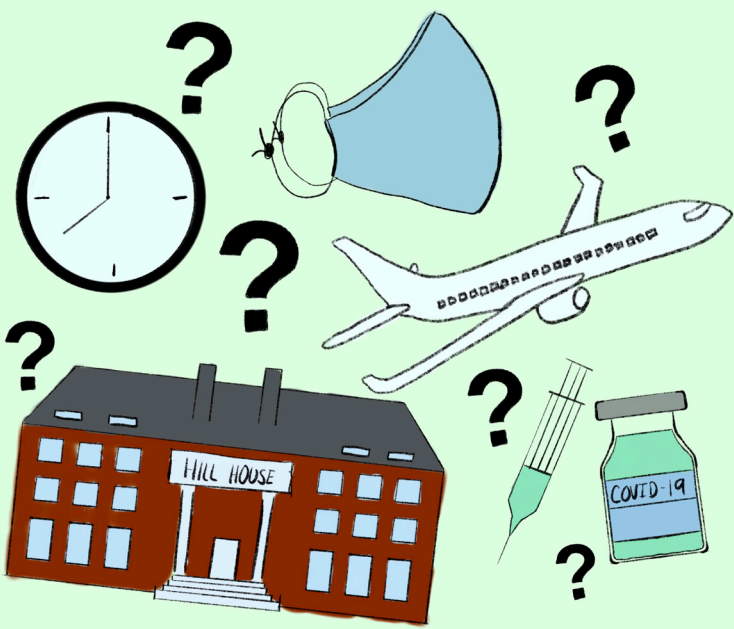




## YEAR IN REVIEW INSERT! SEE PAGE 5!

### CHOATE SET TO ADJUST GUIDELINES FOR FALL TERM



By **Alexis Lien '23**  
Staff Reporter

As the 2020-2021 school year comes to an end, Choate has begun to draft its guidelines for the upcoming school year. This year, Choate has maintained stringent rules in response to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. For the 2021-2022 school year, the School will be making major changes to Covid-19 guidelines, class schedules, and housing.

In September, the School will mandate vaccines for all students, unless specific medical risks prevent them from receiving one. Choate will grant students the opportunity to be vaccinated upon arrival to campus, so those who don't have access to the vaccine before returning to campus will still be able to attend classes in person. Although the School hasn't received clearance to administer the vaccines on campus just yet, they are hoping they will be allowed this privilege before the beginning of fall term.

Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen, who has been at the forefront of Choate's Covid-19 response team, said, "This is especially important for our international students since [the] vaccine is not readily available worldwide." The decision to mandate vaccinations was made to ensure optimal safety and a return to a greater sense of normalcy than has been possible in the past school year.

Planning other Covid-19 guidelines has proved challenging with the ever-changing circumstances. Similar to the past two terms, Choate will be monitoring infection and vaccination rates on a state and global level to determine adequate guidelines for students' return to campus.

"We will take guidance from agencies like the CDC, but, we need to keep in mind that some of those guidelines are not necessarily designed for school settings or for boarding schools in particular, so we have to factor in what's going to be best for Choate," said Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00.

Other than new Covid-19 protocols, a return to the 2019-2020 school year class schedule that includes the return to 70-minute blocks and eliminates night classes will also take place next year. The current schedule was implemented to accommodate students in different time zones and to be conscious of the significant screen time demanded by online learning. The School anticipates that all learning next year will occur in-person, even though students in special circumstances will receive support for distance-learning if necessary.

The fall will also welcome new housing arrangements. The large number of accepted students will mean that the basement of Memorial House will become housing for third-form boys instead of fifth-form boys as it has been the last two years. The reopening of Hill House is set for next year, which will be used for college counseling offices, as well as a new, co-ed dorm. What was an all-boys dorm, Hill House, will be split into two wings for male and female students.

Graphic by **Sajjel Burkett** / *The Choate News*

Director of Residential Life Mr. Will Morris said, "I am looking forward to having boys and girls living under one roof in separate wings while sharing common areas. A similar living arrangement has been a great success at the Kohler Environmental Center (KEC), allowing for the natural development of close friendships regardless of gender, and I am thrilled that students living on the main campus will have a similar opportunity."

In addition, West Wing will replace Combination House as the all-gender house on campus. With the program nearly doubling in size this year, the search for a new dorm that accommodated all students who wanted to live in all-gender housing was necessary. Additionally, the interest of the dorms' advisers were taken into consideration, and West Wing advisers displayed a strong interest in supporting the students in the program.

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### New Strategic Plan to be Implemented

By **Ryan Kim '23**  
Staff Reporter

The Choate Strategic Plan is a document that outlines the initiatives that are to be prioritized by the school. As the eight-year mark from the previous update approaches, the administration seeks to re-write the plan, which is usually updated every five to seven years. Led by Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis and the Board of Trustees, this plan will be finalized over the next few months, and the administration will outline a strategy for its implementation.

The most recent Strategic Plan, adopted in 2013, comprised of four sections: cohesion and culture, teaching and learning, enrollment and student outcomes, and communication and outreach. Included within this document were plans for iPad-based learning, the creation of the position of Director of Equity and Inclusion, and the construction of St. John Hall and Colony Hall.

The 2021 Strategic Plan will build upon the one written in 2013, with an emphasis on incorporating input from community-wide conversations, supporting health and wellness, and reaffirming the School's dedication to sustainability, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Director of Strategic Planning and Communications Ms. Alison Cady said, "We want to build a vibrant, kind, and robust student body, implement the best teaching and learning practices, support faculty and staff, increase connections between alumni and students, and expand financial aid."

Originally slated for 2020, the Strategic Plan was delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to refocus planning and resources for the safe reopening of campus this school year.

After months of gathering data and responses to community surveys and focused group discussions, the information was collated for a strategic retreat held in January 2020 during the Winter Long Weekend. Over a span of two days, members of the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty and staff representatives, and students met to analyze the information and devise initiatives for the School to implement in coming years.

According to Ms. Cady, compared to the 2013 Strategic Plan, this year's plan will be more open-ended, as the new Board of Trustees wants to keep it as a higher, broader-level document, with specifics discussed within the subsequent implementation plan.

This June, the Strategic Plan will be reviewed by senior administrators of the School and published in the Bulletin later this summer. In consultation with the Board of Trustees, a new implementation plan will be devised, including a timeline for completion, assignment of responsibilities, means of execution, and monetary needs for the outlined goals. This new implementation plan will ensure, and pledge to the community, the School's desire to implement all aspects of the new Strategic Plan.

With the introduction of the new Strategic Plan, the School will continue its mission, according to the 2020-2021 Student Handbook, of providing a "rigorous academic curriculum and an emphasis on the formation of character in a residential setting that allows for teachers and students to live with, and learn from, each other in important ways."

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### Students Receive Second Vaccine Dose

By **Lauren Hsu '24**  
Reporter

On May 16, Choate students who received their first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19 three weeks ago returned to receive their second. The day marked yet another milestone in the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic that began more than a year ago and that has upended life at Choate and across the globe.

According to Ms. Libby Peard, who scheduled bussing for the students receiving the vaccine, there were a total of 19 round trips to the vaccination site, during which three or four buses departed Choate each time, spending roughly an hour at the site. This included a fifteen to thirty-minute observation period between the time students received the vaccination and returning to campus to ensure that they did not experience adverse side effects. This round of vaccinations was similar to the first, though students under 16 years of age, who recently became eligible for the vaccination, were also on the bus to receive their first shots.

Kathleen McClatchie '23 said the experience of getting the second dose went smoothly. Instead of getting vaccinated on a bus, as was the protocol for the first round of vaccinations, students exited the bus and sat on tables to fill out paperwork and receive the vaccine.

Mr. James Stanley was one of the chaperones for both rounds of vaccinations. Due to an accident on I-91, his bus was delayed leaving Choate, and wind and rain in East Hartford significantly slowed the vaccination process. Mr. Stanley complimented Choate students. "I was so impressed with how patient, cooperative, and good-natured everybody was. It's not a fast process," he said.

Since students need two weeks after the second dose before they are fully immunized, Covid-19 protocol changes will come right in time for graduation. Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen said, "I do hope it means we can very safely do things like the Last Hurrah and senior events without distancing."

