



DEPARTMENTS TAKE STEPS TO “DECOLONIZE” THE CURRICULUM

By **Alexis Lien '23**
Associate Editor

In an attempt to “decolonize” and diversify the HPRSS and English curricula, new courses have been added to the Course Catalogue, and existing courses have been revised to improve the inclusivity and variety of course materials. The goal is to make the curriculum reflect the diverse identities, interests, and experiences both within and outside of the Choate community. For HPRSS Department Head Ms. Kyra Jenney, making changes to the curriculum “should be about providing more educational, inclusive, equitable opportunities, experiences, content, [and] practices for our students.”

She continued, “When we have a curriculum that has content holes in it, and so far as there are things that students are interested in or there are content areas that are not covered in our curriculum, we have a responsibility to try to plug those holes and provide those opportunities and affirming spaces for students and faculty alike.”

In the HPRSS department, five new courses have been added to the Course Catalogue, including “Topics in Native American Studies”; “Queer Studies”; “Asian American History”; “Crime, Deviance, and Social Control”; and “Our School Upon the Hillside”. All of these courses are single-term

electives, geared primarily toward fifth- and sixth-formers.

“Queer Studies” will explore the history of sexuality, as well as how sexuality connects with the other aspects of one’s identity. In this course, students can expect to study materials created by members of the LGBTQIA+ community and have intersectional discussions about the role of sexuality in creating queer culture.

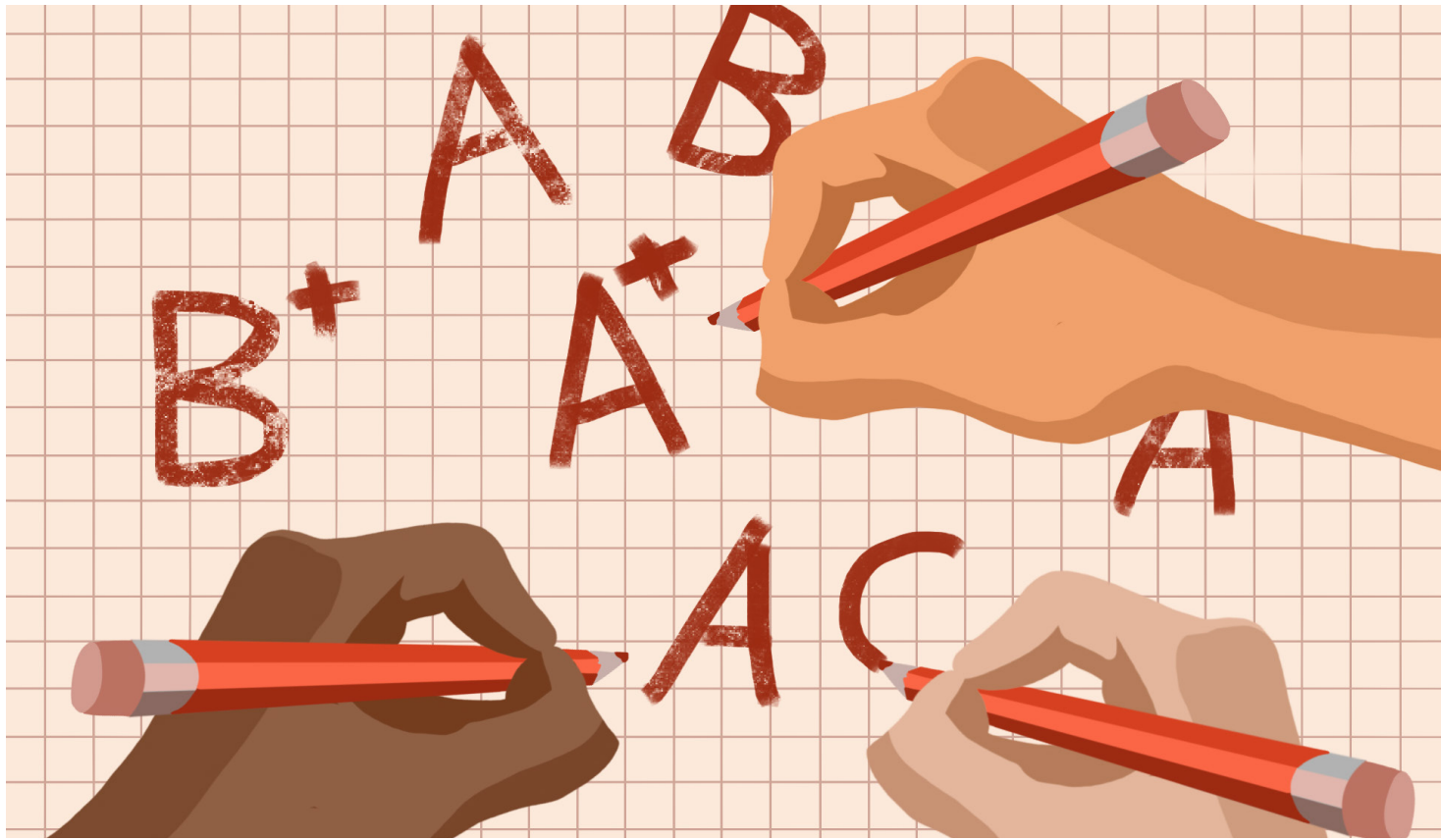
Ms. Jenney, who proposed “Queer Studies” with Ms. Amy Howland, said, “The Queer Studies course is growing out of multiple years of both student and faculty interest and the emerging academic discipline of Queer Studies [...] and then growing out of another area of our curriculum, the Women and Gender Studies course.”

“Topics in Native American Studies” will examine common misconceptions about Indigenous identity and look to provide a more holistic view of what it means to be an American. Texts that will likely be discussed include Sherman Alexie’s memoir, *You Don’t Have to Say You Love Me*, Alicia Elliott’s *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*, and Sarah Deer’s *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*.

Ms. Rachel Kesler, who proposed the Native American Studies course, said, “I hope that many [students] come out

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As Pandemic Continues to Transform Classes, Students and Faculty Ask, What Are Grades For?



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

By **Lauren Kee '24**
Associate Editor

At Choate, teachers are required to give their students a grade “on an A through F rating with (+) and (-) indicators,” as written in the 2021-2022 Student Handbook. Students’ cumulative grades in each class are shown to them and their advisers twice in each of the three terms in the year: once at the midterm and once at the conclusion of the term. So, every few months, students eagerly check ChoateSIS, the School’s portal, to see if their grades have been released.

Traditionally, homework, essays, quizzes, projects, and tests are graded throughout the term. Most teachers also take into account completion of homework rather than accuracy, class participation, and other factors. Despite

some similarities in grading methods, grading remains subjective across students and faculty, raising questions of what grades truly mean to the Choate community.

The Choate News recently surveyed students on their views on, and experiences with, grading at Choate. Of the 108 respondents, only 11% agreed that Choate has a standardized grading system — that is, one in which where every teachers grade to a single objective rubric — while 87% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

“Sometimes grades on individual assignments feel next to arbitrary,” said Chloe Jacobs ’23. “Half the work of getting the best grade you can in a class requires learning a teacher’s preferences and grading style.”

One student who responded to the survey, saying “Some teachers believe that an A is the baseline

grade for a student, with higher or lower grades being offered for particularly exemplary or poor work. Other teachers set that baseline at a B+ or even lower, and push students to exceed expectations in order to earn an A,” they said.

In an attempt to uphold a standardized grading system at Choate, Director of Studies and chemistry teacher Mr. Kevin Rogers evaluates whether the grading methods across different sections of a course are “substantially similar.” To do so, he considers what is being asked of students in a course, the time that they are investing in the subject, and how different aspects of the course are weighted in the final grade. Still, he noted that grading “of course, lends itself to subjectivity in it, so we don’t require that all sections of the multi-section course be identical.”

Other teachers agree that there will likely never be a completely standardized grading system. “I think we’re all human. We all see and value things differently — and I’m speaking purely for English,” said English teacher Mr. Derek Palmore.

For Mr. Palmore, grades are a straightforward way for students to gauge their performance in class. “One of my goals with grades is, in some sense, to give students a sense of what their strengths are, what they need to work on,” he said. “I see grades as a way for students to understand their level of success in a class.”

However, when pressures to attain certain grades stem from extrinsic factors, such as peer pressure, parental expectations, and looming college applica-

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CHOATE WELCOMES BACK STUDY ABROAD AFTER PANDEMIC PAUSE

By **Aubrie Williams '24**
Reporter

After two years without Study Abroad, Choate has officially reopened the program for students wishing to travel to Italy, France, or Spain in the 2022-2023 school year, albeit not quite to its pre-Covid status. Students taking Arabic and Chinese are still unable to participate.

Nonetheless, many students are excited by the program’s return, especially those who came to Choate seeking international and immersive experiences. “Study Abroad is an important part of Choate’s mission, where [students] talk about building global competency and critical thinking skills,” said Director of Global Programs Ms. Ashley Sinclair. “That international experience doesn’t just help kids develop foreign language skills, but to navigate a new area and build independence and self-reliance.”

Given the limitations on international traveling due to the pandemic, organizing Study Abroad was a difficult and ambitious project. “We took a two-year break from study abroad

and decided to wait until we had a grasp as to what Covid meant and what that would mean for travel,” said Ms. Sinclair. She added that the safety of students is of utmost importance, especially regarding protection from Covid-19.

She continued, “We’ve worked with SYA [School Year Abroad] — the ones hosting the semester program in Spain and France — about their Covid mitigation strategies. Their host families have to be vaccinated, they are masked in the classroom, and when they go on field trips outside of the building, they make sure they follow the Covid protocols.”

Many students have shown a strong interest in joining the program. “I’m excited about immersing myself in a new culture and experiencing unique opportunities in a new place,” said Lucy Dreier ’24, a Spanish 350 student who is considering applying for the program in Spain.

Tess Taetle ’24, a French student, agreed, saying, “The Study Abroad program interests me because I want to explore new cultures. While I think that learning French in a

classroom setting is valuable, it’s nowhere near as valuable as learning in the actual country.”

