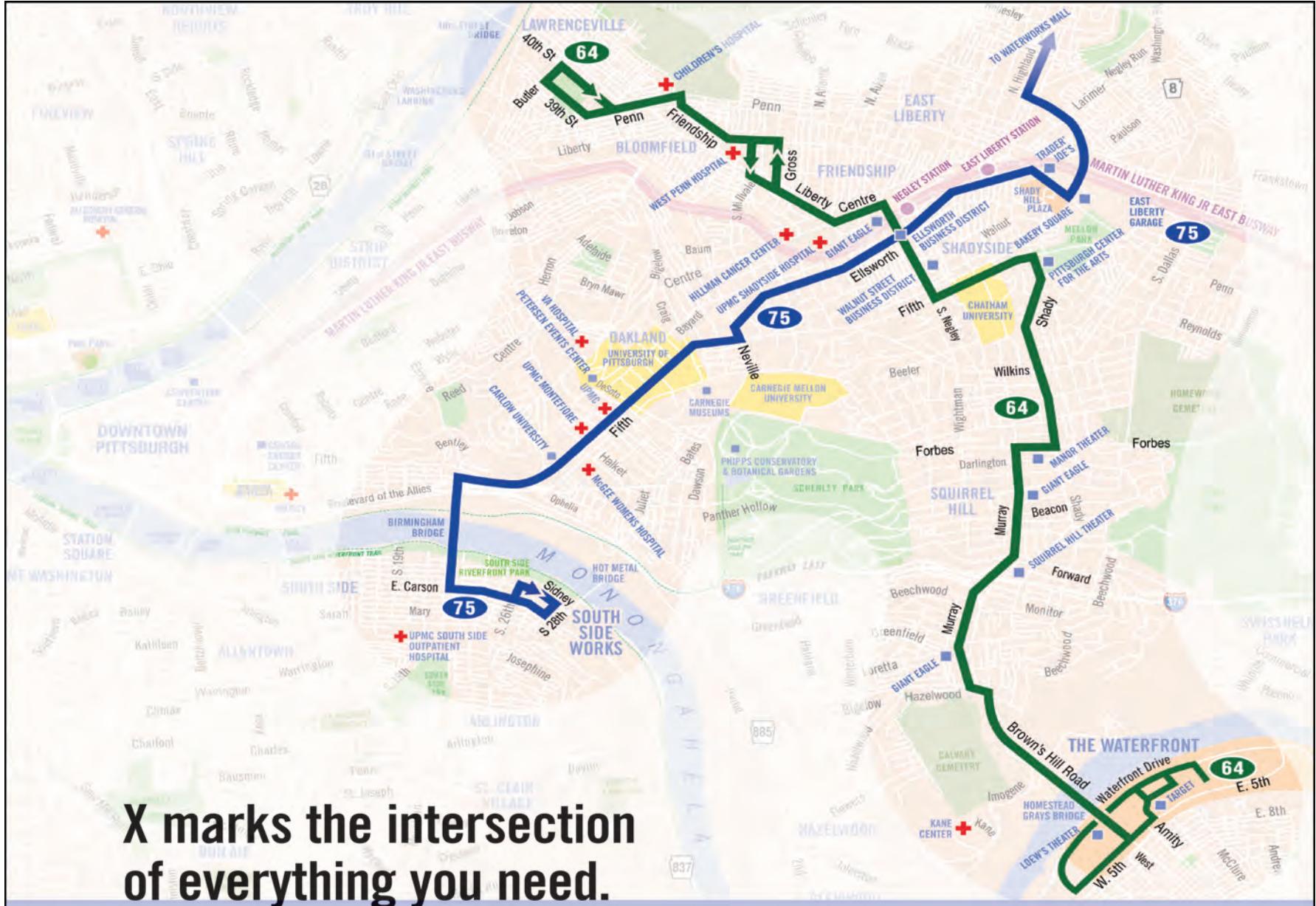
Zoom isn't the only technology new to Pitt this year. This is the first year Canvas is being used University wide — the learning management system replaced Blackboard, following a limited release last year.

Good said the biggest issues she encountered during the first few days of class centered

cause the email doesn't work or goes to the wrong folder, so I see this system as very good," Colin said. "I spent a lot of time preparing for the transition, but I think it's worth it."

Keller also said she found using Canvas at the beginning of the fall semester to be less complicated than Blackboard, especially after having the spring semester to adjust to the new platform.

"I actually had a class using Canvas last semester, so I was already familiar with it coming into this year," Keller said. "I honestly like Canvas so much more than Blackboard, it's easier to use."



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'EMBARRASSING': BLACK STUDENT LEADERS CRITICIZE LOW BLACK STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Rebecca Johnson and Jon Moss
The Pitt News Staff

Morgan Ottley, the president of Pitt's Black Action Society, remembers when she first visited Pitt four years ago for an admitted students day for minority students. But she said she encountered almost no minority students from Pitt during her visit.

"I don't remember meeting any minority student organization, resources and opportunities for minority students or anyone from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion," Ottley, a senior neuroscience major, said. "The most minority students I saw during that two-day trip were the students I came with."

Ottley said this is indicative of a culture at Pitt that she believes needs to change to attract, and retain, more Black students. According to University data, Black students represented 5.26% of the undergraduate stu-



According to Pitt data, Black students represented 5.26% of the undergraduate student body in 2019. Kaycee Orwig **ASSISTANT VISUAL EDITOR**

dent body in 2019.

This percentage is the latest in a downward trend from the last 40 years. Black students made up about 14% of the student population in 1979, 10% in 1989, 9% in 2000 and 7% in 2010. Pitt received a "D" in the University of Southern California's annual report card on the representation of Black students at public colleges and universities.

Increasing Black student enrollment was a key issue that prompted the BAS's famous 1969 sit-in at the Cathedral of Learning. Ottley said it is "embarrassing" for Pitt that the statistics surrounding the percentage of Black students on campus is similar 50 years later.

"The University should be ashamed," Ottley said. "You're supposed to learn from history and then move on in the right direction. I feel like we just haven't. This is a movement,

See **Enrollment** on page 5

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Enrollment, pg. 4

not a moment."

There is a variation in the data, though. Pitt spokesperson Kevin Zwick said the 5.26% reported by the University is actually an undercount because it follows a definition set by the federal government. Zwick said this definition does not count students who identify as both Black and another ethnicity as Black, but instead in the "two or more category."

"While Pitt will continue to report population statistics based on these rules as required by law, future editions of the Fact Book will also note the demographic breakdown counting all students who identify as Black, which we believe is a more accurate representation," Zwick said.

Zwick said using the more "accurate" definition, Black students in 2019 would make up 7.8% of the undergraduate population rather than 5.26%. He also noted that the number of first-year Black students enrolled at Pitt this semester is record-breaking, with 354 Black students making up 8% of the total first-year class.