Having received two doses of the vaccine, Pau Alvarado '21, a

resident of Mexico City, said the quarantine period after travelling home may be shorter for her now that she is completely vaccinated. Alvarado, who will see her family at home after she graduates next week, added, "I feel so much better and safer knowing that ... being vaccinated decreases the risk of me giving Covid-19."

Side effects from the second vaccination are generally worse than the first. In recent weeks, teachers who primarily received the Moderna vaccine, cancelled their classes after suffering adverse side effects. However, Dr. Cohen noted that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has fewer negative side effects than Moderna. Nevertheless, the School planned ahead for students who may not feel well. McClatchie experienced side effects such as dry mouth and vomiting.

The Health Center went into dorms and checked on students. The School asked teachers to avoid giving assessments on May 17 and 18, and all classes on May 17 were asynchronous.

See **VACCINE**, Page 2



Photos by **Tiffany Xiao** / *The Choate News*

Students traveled to the Pratt and Whitney Airfield in East Hartford to receive Covid vaccines.

**Citizen-Created Media**  
WPAA provides support to Wallingford producers.  
**Local News • P3**



**An Ode to Choate**  
Why the Colony Hall lobby is my favorite place on campus.  
**Opinions Campus • P4**

**Scraps in Space**  
Space junk threatens humanity's future in space.  
**Opinions N/W • P9**



**Kalya Bids Farewell**  
Arts Director Kalya Yannatos announces her departure.  
**Arts • P11**

#### What's Inside

School News.....	1-2
Local News.....	3
Opinions: Campus.....	4
Year-End Special Edition.....	5-8
Opinions: Nation/World.....	9
Features.....	10
Arts and Leisure.....	11
Sports.....	12



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## CHOATE SAYS GOODBYE TO DEPARTING FACULTY

By **Meredith Syms '23** and **Arin Tongdee '23**  
*Reporters*

Ms. Joanne Bailey taught French and advised students before joining the Admission Office in 1999. She started as an interviewer and was later promoted to Associate Director of Admission. She spent a large portion of her time working with day students as the head of the Day Student Admissions committee. Ms. Bailey was the longest serving admissions interviewer at Choate. “My favorite memory of her is how approachable and kind she was at Choate Revisit Day in 2019. As an accepted student, she made me feel welcomed and answered all the questions I had thoughtfully,” recalled Sofia Munoz '23. Ms. Bailey will be retiring from her career working in education. She is excited to work on other projects and spend time with her four grandchildren.

Mr. Matt McDonald has been the Director of Financial Aid and Associate Director of Admission since 2015. He has been an instrumental part of the admissions process for many students. Outside of his work in admissions, he helped coach the Boys' Varsity Soccer team and was an adviser in Nichols House, a third-form girls' dorm. “He was very reliable and always checked up on me during my freshman year,” said Tigo Ponce de Leon '22, who lived in Memorial House and an advisee of Mr. McDonald. Next year, Mr. McDonald will be joining the Roxbury Latin School in Boston.

Ms. Casey Kelsey has worked as an academic technologist and a science teacher for Choate. As an academic technologist, she collaborates with the teachers and faculty in an effort to improve learning through technology. Since iPads and computers play such a big role in academics, Ms. Kelsey has provided the community with her expertise to better the learning experience of every Choate student. Beyond the classroom, Ms. Kelsey was the Head Coach of the Girls' Crew. “Coach Kelsey taught me the importance of perseverance and hard work. During race pieces she would always be right behind me to cheer me on and to make sure I didn't stop. It's obvious she really cares about our success,” said crew captain Chloe Brink '21.

Mr. Austin Sanchez-Moran worked at Choate for two years as an English teacher, a coach of Boys' Thirds Basketball, and an adviser for third-form boys in Memorial House. “He was a great coach, adviser, and friend, and was always there when I needed help,” said Jonathan Zhuo '23. Since his arrival on campus, in 2019, his students and fellow faculty members recognized him for his positive attitude in the dorm and on the court.

Ms. Jenn Pelletier, or Ms. P, as everyone calls her, has been an HPRSS teacher for the past five years. She also coached the Varsity Girls' Squash to a 12-2 record and at Division I nationals last year. “She is very individually close to the players and made me more passionate about the sport in [my] first year at Choate,” said squash player Elena Zhang '24.

Avery Feingold has worked at Choate as part of a fellowship program for two years while teaching in the Mathematics Department, coaching Ultimate Frisbee and serving as a dorm adviser in Pratt. “It was awesome to get involved in so many parts of student life,” said Feingold. One of their favorite things about Choate was the diverse perspectives that the School offered on current events. They will be exploring a new and exciting opportunity at the Horace Mann School, in New York City.

Mb Duckett Ireland has worked at Choate for the past 11 years, both as a teacher and form dean. She taught English to sophomores and to seniors. Aside from being a teacher and form dean, Mb served on multiple committees that work to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus. As a form dean, she supervised the social and academic life of students in the Class of 2021. Valerie Guardian '23 said, “I enjoy her authenticity as a person. She never shies away from having a conversation with her students.” Mb will be leaving Choate to become the Dean of Students at Holderness, a boarding school in New Hampshire. Mb has always had a passion for student life and feels her new role will allow her to focus more on that aspect of her career.

During her time at Choate, Ms. Regina Brown has worked as a member of the mathematics department at Choate and a Girls' Varsity Crew coach. She has played a fundamental role in all her positions, both in the classroom and outside. Throughout her time at Choate, she has connected with many students and has fostered a dynamic classroom environment. “What I love most about Ms. Brown is how engaging, organized, and patient she is,” said one of Ms. Brown's math students, Annalise Rhodes '23. Her favorite memories in class were “all the times she made me laugh with her jokes that would seize my attention and never allow me to lose focus in her class.” Ms. Brown will be leaving Choate to pursue a masters degree in Boston.

Mr. Kyle Di Tieri has worked as a faculty member in the Computer Science and Mathematics department at Choate for five years. He has played a major role in the Advanced Robotics Concentration (ARC) signature program, where he worked with students to study computer science and engineering. Mr. Di Tieri also taught a wide range of classes in math and science. Kenadi Waymire '22, one of his students in ARC, said that Mr. Di Tieri “has this sort of infectious excitement about robotics,” adding “He really enjoys what he's teaching us about.” Mr. Di Tieri will be leaving Choate to focus on his family. He will continue to work in the sciences and maths and hopes he can spend more time with those around him.

During her time at the School, Chaplain Arig Elhamouly was an Arabic teacher, a member of the Spiritual Life team, and an advisor to the Muslim Student Association. Genesis Mogent '23 had a lot of fun in Ms. Elhamouly's class. She loved, “memorizing and singing an Arabic song with the entire class.” Gaby Ahl '21 added similar sentiments: “Arig is one of the kindest people I know. She always looks out for her students, checks in on us, and genuinely really cares about our mental health and stress levels.”

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## STUDENTS RECEIVE SECOND PFIZER VACCINE DOSE

*Continued from Page 1*

“We wanted to be mindful of the lessons teachers had planned for this term and make sure they had time to cover the content that they wanted to, but at the same time support students,” said Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00.

Nicolas Madon '21 was one of the many students who were relieved that classes were asynchronous. “My nerves have really stemmed from having to do schoolwork and having to perform at the same capacity under those conditions and, in a sense, that's been taken care of,” he said.

Since the vaccine rollout has now been extended to people between the ages of 12 and 15, the School offered one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on campus before the end of the school year to anyone on campus wanting to take it who met eligibility requirements. Next fall, there will be another round of vaccinations for everyone who has not received a dose.

Dr. Cohen said that with almost the entire student body immunized next year, it will “make a tremendous difference to what we can do on campus.”

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Photo by Tiffany Xiao/The Choate News  
Military personnel administering the Pfizer vaccine to a Choate student.

## Mr. Pat Dennehy Named Director of Residential Life



Photo by Adrienne Chacon/The Choate News  
Mr. Dennehy joined Choate's faculty 17 years ago.

By **Tyler Kuo '23**  
*Staff Reporter*

Next year, Mr. Pat Dennehy will replace Mr. Will Morris as Director of Residential Life. Mr. Dennehy, who currently lives in Tobey House, has worked as the Associate Director of Admission for his first seven years at Choate.