While many believe that Study Abroad is a great opportunity, there is still some apprehension about the program. “One of my reservations about doing a study abroad program is the risk you take going to a foreign country, speaking an unfamiliar language, while living with a native family whom you’ve never met,” said Dreier.

In addition to being far from home, students are worried about how spending part of the school year in a different country could affect their life back at Choate and ability to participate in on-campus teams, clubs, and events. “Another downside would be the way it changes my schedule,” said Dreier. “It might prevent me from taking other electives that interest me.”

With Covid-19 still an important factor in regards to travel, the School is treading carefully to bring the full Choate experience back to life.

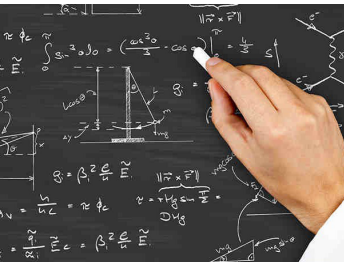
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Photo courtesy of Laura Scaviola

Choate students visit a historical site in the Study Abroad program in Jordan.

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Choate Launches Global Engagement Program



Photo courtesy of Laura Scaviola

A student participates in the 2014 Spain Summer Abroad experience.

By **Meredith Syms '23**
Associate Editor

Choate held the annual Course and Signature Program Fair on Zoom on Friday, January 21 and unveiled a new Signature Program, the Global Engagement Program (GEP). The event was hosted by Department Heads and Signature Program Coordinators who shared information about their specific course or program.

According to the web page for the newly added GEP section of the Signature Programs, the goal of the program is to “help students achieve a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of our world, and learn and think critically about 21st-century issues.” Some of the topics that will be explored within the program include access to education, healthcare, climate change, migration, and food security. GEP differs from Study Abroad as it combines global studies electives at Choate with a four-week study abroad experience.

Students participating in GEP will pick six globally-focused classes, touching on current events that are very prevalent today. Alongside the coursework, the required study abroad experience will take place either on an approved academic year study abroad or during the summer. Another unique aspect of the program is its emphasis on not having to travel far from home to experience and learn about new global environments and the various issues communities face.

In addition to the travel abroad requirement, students who take part in GEP will complete 30 hours of cultural events or volunteering in their own community.

GEP aims to inspire students to seek cultural exploration both in the classroom and beyond. Director of Global Programs Ms. Ashley Sinclair hopes that the program will help “students realize that they can be agents of change by learning more about different stakeholders around different cultures and regions and languages.”

Open to rising fourth and fifth formers, applications

will open this February along with the other signature programs. The plan is to create a small cohort of 12-15 students to launch the program in the 2022-2023 school year. When applying for GEP, rising fifth form students will have priority so that they have enough time to complete the various course requirements.

When asked how students will be selected for the program Ms. Sinclair said, “We are looking for a diversity of students’ past experiences, diversity among what kinds of themes that they are looking to do [...] and trying to make sure that we have covered a wide variety of perspectives.”

Reflecting on the event and the new program, Bella Hasset ’24, who is looking to apply to the program noted, “The GEP makes me feel super excited about exploring new cultures while expanding my knowledge on current events.”

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New Courses Diversify Curriculum

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with a much broader understanding of modern Indigenous movements and also modern Native activists, and also Native authors, Native influencers — just have a better insight into what [Indigenous] country looks like today.”

“Our School Upon the Hillside” is a local, archival history course which will discuss the history of the Quinnipiac Tribe, Wallingford, the Choate School, and Rosemary Hall. This course will be taught by Mr. Jonas Akins.

The English curriculum is also shifting to be more representative of the voices and identities in the Choate community and of the world through diversifying the texts studied in underclassman classes and re-viving several English electives from the past.

EN200 has been renamed “Literatures in a Global Context,” which will still focus on process-based writing, but through examining more di-

verse texts and genres. Because the course is required during the fourth-form year, students can gain a more comprehensive outlook on contemporary issues early in their Choate career.

Some of the revived sixth-form English single-term electives include “Sankofa: Topics in African Literature,” “Literatures of Encounter Across the Asian Diaspora,” “Latinx Literature,” “Return to Turtle Island: Indigenous Literatures of North America,” “Imagined Futures and Alternate Realities: The Literatures of Tomorrow,” and “The End of Nature: Global Literatures of Environmental Justice.”

The “Literatures of Encounter Across the Asian Diaspora” course will explore the diasporas of authors from a wide range of Asian countries. The curriculum’s texts may include Haruki Murakami’s *Underground*, Jin Yong’s *The Book and the Sword*, and Prabda Yoon’s *The Sad Part Was*.

Dr. Amber Hodge, who worked on several of the Course

Catalogue descriptions for the revived English courses, said, “Literatures of Encounter Across the Asian Diaspora’ is an important course because of the content but also the audience. There’s a significant presence from across Asia and the Asian diaspora at Choate, so I’m hoping students who consider themselves a part of that community will be interested in the course and that students of other identities will want to learn more.”

Although members involved in this process understand that the changes have not fully decolonized Choate’s curriculum, they do mark a step in the right direction. Ms. Kesler believes that these new changes can help “give students agency in the classroom and agency over things like assessments, what we might be talking about on the day to day, or just how we are going to cover different types of content.”

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Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

WHAT ARE GRADES FOR?

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tions, grades can become a major source of anxiety and stress for students. On a scale of 1-5, where 5 represented that a student’s grade meant a lot to them and 1 represented indifference, 47% of surveyed students answered with a 5, and another 45% answered with a 4.

“I’ve dealt with many crying students because of grades,” said physics teacher and Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion Mr. Filipe Camarotti. “There’s an emotional response to grades, which I think means that grades mean something’s at stake.” 65% of the survey respondents strongly agreed, and another 27%, agreed, that they would be upset with what they believed to be a “bad” grade.

Students and teachers define a “bad” grade differently. In the survey, 25% of students responded that they would consider B- as an unacceptable letter grade, while another 24% repesonded with a B and B+ respectively. 7% responded with an A-, and 11% responded with a C+.

Many students noted that they often equate their grades with their self-worth and use them as a form of self-validation. “I do my best to separate my worth from my grades, but when family, peers, and even strangers compliment me for my academic achievements and good grades, that positive reinforcement inevitably affects my self-worth,” said Jacobs.

While Mr. Rogers believes that grades serve as a shorthand indication of how a student is doing in a class, he considers narrative feedback and the student’s digestion of that feedback to be more important. “I would love to give narrative feedback and not

have to translate that narrative feedback into a representative grade,” he said.

Mr. Morgan Harris, Director of Academic Technology and HPRSS teacher, describes himself as being in “a very experimental phase with figuring out how to best approach grading.”

Instead of being graded on assignments throughout the term, students in Mr. Harris’s classes write two reflections, one at mid-term and one at the end of the term. Students will “compose a comprehensive reflection on what they’ve done in the course and how they’ve grown as a person ... to take an honest look at their relationship with the course and then advocate for what grade they believe they deserve,” he said.

Mr. Harris has questioned why most institutions, including Choate, give grades. He said, “The answer seems to always come back to ‘because if we didn’t, it could disadvantage our kids in the college application process.’” However, he is curious if “the other various benefits of not having grades would ultimately make that student a more compelling candidate, because they are able to tap into their intrinsic motivation, explore their passions, and be such an authentic applicant.”

Researching the origin, relevance, and effectiveness of grades, Mr. Harris found that grades originated in the Western Enlightenment, a time of revolutionary inventions resulting from newfound abilities to measure, analyze, and quantify. The first grades can be traced back to a footnote in former Yale President Ezra Stiles’s journal, which sorted students into Optimi, Second Optimi, Inferiores, and Pejores — from there, stu-

dents began to be analyzed and quantified through grades.

“What we’re doing is we’re setting up all of these incentive structures to measure everything possible,” Mr. Harris said. “It can create perverse incentives for people to become addicted to the affirmation that some quantifiable measure gives to them. And in succumbing to that addiction, you lose sight of why you’re here in the first place.”

Lilli Schmidt-Engelbertz ’23, who is currently taking Mr. Harris’s Moral Reasoning class, said, “You do the homework not to get the grade on it, but you do the homework because you actually want to learn it.” Her mindset has shifted from having to produce a paper to simply creating a reflection, which has allowed her to be more thoughtful, straightforward, and authentic in her responses to class materials.

During the pandemic, many students were forced to reevaluate their styles of learning and teaching under times of uncertainty and remote learning. Students were taking classes in different environments with different resources available to them, while teachers adapted to both their students’ new lifestyles and their new classrooms — Zoom.

Mr. Camarotti believes that the pandemic has exposed the flaws and inequities of the grading and education system at large. “And so, a way to respond to inequity is to then take a closer look at the system — grading as a system,” he said. For example, a student living in a different time zone and with different access to technology and space can unfairly affect their experience in a class. Speaking on how he adjusted to teaching in a pandemic, espe-

cially during virtual learning, Mr. Camarotti said, “I can’t just give a quiz in the same way. So let’s think more creatively — let’s expand how to assign something.”

Currently, the School offers the option for students to take classes on a Pass/D/Fail basis with the approval of Mr. Rogers and in consultation with the student’s dean, department head, adviser, and college counselor. Yet, many students are hesitant to switch to the Pass/D/Fail option in fear of hurting their chances in college admissions.

“I wish I could’ve taken Pass/D/Fail in some of my classes that made me overly stressed so that I could enjoy learning the content more,” said Ellie Pyper ’22. “If there wasn’t the stigma that Pass/D/Fail would look bad on my transcript for college applications, I definitely would try more classes.”

Mr. Rogers noted that grades are an important metric used by external institutions, such as colleges, scholarship programs, and internships — opportunities often sought by Choate students. “For better or for worse, the A-B-C-D-F system that we use is widely translatable and understood across a wide spectrum of outside constituencies that would be interested in seeing what students are doing in high school academically,” he said.

Grades continue to be a crucial element in the classrooms at Choate and in the American education system as a whole. As teachers adjust and adapt to changing times, the way that they evaluate students’ work will change too.