Increasing Black student enrollment was one of the action items in a list of demands that BAS and 17 other Black student organizations sent to University administrators over the summer. The groups asked that the University increase the percentage of Black students on campus to 10% in the next five years, with an approximate 1% increase per year, separate from student athletes. This demand was based on the 5.26% reported by the University. They also wanted an admissions panel to be formed to increase enrollment and retainment of Black students.

Zwick said Pitt is committed to reaching the 10% goal in five years with a number of new initiatives.

"The University of Pittsburgh is committed to addressing the historic underrepresentation of Black students on our campuses," Zwick said. "That strategy will include continuing to increase the involvement and engagement of Black Pitt students in the recruitment, enrollment and retention of Black high school students as well as in efforts aimed at encouraging admitted Black students to enroll."

Destiny Mann, the president of the Black Senate and vice president of the BAS, meets with Kenyon Bonner, the vice provost and dean of students, every other week as part of the University's response to the student demands. She also meets with other senior

leadership including Provost Ann Cudd and Kathy Humphrey, the senior vice chancellor for engagement.

Based on these meetings, Mann said she believes Pitt wants to make a change, but she hopes it's willing to take the necessary steps to do so.

"Administration is for admitting more Black students," Mann, a junior Africana Studies and political science double major said. "I just hope that they're for putting out the money that's required to get to that point."

Mann added that Black student leaders are tired from doing what they see as the University's job.

"We've provided mental health resources, academic health, managed financial aid without getting paid and being full-time students," Mann said. "We are exhausted."

Leigh Patel, a professor in the School of Education and former associate dean of equity and justice, described higher education as "made out of the fabric of society." She said based on policies throughout the last 60 years, it is possible to pinpoint the reason for many of the fluctuations in Pitt's Black student population.

Patel explained that there was likely a significant increase in Black students at Pitt in 1979 because it was historically a period when desegregation in schools was in full swing. She said the consistent decrease since 2010 is likely due to decreased funding to public colleges and universities, following the economic collapse of 2008. State and local spending for public university students dropped to a 25-year-low in 2011, according to Reuters.

Patel said this loss in funding led to skyrocketing tuition prices and financial barriers to low-income students. These barriers disproportionately affect Black families, Patel said, because of generational blocks to wealth.

"Black people and other people of color have to work twice as hard to get half as far," Patel said.

Patel said increasing Black student enrollment first involves removing financial barriers, and Ottley agreed. Ottley described the struggles she has experienced during her time at Pitt with securing scholarships. She said as a first-year student she received approximately \$38,000 in scholarships, but Pitt unexpectedly decreased the scholarship to about \$14,000 her sophomore year.

"Pitt truly slapped me in the face," Ottley said.

See **Enrollment** on page 6

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Enrollment, pg. 5

Although, with connections at the University, Ottley said she was able to increase the scholarship to its original level, she experienced similar decreases every year along with other members of BAS. BAS included the creation of more than 50 scholarships, totalling hundreds of thousands of dollars, in their list of demands to the University.

"There has to be an incentive to go to this school," Ottley said. "Right now, the biggest issue is money, which is why we added it to the list of our demands."

Ottley added that Pitt should put in place more and better-funded community engagement programs to attract more Black students from Pittsburgh.

"They think that it's beyond their reach," Ottley said. "That comes down to how students are supported and how they're groomed in this education system."

Ottley said increasing Black student enrollment goes hand in hand with increasing Black faculty as well. In their demands, Black students asked that Black tenured faculty over the next 10 years reach 10% of all faculty, spread out across all corners of the University, not solely the Africana Studies department.

Ottley said it's been difficult for her to navigate the neuroscience department, because no professor or researcher looks like her.

"Finding a Black professor at the University is literally like finding gold," Bottley said. "As a neuro student, I want to see Black people in the department. I want to see people who look like me, so I know there's a space for me in this field. It's very discouraging and there were days I thought I couldn't do it."

Patel agreed that increasing Black faculty could increase the number of Black students.

"I think we need to have more Black faculty and Black leadership. That alters the rela-

tions of power," Patel said. "One of the things higher education has gotten good at is optics and not changing power relations."

Even though she is skeptical that Pitt will actively work to increase Black student enrollment, Ottley said she is cautiously optimistic after speaking to senior leadership and hopes to see systemic changes.

"Rather than trying to fix a broken system, they need to be thinking of more innovative systems," Ottley said. "Discard the rough draft and propose something new." ■

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QUARTER OF PITT GREEK LIFE CHAPTERS NOW TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED AFTER UNIVERSITY CRACKDOWN

Rebecca Johnson

News Editor

Pitt on Monday placed four Greek life chapters — Delta Chi, Pi Kappa Phi, Delta Delta Delta and Sigma Sigma Sigma — on “Interim Suspension of Registration.” The two sororities and two fraternities allegedly violated the University’s Health and Safety Guidelines and the Student Code of Conduct, according to University spokesperson Kevin Zwick.

Zwick did not comment on the specifics of why the groups faced an interim suspension, but said Pitt has received multiple reports of conduct violations by individual students and chapters as a whole.

This round of suspensions follows two other sororities and three fraternities — Chi Omega, Kappa Delta, Pi Kappa Alpha, Alpha Tau Omega and Sigma Phi Epsilon — also being placed on interim suspension last week for allegedly violating health guidelines. In all, a quarter of all Pitt Greek life chapters active before the pandemic have been placed on an interim suspension in the last week.

Zwick said all students involved have been placed on interim persona non grata status and have been given interim housing suspension, barring individual students from entering campus and any Pitt buildings until an investigation is completed. The chapters must “cease all organizational operations,” he said.

“Our policies and expectations have been made very clear to our students. Your actions have consequences,” Zwick said. “If you want to experience campus life as well as in-person classes this semester, students must support the health and well-being of the members of our community

with their actions.”

Sigma Sigma Sigma was previously under social probation, meaning members were barred from hosting activities “where alcohol is present, with non-members anywhere,” according to the Student Affairs website. Delta Chi, Pi Kappa Phi and Delta Delta Delta were in good standing with the University until Monday’s sanctions.

released a joint statement criticizing members of Greek life who break health guidelines.

“Upon returning to Oakland, we have noticed that there has been an alarming amount of partying and people not following those guidelines. To those who have ignored or disregarded these guidelines, we are incredibly disappointed and this behavior is unacceptable,” the statement



Four Greek life chapters were placed on “Interim Suspension of Registration” on Monday for allegedly violating the University’s Health and Safety Guidelines and the Student Code of Conduct.

Sarah Cutshall VISUAL EDITOR

Representatives from Delta Chi, Pi Kappa Phi, Delta Delta Delta, Sigma Sigma Sigma, Chi Omega, Kappa Delta, Pi Kappa Alpha, Alpha Tau Omega and Sigma Phi Epsilon did not respond to requests for comment.

After the first round of suspensions, Eleanor Streitwieser, the president of the Collegiate Panhellenic Association, along with Josh Wiener, the president of the Interfraternity Council, and Richard Norris, the president of the National Pan-Hellenic Council,

said. “We ask you to be mindful of this simple truth: this is about more than just you.”