Mr. Dennehy has also served as the Head Coach of Boys Varsity Hockey at Choate for 17 years, which he will be stepping down from to prioritize his new position. “Mr. Dennehy cares about you a lot. As a hockey coach, he wants to bring out the best in you,” said hockey player Charlie Aronov '21. He continued, “He looks for you to succeed both in the classroom and on the ice, and will do anything in his power to help you succeed.”

Mr. Morris, who is Head Coach of the Boys Varsity Squash Team, served as the form dean for the Class of 2014 and is currently the Head of House of Tenney House. “Mr. Morris is one of the most diligent house advisors I've had here. He's always coming in and having a chat with us in the dorm,” said Finn McGaan '22, a resident in Tenney.

Varun Ramamurthi '22, who also lives in Tenney, echoed this sentiment saying, “In dorm meetings and on Zoom, he was very attentive to the needs and wants of our community.”

As Director of Residential Life, Mr. Morris helped create the all-gender housing program and implemented the use of Reach, the School's electronic sign-out system. Mr.

Morris also enacted the tiered lottery system when determining housing for students. “By tiered housing I mean where students have the opportunity to come back to their house for their 10th and 11th grade year if they chose to do so. I think those have all been positive changes,” Mr. Morris said.

Over spring break, Mr. Morris played a crucial role in allowing, for the first time, a cohort of students to remain on campus to accommodate for Covid-19 travel restrictions.

When asked about why he decided to step down from his position as Director of Residential Life, Mr. Morris said, “There is a kind of regular turnover through director positions, so I think that's important. And for me, between the three years I spent as a form dean for the Class of 2014, and then seven years as Director for Residential Life, I feel good about the 10 years of service that I gave to the Student Life Office.”

Mr. Dennehy is excited to take on what he sees as a challenging role. “If we are making shifts down the road in certain areas in residential life, having both students and faculty advisers buy into those things is going to be a challenge,” he said. “People don't always like to change.”


One of Mr. Dennehy's goals is for teachers to feel a sense of pride about advising. “If we can cultivate strong relationships with our advisees, and there is trust there, it makes the whole experience better.”

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# VACCINATIONS UP, INFECTIONS DOWN, CT CLOSER TO NORMLACY


\$13 million grant

for the vaccination effort in underserved communities




May 13th

Pfizer authorized for adolescents



May 19th


Lamont completely reopens CT



48% vaccinated

Positivity rate 1.12%

Hospitalizations down by 24



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

Connecticut is trending toward low Covid-related hospitalizations and high immunizations rates against the coronavirus.

By **Isabella Wu '24**  
*Reporter*

As of May 20, more than 50% of Connecticut's population was fully vaccinated, according to CDC data. On May 13, the FDA authorized the Pfizer vaccine for adolescents, and vaccine providers immediately began to administer, allowing approximately 17 million U.S. adolescents to get vaccinated. The success of the vaccination program in Connecticut is, in large part, the result of various campaigns and partnerships to encourage its residents to get the vaccine. In New Haven, community leaders and volunteers went door-to-door

promoting inoculation. Dr. Stephen A. Civitelli, the Director of Health at the Wallingford Health Department, said that Connecticut's productive vaccination rate was precipitated by "local health departments, such as Wallingford's, offering vaccinations in late December really accelerated vaccination rates when compared to other states." Connecticut has seen a consistently low positive test rate and a continuous decline in Covid-19 related hospitalizations. As of May 14, Connecticut's Covid-19 positivity rate was 1.12%, and hospitalizations had decreased by 24 people. According to recent

data from the Connecticut Department of Public Health, less than 0.1% of fully vaccinated residents have become infected. On May 3, Governor Ned Lamont and the Connecticut Department of Public Health announced a \$13 million federal grant to be distributed among 27 municipalities and local health departments in partnerships with community organizations and vaccine providers. "Our goal with the vaccination program is to reach out to every Connecticut resident, particularly those who have historically been underserved when it comes to access to health care, transportation,

or other challenges," Governor Lamont said in a press release. The grant aims to support vaccination distribution in communities of color and ethnically diverse communities. He continued, "Everybody deserves the right to access these life-saving vaccines. We need to do everything we can to make sure everyone has an equal opportunity to receive this care." Governor Lamont also lifted most Covid-19 guidelines including the mask mandate for fully vaccinated individuals on May 19; he said in a press release, "I think Connecticut has earned it." Capacity limits are already up

to 100% for businesses such as restaurants, libraries, museums, fitness centers, offices, personal services, and houses of worship. Masks are still required in all indoor public settings where social distancing is impractical. In regard to Choate's vaccination plan, around 400 students received their second vaccination on May 16, and about 100 others received their first vaccine on May 16 and May 21. An on-campus vaccine clinic for students 12 and older took place on the latter date. About 92% of Choate's faculty and staff have been vaccinated, and Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen estimates that about 10% of Choate students

have been fully vaccinated, and 75% are getting vaccinated. Next year, Choate will require its students to be vaccinated. Arrangements will be made for students unable to get vaccinated before the return to school. "This way, we can have a campus with the minimum amount of restrictions that still keep us safe," said Dr. Cohen. "We will certainly be spending the summer planning for a COVID safe campus in the fall, and I believe through vaccinations we will be able to return to as normal as possible."

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## Now PLAYING: WPAA-TV

Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

Wallingford Public Television is an acclaimed and established fixture of the local community.

By **Michael Korvyakov '23**  
*Copy Editor*

There is a well established facet of the local community that is public, free, and entertaining – the Wallingford Public Access Association (WPAA). WPAA is a volunteer-run, non-profit community media center that facilitates the creation of citizen-produced media for the town of Wallingford. Over the past few years, the organization has been expanded to include an arts and media center. WPAA is largely funded by donations, grants, and subscribers who pay an annual fee of \$8 to support shows made by citizens members serving the community via television. The WPAA non-profit has been around for over 30 years, and in its time, it has produced television shows, provided equipment and technical support to the producers of Wallingford, fostered a sense of community through competitions, and grown to be a community arts hub. According to Volunteer Executive Director, Ms. Susan Huizenga, they "provide the tools and the stage for people to cover what they choose to cover." One show featured on WPAA is "The Citizen Mike Show," where Mr. Michael Brodinsky, a resident of Wallingford, discusses issues that are important to the community: "It's interviews, it's news, it's commentary." Mr. Brodinsky explained. He often hosts government employees and officials to discuss and debate local politics. This angle of the show originated in the 2010 Connecticut election, where Director Huzienga asked Mr.

community service opportunities. One such opportunity is the "Hercules Team" – named for the heroism, kindness, and wisdom that the members display – which creates videos to share how WPAA is working to transform the Wallingford community in a unique way. One WPAA viewer and occasional contributor is Meriden resident Ms. Nina Terrible. She has participated in two of WPAA's three-minute movie challenges. WPAA's social media presence, in particular, stands out to Ms. Terrible because it "gives people a voice and educates them on different topics ... It helps people to become inspired and have an understanding of the world that we live in." According to the WPAA website, the goal of these challenges is to "facilitate the creation, sharing, and collection of stories from our community in the time of Covid-19, when we experienced ourselves and our spaces differently." In that spirit, awards given in these challenges are gift cards to local businesses to help them thrive. For its service to the Wallingford community, WPAA has won the 2019 Overall Excellence Award for Small Community TV Stations from the Alliance for Community Media USA, and the Overall Excellence Award from the Alliance for Community Media North East in 2013 and 2014. WPAA's programs, shows, and events, can be found on their website, [wpaa.tv](http://wpaa.tv).