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NETWORKING SERIES CONNECTS STUDENTS WITH ALUMNI

By **Calvin Moon ’24**
Reporter

On January 19, The ChoateNexus Networking Series held its second event via Zoom, which covered the medical field. The Alumni Relations team organized the networking series in hopes to connect students early to alumni involved in different career fields.

The most recent event hosted eight doctors from different medical fields, including pathology, dentistry, medical residency, pediatrics, emergency services, global health, oncology, and neurosurgery. In each of the two 25-minute sessions, the doctors talked about their journey, shared helpful resources and contact information, and answered many questions.

The event provided the participants with access to alums who are accomplished in their field, giving the audience an opportunity to seek advice. This allowed current students to obtain valuable experience and knowledge about their field of interest.

“Overall, I felt like the event was useful, as they had alums from several fields of medicine. I learned a lot about daily life as a pediatrician and an oncologist and how Choate will prepare me for a future career,” said Alyssa Jaster ’23. As she looks forward to pursuing a career in pediatric oncology,

she now knows, “medicine is the right path for me.”

Fifth-form dean and Associate for Alumni Engagement Mr. Will Gilyard ’98 hopes that the networking series will help participants create their own network of Choate alumni that they can tap into later in their life. “As an alum myself, I have been lifted up by Choate alums and have helped lift Choate alumni, and knowing that this affinity group exists and

“As an alum myself, I have been lifted up by Choate alums and have helped lift Choate alumni, and knowing that this affinity group exists and are willing to support each other is amazing”

Mr. Will Gilyard ’98
Fifth-form Dean

are willing to support each other is amazing,” he said. “I want our current students and young alums to feel that sense of pride and responsibility.”

Nina Kulkarni ’23, who learned about emergency medicine, appreciated the diversity of the doctors who spoke. She said, “I also enjoyed that many alumni were there, either those who were in college and deciding how to pursue a career in medicine or alumni who had completed medical school and were in residency or in practice.”

The Alumni Relations Office hopes to continue to provide learning and networking opportunities to students interested in other fields. As of now, a health and wellness networking event is planned in February, arts in March, tech in April, and law in May.

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EXPLORING WALLINGFORD

Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

DAY STUDENTS ATTEMPT TO
BRIDGE CHOATE-TOWN DIVIDE

Photos courtesy of Lorraine Hillgen-Santa, Gaby Nirmal, and Chiara Vessicchio

Lorraine Hillgen-Santa '24 (left), Gaby Nirmal '23 (middle), Chiara Vessicchio '22 (right), recount their experiences as Wallingford day students.

By **Sydney Alleyne '23**
Associate Editor

Choate's position in the Wallingford community creates a nuanced conflict for students who are a part of both worlds. Particularly amid the pandemic, the concerns of international students have been apparent — issues such as irregular schedules due to differences in time zones, or international travel. What is rarely focused on, however, is the experience of the students whose daily commute is about the length of a passing period: Choate's Wallingford residents.

The dichotomy between being a Choate student and a Wallingford resident is unique to each individual. For Chiara Vessicchio '22, a lifelong Wallingford resident, there is a stark contrast between these two aspects of her daily life. She said, "As both a 'townie' and 'Choate,'

I've felt like I had to pick a side to support. When I tell people from Wallingford I go to Choate, I'm usually met with disgruntled looks and a snarky remark like, 'Oh, so you're one of them?'"

Lorraine Hillgen-Santa '24, who moved to Wallingford only a few months before entering Choate, has had similar experiences. "I do notice that when you talk to other Wallingford residents, there is a large divide [between whether] they either find you fascinating and like Choate, or assume that you think you are better than them and strongly dislike Choate."

It is clear that these sentiments, and that they play a rather pertinent role in the lives of students. This division exists primarily because Choate and Wallingford are so demographically different. As of the 2021-2022 School year, Choate currently has a population of 38% domestic students of color and 18%

international students. Choate has a much more racially and ethnically diverse population than Wallingford, of which 84% of the town's population identifies as White, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This racial breakdown is a component that Melody Qian '24, who identifies as Chinese, feels acutely. "It's not like there aren't other Asian residents in Wallingford. There definitely are. I just feel like Choate is generally a much more diverse and accepting community."

"I don't really want to look like a Choate student," said Qian, who believes the label subjects her to a certain hostility when in town. "I try not to wear Choate merch or dress preppy when going into town for groceries and such. This is generally just to avoid harassment and things that I've heard have happened from prior accounts." As the Choate lays in the center of town, it controls the

four-way intersection, resulting in heckling from local residents. Yet, students from both the Choate and Wallingford communities warn that it is a misconception that there is only hostility from Wallingfordians against Choatians. Hillgen-Santa said, "Sometimes I think boarders assume that if you are living in Wallingford, then you or your family may have that disdain for Choate like some of the Wallingford residents they have interacted with do."

Nonetheless, The day students that call both Wallingford and Choate home have a singular experience. Gaby Nirmal '23, a Wallingford day student said, "My friends from Wallingford and my friends at Choate couldn't be more different. Both worlds make up different parts of who I am."

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WALLINGFORD ANIMAL
SHELTER GETS TAILS WAGGING

By **Tiffany Xiao '23**
Associate Editor

When Mr. Mitch Gibbs, Director of the Wallingford Animal Shelter, thinks about local animal conservation, he thinks of the time a town resident reported a stray cat he'd seen on his security footage. The cat had an infected wound encircling three quarters of his neck, and Mr. Gibbs reported that the animal did not have good odds of survival. The cat went into the care of the Wallingford Animal Shelter, where his wounds were operated on twice. Both times, his stitches reopened and his condition worsened. A third and final surgery, Mr. Gibbs recounted, was a "magic number. He's a brand new cat. He's loving. He loves his treats. He's just a good boy." The cat will soon be available for adoption.

Located just a short walk away from Choate campus, the shelter is an organization dedicated to rescuing and providing loving homes for stray or surrendered animals. While the shelter gives priority to local animals and pets given up by Wallingford residents, it accepts animals from across Connecticut. Their work has made them a popular place of refuge for a wide range of rescued

animals, including dogs, cats, rabbits, hedgehogs, ferrets, and recently, a guinea pig.

The shelter's "low-kill" policy is responsible for saving the life of the injured cat. The shelter euthanizes only when animals are deemed too dangerous to place in a household, or when they have a debilitating and terminal illness that prevents them from having a pain-free life. In other cases, the shelter prioritizes rehabilitation and adoption for the animal.

The stray animals that the shelter takes in are often, as Mr. Gibbs put it, "rough around the edges." Frequently, they are anxious and physically injured. Mr. Gibbs finds it fulfilling "just watching their transformation — watching them blossom into a new animal that we're able to find a home for. A lot of times it's like night and day — the animal that we brought in to what they turn out to be — and it's just great to be part of that process."

More recently, the shelter has greatly benefited from an online trend named the "Betty White Challenge," after the late actress, comedian, and animal-rights activist. Through fundraising with nonprofits, the shelter has raised nearly \$7,000. "We were going to be

happy if we made three or four hundred dollars," Mr. Gibbs said, "We were all amazed."

While the shelter is a municipal organization, like many animal shelters, it works closely with a nonprofit, in this case, Friends of the Wallingford Animal Shelter. With the money donated from the nonprofit, the shelter has been able to expand their volunteer opportunities. For example, they have cat socialization and dog walking programs, which offer the participants and animals an opportunity to get outside.

Ms. Jackie Richo, the founder of Friends of the Wallingford Animal Shelter, said, "Volunteers are there to make an animal's time in the shelter as comfortable as possible with the ultimate goal of getting them out of the shelter."

Before the pandemic, the shelter hosted events that ranged from fairs with an assortment of rescue groups to bake sales and Easter egg hunts. The shelter has now adapted to Covid-19 restrictions, presenting at the annual Wallingford Holiday Stroll around Christmastime and planning an open house for the fall. Presently, walk-in visits to the Shelter are not allowed. Instead, visits are made by appointment, and

volunteers can participate in initiatives organized through the Friends of the Wallingford Animal Shelter.

The organizations have also pooled resources to expand their fostering programs, in which households can temporarily take in animals. The Animal Shelter has also found success using Petfinder, a website that allows the organization to showcase pets that are up for adoption to people in the surrounding area. The shelter has managed to process four adoptions in only a matter of weeks using the platform.

The money raised from general fundraising and the Betty White Challenge will go toward new programs the Friends of the Wallingford Animal Shelter is developing through the shelter. They are specifically working on efforts to implant microchips in each animal that is adopted and provide health check-ups for senior animals that enter the shelter. Mr. Gibbs hopes that with the Shelter's new developments, more animals will make it into the homes of families across the Northeast.

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Photoscourtesy of Mitch Gibbs, Director of the Wallingford Animal Shelter

Artichoke (left) and Mindy (right) await adoption at the Wallingford Animal Shelter.

CHARITY BEGINS
IN TOWN

Photo courtesy of Mitch Gibbs, Director of the Wallingford Animal Shelter

Mario Van Pibbles was rehabilitated with the help of the FWAS.

By **Tiffany Xiao '23**
Associate Editor

"Animals are my passion," Ms. Jackie Richo said when asked about her role as the founder of Friends of the Wallingford Animal Shelter (FWAS), a 501c nonprofit organization established to provide support for the local animal shelter. Ms. Richo, who once dreamed of becoming a veterinarian, created the nonprofit in August of 2021, when the Wallingford Animal Shelter experienced short-staffing and a shift in leadership after the previous director went on maternity leave.

Ms. Richo, who has served on various nonprofit boards and volunteered with the Meriden Humane Society, took inspiration from the Friends of the New Haven Animal Shelter and wanted to recreate it locally. She proposed a new local organization to work in tandem with the Wallingford shelter. "You can't run a shelter with just animal control officers. There's not

enough time in the day for them to do everything that needs to get done," she said. "It takes a village."

While FWAS works closely with the Wallingford Animal Shelter, it is an independent organization. Decisions on the allocation of funds raised by the nonprofit are made by its board members, and funds sometimes go to other local projects related to FWAS's mission, like the "trap, neuter, release" program, which aims to reduce the feral cat population.