The statement also said that the councils would be barring in-person events with alcohol for the foreseeable future. They also required any in-person events without alcohol to follow social distancing guidelines and that all participants wear masks. The in-person events without alcohol must be approved by the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life.

Kenyon Bonner, vice provost and dean of students, sent an email last week to students with a list of consequences for students who attend or host parties where social distancing isn’t possible or attendees aren’t wearing masks.

Bonner said student organizations that host a party or event can face “Interim Suspension of Registration” — the same sanction placed on the nine Greek life organizations — and students hosting large parties can be suspended. Bonner added if the student organization has an active conduct history, the suspension may be extended.

“Your actions have consequences,” Bonner said. “If you want to experience campus life as well as in-person classes this semester, then support the health and well-being of the members of our community with your actions.”

Students living on-campus who attend large parties can have their housing suspended for the semester, and students living off-campus can be switched to persona non grata status, preventing them from entering University buildings or property.

A new code violation regarding health rules was recently added to the Student Code of Conduct. It said that a student who “fails to comply with guidance set forth by the University, federal, state and/or local authorities regarding public health and/or safety” may be sanctioned.

Student violations of the Student Code of Conduct can be reported online or emailed to Bonner. Violations by any member of the Pitt community can be reported through Environmental Health and Safety’s anonymous form or the RAVE Guardian mobile safety app. ■

PITT OFFERS NEW MANDATORY ANTI-RACISM CLASS FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

Mary Rose O'Donnell
Contributing Editor

All Pitt first-year students will now be required to take a course on anti-racism, Chancellor Patrick Gallagher announced in an email last Monday.

The University is offering a one-credit, online course on systemic anti-racism and anti-Black racism called Anti-Black Racism: History, Ideology and Resistance beginning this fall. The course will be available to all Pitt students, and students can begin to enroll this week, with first-year students automatically enrolled. The course will also be made available to faculty, staff and the broader Pitt community in the following weeks.

Provost Ann Cudd provided additional information about the new course in a Wednesday email. She said the course will be asynchronous, free of charge and graded on an S/NC basis. Faculty, staff and activists gave lectures that are featured in the course, which Cudd said "is designed to inform us all about Black history and culture, about the multiple forms of anti-Black racism and about how we can be anti-racist."

The new required course arrives after a petition demanding Pitt require all students take a Black studies course gained more than 7,000 signatures this summer. The petition came in the wake of the late May killing of George Floyd at the

hands of Minneapolis police, which has caused massive protests nationwide.

Sydney Massenberg, a 2020 alumna and first-year New York University School of Law student, created the petition in June. It then gained the attention of the University, resulting in the creation of the new course. Massenberg said she thinks the course is a "great start and a great idea" and will be beneficial to students.

"Providing a solid baseline for students to be able to work from and which will likely spur many to do some independent learning will undoubtedly spur some important thought processes, and that's an important first step," Massenberg said.

While she is happy with the creation of the course, Massenberg said many of the courses Pitt already offers can be a place for more detailed conversations about race theory, anti-racism and anti-Black racism, and she encouraged students to explore these options as well.

"The three-credit courses are where I feel the most impactful conversations take place between students and professors during facilitated class discussions and where powerful thought and self-reflection are prompted by class assignments and extensive projects students are to complete," Massenberg said. "This one-credit course is an amazing start, but I hope Pitt doesn't stop there." ■

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SGB KICKS OFF FALL SEMESTER WITH FIRST ONLINE MEETING

Nathan Fitchett
Staff Writer

Although the fall semester looks different, COVID-19 hasn't stopped Student Government Board members from planning and implementing new ideas.

SGB held its first public meeting for the fall semester virtually via Zoom on Tuesday night. Board members reported their activity from the summer semester and presented plans for the fall.

SGB President Eric Macadangdang began the meeting by acknowledging the unprecedented circumstances under which SGB is now operating, due to the ongoing pandemic.

"Since March, SGB, along with practically everyone else, was forced to adapt to a world stricken by a pandemic," Macadangdang said. "The new board and I were sworn into office via a Zoom webinar, and since then, our working and planning for this year has been entirely virtual. But faced with crisis, we try to find opportunity."

Macadangdang went over the various policies and accomplishments that SGB worked on over the summer. This included a 20% reduction in the Student Activities Fee, a collaboration with Pitt's Black Action Society to create a resource guide on how to support the Black Lives Matter movement, the extension of free student legal services over the summer and efforts to help to author the Pitt Community Compact. Macadangdang reaffirmed SGB's support for the nationwide protests against excessive police force, which will be published as a written statement Wednesday.

Following the opening address by Macadangdang, Executive Vice President Cedric Humphrey began board reports with a statement regarding the Black Lives Matter movement.

"I'd like to start my report by explicitly stating that Black lives matter and calling for justice for George Floyd, Marquis Jaylen Brown, Breonna Taylor as well as countless other victims, which now unfortunately includes Jacob Blake," Humphrey said.

Humphrey followed by outlining his agenda for the rest of the semester, beginning with discussing the Year of

Humphrey said he will also push for students who work paid internships to receive academic credit for those internships while still being paid.

Ben King, a board member and the chief of finance, discussed his work over the summer to revise the SGB's governing code to better reflect the current circumstances amid the pandemic. He introduced these changes as part of Board

logue remains ongoing.

Viljaste detailed his agenda for the upcoming semester, which includes the creation of a taskforce to continue the long-running process to create an LG-BTQ+ student center as well as helping run the First Year Council.

Other members of the board also went through their goals for the upcoming semester. Some notable agenda items include improving mental health resources on campus, the inclusion of a new black studies gen ed, ensuring transparency with the new ad-hoc committee for divesting from fossil fuels and creating a student leader database.

Following the board member's introductions of their agendas for the semester, the SGB committee chairs reported on their activities over the summer as well as their goals for the upcoming semester. Some important items include working to increase voter registration on campus, engaging students on issues regarding sustainability and racial justice and raising awareness for mental health on campus.

As it was the first meeting of the semester, SGB had no preexisting agenda items to address yet.

Macadangdang concluded the meeting by encouraging students to contact SGB with any concerns during its office hours. He also asked students to make use of the various services provided to students in need this semester and to take care of their mental health.

"Please, please, please take care of yourself," Macadangdang said. "What's interesting about traumatizing events is that while you're going through them, you often aren't cognizant about it. So please take a step back, even though you're in front of your screen nearly all day, and relax." ■



The Student Government Board met Tuesday night via Zoom. **ZOOM SCREENSHOT**

Engagement at Pitt this year. The Year promotes and celebrates the engagement work that Pitt students and faculty participate in every year. Pitt will offer grants to students and student organizations who are doing any work related to student engagement on campus this year.

Humphrey also mentioned his work with fellow board member Kathryn Fleisher to increase lines of communication between the Pitt police and students, as part of an effort to expand accountability for the campus police.

Bill 2021-1, which is now open to public comment for one week and will be put to a vote at next week's meeting.