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By **Eva Li '24**  
*Staff Reporter*

This spring and upcoming summer, the Wallingford Public Library has invited several accomplished writers and speakers as part of an eventful slate of programs. This May, the library is hosting Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Arthur Sze, authors Winona Guo and Priya Vulchi, and other community events including a community art project. The Wallingford Public Library has partnered with the Wallingford Diversity, Equity, the Inclusion Committee, and Wallingford Public Schools to present a curriculum centered around identity. The discussion will be called, "Who Am I? Who Are You? Who Are We?" and was inspired by the book *Tell Me Who You Are: Sharing Our Stories of Race, Culture & Identity*. In this book, the authors, Ms. Guo and Ms. Vulchi, recount their experience of traveling around all 50 states and speaking to over 150 Americans about racial inequality and identity. When asked why the library chose this book, Ms. Leah Farrell, the Adult Programming & Community Services Librarian, said, "As we are starting to come out of the pandemic, we wanted to use this book as a way for the community to reconnect by reflecting on our own identities, listening to the stories of others, and determining who we are as a larger community." All of the events center on a theme of diversity, including Asian-American identity. "While [May's programming] was not planned specifically to celebrate AAPI Heritage Month, we want to recognize the AAPI members of our community with this initiative," said Ms. Farrell. Aside from the 'Who Am I? Who Are You? Who Are We?' events, the library also hosted a virtual visit from acclaimed poet Mr. Arthur Sze on May 12. The event was co-sponsored by Wallingford's poet laureate, Ms. Debora Kuan, as part of the library's Poet Laureate Present Series. Ms. Kuan, who has studied with Mr. Sze, said of the Pulitzer Prize winner: "His work has so much integrity, and so does he; it's difficult poetry, with often obscure, multicultural references, that never panders to a solipsistic, ethnocentric culture. I thought it would be wonderful if he would read for us, and I was so happy and surprised when he said yes." When asked about the highlight of his visit, Mr. Sze said, "One question from a participant that stood out for me was, 'What advice do you have for a beginning writer?' And my response was to 'Write, write, and keep writing.'" Mr. Sze explained that when he was young, he was told that if he stopped writing, he would lose all the momentum he was building with his language. According to him, this was "in hindsight, excellent advice." The event was broken into segments of reading and conversation. Ms. Kuan opened with her poem "One Day in America," followed by Mr. Sze's poems "Midnight Loon," "Qiviut," and "The Gift." Afterward, they discussed thematic overlaps in their poems, such as violence in contemporary America, before concluding with more poetry. "We wanted to have a conversation in between the poems, rather than a formal reading," said Mr. Sze. The revamping of typical readings prompted Ms. Kuan to reflect on her tenure as Wallingford's Poet Laureate. "I have loved my time as

poet laureate so far. Not only has it given me the opportunity to form connections with so many wonderful people in Wallingford, but it has also provided me the chance to bring poetry to this community and to share the unlimited richness and value of contemporary poetry with the public." In regard to Mr. Sze's visit commemorating AAPI heritage month, Ms. Kuan explained, "One of my goals as the first poet laureate of color in Wallingford was, indeed, to amplify the voices of poets of color, so I was specifically intending to invite poets of color for the reading series." The first event of the diversity, equity, and inclusion program will be a virtual visit hosted by the Wallingford Public Library for Ms. Guo and Ms. Vulchi on May 25. "Our hope is that this event will inspire people to be reflective and more aware of the experiences of others. Everyone, no matter their background or experiences, wants to feel as if they belong," said Ms. Angela Boucheri, a committee member at the Wallingford Public Schools. Another aspect of the diversity programming will be the installation of a community art project in the window facing Main Street. "It will feature art created by students as well as colorful cards featuring responses to questions about identity and community," explained Ms. Farrell. The public is encouraged to fill out cards to be added to the display. Her hope is that "anyone walking by the library will be able to view the display, creating somewhat of a public art gallery along Main Street."

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## WALLINGFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY CELEBRATES DIVERSITY

By **Eva Li '24**  
*Staff Reporter*

This spring and upcoming summer, the Wallingford Public Library has invited several accomplished writers and speakers as part of an eventful slate of programs. This May, the library is hosting Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Arthur Sze, authors Winona Guo and Priya Vulchi, and other community events including a community art project. The Wallingford Public Library has partnered with the Wallingford Diversity, Equity, the Inclusion Committee, and Wallingford Public Schools to present a curriculum centered around identity. The discussion will be called, "Who Am I? Who Are You? Who Are We?" and was inspired by the book *Tell Me Who You Are: Sharing Our Stories of Race, Culture & Identity*. In this book, the authors, Ms. Guo and Ms. Vulchi, recount their experience of traveling around all 50 states and speaking to over 150 Americans about racial inequality and identity. When asked why the library chose this book, Ms. Leah Farrell, the Adult Programming & Community Services Librarian, said, "As we are starting to come out of the pandemic, we wanted to use this book as a way for the community to reconnect by reflecting on our own identities, listening to the stories of others, and determining who we are as a larger community." All of the events center on a theme of diversity, including Asian-American identity. "While [May's programming] was not planned specifically to celebrate AAPI Heritage Month, we want to recognize the AAPI members of our community with this initiative," said Ms. Farrell. Aside from the 'Who Am I? Who Are You? Who Are We?' events, the library also hosted a virtual visit from acclaimed poet Mr. Arthur Sze on May 12. The event was co-sponsored by Wallingford's poet laureate, Ms. Debora Kuan, as part of the library's Poet Laureate Present Series. Ms. Kuan, who has studied with Mr. Sze, said of the Pulitzer Prize winner: "His work has so much integrity, and so does he; it's difficult poetry, with often obscure, multicultural references, that never panders to a solipsistic, ethnocentric culture. I thought it would be wonderful if he would read for us, and I was so happy and surprised when he said yes." When asked about the highlight of his visit, Mr. Sze said, "One question from a participant that stood out for me was, 'What advice do you have for a beginning writer?' And my response was to 'Write, write, and keep writing.'" Mr. Sze explained that when he was young, he was told that if he stopped writing, he would lose all the momentum he was building with his language. According to him, this was "in hindsight, excellent advice." The event was broken into segments of reading and conversation. Ms. Kuan opened with her poem "One Day in America," followed by Mr. Sze's poems "Midnight Loon," "Qiviut," and "The Gift." Afterward, they discussed thematic overlaps in their poems, such as violence in contemporary America, before concluding with more poetry. "We wanted to have a conversation in between the poems, rather than a formal reading," said Mr. Sze. The revamping of typical readings prompted Ms. Kuan to reflect on her tenure as Wallingford's Poet Laureate. "I have loved my time as

poet laureate so far. Not only has it given me the opportunity to form connections with so many wonderful people in Wallingford, but it has also provided me the chance to bring poetry to this community and to share the unlimited richness and value of contemporary poetry with the public." In regard to Mr. Sze's visit commemorating AAPI heritage month, Ms. Kuan explained, "One of my goals as the first poet laureate of color in Wallingford was, indeed, to amplify the voices of poets of color, so I was specifically intending to invite poets of color for the reading series." The first event of the diversity, equity, and inclusion program will be a virtual visit hosted by the Wallingford Public Library for Ms. Guo and Ms. Vulchi on May 25. "Our hope is that this event will inspire people to be reflective and more aware of the experiences of others. Everyone, no matter their background or experiences, wants to feel as if they belong," said Ms. Angela Boucheri, a committee member at the Wallingford Public Schools. Another aspect of the diversity programming will be the installation of a community art project in the window facing Main Street. "It will feature art created by students as well as colorful cards featuring responses to questions about identity and community," explained Ms. Farrell. The public is encouraged to fill out cards to be added to the display. Her hope is that "anyone walking by the library will be able to view the display, creating somewhat of a public art gallery along Main Street."

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Photo courtesy of Wallingford Public Library

The library is unveiling a diversity-centric curriculum starting with visits from Asian American authors.

THE CHOATE NEWS



115<sup>TH</sup> MASTHEAD

VOL. CXIV  
NO. XII

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Choate's Culture of Complaining



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

By **Cassatt Boatwright '24**  
Opinions Staff Writer

Almost anyone who has walked around campus has heard the common Choate student complaints:

"I'm so tired. This is my third coffee today."

"I have two tests, three projects, one essay, four meetings ..."

"I really hope it rains today so sports practice will be canceled."

All of the students in the vicinity nod their heads in agreement and add in a few of their own complaints regarding their workload or lack of motivation. It's normal for conversations among peers to begin with complaints. In fact, complaining has become one of the primary forms of socialization at Choate — throughout my time at Choate, I have started multiple friendships through sounding off on my excessive workload.

While many students are going through very real struggles and should feel comfortable expressing their feelings, the common sources of complaints concern ultimately trivial things, such as a challenging homework assignment, or an unsatisfying meal in the dining hall. This culture of complaining creates a negative atmosphere on campus that often breeds competition between students on who is struggling the most. Oftentimes, it is more common to hear about the trying aspects of the Choate experience rather than the positive ones.