The nonprofit is still in its early stages; Ms. Richo said that her goals so far have been fundraising and promoting. The group commissioned a logo and sold car magnets to promote itself and raise money.

Though only a few months old, FWAS has already made a notable impact on the Wallingford community. Ms. Richo said, "Everybody is very engaged and very active, so this is very exciting for me."

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Friends of the
Wallingford Animal
Shelter

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ODE TO LANPHIER

By Yoyo Zhang '24

Associate Editor

When I first arrived at Choate as a freshman last winter, I was overwhelmed by the complex layout of the 458-acre campus. Being directionally challenged was a constant struggle, despite the tours that my roommate frequently gave me — our favorite quarantine activity. The resemblance between all the reddish-brown buildings forced me to find a walking buddy for each class, so I would not end up lost.

In the jungle of Brick Romanesque architecture, however, one particular structure stood out to me: the Lanphier Center. It was the transparent walls that caught my attention — a futuristic style that differentiated itself from the red brick I saw everywhere else. Just from first glance, I knew that this was the math and computer science building, which was why precalculus became the first class I could walk to alone.

Perhaps it was the easy identification that drew me to spending many afternoons there. Whenever I had a few hours to spare after class, I would pack up my books and walk straight through Memorial Circle from my dorm, Nichols, to Lanphier. I would then swipe my card to enter the Bruce S. Gelb '45 Study Room — the biggest one on the first floor — and stay there until sunset. In my little hideout, I read novellas, composed essayettes, listened to Liszt, and pondered life. It was mesmerizing to relax in a place far from noise and clutter, gazing out the glass wall at the pond and the weeping willow trees.

On some days, though, I was visited by others who passed by the study room and poked their heads in to say, “Hi.” As timid as my freshman self was, I made some of my first friends there, thanks to the transparent glass walls. Even though I was initially reluctant to allow intruders into my secret garden, I realized that having company at the opposite end of the

room could be refreshing. The wide space perfectly accommodated two people, and gradually, my solo view-watching turned into a shared experience of serenity. “Do you want to study in Lanphy with me this afternoon?” was an invitation I frequently extended to people whom I deemed special enough to enter my sanctuary.

One afternoon, I noticed a familiar face outside the study room. It was someone from my Spanish class, but we had never met in-person because our class was held at night and remained online for the entire year. We started a conversation and instantly clicked. From that night onwards, we arranged to attend every Spanish class together from the same computer, in the same study room. It was an end-of-the-day activity that I always looked forward to. On the dark trek across the science center bridge after my 7:30 p.m. physics class, Lanphier was the crystal beacon that guided my way. I felt a rush of happiness every time I pulled open the glass

door because I knew that my friend was waiting for me at the end of the hallway. While the world dimmed into darkness, we fought back our giggles and exchanged knowing glances in our peaceful oasis.

This year, I have the luxury of living right next to Lanphier in Archbold, but sadly there is less time for me to indulge in my beloved study room sessions. The once-quiet floors have turned into another populated passage due to the increased number of students on campus, and I rarely find the Bruce S. Gelb '45 study room empty. Yet, although Lanphier and I have both changed since when we first met each other, I still reminisce on the shades of sunset I once viewed from the window and the peaceful state of mind that allowed me to appreciate the slow moments.

Yoyo Zhang is a fourth-former from Shanghai, China. She may be reached at yozhang24@choate.edu

I MEDITATE. YOU SHOULD, TOO.



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

By Lily Hrazdira '24

Opinions Writer

Amid the chaos of hockey games, essays, and tests, I went into the last week of winterlude with a goal to meditate every day during one of the school year's busiest weeks.

Meditation is accessible to all and easy to learn. It seemed almost too simple of a solution for the complex stressors in my life, which is why I was reluctant to start in the first place. As someone who typically internalizes and suppresses my stress, I wasn't sure how meditating instead of actively dealing with my stressors could help me move forward from them.

The first time I meditated during winterlude was before an early morning chemistry class. I used a meditation session specifically geared towards enhancing focus, where the narrator asked me to focus solely on the music playing. Prior to the meditation, I remember feeling very rushed, with a million thoughts rushing through my head. Yet, as I got out of bed after meditating, I felt a sense of serendipity and was surprised that the meditation had actually worked. Feeling more organized, I headed off to class.

At first, it was difficult to listen only to the meditation guide and not get distracted by my other thoughts, especially during a busy day. But, as I continued to meditate day after day, I could tell that my focus had improved. Over winter break, meditation helped me get out of my head and put me into a better mindset

to enjoy a break from school's pressure. Now that we're back and running, I hope to add meditating to part of my daily routine and see its long-term impacts on my wellbeing.

In the short term, I have noticed a sense of calm before tests and improved focus for the information I need to remember. Similarly, meditating before hockey practice has helped get my mind off things that aren't important on the ice. I like meditating alone in my room, especially on my bed, where I can comfortably sit or lie down. I typically browse YouTube for guided meditation videos as I've found that I prefer meditation sessions guided by women, finding more comfort in feminine voices. I also like listening to the soothing sounds and music that play in the background of the videos.

Choate is a stressful place, and it can be overwhelming when free time seems impossible to find. I recommend meditation by starting for just five minutes before extending to longer periods of time as you get more comfortable with it. Once you find what method of meditation works best for you, its positive effects on your mental health and wellbeing will keep you hooked. While I had only intended to try meditation for one week during winterlude, it ended up being a lot more helpful than I had anticipated. Here I am, two months later in the thick of the winter term, still meditating and reaping its benefits.

Lily Hrazdira is a fourth-former from New York. She may be reached at lhrazdira24@choate.edu



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

ADVICE FOR THE MATH DEPARTMENT,
FROM A STUDENT TUTOR

By Samuel Qin '22

Opinions Writer

As an elite, college preparatory school, Choate is expected to prepare students for future studies in college and beyond. This intent, however, isn't always realized. For example, in the Math Department, a disproportionate amount of students require extensive extra help and/or tutoring to keep up with the curriculum. Ideally, students should be able to succeed with minimal amounts of outside help.

In order to adequately support math students, teams of students in the Peer Tutoring program and the Math Center volunteer to aid their struggling peers. In the Math Center, I've spent over 30 hours tutoring, working with students in math classes ranging from Geometry to Multivariable Calculus. I've noticed a pattern in students' math habits: they struggle to apply previous knowledge and instead prioritize memorization over understanding.

This first shortcoming greatly impedes students' ability to learn. Math is a constructive field of study — in order to learn and fully understand mathematics, students need to be able to take the previous knowledge in their “mathematical toolbox” and apply that to new situations. Essentially, students must develop critical thinking and creative problem solving skills.

Yet, Choate's math courses speed through new material rather than allowing students the time to foster these skills. As a math tutor, I've noticed that some of Choate's precalculus classes teach the Law of Sines and Cosines without a proof of these laws. Some classes also teach trigonometric identities and complex numbers without tying the two together. This format teaches new knowledge by ingraining formulas into students' minds through dozens of homework assignments and tests, yet these con-

cepts are never entirely understood and, therefore, inevitably forgotten. Students focus solely on memorizing formulas just to get through the next assessment without ever reviewing old material.

Think about memorizing song lyrics: the words are hard to learn without the music, but the song itself, with the music and melody, is quite easy to memorize. Why? The music offers a structure for the lyrics. Likewise, Choate's math system needs to create this melody (structure), so the lyrics (formulas) can be attached and linked. However, the facilitation of these connections is often neglected, so students are left to make them on their own — or not at all.

Still, the face-paced nature of Choate life makes it difficult for the Math Department to foster critical and creative thinking. Between extracurriculars, heavy class loads, and club commitments, students are hard-pressed to find time for homework. Once one assignment is done, students immediately move onto the next without spend-

ing time ruminating and connecting new knowledge to previous knowledge. Unfortunately, this fast-paced life impacts teachers as well, as they balance teaching four to five classes, extra help, sports, and dorm life — while trying to get through a packed curriculum.

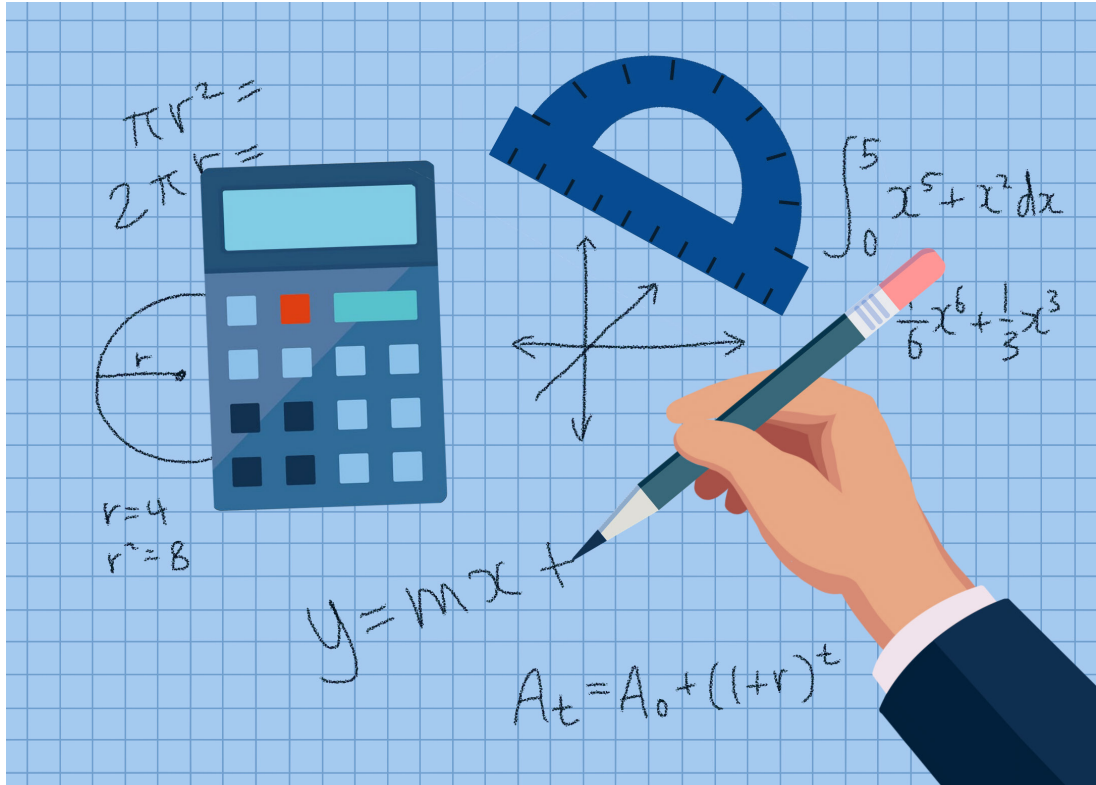
In short, the Math Department struggles because teachers and students are both overburdened. Still, the program could help students draw connections across their body of mathematical knowledge by incorporating proofs into classwork or homework and by substituting tests with problem sets.