Tyler Viljaste, vice president and chief of cabinet, discussed plans for a new hub for civic engagement on campus. Students were given the go-ahead from Kenyon Bonner, the vice provost and dean of students, to draft a proposal for the new hub a few weeks ago. Viljaste and fellow board members also recently met with new dining services contractor Compass Group to discuss food quality, variety and accessibility at Pitt. This dia-

COLLEGE DEMS PANEL ENCOURAGES FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE ON CAMPUS

Paul Mlodgenski

For The Pitt News

The College Democrats haven't allowed distance to inhibit action on racial justice, as they held their first meeting virtually via Zoom on Tuesday night.

Nearly 50 students attended the panel, which featured three guest speakers to discuss the Black Lives Matter movement in the Greater Pittsburgh area. The speakers included State Rep. Summer Lee, D-34, Allegheny County Councilperson Liv Bennett and Miracle Jones of 1Hood Media. The panelists urged students to amplify individual voices against systemic racism and question perpetuated racial inequality.

Lee — the first Black woman elected to the state House of Representatives from western Pennsylvania — said she encourages students to determine practical sacrifices when protecting marginalized individuals.

"Historic movements for civil rights emerged out of college campuses," Lee said. "Mentorship from peers and professors can be used as a springboard for justice fighting."

Black Lives Matter protests have surged throughout the country, and in Pittsburgh, following George Floyd's May killing by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. Many of the protests that took place in various Pittsburgh neighborhoods such as Market Square, East Liberty and Oakland were organized by the

group Black, Young and Educated.

Lee is currently working on legislation against qualified immunity at the state level, which she believes will help hold police officers accountable for their actions. Current law generally prevents government officials from being held personally responsible for constitutional violations. Lee said this system burdens

peers all help amplify marginalized voices."

Sydney Wilhelmy, a first-year student and College Democrats member, said attending events like these serve to empower students to take action.

"College presents a transition from high school, offering greater tangible opportunities for students



The College Democrats held their first meeting virtually via Zoom on Tuesday night. **ZOOM SCREENSHOT**

taxpayers when law enforcement personnel are accused or found guilty of misconduct.

Lee said there are numerous ways students can help the Black Lives Matter movement, beyond pushing for changes in legislation.

"There are more ways than one to make change," Lee said. "Protesting, donations and education of

to embrace," Wilhelmy said.

The panelists emphasized the definitional overlap between support and action for the Black Lives Matter movement.

"We support this movement by working to raise awareness and establishing an effort for change — talking with politicians, signing petitions, running candidates and

changing policy," Jones said.

Bennett said Democrats need to work across the political spectrum, stating the importance of working with Republicans to create a united front. She said this cooperation across the political aisle is missing from the Black Lives Matter movement.

An advocate for abolition of police forces, Bennett recognizes that such a strong political proposition is unlikely to happen soon. Bennett said she supports police reforms, with the ultimate goal of abolishing the police.

"It is a necessary evil right now," Bennett said.

Bennett added that it is never too early to foster social change, recalling her own time as a student activist.

"Students are often energized and serve as the catalysts that push social movements," Bennett said.

College Democrats president Christian Resch expressed his gratitude for the panelists' dedication to social movement and willingness to speak with young political activists. Resch, a junior, noted that following increased action and media coverage, there may be a shift in City politics on race this year.

"Pittsburgh has been a very racist city, with significant segregation, but has presented the most united front for change that I've seen," Resch said. ■

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column

COVID-19 exemplifies irony in wellness culture

Leah Mensch

Opinions Editor

Especially in the time of COVID-19, as many people find themselves with more time on their hands, social media has become saturated with wellness influencers, food bloggers and workout junkies.

I'm not sure anyone can clearly define wellness culture — which is what many of these influencers promote. On the surface level, it's presented as a way of prioritizing health with semi-rigid exercise routines and juice cleanses. But it's rooted in capitalist ideas that promise if you work hard, you'll be rewarded. If you do more, if you're more disciplined and committed, you'll get ahead. Wellness culture



Joy Cao SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

has left people waking at 3 a.m. to lift at the gym before work and buying gluten-free flour in the name of health. Both of which are OK — if that's how someone chooses to live, but wellness culture is often marketed as a way of maintaining a "holistic" lifestyle. Too often it focuses on weight maintenance, weight loss and appearance and neglects equally important factors of wellness like sleep, energy levels, rest and flexibility. The problem isn't wellness itself, but the way — culturally — we seem to define wellness.

Wellness culture was roiled with irony and hypocrisy for years before the COVID-19 pandemic, where in-

See Mensch on page 14

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column

AMERICANS NEED A POPULIST THAT WILL FIGHT FOR THEM

Ethan Tessler
Staff Columnist

If you have been watching the news or keeping up with politics, then you know last week was the Democratic National Convention.

The main event of the DNC is the coronation of the Democratic presidential nominee and their running mate — in this case, Joe Biden and Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif. The whole point of these political conventions is to convince undecided voters to vote for their party's platform.

In this year's convention, the Democrats geared their platform toward the economically comfortable, older, white moderates — people who are receptive to cultural issues but remain aloof or indifferent to the Obama-era economic policies that helped get President Donald Trump elected president in the first place.

While many people were wowed by Biden's speaking abilities and Harris' feistiness, I'm afraid it didn't do much to sway voters. Using FiveThirtyEight's average of all major presidential election polls, we see that Biden's lead the day after the convention was minuscule compared to what he was at before the convention — hovering at about 51% approval the night before the DNC and still at that number afterward.

What the Democrats fail to realize — or maybe they do, but just ignore it — is that the base to go after are the 100 million disaffected voters, the people who constantly get screwed over by the two-party system that controls America. For the most part, these people are struggling economically and have lost faith in the two-party system that mainly benefits the wealthy. Since the '80s, the American Overton Window — a range of policies politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time — has left about a



President Franklin Delano Roosevelt ran on his famous New Deal platform that included many economic reforms, public works and many other social programs. IMAGE VIA FLICKR

third of America in the dust.

The reason why there are so many disaffected voters is because they don't have a presidential candidate who will fight for them. They need someone who will use American tax dollars for programs that actually benefit the many and not the few. America needs a populist president.

To clarify, populism is defined as "a political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups."

If you're wondering what a populist running for president looks like, look back at our longest tenured president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He ran on his famous New Deal platform that included many economic reforms, public works and many other social programs. He smartly recognized that the Great Depression necessitated

government action. He didn't bail out big corporations like our government did — he bailed out the American people, following through on his populist principles.

Some people call Trump a populist. While he certainly campaigned like a populist, he didn't follow through once he was in office. Trump ran on his famous "Make America Great Again" slogan and promised to bring back manufacturing jobs, cut taxes and of course, build a wall. Love him or hate him, he was able to rile up disaffected voters through economic promises that were popular among voters. Trump capitalized on the fact that Hillary Clinton pretended like the Obama years were perfect and didn't leave millions of workers mostly helpless.

What people don't seem to realize is that a vast portion of Americans don't live comfortably.