One of the downsides of this imbalance is that it encourages poor behavior by glorifying detrimental practices that come as a result of a rigorous workload. When a student claims to have pulled an all-nighter, it's said with a sort of pride that makes it seem like I should feel impressed with their work ethic rather than concerned with their lack of sleep. In this way, bad habits are rewarded with social points, and poor mental health is trivialized, even enabled.

To make matters worse, whenever someone complains, others tend to contribute stories of their

struggles, as if it's a competition to see who's damaging themselves the most. This toxic environment makes it virtually impossible to identify those in need.

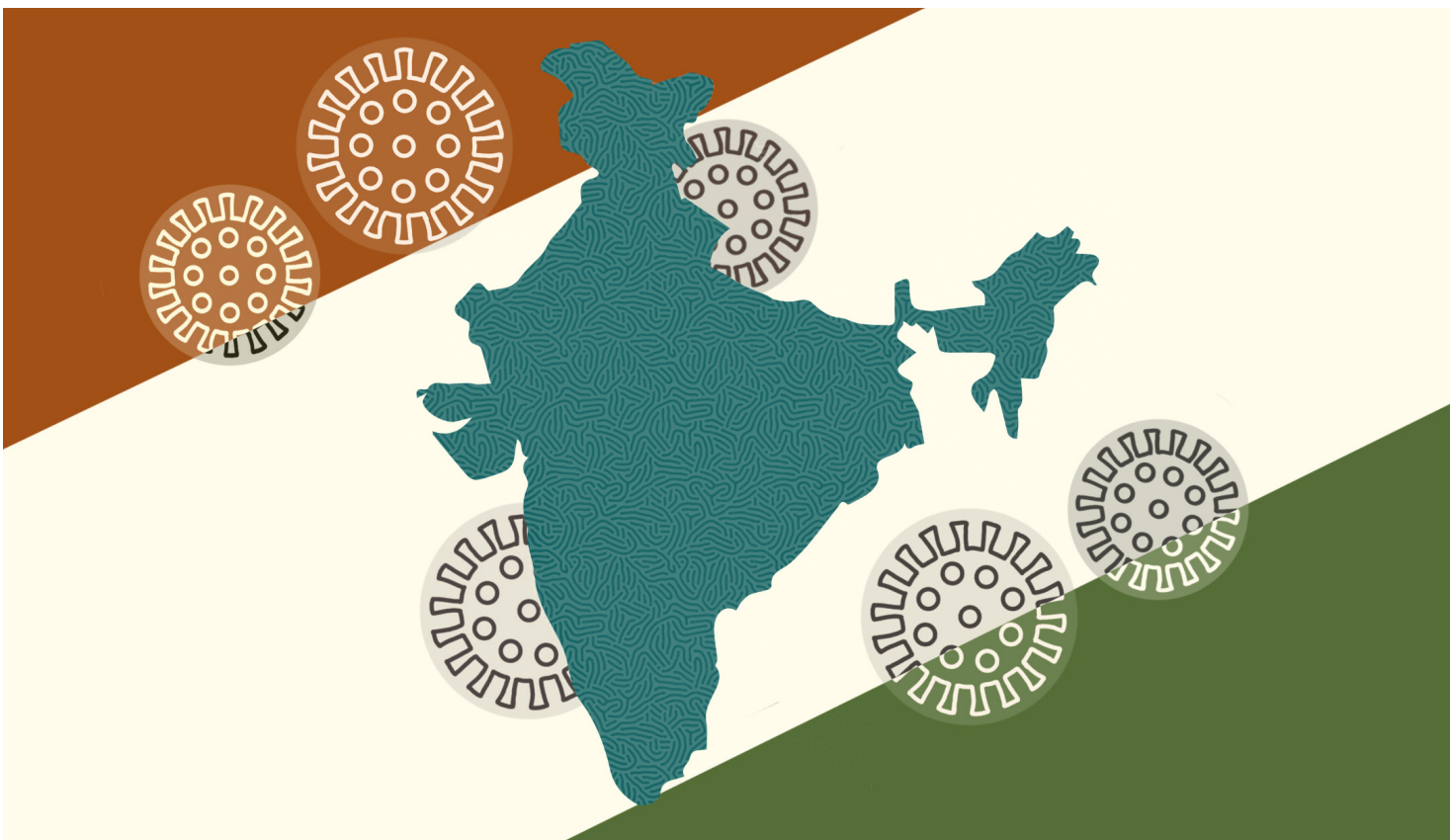
The most shocking moment of my Choate career so far occurred during a conversation in the dorm. We were discussing seasonal depression, and my friend said, "I don't trust anyone who is always happy at Choate." Everyone immediately agreed and began giving examples of people who seemed "too happy." We were shaming people for always being positive instead of admiring their personalities. The subject of our complaints was no longer classes or homework, but people. We were divorcing the Choate experience from any kind of happiness.

Social media tends to promote a similar kind of negativity. While posts and stories can highlight our voices, these voices tend to be filled with grumbling and pessimism. Private Snapchat stories are filled with paragraphs and paragraphs of people complaining, and TikTok videos feature dramatic crying over feeling stressed or burnt out. While it is important to talk about the hard things we are going through, it is also important to remember to look for healthy ways of relieving stress.

When we only focus on the downsides, it's easy to forget how amazing it is to be here at Choate. Words are powerful, and, often, we are not careful enough about how we use them. Recently, I have been trying to focus more on the positive things happening around campus, from fun conversations with my teachers to cool projects that I was assigned in class. If we want the positive to outweigh the negative in our lives, our conversations should reflect that. Rather than sharing our plights, we should strive to connect with people over the things that make us happy here at Choate.

**Cassatt Boatwright** is a third-former from San Francisco. She may be reached at cboatwright24@choate.edu

AS COVID-19 DEVASTATES INDIA, CSAA MEMBERS SPEAK OUT



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

With a recent spike in Covid-19 cases, India is currently faced with the world's largest outbreak. Compared to the United States, where personal protective equipment and vaccines are readily available, India is struggling to contain the tragedy of growing infections amid mass cremations and shortages in basic medical supplies. Three members of the Choate Student Asian Association (CSAA) voice their opinions on the Covid-19 crisis, share how they have been personally impacted, and urge the Choate community to do more.

My heart sinks as I go to CNN.com and read article after article about India's Covid-19 crisis. I don't look at the photos, though. I can't. It's too painful. Words like "oxygen shortage," "funeral pyres," and "dead bodies in the Ganga River" crowd my thoughts as tears well up in my eyes. My whole extended family, many of whom haven't received the Covid-19 vaccine yet, lives in India, and I'm terrified. I'm terrified of something happening to them; terrified of feeling numb to this crisis; terrified that I've already become numb; terrified because I know that even after a few years when things return to some semblance of normalcy, India will never be the same. Thousands have died of Covid-19 and millions more

have been forced into poverty — a reality that will have lasting generational effects.

When I look around at my own life, I remember all over again that I'm sitting in the lap of luxury. I have access to masks, clean water, soap, and hand sanitizer. I've already received both doses of the Pfizer vaccine, despite the many more vulnerable people in India who haven't. As an Indian-American, I feel disconnected. India isn't my home, but it's where my parents grew up — Indian culture is part of me. So, as I read about the hopelessness of India's Covid-19 situation, my heart continues to break. To my fellow Choate students: let us not forget how lucky we are to have access to so many health resources and to have the ability to take all the appropriate precautions. I hope we'll all continue to educate ourselves on the Covid-19 crisis in India and how it is affecting neighboring nations. If you're able to, please donate to organizations such as GiveIndia to support India in its time of need. — **Shivani Sharma, a fifth-former from Saudi Arabia**

Our school has made some progress that I have been proud of in recent months. After everything that has happened this year, from the Black Lives Matter protests to the attack on the

U.S. Capitol, Choate brought back its Current Events Resource Group (CERG). I thought the reintroduction of this group would be great for our school: everyone would be supported as they learned to deal with current issues in our world. And, in many ways, it has been. But, as the number of Covid-19 cases started declining here in the United States, they began to rise on the other side of the world, particularly in India. I waited for the day someone would reach out to ask if my family and I were okay. My family in India is trapped in their home because they do not want to contract Covid-19. As political figures in India continue to hold large, maskless election rallies, any venture outdoors is dangerous. Yet, I am not aware of any support from the administration for students from India or students with family members who live there. The School appears to be failing in its goal of supporting all students. Please do not ignore me while my family members are dying. Please don't expect me to act like everything is normal while I worry about the well-being of my family. I urge the CERG to provide support to students who may be affected by the Covid-19 crisis in India. — **Saijel Burkett, a fifth-former from Denver, CO.**

Over the past month and a half, many other South Asians and I have been faced with the crushing news of family members dying or falling ill to Covid-19 at increasing rates. This crisis has highlighted global healthcare disparities. My family in India also lives in an area where social distancing is uncommon, and personal protective equipment isn't widely accessible. Thus, they don't have much control over whether or not they are exposed to Covid-19.