Consider proofs. First taught in geometry, proofs serve as a logical method of showing that a statement is true. Proofs build on known knowledge to achieve an unknown result, thus connecting the two and creating a foundation that makes new knowledge easier to learn. Admittedly, writing a proof is challenging, but by using one's “mathematical toolbox,” it is doable and helps students practice discovering connections on their own.

My second suggestion, problem sets, has already been implemented in several courses, including those of Mr. Dan Proulx and Dr. Jessica Pfeil. These problem sets are designed to challenge students to apply their knowledge in a new and unexpected situation, similarly building problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

I know that the teachers at Choate are fantastic and are trying their best under the constraints of our current education system — and that my proposed solutions are challenging to implement and require extra time and energy on teachers' ends. Still, I hope that between the Math Department's teachers and student tutors, we can work toward building a math program that encourages imaginative and critical thinking — that encourages students to enjoy the whole song, not just a list of soon-to-be-forgotten song lyrics.

Samuel Qin is a sixth-former from Greer, S.C. He may be reached at sqin22@choate.edu



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

The Political Advantage of a Talking Filibuster

By **Maggie McCabe '22**
Staff Writer

One of the most pressing issues facing Capitol Hill is the fate of the filibuster. Broadly, the filibuster is a rule implemented in the U.S. Senate that allows for unlimited debate — a tactic used to delay voting on a specific matter by requiring at least 60 votes supporting the bill in question. The majority leader can choose to throw out the issue entirely or file a motion to invoke cloture, ending debate and moving to vote. Most recently, the filibuster was used to block Democrat-backed voting rights acts.

Now, the Democrats have found themselves at a do-or-die scenario: a thin majority alongside the reintroduction of the long-debated and controversial filibuster. If the U.S. is to maintain peace between both sides of the aisle, the Senate must revert back to the talking filibuster rather than the silent filibuster. Although senators can use the talking filibuster to give lengthy speeches in order to divert from the topic on the table, the rule gives each side a total of 20 hours to debate before requiring them to come to a vote.

When considering how the U.S. can implement the talking filibuster to protect democracy rather than undermining it, it's important to understand the historical context of the policy. The filibuster was created in 1917 during World War I (WWI) to advance an anti-war agenda. It reformed the



Photo courtesy of Brookings Institution

Senators convene over the most recent filibuster involving a Voting Bill.

Senate's initial rules of unlimited debate, but required a two-thirds majority vote to invoke cloture. At the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, the filibuster turned into a last resort for Southern Democrats, an attempt to preserve racist practices in their state. After it was lowered to a three-fifths majority in 1975, the filibuster became used more frequently.

In 2013, Democratic Senator Harry Reid reduced the filibuster to not include presidential nominations other than the Supreme Court. Five years later, Republican Senator Mitch McConnell reduced it even more to not include Supreme Court nominees, which re-

sulted in Former President Trump P'oo packing the court with three conservative justices. The cloture motion was initially only filed a few times per year, but in 2021 alone, the motion has been filed close to 200 times — often by the Republican Party to reject legislation they disagree with without voting on it, as in the most recent case.

Currently, any senator may stand up when the majority leader asks for unanimous consent to end debate by saying "I object." Then, the senate floor enters debate over the issue until a motion is filed for cloture, which must pass with 60 votes. The filibuster rule does not apply to the Senate confirmation

of executive branch positions and supreme court nominations, as well as certain types of legislation like budget reconciliation, trade agreements, military base closures, and arms sales.

Following the recent incident, the Democrats have increased support for a modification to current filibuster policy — now, this push must continue.

By keeping the filibuster in place as is, we risk stripping Americans of their right to vote. In the long term, the policy allows a singular senator to completely shut down a piece of legislation. Yet, completely abolishing the filibuster would allow the party with the ma-

jority in the Senate to pass as much legislation as possible. This goes against the founding fathers' ideals and George Washington's famous words, "the House of Representatives pours legislation into the Senatorial saucer to cool it."

Therefore, the only logical, middle-of-the-road solution to keep the legislative branch of the U.S. government a representative democracy is to revert back to the talking filibuster. If we do this, it will require the party who declares the filibuster to hold the floor of the Senate. As soon as they leave the floor, the Senate goes straight to voting on the bill, only requiring a

simple majority. In essence, the talking filibuster would restore balance to the Senate and fulfill its role in deliberating and debating potential solutions to the nation's biggest challenges.

This minor rule change will reduce the number of filibusters declared and allow legislation to be passed much faster than the two-track system currently in place. Additionally, restoring the filibuster would return debate to the public eye. American democracy depends on voter transparency. Yet today, voters rarely see the Senate enacting change — other than a few bills and amendments on the floor, the Senate's gridlock has forced all negotiations behind closed doors. Through the talking filibuster, the Senate can hold the floor to explain their positions to the American people.

In order to achieve this rule change, the Senate needs 50 votes plus Vice President Harris's tie-breaking vote. Right now, all Democratic Senators have expressed some support for this except Senator Sinema of Arizona.

If Democratic leaders can convince Sinema to vote along with this rule change, the Democrats have a chance of passing voting rights legislation without risking it being reverted as soon as they lose their thin majority.

Maggie McCabe is a sixth-former from Broadlands, Va. She may be reached at mmccabe22@choate.edu

Quebec's 'Punishment Jar' is Unreasonable

By **Olympia Wolff '25**
Opinions Writer

Pitman prefects use a "punishment jar" to motivate recalcitrant third formers — myself included — to comply with dorm regulations. During nightly prefect inspections, failure to clean your room or to check-in via Reach means reaching into a small cup with little paper slips to select one of the many possible penalties, including losing cell phone privileges during the study break and early lights out. While we use a punishment jar in Pitman to deal with infractions, Quebec's unvaccinated citizens face their own version of a punishment jar. Only in this case, the anti-vaxxers will need to put their own money in the jar. That is, unvaccinated residents of the Canadian province of Quebec will soon face a significant financial penalty, violating Quebecans' independence.

Today, roughly 10% of residents of Quebec remain unvaccinated. Vaccination is the best step towards ending this pandemic or, for now, lessening its deadly effects on communities. But, financially penalizing unvaccinated residents isn't the best way to increase vaccination rates.

By financially penalizing the unvaccinated, Canada is directly infringing on the autonomy of its residents. Quebec should take certain measures to ensure the health and safety of vaccinated residents and healthcare workers directly impacted by the poor decisions of

those who refuse the vaccine. At this moment, Quebec's decision crosses a line for many people. Some people are uncomfortable with receiving vaccines because the technology is still relatively new and its long-term effects are largely unclear. Residents deserve the ability to refuse vaccination, but they should be restricted from interacting with society in the ways that vaccinated people can.

Many who refuse to receive the vaccine tend to distrust the government and public healthcare system, and such a penalty could backfire, resulting in more distrust of the system. The government is able to limit what unvaccinated residents can do by requiring vaccination records before participating in public life such as utilizing public transportation or entering movie theaters. A punishment jar for the unvaccinated should not be necessary.

Other countries use more severe measures to enforce vaccine compliance. For example, Singapore requires unvaccinated patients hospitalized with Covid-19 to pay their medical bills. This requirement to pay medical bills ensures the unvaccinated don't overburden the healthcare system. Quebec may have gotten its idea from Greece, who, at the beginning of 2022, imposed a fine of 100 Euros (\$113 USD) on its citizens for each month that they remain unvaccinated. While we don't yet know the details on how much Quebec is planning to fine

its unvaccinated residents or the regularity in which they will be fined, Premier Francois Legault has set his hopes on a seemingly larger amount.

Many argue that when a patient enters a healthcare system, their medical record and choices shouldn't reflect how they are treated. But, according to NPR, 50% of the people filling Canada's intensive care units are individuals who have chosen not to be vaccinated. This has very adverse effects on the healthcare system in Canada, which is currently overloaded. Residents in Canada are paying for a healthcare system via taxes, yet many of its resources are going to patients who have chosen to impose consequential risks upon their community by not getting vaccinated. Something needs to be done, but financially depleting citizens is not the solution. Restricting access to bars, restaurants, community centers, and other local places that aren't of necessity is enough of a punishment for those who aren't vaccinated.