In 2016, it was reported that nearly half of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck. If one of these Americans got a flat tire, a parking ticket or some other unforeseen cost, they'd be broke or on the verge of bankruptcy.

Mind you, this was in 2016 — I can only imagine what the COVID-19 pandemic has done to millions upon millions of Americans. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour — the same number as it was 11 years ago. Meanwhile, the minimum hourly wage to live in Arkansas — the state with the lowest cost of living — is \$14.26, about twice as much an hour as workers currently get paid. The government expects people to somehow make this work in normal times, let alone during a pandemic in which tons of people lost their jobs.

With all of this in mind, it's clear that the United States is not working for the people like it should. Most Americans pay too much in taxes to not see the government do anything with that money. Things will not fix themselves without the government intervening, and the people know that. That's why people tune out when they hear Biden aides talking about limited spending options. Frankly, ordinary people don't care about the deficit. What they do care about is putting food on their table and paying their bills.

Right now, the Biden/Harris ticket doesn't go far enough for workers and solely bases election hopes on the fact that they're not Trump. If Biden and Harris were to put overwhelmingly popular policies such as Medicare for All or universal basic income on the Democratic Party platform, more people would be very enthusiastic about

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Mensch, pg. 12

fluencers gloated about their early morning workouts without addressing lack of sleep, or promoted exercise as a cure-all for stress relief, even though it sometimes has the opposite effect. Nonprofessionals offer eating and workout plans, though all bodies have completely different needs. But the narrow definition of wellness has become clearer within the past six months, as gyms reopen and many folks rush back, even as COVID-19 remains uncontrolled in the United States.

Scientists are generally unsure about how big a risk returning to the gym is. A small study of gyms in Norway, which concluded that there wasn't higher transmission after visiting a gym, provided justification for many people itching to go back to the gym. But the problem is, Norway had about 9,000 confirmed cases at the time, whereas the United States was edging toward 2 million. Scientists

said it's nearly impossible to make a direct comparison between the two countries.

Like most activities, gym safety depends on the number of cases in your specific area, your gym's cleaning policy and how many people are allowed to enter at once. But in general, we know that it's much safer to be outside, and that the virus can likely be spread through air particles. This is to say, talking face to face with someone is a risk factor, let alone breathing heavily during exercise. Even if gyms space out cardio equipment and rigorously sanitize, the World Health Organization announced in July that the virus can still linger in the air and infect people.

One of the defining characteristics of wellness culture is choosing not to engage in something even if the opportunity is presented. For example, if someone serves cake at a party, have only one slice, or eat none at all. Take your coffee black instead of adding cream, and though it might be

tempting to sleep until noon, forgo the sleep to get your run in. All, of course, in the name of wellness. This raises the question, then, of why people who claim to be invested in wellness would rush back into fitness facilities when it's so obvious there are safer ways to exercise — even if the workout won't be exactly the same. It raises the question, too, of whether or not the cultural obsession with "wellness" is actually about holistic health at all.

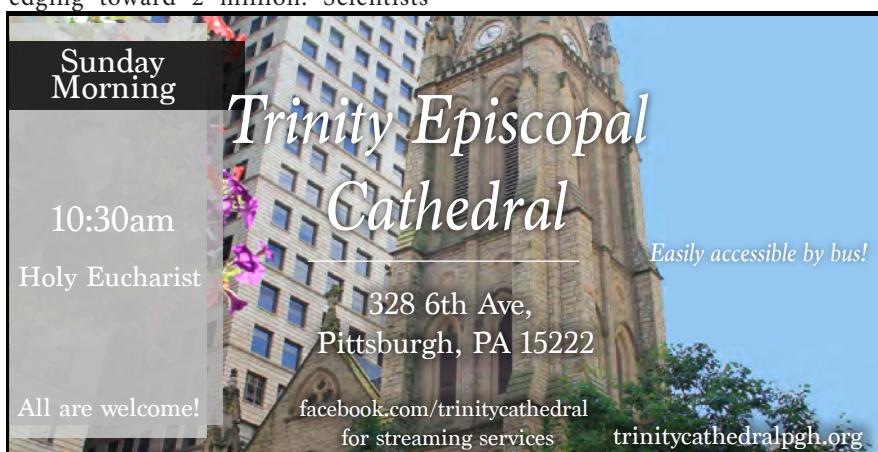
I understand that some people have carefully assessed the risks of returning to the gym and other fitness facilities. If you've done so, and you honestly feel like it's an acceptable choice to return, if you're not putting your pod members at an extreme risk, then return to the gym. But it also might be worth looking at other options. Ask yourself if you want to return to the gym because you feel that you can do so safely, or because you feel like your self-worth is tied to the way your body looks and whether or

not you have a good workout.

Lately, when I make decisions about my health and coronavirus, I've been thinking of a friend of mine who owns a yoga studio, which she has decided not to reopen in the middle of the pandemic. As she said, she doesn't know how she can reopen while simultaneously claiming to be part of the wellness industry.

Americans rushing back into gyms is problematic. They're often unsafe, and it's quite obvious that a single person's actions put everyone they interact with at risk. But this also gives us a chance to look squarely at the way we define wellness. To realize that we do, in fact, live at the mercy of a wellness industry that is only sometimes actually about wellness. ■

Leah writes primarily about literature, houseplants and the spices of the world. Write to Leah at LEM140@pitt.edu.



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REMEMBERING RICHARD 'THE REV' RICCI: PITT ALUM AND SPIRITUAL FORCE BEHIND 'NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD'

Charlie Taylor
Culture Editor

It's a classic trope in horror movies, so much so that it almost feels like common sense. If you want to kill a zombie, you go for its brain.

But this conventional wisdom wasn't part of the public consciousness until 1968, when actor and producer Richard Ricci appeared as the first ghoul to take a bullet to the head in "Night of the Living Dead."

An integral part of Latent Image — the independent, Pittsburgh-based company behind the film — Ricci provided inspiration, friendship and the occasional spiritual guidance to his fellow filmmakers. Ricci passed away on July 15 at age 80, almost exactly three years after the death of George A. Romero, his friend and "Living Dead" director.

The world remembers Ricci through his work with Latent Image, and Pitt students in the film and media studies program remember him through his contributions to the course "Making the Documentary: George Romero and Pitts-

burgh."

Students who took the course last spring worked on a documentary about the making of "Night of the Living Dead" and Ricci participated in interviews about his involvement in the film. Carl Kurlander, who taught the course, said he felt Ricci's appearance left a lasting impact on both himself and his students.

"We were so lucky to be able to meet Richard," Kurlander said. "My students said they could tell what a good soul he was."

According to Kurlander, Ricci met Romero through his cousin in 1960, during Ricci's senior year at Pitt. Kurlander said they shared a love of film and frequently watched movies together, thanks to Ricci's job operating projectors at Pitt.

The two became close friends and collaborators, so much so that Kurlander said he thought the director "would never have done 'Night of the Living Dead'" had it not been for Ricci.