Many South Asians in America are now experiencing "Survivor's Guilt" — the feeling of being privileged enough to have access to these basic necessities while helplessly watching others suffer. Trying to keep up with which of my family members are sick and worrying about which ones might become sick has been emotionally taxing for me. I know that many of us want to forget about this pandemic and thus have become desensitized to the neverending Covid-19 headlines, but not everyone in the world has the privilege to turn a blind eye. If you're looking to help the South Asian community, you can start by bringing awareness to the crisis, which is something that I wish I could have seen from the Choate administration. Check in on your South Asian friends, students, colleagues, and classmates; let them know that you acknowledge their struggles and are there to support them.

— **Maya Rose Chiravuri, a fourth-former from Bridgeport, Conn.**

ODE TO CHOATE

Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

By **Lauren Kee '24**  
Copy Editor

I remember entering Colony Hall lobby for the first time in October of 2019, when I visited Choate for my admissions interview. As I walked into the lobby, listening to my tour guide introduce the building, I stood in awe. I was mesmerized by the sun rays that shone through the floor-to-ceiling windows, bathing the brown leather couches in a soft glimmer. Admiring the streaks of sunshine and shade drawn by the sun that reflected the building's angular structure, a sense of calm washed over me, putting my interview anxieties at ease. For the first few minutes of my interview, I could only rave about how much I admired Colony Hall.

A year after I first visited Colony Hall, I eagerly returned to Choate as a freshman. As I stepped inside from the chilly weather before my first Symphony Orchestra rehearsal, I was greeted with an embrace by the warm atmosphere

of the lobby. To my left, a drummer was improvising in the Jam Room, and I felt the crash of the cymbal and thud of the tom-tom reverberate through my body. To my right, a pianist was practicing, the melody echoing throughout the building. Somehow, the contrasting music coming from the practice rooms complemented each other, and I was so immersed in the experience that I was almost late to rehearsal.

For many Choate students, the dining hall and the Student Activities Center are the main socialization hubs. For me, it is the Colony Hall lobby. Whenever I feel too lazy to make the trek back to my dorm across campus after my practice sessions, classes, and rehearsals in Colony, I sit in the lobby, intending to "get some work done." The classical music coming from various practice rooms and the convenient outlets on the wall would make for the ideal place to focus, but students or teachers coming and going always end up sitting on the couches around me. For those of us lingering in the Colony lobby, there

is an unspoken bond that we share over our passion for the arts, which makes it easier for me to reach out to those seated around me for a spontaneous conversation.

One sunny day this past fall, three other freshmen and I sat in the lobby, chatting away after our dance rehearsal. The four of us had never talked before, but ever since that day, we have met up in the lobby after rehearsal every week to head to lunch together. Just last week, I exited the Recital Hall to find someone whom I shared a mutual friend with sitting in the lobby. I had never spoken to her before, yet we easily launched into a conversation that lasted an hour. In the background, a pianist continued to practice "Moonlight Sonata," just as they had been for the past few weeks, and the mysterious blue notebook that had been laying on one of the marble tables remained unclaimed since the beginning of the spring term. As the rain pattered against the windows outside, Colony Hall's consistency brought me a sense

of comfort and security on this gloomy spring day.

Recently, the Class of 2024 attended our first and last in-person form meeting in Colony Hall for the school year. As all of my classmates gathered in the lobby, my selfish instincts took over for a split second. I had heard stories from upperclassmen about the swarms of people in Colony before School Meetings last year, with backpacks and belongings strewn everywhere — what if other people began overcrowding the lobby every day again, leaving no space for me? Yet, a warm glow kindled in my heart. I could finally share my happy place with my classmates. The ambience of the Colony Hall lobby is unmatched by anywhere else on campus. Although next year seems destined to open up opportunities for me to explore the Choate campus and Wallingford, the Colony Hall lobby will remain my sanctuary.

**Lauren Kee** is a third-former from Hong Kong. She may be reached at lkee24@choate.edu

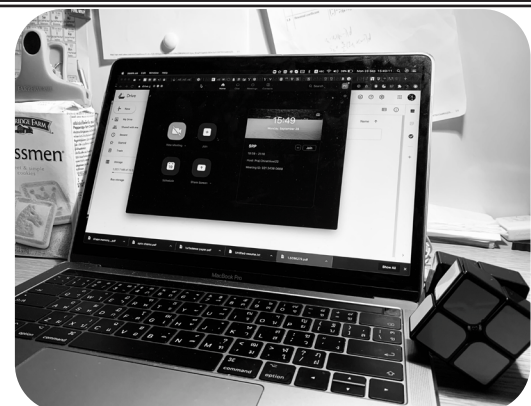
# YEAR IN REVIEW

— SNAPSHOTS OF OUR JOURNEY —

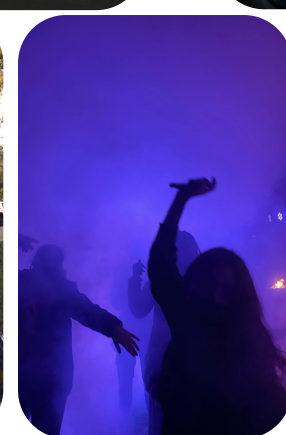
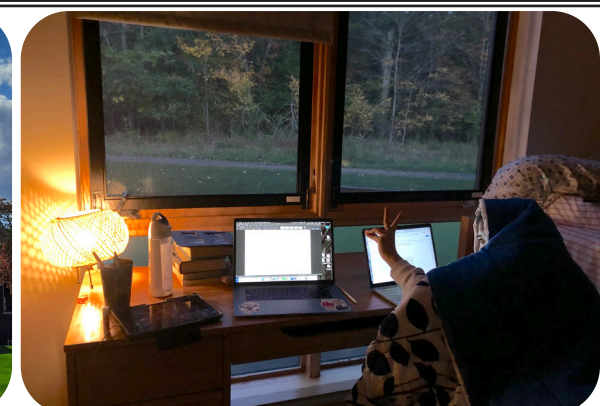
TUESDAY, MAY 25, 2021

THE CHOATE NEWS || PAGE 5

SEPTEMBER



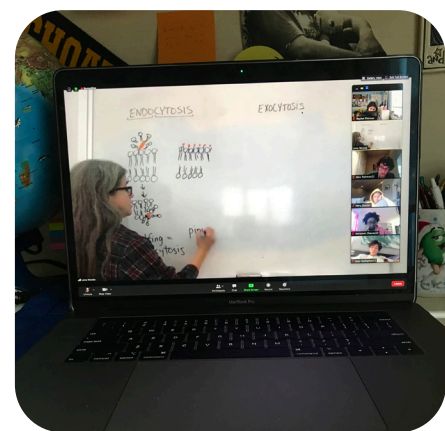
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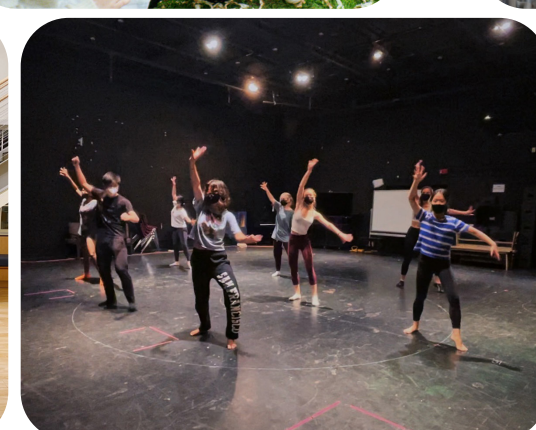
MARCH



APRIL



MAY



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# YEAR IN REVIEW

## SENIOR SPEECHES

THE CHOATE NEWS || PAGE 6

TUESDAY, MAY 25, 2021

### *Meditations on a Chapter Nearly Complete*

#### **Supriya Chang '21**

Today, I put on the sweatshirt I wore when I was admitted to the psych hospital last year. I remember the nurses took the strings out of the hoodie, because they were hazards, like my acne medication, pencils, and blankets from home. I honestly don't know how the string got back in, probably the work of my mom, but anyone who's ever tried to re-thread a hoodie or shorts knows it takes a long time to put back things that get unraveled.