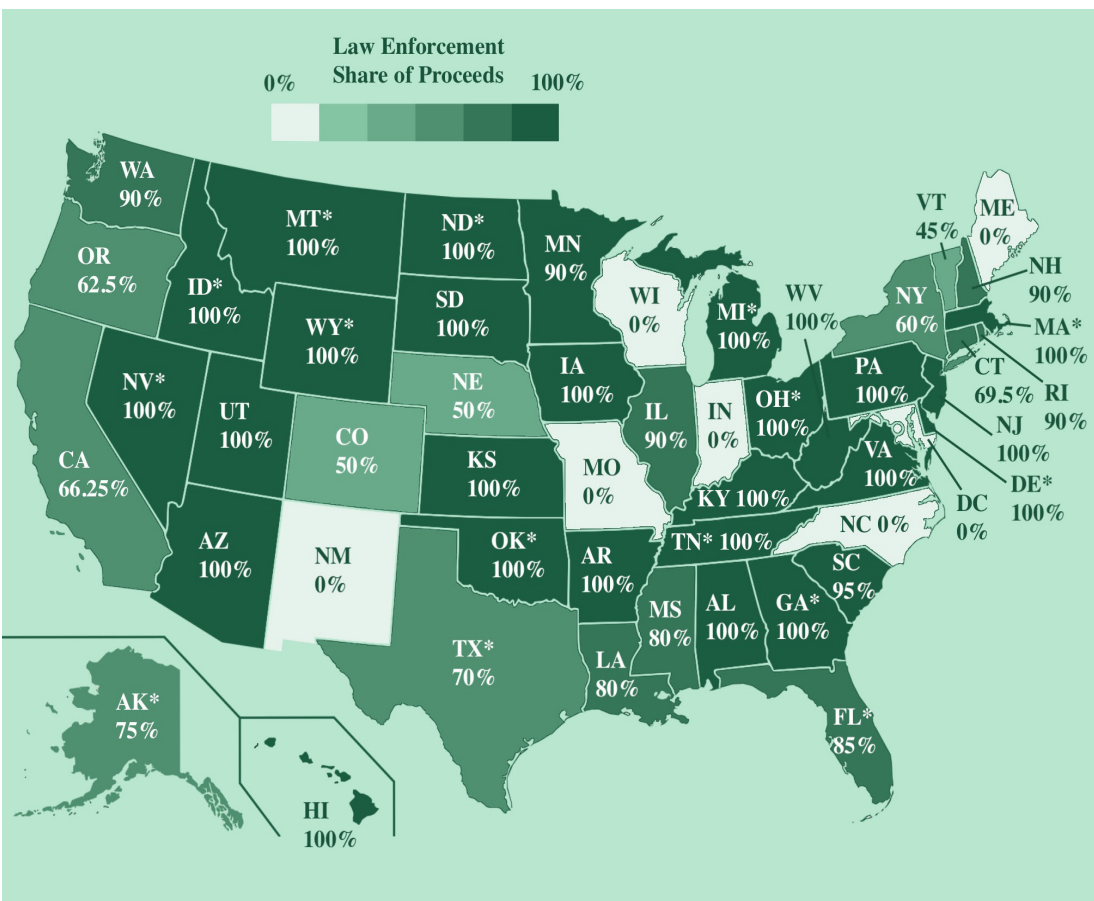
Even without a financial penalty, the punishment jar has motivated some counter-productive changes in behavior. Residents of Quebec should simply get vaccinated to help stop the spread of Covid-19. Keeping themselves, loved ones, and healthcare workers safe — and avoiding the fines imposed by Quebec's government.

Olympia Wolff is a third-former from St. Paul, Minn. She may be reached at owolff25@choate.edu



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

The Ethics Against Forfeiture of Civil Assets



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

By **Michael Koryakov '23**
Associate Editor

One day, Stephen Lara was driving down the road of Reno, Nevada when he was pulled over by a police officer who asked to search his car. Lara, preferring to keep his money in cash instead of holding it in a bank, had his life savings — almost \$100,000 — stashed in his trunk. Upon finding this cash, the officer called the FBI in, seized the cash, and brought it back to the police station, never charging Lara with a crime. The Institute for Justice recently brought to light this story of injustice and many more along with it. Luckily for Lara, he was able to get his money back, but most cases don't have such a favorable outcome.

Laws such as the one imposed on Lara were first created with the intention of confiscating assets from criminal organizations to prevent them from using those assets for nefarious activities. However, criminal forfeiture laws already exist. Once the court systems prove that money is involved in criminal operations, they have the right to seize the assets. Civil asset forfeiture laws are different because government

officials are instructed to take first and ask questions later.

The problem is that police are able to confiscate assets without probable cause. In the case of Lara, the police officer knew that he did not have cause to arrest him but still confiscated his money under the assumption that it was for or from an illegal transaction. What's worse is that police stations have a financial incentive to engage in these unsavory practices. In the majority of states, when a police station confiscates liquid assets, they — along with the prosecutors — get to keep anywhere from half to the entire sum for themselves. This effectively encourages police to do their jobs poorly for the sake of their precincts' financial success. In many cases, people whose assets are confiscated are never charged with a crime and cannot afford the legal fees to fight the federal government over the confiscated items.

The need to make change has been brought to light by people on both sides of the table, but few states have made a substantial change. According to the Institute for Justice, while 35 states have passed re-

forms, only seven have received a grade of "B" or higher on the Institute's rating scale for how well states protect their property owners. There are two effective proposed solutions.

One — which a few states have already put into place — is a reform of the confiscation policy itself. The ideal reforms would make it easier for the victims of a civil forfeiture to appeal their cases and remove the burden of proof from the citizen in these cases. It would also prevent the local and state police from using the money for operations before any sort of criminal charges or a conviction was levied.

The other solution to the issue of civil forfeiture is a complete abolition of the policy. The clear way to stop the police from abusing the system, as well as the loopholes to it, is to remove the policy as a whole. While it may result in marginally less money in criminal organizations, it'll prevent a substantial number of innocent Americans from losing their life savings.

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What It Takes to Clear COSA's New-Club Screening Process

By Ryan Kim '23
Associate Editor

On Monday, January 10, the Committee on Student Activities (COSA) once again began its annual club proposal process, an opportunity for students to present and start their own clubs on campus.

An organization of 12 students working in cooperation with the Student Activities Office, COSA helps manage and improve the quality of club life on campus. Currently, the group oversees 92 recognized student clubs, as well as two affinity groups, five spiritual life organizations, and 14 student organizations, which are mostly managed by faculty.

According to Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar, who is also the faculty adviser to COSA, 41 proposals were submitted to COSA last year. Among them, 23 proposals were approved, 14 were denied, and four were incorporated as a part of the newly formed Community Service Club and Environmental Action Coalition.

Among the proposals that were denied, one was because it was submitted by a sixth-form student, another was because it violated school policy, six were because the proposals were deemed to be personal projects or one-off events, and the remaining six were because their mission statements aligned closely with those of pre-existing clubs. These six proposals were recommended to collaborate with the pre-exist-



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

ing club that shared a similar mission statement.

"A lot of them were denied towards the beginning," shared Ms. Kazar. "Last year, we didn't see a lot of clubs get through the whole club proposal process and then get denied. I prefer not to do that because I think it gets people's hopes up and it's not really fair to stop them in their tracks."

The process begins with a short written application and a meeting with a member of COSA. Then, potential clubs will be cleared to have an initial interest meeting, after which they will begin to develop

their club constitution. Once those steps are completed, the club will gain official COSA recognition. For those interested in starting a club, the process is discussed in length on the Choate portal.

Finn McGaan '22, who founded the politics-focused publication *The Choate Inquiry* last year, said, "The application process was very smooth. The level of detail was apt — I didn't find myself overextending during my junior winter, but I also didn't feel like I was breezing through it."

Rajeev Roy '23, the founder and president of the Choate

branch of HOSA, agreed with McGaan. "It wasn't extremely rigorous, but it was pretty thorough," Roy said.

COSA has the ultimate say on whether a proposal is accepted or denied. "After the applications come in, an initial meeting is held with the student who proposed the club, their [club] adviser, and one or two representatives of COSA," said Ms. Kazar. In that first meeting, the student who proposed the club elaborates upon its mission, values, how the club will be successful, and how it differs from those already on campus.

"The representatives of COSA bring a recommendation back to the rest of the COSA board as to whether or not they think that a club should move on to the next steps. The reason that we do that is because we get so many club proposals it's hard for all of COSA to go to every single interest meeting," she said. The pool of potential new clubs narrows down the most after that first meeting with COSA.

The determination on whether a proposal is accepted is more complex than a simple majority vote. "It's not just one person's opinion that determines the suc-

cess or failure of a club. It sparks a conversation, and I typically take part in these conversations as well so that I ensure there is fairness in that process," said Ms. Kazar. It is these conversations that ultimately determine whether a proposal passes or not. In particular, COSA assesses the longevity of proposed clubs, the amount of interest demonstrated by the student founder, and how the club differs from pre-existing ones.

"COSA is dedicated to growing a healthy club life without over-saturating it, and we hope to work alongside the student body in helping them in understanding any decisions that we might make to ensure that this balance in club life is maintained," said Rhea Shah '22, the current COSA chair.

Among the 92 current clubs, 58 of them have been active for more than two years, according to Ms. Kazar. Notable changes such as the combination of numerous community service clubs into one unified Community Service Club and mergers to form the Environmental Action Coalition have contributed to the seemingly low number of long-term clubs.

As of January 26, 37 new club proposals have been submitted to COSA this year. The club proposal form closes tonight, January 28, at midnight, setting into motion another cycle of the club creation process.

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Aided by the Archives, HI333 to Explore Tri-School History



Photo courtesy of Choate Archives

A new history elective will focus on the histories of Rosemary Hall, Choate, and Choate Rosemary Hall.

By Jacqueline Yan '24
Reporter

kneelers from Rosemary Hall's old chapel in Greenwich.

According to Mr. Akins, frequent feedback from other teachers on how much their students enjoyed investigating the Archives — often as stand-alone units in English and HPRSS courses — inspired him to develop a full course revolving around such study. "My hope is that students will be able to personalize their experience in the course, tailoring their research to areas of interest, like a dormitory in which they live, an extracurricular in which they participate, or even a famous alum," he said.

Mr. Akins believes that diving deeper into the history of the School — or in his words, "really three schools: Rosemary Hall, Choate, and Choate Rosemary Hall" — will allow students to better understand how the Choate community came to be the way it is, while also studying Wallingford's complex history. Mr. Akins has read about the history of the Quinnipiac people and the early years of European contact in Wallingford. Some of the other themes that he has come across during his research include the town's silver industry, some remarkable weather events over the years, and the town-and-town relationship.

Because of the wide scope of material available, he's yet to draw up an exact syllabus for the new class. However, Mr. Akins intends for a large portion of the course to be student-oriented and has tailored the course to allow each individual student to independently explore their own areas of interest for two weeks.

"Doing archival research is a skill that will serve students well, even if they don't go into a career as a historian," said Mr. Akins, who explained that about a third of the course's meetings would take place in the archives. "The research portion will be personally important to the student, and they'll feel a sense of agency and also responsibility for understanding the topic they select."