"George had literally learned everything about filmmaking not at [Carnegie Mellon University, where he attended college]," Kurlander said, "but at Pitt with Richard Ricci."

After graduating in 1961, Ricci joined Romero and several other friends in creating Latent Image. According to Claire Akers, a 2019 Pitt alumna and TA for the documentary course, the company produced their first film together — called "Slant" — on the Duquesne Incline.

Akers said the short film, the footage for which no longer exists, followed the story of a young girl dreaming of a better life.

"[She] dreams of going up the Incline, and when she gets there she realizes it's not all she thought it was. So she goes back down and realizes she likes her life," Akers said.

But Latent Image didn't produce a full feature-length film until "Night of the Living Dead" — which Ricci also had a major hand in developing.

The film is loosely based on the Richard Matheson novel "I Am Legend," about a post-apocalyptic world overrun with vampires. And according to Kurlander, Romero only knew about the book because of Ricci.

"Richard was the one who gave George a book called 'I Am Legend,' which is the book that

"Night of the Living Dead" was based on," Kurlander said.

Gary Streiner, another member of Latent Image, said Ricci also contributed to the film by convincing its collaborators to fund the project.

"He was the financier of Latent Image. He infused it all with a lot of cash," Streiner said. "He was the one that inspired each of us — there ended up being 10 of us — to put up whatever cash we could."

Streiner added that Duane Jones, the film's lead actor and one of the first Black men to play the hero in a horror movie, joined the production because he and Ricci were college roommates. Streiner said Ricci convinced him to audition for the part, despite the fact that Jones had moved to New York.

"Duane, after college, was ready to get out of Pittsburgh. He was ready to find higher ground," Streiner said. "He was back in town over the holidays. Duane came and read for George, and there was just no question about it."

See **Ricci** on page 16



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Courtesy of Claire Akers

Ricci, pg. 15

And as for that infamous head shot scene, Ricci told the film class that Romero selected him for the part out of necessity. According to Akers' interview with Ricci, the scene was potentially dangerous, and Latent Image couldn't afford a lawsuit if it ended badly.

"George said, 'Oh, Richard, listen, I have something. I want a roll for you for your zombie,'" Ricci said. "We want you because you won't sue us if anything happens."

On a personal level, Streiner described Ricci as spiritual, and said he earned the nickname "The Rev" among friends for the way he "always had an answer."

"He never rushed his answers — he always took time to think them out," Streiner said. "That's the way he was about everything. It would take him an hour to eat an orange, he was so particular about the process."

Streiner said Ricci also had rituals for even minuscule, everyday activities — something he said exemplified Ricci's careful nature and earned him respect from friends.

"You couldn't just have a fire in the fireplace without there being some ritual attached," Streiner said. "Everything got that special attention. That's why he was so loved by everyone that knew him. It was because he took time to listen."

Although Akers knew Ricci for only a few months, she said she grew close with him through their interviews, adding that he took an interest in her goals as a filmmaker.

"He had asked me — what am I interested in, and what do I want to do," Akers said. "He's so personable that without even realizing it, you enter a full conversation."

After making "Night of the Living Dead," Ricci drifted apart from Latent Image, moving

to Los Angeles and later Santa Fe, New Mexico, to pursue a behind-the-scenes career in film production, according to Streiner.

"He kind of left the pack after a while and went on to have a career elsewhere, which a lot of us did. We were all really really young when we started," Streiner said. "You finally get to that point where you have to go out and use what you learned."

Akers said Ricci often joked about being "the only one with a steady job [in Latent Image]," and Streiner also noted that even during the company's heyday, Ricci drifted in and out to serve in the Navy or work for advertising companies.

"Richard was kind of out there. He had other jobs, he went to work, he was a producer at an advertising agency," Streiner said. "He went away to the Navy, and he kind of separated from the pack."

Still, Ricci never put too much distance between himself and Latent Image. He eventually settled in Miami, where he lived until his passing, but regularly returned to western Pennsylvania to participate in the annual Living Dead Weekend, according to Streiner.

Akers said at the time of his death, Ricci was also working with the George A. Romero Foundation to restore footage from Latent Image's unfinished feature film, "Expostulations."

During one of his interviews for the documentary, Ricci recalled the confidence and determination he felt when he and Romero decided to start a film company — a decision that eventually led to "Night of the Living Dead" and solidified Ricci's legacy in the horror world.

"[Romero] said, 'I'm going to make movies with Richard Ricci,'" Ricci said. "No doubt in our minds. This is what we're going to do." ■

Let's Get Free art contest raises awareness for women sentenced to life without parole

Sinead McDevitt

Staff Writer

There were 5,461 people sentenced to life without parole in Pennsylvania in 2017, according to a report by New York University's Center on the Administration of Law. This sentence — known as death by incarceration — leaves prisoners with very limited opportunities to be released before dying in prison of old age.

The Let's Get Free art contest hopes to raise awareness of the plight of these prisoners through several pieces by artists both inside and out of prison. The contest was organized as part of Life Cycles Toward Freedom, a multimedia campaign created by the Pittsburgh-based Let's Get Free nonprofit group and the Women Lifer's Resume Project.

Both organizations work to help women sentenced to life without parole. Let's Get Free works to foster community ties between people in prison and people on the outside, assist people in applying for commutation and organize visits to prison, while the Women Lifer's Resume Project works to document the growth of women lifers away from the people they'd been when they were first incarcerated.

Pieces for the contest went on display at Boom Concepts in Pittsburgh's Garfield neighborhood on Aug. 7. Virtual tours of the gallery space have been held on Sundays, with the final tour taking place this Sunday on Zoom.

The Let's Get Free website also provides a space to view the artwork, including a piece called "If we can break the system (Aging in Prison)" by Monica Davis, a Philadelphia artist. Davis said she took part in the contest because she knew people who were incarcerated.

"I decided to take part in this contest because I personally know of a couple of people who are incarcerated, that were wronged by the system. The idea of 'death by incarceration' can be extremely detrimental to a person," Davis said. "I heard about the contest from one of the incarcerated individuals."

Ellen Melchiondo, who submitted an



The Let's Get Free art contest hopes to raise awareness of the plight of these prisoners through several pieces by artists both inside and out of prison.
Courtesy of Ellen Melchiondo

art piece entitled "No More Names" for the contest, said her personal history assisting women sentenced to death by incarceration drives her work.

"Helping lifers goes back to about 2011 for me, when I met Sharon Wiggins at [State Correctional Institute] Muncy," Melchiondo, a co-founder of the Women Lifer's Resume Project, said. "She was a juvenile lifer and I knew her the last two years of her life before she died in prison in 2013."

There are 62 pieces on display, including work by artists in prison and artists in solidarity. Pieces by artists in prison are being accepted until Sept. 30. Viewers can vote on their favorite piece from each category, and the winners in each category, who will be announced in October, will receive cash

prizes.

cetera, a co-founder of Let's Get Free, said the organization began doing art auctions three years ago.

"The past three years have been auction fundraisers, and that's been actually the lead way that we raised money for our group, up until last year when we became a nonprofit," cetera said.