In the hospital, we had to earn privileges to eat in the cafeteria downstairs. Meals were really exciting, despite the fact I survived off of french fries and knock-off Rice Krispie treats. It made me realize something really deep and profound... SAGE food slaps.

Phone calls were restricted too. They took our cellphones, so we had to use the hospital's landline in the shared common room. We could only call certain people for a certain period of time. The ten minutes I was able to call friends each evening

were so precious. I learned to appreciate those little moments: wearing pajamas all day and knit socks instead of shoes, staying up late chatting with my roommate, playing spoons with the other kids in the craft room.

But it wasn't easy. I felt the shadow of my old life getting heavier, like I was losing time. At Choate, every minute was packed with obligations, wringing my fingers waiting for the teacher to call on me, swallowing a granola bar while rushing to a Wednesday squash match, returning to campus when the cold winter sun had already set, going to orchestra rehearsal exhausted, all to do essentially the same thing the next day.

I remember walking back to my dorm from orchestra one of those nights. It was dark and

the campus was quiet. It was terrifying. Not the absence of others or the dim lighting of just the streetlamps and the stars, but the sensation that my surroundings were not real. My body was moving, but I wasn't trying to walk. I was so scared that for the rest of my life, I would be sleepwalking.

And in the hospital, I felt like I had just woken up.

Anyone who knows me knows I love aesthetic things. I color code my home, my closet, my stationary, my dorm decor, and honestly anything imaginable. When I came to Choate my freshman year, my biggest fear was that my roommate's stuff wouldn't match my color palette. Luckily, it did, and she turned out to be my best friend.



#### **Patrick Finnerty '21**

In the winter of my freshman year, I remember Mr. Loeb explained to me why everyone had to partake in a public speaking competition. Supposedly, a senior is selected each year to speak to the board of trustees, and some time ago, a particularly distinguished senior was chosen. Unfortunately, public speaking was not one of that senior's many talents, and now we have the public speaking competition for all freshmen. I remember laughing at this story and thinking, "couldn't be me." Well, it turns out that is me, sort of.

I was honored to give a speech to the board of trustees, and according to other people, did relatively well, and while I loved it, it also led to being told by Ms. Shea, "Patrick! Dr. Curtis talked about you in the faculty meeting today! He said your speech was... 'Very honest'." This of course led to a minor heart attack. Later that night I conveniently ran into and promptly confronted Dr. Curtis in the dining hall, and he assured me that his words were, "Hello everyone, we need to talk about Patrick because he keeps causing trouble." I wasn't aware Dr. Curtis knew I spent quite a few nights this winter making ramen at 3 am in CK's basement in nothing but underwear, a mask, and some slides, but I guess the cat's out of the bag on that one.

After giving the speech, I got some compliments from friends and faculty I knew who were in the meeting, and kind notes from anyone who asked me to send it their way. In general I'm a pretty terrible writer, but a very good storyteller. That sentence seems a bit oxymoronic, but I just find it hard to translate thoughts onto paper sometimes. While being a good writer is a crucial skill that will help you in any professional setting, I think that storytelling is just as important. I grew up with a close extended family that spends all our time together playing cards and telling stories, and I wouldn't have it any other way. While being a good writer allows you to analyze, criticize, or explain, being a good storyteller allows you to empathize, understand others, and translate.

Being a good storyteller means that instead of saying, "I am eternally grateful for their mentorship and support," you can tell the story of how you pulled an April Fool's prank on them and got a shoe and three volleyballs thrown at you. It means that instead of saying, "I will always value my friendship

with them," you can tell the story of how they encouraged you to pursue a dream you didn't think you had the ability to chase. It means that instead of saying, "I love them," you can tell the story of how they watched the sunrise with you from the football field, despite it being ridiculously cold. It means that instead of telling the board

of trustees, "This school is incredibly meaningful to me, but you need to fix the issues in how you handle sexual misconduct policies," you can tell them a few stories of why you love this place so much, but also why it pains you sometimes.

I was raised with the knowledge that stories are powerful. Whenever I am with my family or friends, I relish the late night conversations where we sit together and swap stories, some sad, some happy, some embarrassing, some funny, and all valued. By listening to a story, no matter how silly it may be, you learn about the storyteller's personality, their home, their morals, and many other tidbits of information you may glean. It's hard to place, but there's just something so inexplicably beautiful about story-



#### **Dominic Young-Smith '21**

I'm gonna start off with a quote that I first heard from my mom, "Excuses, excuses are tools of incompetence. Those who use them build monuments of nothingness and will never amount to anything." My dad's version, "Excuses are like buttholes. Everybody has them and they all stink," is much more appealing to me, but you can pick your favorite since they both portray the same message.

Funny enough, this lesson was also one of the first things I heard when I got to Choate in August 2019. One of my football teammates showed up late to the first day of preseason, rushing, trying to make up for the lost time, and, as everybody does when they're late, rattling off a handful of excuses such as "I'm sorry" and "I got caught in traffic," in his appeal to Coach Spin. Coach sternly but lovingly responded with two of his more common expressions: "Don't be sorry, be better" and "Figure it out." I immediately felt at home again. These two simplistic statements have pretty much described my short, Covid-ridden time at this institution.

My first week on campus was a grind to say the least. Trying to figure out a new life schedule at a new school in a new state is never easy. It surely doesn't help when you are partaking in preseason football while hearing about the most dreadful conditioning drill ever — Burma road — at the same time. That week was filled with so much laughter, pain, and throw up that it felt like we had been with each other for at

least three months already. I found myself a part of a new family. One that I had hoped for when I made the decision to come to this place, but never could have imagined without actually experiencing it. Although the week was intense, it felt fulfilling in a way. Being surrounded by people who were committed to being better — in all facets of life not just football — and full of love and compassion just like me was the perfect introduction to Choate football, and, as I would eventually find out, the Choate community as a whole.

For my three previous years of high school, I had always been late to the very first class of each school year. I thought that things would be different this time since I didn't have to rely on anything or anyone but my own two legs to get to class. Key word, "thought." New school, new team, new state, everything around me was new, everything within me felt new, but for some reason I still couldn't break the streak. Hundreds of excuses raced through my mind as I embarrassedly walked to my first Choate class, American Lit with Ms. D, over the freshly emptied Mem field. I came across some old, overused ones that would surely fail, such as "Traffic was backed up today" or "My mom took forever to get ready," but I finally came up with the most foolproof one: "My alarm

didn't go off." A crappy, familiar start to something that I hoped would be different. Falling into this same trap of finding fault in something else, instead of accepting it as my own and moving on was heartbreaking but motivating. "Don't be sorry, be better," I thought to myself over and over again in the following weeks. As I started to make fewer excuses, I became more willing and able to accept faults as my own, but also not to fret over things I could not control. This trinity of less excuse-making, more love and compassion, and more serenity propelled me.

Almost everything went to crap after fall, though. January was mostly full of loneliness; I ended a relationship, became unbearably annoyed with my roommates and their constant bickering, endured some racial slurs, and dislocated my kneecap and underwent surgery while my mom and brother were halfway across the world. Thankfully, though, I'll admit that my dad was able to come up and care for me during and a few days after the surgery. February was a little better; I became accustomed to swinging my leg in order to walk, got to reunite with my football family at the Team 120 banquet, and got to see my mom for the first time since the injury. March started to continue the upward trend, and then everything came



#### **Kevin Tang '21**

Last April, some other students and I were randomly selected to attend a trustee meeting over zoom. At the end, one of the trustees asked us a question: "Of what percentage of the Choate experience are we getting now that we are virtual?" To be honest, I was completely spaced out, so I just went with the crowd and answered 40 to 50 percent.