Now that it's been presented to and approved by both the HPRSS department and the department chairs' group, the course — titled Our School Upon The Hillside and numbered HI333 in reference to Choate's street address, 333 Christian St. — will be offered in the spring term of the next academic year. Mr. Akins said, "If we don't study how we got to where we are today, we've got no hope of shaping where we're headed as a community."

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Non-Native Speakers' Distinct Approach to Language Education

By Brian Harder '23
Staff Reporter

While many of Choate's language teachers are native speakers of the language they teach, a number of them were once students of the language themselves. Though these faculty members may not have been speaking the language their entire lives, non-native language teachers bring a unique viewpoint to their pedagogy which benefits the education of their students.

A key asset of non-native language teachers is their developed ability to understand what the language learning process is like. "As somebody who has learned this language from scratch, I have a natural ability to empathize with the experience of a student learning this language," said Ms. Amanda Arcand '94, a Spanish teacher who first learned the language in a Steele Hall classroom and continued her study through college and graduate school.

A non-native teacher is able to "anticipate what will be the challenges for a student," said Ms. Arcand. She can bring in "different ways that I know I can explain something, because it was [once] explained to me."

Non-native teachers have a distinct approach to teaching grammar, too. Native speakers often learn their language adhering to syntax more loosely, like many Americans do when first learning English; on the other hand, those learning in a classroom setting study grammar rules intensely. Ms. Anne Armour, a French teacher who has a particular interest in grammar, said, "When you're a French speaker and you're teaching French to people who don't know it, you're going to have to talk about grammar at some point, but that's my first entry being non-native as opposed to the way a native speaker might do it."

Despite these benefits, native speakers still have a more complete knowledge of the language, especially its conversational side. When talking with native-speaking colleagues in the past, Ms. Armour was exposed to "certain idiomatic expressions that they use that I

have learned by speaking with them." For example, she's observed the nuance that goes into choosing between the formal *vous* and the informal *tu* when referring to another as "you" — something that's impossible to pick up from a textbook alone.

From interacting with native-speaking faculty members, she can "keep those things fresh because they're not the first things you would learn as a non-native speaker." Native speakers, having grown up in a cultural setting of their language, are naturally familiar with idioms, while a non-native would have to learn these conversational terms deliberately.

Of course, Choate offers one language where no teacher can be a native speaker: Latin. In every Latin classroom, teachers are able to fully understand their students' experience of being non-native learners. However, according to Latin teacher Ms. Diana Beste, it can be difficult to "deliver Latin fluently to students like a native speaker would." Conversing in Latin, a dead language, can be a challenge in the modern day — how does one say "take out your iPads" in Latin? Also, it becomes more difficult to tie the language to cultural

themes: the Roman empire is full of rich history that can be studied, but contemporary connections are more scarce than in the modern languages.

Still, while Latin classes are mostly taught in English, Ms. Beste added that she and her colleagues "have been training over the last five to ten years so that [they] can use Latin as a spoken language in the classroom." In attempting to drive Latin instruction towards that of living languages, Ms. Beste has found teachers of other languages to be very helpful as she can learn from their methods.

Choate's non-native language teachers bring a varied teaching style to their department. While non-native teachers can better empathize with the learning process and convey their knowledge of grammar, native speakers have a more holistic understanding of the conversational usage of a language and the cultural connections that can be studied. Both types of teachers complement each other with their respective strengths, creating Choate's cohesive and accomplished language department.

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Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Ms. Anne Armour is a teacher, but not a native speaker, of French.

STRENGTH, STYLE, AND GRACE — THE ART OF KUNG FU

By Begum Gokmen '23

Associate Editor

The sound of a sharp blade cutting through air reverberating across the bamboo forest is the memory that Wendy Huo '23 recalls about her initial encounter with the traditional Chinese Martial Art of kung fu, also known as Wu Shu (武术): “Wu” (武) meaning the art of fighting and “shu” (术) referring to the skill of fighting.

Huo embarked on her kung fu journey at eight years old. “My first experience was training in the Shaolin Temple (少林寺) for a month, where I acquired the basics of Quan (拳), which is the most fundamental form of traditional Chinese kung fu that you are required to use in all the other forms,” said Huo. In the following summer, Huo continued practicing with her trainer in preparation for the Under 13 kung fu competition that she attended in Beijing.

She then learned to perform with two new weapons: Dao (刀), a single-edged Chinese performance broadsword with a curved blade, and Gun (棍), a traditional performance equipment. Huo furthered her practice of the art form by training with the masters of her craft. “In the summer of 2018, I went to the most traditional Tai Chi Clan in the Wu Dang mountain (武当山) to learn for a month and acquired the 24 forms of Tai Chi,” said Huo.



Wendy Huo '23 practices Dao in Colony Hall and trains in traditional Chinese Martial Arts with the Tai Chi Clan in the summer of 2018.

Amongst the many forms of traditional Chinese kung fu, Huo is currently focusing on two in the category of performing arts: Quan and Dao. Quan, as Huo described, “comprises a sequence of movements, requires flexibility, agility, strength, and aesthetics.” Dao, on the other hand, “includes a performance sword, and the movement compositions of Dao are a little modified compared to Quan.”

The two forms also strengthen different parts of the body. Quan requires more power in the legs, as most of its movements involve squatting and moving with the legs while the arms remain still. Dao, in contrast, relies on arm strength, as the performer needs to move sharply and quickly to produce the correct sound with the weapon. Despite these differences, they share the same movement patterns across the



Photos courtesy of Wendy Huo and photos by Toffy Prakitipoom/The Choate News

stage. “For both Dao and Quan, you essentially run from corner to corner, and when you finish, you end up at the corner you started,” said Huo.

At Choate, Huo finds time to practice kung fu in the Dance Studio at the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC). Her daily training session usually lasts two hours, which she divides into smaller increments that focus on different parts of the body. “The

first 30 minutes is focused purely on my lower body; in the next, I work on upper body movements,” said Huo. Then, she stretches, practices basic techniques, and choreographs or practices sets. She explained, “Some days I decide to go through my sets, adding on to and repeating them depending on how many times I feel like doing it.”

While the practice is oftentimes demanding and ex-

hausting, Huo’s love for kung fu motivates her to strive for excellence. “It is a passion that never bores me, but brings me a tremendous amount of happiness and hope. The process of making my movements a little more accurate after every try gives me enormous confidence,” she said. Huo further expressed her profound appreciation for Dr. Edrik Lopez “for being my athletic project advisor in the fall term and giving me constant support in class,” she said.

Besides being a source of contentment in everyday life, kung fu has empowered Huo during difficult times, such as the lockdown last year. “Last year due to Covid and other reasons, I became anorexic, and because of kung fu I was able to start eating and practicing again. It helped me move forward and helped my physical and mental well-being tremendously,” she said.

More recently, on November 21, 2021, Huo competed in the World Martial Arts Federation Legends Tournament and won first place for the Under 17 Advanced Weapons category. She will also be performing at the Lunar Banquet hosted by the Chinese Club on January 28 to share her culture and passion with the rest of the Choate community.

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Díaz del Castillo Rosique '23 Seeks Truth in a Range of Media



Photos courtesy of Paola Díaz del Castillo Rosique

Díaz del Castillo Rosique pushes herself in exploring ink collage artwork.

By Erin Li '24

Reporter

The sun-kissed second floor of the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) is where artist Paola Díaz del Castillo Rosique '23 brings art to life. Díaz del Castillo Rosique uses her artwork as a form of self-expression; she brings themes from her daily life, such as the struggles of being a student at Choate or the pressure to be “perfect” into her ink and collage work.

Díaz del Castillo Rosique’s art usually starts with the search for inspiration, a part that she takes pleasure in. She expressed that “coming up with the idea, and that moment when I realize I have the perfect theme,” is the most enjoyable. After pinpointing an idea, she begins to manifest that envision by sketching and drafting. During this stage, her initial idea is often significantly altered because of the many elements she integrates along the way.

For Díaz del Castillo Rosique, coming up with an idea for the final piece is the most challenging part. When she feels lost or frustrated, she draws motivation from thinking about the final product and lets that sense of fulfillment guide her to enjoy the creation process. Therefore, Díaz del Castillo Rosique prefers “going with the flow” and incorporating different techniques and methods to express her message, instead of being fixated on the materialization of her basic idea. She described

the last stages of piecing all the parts together as “the end of the tunnel,” for she deeply cherishes the process of seeing a seemingly disorganized work grow into a coherent one.

Recently, Díaz del Castillo Rosique has been exploring the integration of ink drawings and collages in her art, attempting to experiment with an unfamiliar form of art. In her collages, she combines her own artwork, both new and recycled from her sketchbooks instead of taking materials from magazines and pictures, to convey her message through her work entirely.

Díaz del Castillo Rosique worked on five different pieces in the fall term, each layered with a “different theme I was struggling with or thinking about, or what people can relate to, especially with classes at Choate or Choate life,” she explained.

For example, one of her pieces focuses on the struggle of losing her identity when trying to fulfill her goals to reach the perfect societal standard. The piece features the image of a girl in a mirror, unable to recognize herself due to outside influences, such as pressure from parents and teachers. Another more personal piece was of a skeleton holding a paintbrush, almost a self-portrait of Díaz del Castillo Rosique; she noted that it feels “more like myself when I paint, but also not having enough time to feel like myself.”

In addition to the exploration of ink and collage art-

work, Díaz del Castillo Rosique is working on an oil painting piece, which is also a new medium to her. Through this project, she hopes to not only improve her technique but also incorporate “the element of collage to it to make it more unique and different, which is something I really enjoyed doing in fall term,” she said. With this piece, Díaz del Castillo Rosique aspires to influence more people to focus on the present; “When you’re too focused on the future or the past, you start losing what’s around you currently and the importance of being present,” she said.