In addition to the art contest, the Life Cycles Toward Freedom campaign also produced three short films, which were screened virtually via Zoom on Aug. 11, 18 and 23. The Let's Get Free YouTube channel features clips from each of these films, which all center on women who have been sentenced to life without parole.

According to cetera, the art contest start-

ed a way to incorporate visual arts into the film campaign.

"We got a grant from Open Society Foundation to raise awareness about women and trans people sentenced to death by incarceration, so we're making a series of films and we wanted to have a graphic component to that," cetera said.

One film made by Life Cycles Toward Freedom is "Pennsylvania's Commutation Process: Naomi Blount's Experience," produced by Tusko Films. The film screened Aug. 18, and the event also featured a conversation with Brandon Flood, the Pennsylvania pardon board secretary, and Naomi Blount, the second woman in Pennsylvania to receive a commutation in 30 years.

The two answered questions about the commutation process and challenges faced by former inmates who must adjust to life outside of prison.

Commutation allows people sentenced to life in prison to be released, as the short film explains. Applicants fill out the application, then have it reviewed by the Board of Pardons, which consists of Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, Attorney General Josh Shapiro, a psychiatrist, a victims rights advocate and a corrections expert.

According to the film, if a majority of the board approves the paper application, the applicant is then granted an in-person hearing where they must convince the dissenting members of the board to approve their application before it can be passed on to the governor, who can then choose to sign off on it. That last step can take anywhere between 30 days to three years.

According to NYU's Center on the Administration of Law, commutations were much more common and the requirements were less strict before 1980 when Gov. Dick Thornburgh took office, only requiring a majority vote from the Board of Pardons to have an application sent to the governor.

Older prisoners tend to have their sentences commuted more frequently than

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What will it take to grow Pittsburgh's film industry?

Charlie Taylor

Culture Editor

As a senior lecturer of film and media studies, Carl Kurlander said he has seen the worlds of education and filmmaking drifting closer together — a phenomenon he claimed started with Pittsburgh native Fred Rogers.

"Entertainment and education have been colliding for years, and it started on the Pitt campus when Fred Rogers left NBC and came back to try to start public television," Kurlander said.

Since the start in the 1960s of "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood" and "The Night of the Living Dead" — another production made in Pittsburgh — the City has been the backdrop for a myriad of film projects. But some industry professionals, including Kurlander, think Pennsylvania's tax policy is holding Pittsburgh back from becoming a bigger name in entertainment.

Kurlander moved back home to Pittsburgh from Hollywood when he was offered his position at Pitt in 2001. Here, he has continued to make movies while "trying to make these two worlds [of education and entertainment] collide."

Kurlander does so by teaching the Pitt in LA study away program, where students meet industry professionals and make a documentary about their experiences. But despite introducing students to Hollywood, Kurlander said he wishes fewer graduates moved away to New York, LA and Atlanta, which currently has a booming film industry.

"A lot of my students leave here and go down to Atlanta," Kurlander said. "I want them to stay here in Pittsburgh."

He said production companies like Lionsgate want to film in Pittsburgh, but the state doesn't offer enough incentives to attract the same number of projects as other cities.

"People want to shoot here night and day," Kurlander said. "Politicians can't seem to put enough resources here to make it a really big industry."

Currently, the state's Film Tax Credit



Kevin Smith teaches a class on broadcasting through Pitt Studios, where he said students interested in production can apply their skills to filming live sporting events and news stories. **Courtesy of Pitt Studios**

Program gives production companies tax credits on 25% of expenses for a given film. These films include feature movies, commercials, full-length TV series and individual TV episodes shot in the state.

Projects are only eligible if 60% or more of their total production expenses occur while filming in the state. The tax credit is also capped at \$70 million — a number that increased from \$65 million between 2018 and 2019.

Dawn Keezer — the director of the Pittsburgh Film Office, a nonprofit that aims to bring film projects to southwestern Pennsylvania — said the new \$70 million cap still isn't high enough. She claimed that the program is "oversubscribed and underfunded."

"The program should be funded at a minimum of \$150 million to really grow the entertainment sector in our region," Keezer said.

But the program has garnered controversy in recent years. Some have questioned the effectiveness of the program, arguing the credit went to too many unprofitable, in-state productions.

State Sen. Wayne Fontana, D-42,

tried to address the problem of credits going to what he viewed as the wrong sources when he sponsored a 2015 bill that would bar QVC, a television shopping network, from receiving the credit. Fontana said he was concerned that funding QVC prevented the state from supporting larger projects.

"We drafted the bill specifically to the seller of 'commercial goods' to address QVC having an advantage of getting funds that should have been used toward actual movie and television productions," Fontana said.

But Fontana said the situation in 2015 had more to do with politics than an inherent flaw in the program, since the Senate majority leader at the time was Dominic Pileggi, R-Delaware, whose district housed QVC headquarters. Fontana added that he supports the tax credit policy overall, as well as increasing the cap.

"It was an entirely political process, which is not so much the case any longer," Fontana said. "I have introduced legislation several times that would increase the cap on the program."

But even though some professionals

and lawmakers think the state doesn't provide enough incentives to the entertainment industry, Pitt students interested in a film career can still find ample opportunity in Pittsburgh.

Keezer disagreed with Kurlander's claim that too many film studies graduates move away, and said she's seen students from all of Pittsburgh's colleges stay in the City to pursue their production careers.

"Most of these students are hoping to stay here and work, and given the amount of film work we were seeing and should see again, there will be jobs and opportunities available here," Keezer said.

According to Kevin Smith, a senior lecturer in film and media studies and the director of undergraduate studies in broadcast, students can find broadcast jobs in the City whether or not they focus their education on live video production.

Smith teaches a class on broadcast through Pitt Studios, where he said students interested in production can apply their skills to filming live sporting events and news stories. He added that all forms of filmmaking require the same core abilities.

"There's an overlap because everything is done in digital," Smith said. "How Pitt Studios approaches doing a game is that we're in sync simply because it's about storytelling. Film is all about storytelling. So is news, so is a live sporting event."

Moving forward, Keezer said the Pittsburgh Film Office is working on plans to reopen the City to movie production in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kurlander said he saw reopening as an opportunity for Pittsburgh to get ahead of other film cities and continue the legacy of Fred Rogers.

"I am once again hopeful that Pittsburgh, which started public television," Kurlander said, "[will] have one more chance of reinventing the entertainment industry." ■

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Michael Yeomans

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Visit the Big Idea Center website at: innovation.pitt.edu/bigideacenter to learn more.



point-counterpoint

Benefits will outweigh the consequences for college football this fall

Griffin Floyd
Staff Writer

Last time Pitt football held a season amid a pandemic, they went on to win the

national championship. This year's team may not reach the same heights as the 1918 Panthers — although there will be a lot less competition with other leagues cancelling their schedules — but there are still many reasons to play this season. Game-altering concessions must occur to pull it off, such as the absence of fans, but the benefits outweigh the compromises that must be made in what will be a year like no other.

Players have been given the freedom to opt out of the season if they don't feel safe competing or if they are worried about the long-term health issues that COVID-19 can cause. This isn't a perfect fix, though, because the coronavirus doesn't care if the

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players aren't scared of it — it can infect and hurt them all the same.

Those lasting effects, such as inflammation of the heart muscle, or myocarditis, and general organ damage due to blood clots, have been used for months to argue why the season isn't worth the risk. But some health experts think those risks are overblown. Dr. Michael Ackerman, a genetic cardiologist from the Mayo Clinic, has downplayed the effects that COVID-19 can have on the heart, saying he would take it out of the safety discussion or at least "demote it to ingredient number 10."

Overblown or not, it's important to understand why that risk is worth taking. To do so, one must look to the issue that has been at the forefront of football at all levels for the past decade — concussions. Players know that playing football can cause

concussions, which can lead to even worse health problems over time as a result of chronic traumatic encephalopathy — memory loss, depression, an inability to control their emotions and early-onset dementia — and continue to play in spite of that. Players have been able to answer that impossible question, whether their health or the game they love means more to them, for as long as football has been played. Why shouldn't they be allowed to answer it once again?

With many professional sports leagues back in action, college sports can follow in their trial-and-error footsteps, hopefully with more success. The NHL and NBA have put together successful seasons, even with the coronavirus looming overhead, thanks to their reliance on a player bubble.

The NCAA hasn't announced any plans like that, and a bubble isn't feasible with doz-

ens of college teams. Instead, they will follow in the footsteps of Major League Baseball, where geographically proximate teams have played each other to limit travel and the number of teams coming into contact with one another. The NCAA is having conference-only schedules in similar fashion.

The MLB was rather lax about enforcing social distancing rules at first, leading to outbreaks among the Miami Marlins and St. Louis Cardinals, among other teams. The NCAA has long been criticized for not giving players autonomy, however, and its current approach may be more helpful in this case, limiting potential exposure through more stringent policies.

The financial aspect of college football,
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point-counterpoint

College football this fall is too dangerous

Alex Lehmbeck
Sports Editor

It's the hottest topic in sports right now.

Try turning on ESPN tomorrow and see if you can make it 30 minutes without hearing endless speculation about a college football season that frankly everyone knows next to nothing about. We're less than a week from when college football is set to begin, yet there's still way more unanswered questions than confirmed adjustments.

We all want a college football season. I've enjoyed three amusing years of Pitt football since my arrival in Oakland, and I didn't expect to spend my first Saturdays of senior year studying instead of consuming college football at unhealthy rates.

I also never expected my senior year to occur amid an unprecedented pandemic that has killed more than 170,000 people in the United States alone, which is why I must be the bearer of bad news and declare that the college football season, as well as every collegiate sports season, should not be played this fall.

Let's get to the only factor that should matter in this decision — safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Football, a high-contact sport, requires frequent face-to-face interaction on every single play of the game, as opposing players clash with brutal force for multiple hours at a time. A crowded sideline of sweaty, tired humans view the game beside each other. This isn't tennis we're talking about.

Look at this graphic of recommendations for safe participation in sports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Think of college football at level three of the scale provided. Players are confined to practicing against their own team, although most practices have featured small amounts of actual team scrimmages, instead doing mostly individual or small-group drills.

Despite the seemingly low level of risk involved in this controlled environment, Power Five football teams across the country have announced multitudes of positive tests from players. By the end of June, more

than 30% of Clemson's roster had contracted the virus within a month of players' return to campus. An actual season full of mass travel, the highest risk stage of the CDC's scale, will be a whole different nightmare.

We've heard players, fans and even the president of the United States express support for a fall college football season, with some reasonable arguments and some absurd ones. One aspect of the #WeWantToPlay movement suggests that players would actually remain safer in the highly monitored environment of college athletics than if they returned home. While this would be the only sentiment that would justify the season's resumption, it doesn't quite seem to add up.

Ryan Marino, who worked with COVID-19 patients as an emergency physician and attained his fellowship in medical toxicology from UPMC, believes college football players put themselves in greater risk if they choose to play, referencing Major League Baseball's struggle to contain COVID-19 cases so far.

"They did everything," Marino said. "It was pretty much incentivized to succeed as safely as possible. I'm sure more resources were put towards that than they'll put towards college football, and they've already had massive outbreaks and spread of infection."

Unlike baseball, a college football season would see teams of more than 100 players traveling all around the country. If Pitt deems most in-person classes too dangerous until at least Sept. 14, how can it justify playing a football game on Sept. 12? By the end of the season, Pitt will make two road trips to Florida, where more than 600,000 cases have been recorded.

Sheldon Jacobson, a University of Illinois computer science professor whose research has influenced public policy in the past, projects a 30% to 50% infection rate from

*Find the full story online at
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Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Lewis

ACROSS

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64			65							66			
67			68							69			

By John Guzzetta

8/26/20

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

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39	San Francisco vicinity	49	Terse summons about an exam grade
40	H or O, in H2O	52	They're built in birdhouses
42	NFL official	54	AOL rival
43	Technique used for many film explosions: Abbr.	56	New Deal prog.
44	Boozier	57	Sworn promise
45	Sentence segment	58	Leery of
36	Wurlitzer product	61	Rowboat mover
37	Broadcast	62	Metal in bronze
38	Target of a cheek swab	63	Raised urban trains

Pitt's marquee pair of head soccer coaches aim for new heights

Ben Bobeck

Senior Staff Writer

For more than 30 years, Joe Luxbacher was Pitt soccer.

A 1974 Pitt alum, the Upper St. Clair native led the Pitt men's soccer program as a captain in 1973 before serving as its head coach from 1984 until 2015. Still the school's record-holder for goals in a game with seven and career goals with 37, Luxbacher led the Panthers as high as seventh in the nation while claiming two Big East Coach of the Year awards.

But after nearly a decade and a half of lackluster results, with the team failing to eclipse the .500 mark since 2000, Luxbacher retired in December 2015 and opened the door for then Athletic Director Scott Barnes to bring new life to the program stalled in its own past.

"The lack of overall program success was obvious and the trajectory of the program



After parting ways with former women's soccer coach Greg Miller, Athletic Director Heather Lyke hired former Notre Dame head coach and two-time national champion Randy Waldrum.

IMAGE VIA PIT ATHLETICS

needed to change," Barnes said through a spokesperson for Oregon State, where he is now the athletic director.

To usher in a new era for the program, Barnes lured Jay Vidovich from the professional ranks back to campus to serve as the third head coach in Pitt men's soccer history. Vidovich had already demonstrated his ability to build a program within the difficult ranks of ACC soccer at Wake Forest, assembling a National Championship team, winning National Soccer Coaches Association of America National Coach of the Year twice and being crowned the conference's coach of the year five times throughout his 21 years in Winston-Salem.

"We were recruiting Jay, not really interviewing him," Barnes said. "We were fortunate because Jay had made a decision to experiment with a career-long goal of

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