Finding her identity as an artist has been something Díaz del Castillo Rosique struggled with in the past. “I would just practice technique without a meaning behind it,” she said. However, she feels that she has grown as an artist by being more intentional with using different techniques. She further noted her appreciation for the support and advice that the Arts Concentration Signature Program gave to her. Under the guidance of her teachers and fellow student artists, she found a way to express herself through art and to layer deeper meanings into her work. With their encouragement, she explored new mediums of art that were extended beyond her comfort zone and broadened her horizons in her craft.

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RAJ '24 BRINGS INDIAN DANCE — KUCHIPUDI — TO CAMPUS

By Sabrina Wang '23

Associate Editor

Laya Raj '24 has been dancing for as long as she can remember. She started dancing when she was just three years old, training in the South Indian dance form, Kuchipudi. “I lived in India until I was in third grade,” said Raj. “I was living with my grandparents at the time, so my grandmother would take me to dance classes everyday. I moved to America permanently when I was in third grade, and since then, I’ve been traveling back to India over summer break which is when I train most rigorously, about twice a day.”

Kuchipudi, one of the eight major Indian classical dance styles, started as a form of storytelling. It developed as a religious art linked to temples and spiritual beliefs, where dancers would portray stories about mythological characters. To this day, the dance form is still very expressive, as dancers must use a lot of facial expressions. Often, there is a clear message behind each piece. “[Kuchipudi] really connects with my Indian roots, in which much of the composition includes Indian mythological characters, so it’s very connected to my Hindu culture,” said Raj.

Before coming to Choate, Raj hadn’t trained in any dance forms other than Indian classi-



cal dance. Since then, she has been able to explore many new styles through participating in afternoon dance classes, such as ballet, contemporary, jazz, and hip-hop. “Knowing and learning other types of dance forms, I’ve found a lot of intersection between them,” said Raj. She still finds time to practice Kuchipudi on her own and takes online classes when she gets the chance to.

This fall, Raj had the opportunity to choreograph for the Student Choreography Showcase (SCS), through which she not only demonstrated Kuchipudi, but also presented her own interpretation and twist on the style. “For SCS this year, I choreographed a piece that was a combination of modern [dance] and Kuchipudi, which was my way of showing the dance off to the community,” said Raj. “I thought it was a good way of showcasing it to audiences who weren’t accustomed to seeing Indian dance forms. I’ve always wanted to explore that ever since I’ve started doing Kuchipudi, so it was a good experience.”

Raj performed the dance with two other Choate students: Lauren Kee '24 and Vicky Grechukhina '23. “Lauren and Vicky are both predominantly trained in ballet, so it was very interesting to see how their previous training affected how they approached a specific movement in the dance. When I watch videos

back with Lauren, we can agree that the same movement looks very different on all of us just because of the different backgrounds of training we’ve had.”

In addition, Raj noted that while choreographing the dance, she found a lot of intersections between ballet and Kuchipudi. “The grace of the dance is very similar [in] both dances, and the way you show that through movement is very similar. I found that this aspect came naturally for [Lauren and Vicky], but there is certain footwork that they had to learn that other dance forms don’t have, and that Kuchipudi has,” she said. She added that although her piece didn’t have a clear message, “the theme of the piece was just looking for that intersection, and seeing how certain parts of modern complemented certain parts of Kuchipudi.”

Next year, Raj hopes to continue presenting Kuchipudi to the Choate community through SCS and the annual Dance Showcase, if she is selected. “Dance is a really big part of my life, and I was introduced to dance through Kuchipudi. It’s a part of my everyday life; I dance almost everyday and I really enjoy every time I do. Without Indian dancing, I would be far less connected to my Indian culture,” she said.

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Photo courtesy of Laya Raj and photos by Sophia Kim and Tiffany Xiao/The Choate News



Raj '24 showcases Kuchipudi in Colony Hall, in traditional dress, and in the Student Choreograph Showcase.



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Girls' Basketball (8-2)
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Boys' Ice Hockey (4-8-1)
vs. Deerfield, 1-2

Boys' Squash (5-5)
vs. St. Paul's, 0-7

Girls' Squash (5-2)
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Boys' Basketball (2-4)
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Boys' Squash (7-0)
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vs. Taft, 51-48

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PLAYER PROFILE

RODRIGO CHON HIM '25 SQUASHES THE COMPETITION

By **Bo Goergen '22**
Reporter

Rodrigo Chon Him '25 has taken the New England Preparatory Athletic Council (NEPSAC) Squash league by storm, achieving the #1 rank on Choate's Varsity team as a freshman. Chon Him frequently plays — and beats — athletes three grades above him. When asked what it is like to play on varsity as a freshman, he stated, “Being a freshman on varsity is a very big deal at a prestigious school such as Choate.”

Chon Him believes that being younger than the majority of his team pushes him to work harder on the court. He said, “Even before the squash season started, I knew I had to be in my best physical and mental state. Everyday I go to practice with the mentality that I have to work harder than yesterday. I want to give the best contribution to my squash team.”

However, Chon Him also knows that he is at a physical disadvantage being younger than his opponents. He said, “I also put myself through a lot of intense workouts since most of the guys



Photo by Junho Lee/The Choate News

Rodrigo Chon Him '25 returns the ball in a recent challenge match.

that I play with are seniors, which means they are stronger, taller, and sometimes faster than me.”

Interestingly, Chon Him has not played squash his entire life.

He started off playing soccer, then moved on to baseball and swimming, until he eventually started playing tennis at an elite level. Both of his parents played

tennis growing up, which helped him fall in love with the sport.

Chon Him has been practicing multiple times a day with his coach, and plays competitive

matches whenever he could. It was only two years ago that he added squash to his growing list of sports. Even despite his success this season, Chon Him would not consider squash his main sport. He stated, “Tennis is my main sport because I have been playing it for a long time and have put myself through a lot. Also, I have done better in tennis tournaments than in squash tournaments.”

Chon Him is notably humble when he talks about his athletic accomplishments. He realizes that, although he has come so far in the sport already, there remains room for improvement. “There are a lot of things I need to learn about squash and a lot of things that I should know by now,” he said.

Nevertheless, he consistently performs well, leading the Boys' Squash team to five victories at the middle of the season. His continued performance as a freshman will undoubtedly contribute to the team in the years, and many matches, to come.

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Swimming & Diving Finally Back in Action



Photos by Tiffany Xiao/The Choate News

Diver Diego Maldonado '22 and swimmer Ben Cho '22 compete at the Deerfield meet.

By **Sam Anastasio '23**
Staff Reporter

While, as of last weekend, every interscholastic sport had completed numerous times throughout the winter season, Boys' and Girls Varsity Swimming and Diving, had yet to make an appearance. Since November, the team has practiced for over five weeks. However, due to a series of cancellations related to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Saturday marked their first competition in almost two years. Although the team would ultimately fall short to Deerfield Academy, it is well positioned for a successful, albeit shortened, season.

Choate started the meet with a strong first place finish from Martha Chesson '22, Maggie McCabe '22, Mealy Cronin '23, and Victoria Layden '24 in the Girls' 200 Medley Relay. Deerfield's conditioning and experience was displayed in the school's depth in the Boys' and Girls' 200 freestyle, but Kaya Tray '24 was able to out touch an opponent swimmer by three tenths of a second to win the

200 IM. Going into Diving, both teams were down, but Catherine Cronin '23 and Gretchen Russell '22 placed first and second, respectively, giving a Choate a slight edge. The Boys' team had divers who placed 2nd and 3rd in Diving.

Following a series of respectable swims across the board in the 500 free, 100 back, and 100 breast, both teams were neck and neck heading into the 400 free relay — the final event of the meet. Although Choate would put up a strong effort, Deerfield was able to perform better. Despite a 95-90 loss for the Girls' and a 99-86 loss for the Boys', the team nevertheless had some major takeaways. Finn Lutton '23, who had never swam competitively, before this season said, “It was super exciting to see all the energy and passion the team brought to the meet. I was pretty nervous going into the meet but was calmed when I saw that everyone was cheering for one another.”

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NEW SPORTS LIVESTREAMING SERVICE OPENS CHOATE ATHLETICS TO THE WORLD

By **Jonathon Zhuo '23**
Staff Reporter

Prior to the 2021-22 school year, the school installed cameras with a new provider, LocalLive, with the purpose of streaming live athletic contests to the Choate community. So far, the cameras have been installed on the basketball and squash courts, the hockey rink, as well as on outdoor fields. With the new live stream system, students, faculty, parents, and anyone with access, can watch sports games while still staying safe while observing Covid-19 protocols.

While on-campus community members are still permitted to attend sporting events in person, a large portion of support comes from people who do not live on campus, especially close family and friends. This new system allows for them to contribute to school spirit indirectly and support their friends.

Arin Tongdee '23 said, “I really enjoy playing my squash matches knowing that my fam-

ily can watch back at home. They don't get to watch me play very often, and they tell me the live stream is very smooth. I can almost feel their support and spirit while playing. It's a great new implementation, and I look forward to having this kind of access in the future.”

Along with keeping the community safe, the new cameras also open a new opportunity for growth for students competing in

“I really enjoy playing my squash matches knowing my family can watch back at home.”

Arin Tongdee '23
JV Squash Player

interscholastic competitions. Now, instead of team managers setting up a tripod camera to record film, the cameras allow for much more in-depth footage. A key resource for many teams is film, specifically learning from it and noticing things to improve on. This new system al-

lows for teams and individuals to go review their performance.

“The ability to go back and watch our basketball games is great,” said Isak Hopfner '24, who plays on the Boys' JV basketball team. “Film reveals a lot to a team that we may not see at the moment, and it is a great opportunity for us to grow. I really like that I can go back to the recordings, and learn from any mistakes I made or admire any highlights I had.”

Choate is one of a long list of schools that uses LocalLive to host their streams. Many schools in the New England Preparatory Athletic Council (NEPSAC), including such as Brunswick, Deerfield, and Groton, use the service as well. The provider serves a total 2,523 schools, including private and public high schools as well as universities.

Fans can watch games from anywhere they have an internet connection. Furthermore, with the ability to watch archived streams, they can do so with an elevated level of convenience.

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Photo by Richard Chen/The Choate News

Livestreaming cameras, such as these at the tartan, are set up across various courts and fields on campus.