After the meeting, my advisor at the time, Jackie, emailed me. In a few short yet efficient words, he tore through the cloud of bullshit that is my answer and encouraged me to be truthful.

That resonated with me. So much so that over the next ten months, the trustee's question annoyingly simmered in the back of my mind. To find MY answer, I looked back on my Choate career, searching for the shiny, luminous events that would come to define my years here.

But I couldn't. As I rummaged through my memories, I only remembered the smaller moments.

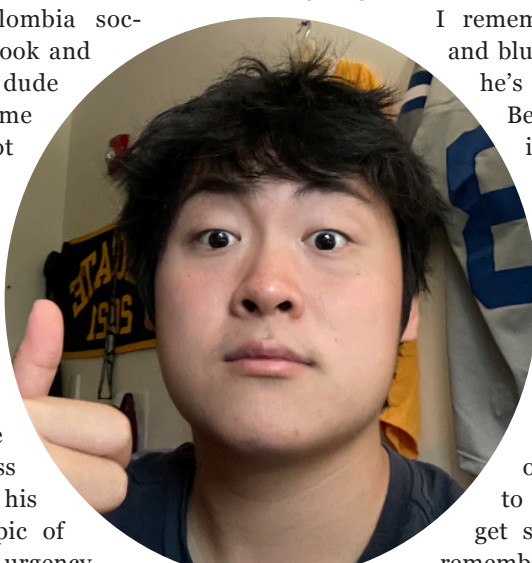
I remember my first night in freshman year. Under the dim lights of Mem basement, I saw this kid filling up his bottle down the hall in this bright yellow Colombia soccer T-shirt. I took one look and thought to myself: "this dude could definitely beat me up." David has since not only obtained the physique of a greek demigod, but also accomplished the torturous feat of becoming one of my closest friends.

I remember a few months into freshman year, Calvin and I were discussing the stickiness of football gloves in his room, you know, a topic of utmost importance and urgency. For some reason, things got heated over this stunningly irrelevant subject matter, and I chucked a football at his head. Of course,

he proceeded to kick the shit out of me. Fast forward three years, Calvin and I are going to college together next fall.

I remember Jaime's bright red and blue spiderman blanket that he's had since freshman year. Believe me when I say that it is one of the best things I've ever seen and felt in my entire life, but it is way too soft and comfortable considering the disturbingly low amount of times I've seen him wash it.

I remember the French final I got a C+ on that I've been trying to make my parents forget since freshman winter. I remember accidentally running onto a nearby highway during my brief stint with the cross country team. I remember when I threw four interceptions in a JV football



I run an Instagram page for mental health. I have a bullet journal. I am obsessed with taking pictures of my dog in front of pretty flowers. And I like clothes. I used to think that wasn't important, but it is. Everyday, I wake up and I get a choice. That act is simple, but so empowering.

Everyone's probably heard the cliché: "it's the little things in life." I literally had a wooden plaque with those exact words in my freshman dorm room. But what people don't tell you is that those small things aren't small at all. The outfits, the dining hall hacks, the inside jokes, those are the choices and memories that keep us grounded. They give us agency. In an environment where we are pressured to make big decisions about where we are going and who we are, when we honestly don't have a clue, the little things let us choose who we want to be.

Today, I woke up early and got dressed. I got in my car and enjoyed the steady feeling of the quiet drive to Choate. And as I blinked my eyes sleepily, "Simple Things" by Jim Brickman, a song from my childhood, came on. The chorus goes like this: "How I love the simple things / the simple things just are."

telling. You see it when a friend's eyes light up as they explain some fascinating topic they learned from their favorite class, you see it when someone sets up the perfect punchline to a joke, and you see it in many other parts of your life if you pay enough attention. With every moment that passes in our lives, we are living a new story just waiting to be told.

So, I urge you all to practice the art of storytelling, because while writing will help you get far in life, storytelling will allow you to understand your own life, and the lives of others. Go play cards with friends on a Friday night and tell them about how you b.s.'d your way through class after forgetting to do the homework. Go tell your parents about some new club you "joined" by showing up to the interest meeting and taking a slice of pizza before leaving. Go tell that one teacher you look up to about some niche interest of yours that doesn't even apply to class, but you think they might be interested in anyways. Tell as many stories as you can, as often as you can, and eventually storytelling will become second nature. Then maybe you'll be able to tell not only your story, but also be able to use your platform to tell the stories of others.

I have spent four years at this school and could spend four times as long telling stories about my time here. So please, come find me and I'll tell you some. Or better yet, you could tell me some of your own.

crashing down: I went to North Carolina to see old friends over spring break, found out that America would be fully reopened by Easter, lost some family to "the 'vid," and then became a member of a six-instead-of-four-person family because of this same virus. Since then it has almost all been a blur.

Through all of the hatred, laughter, political unrest, fun, loss, and CDC statements, five things have remained clear for me: one, excuses waste your and everybody else's time, so avoid them at all costs and understand that mistakes will happen no matter what; two, love those close to you super hard and everyone else even harder — it betters both the giver and receiver more than anyone knows; three, bad days stink but having a bad day with people there to support you is priceless; four, failure is inevitable, and you shouldn't be afraid to ask for help if you genuinely need it; and five, coming to Choate is the single greatest choice that I, personally, have made up to this point in my life.

I'm beyond grateful for all of the passion and courage that I have found within myself, with the help of many people in the Choate community, as well as my friends and family from elsewhere.

I'm thankful for it all. From the football field to Cafe Ra to John Legend performing to spontaneous snowball fights to sleepless nights filled with homework. I thank everyone in this community for helping me in one way or another, even if we have never met. Always remember that a failed experience is better than a missed one, love conquers all, and excuses are like buttholes — everyone has them and they all stink. Love y'all.

game. I remember winning most improved player in thirds basketball while averaging 0.4 points a game. I remember sitting in the Mem common room on Thursday nights, talking about how the Celtics have managed to disappoint me again.

To the trustee that asked me that question 11 months ago, my answer is ten percent. Attending classes via pixels is ten percent of my Choate experience. The 90 percent is the bathroom in Lanphier that has not been able to lock since my freshman year. It is the world-shakingly loud doors in Humanities. It is the life-threatening smell of the boys locker room after a rainy practice in the fall. It is the train that makes sure we know its passing by in the mornings. It is the breeze as you walk back from the dining hall.

The smaller moments are the tiny pieces of your Choate puzzle. Do not take your time here for granted. Savour every last drop of it like it's going to be ripped away from you any second. Because trust me, I think I speak for the entire senior class when I say we know a thing or two about stolen time.

Thank you.

Medha Illindala '21

There's a magnolia tree behind Spencer house. Every spring, it blooms. The most beautiful pink petals fall to create a blanket on the grass below. Fun fact - those leaves are edible, but I wouldn't recommend using them as an afternoon snack. I spent my entire sophomore spring sitting under that tree, watching the frisbee team on the field nearby, letting the breeze run through my once-long hair. I remember once Dr. Curtis came up to a friend and me when we were sitting under that tree. He appreciated our efforts to be outside on such a beautiful day. Before he left, he told us a story about a magnolia tree at his childhood home, and how he loved to see the magnolias bloom around campus in the springtime. It's been two years now, and I still remember that moment and how happy and carefree I felt.

I wish my Choate experience centered around my spring under the magnolia tree, so I'd have nothing but sunshine and rainbows to share with you. But I've made mistakes, quite a few of them. I've had some of my lowest lows at this school. I thought that I'd hit rock bottom, only for the floor to get lower. There were times where I was going to counseling twice a week, where I showed up to take tests in tears, where I spent weekends in my room staring blankly at my computer screen.

I always felt out of the loop, like there was a meeting with all the Choate secrets that I somehow missed. I'm honestly still not convinced that that's not true. I wish I knew how to hold onto the feeling of that spring and never let it go. But I now have hindsight on my side. So, here it is, my guide to having your very own spring under the magnolia tree.

**One.** Honors classes are demanding. The order of labeling should be "Super Difficult," "Difficult," and "Ok not as Difficult but not Easy". I came into freshman year thinking every class I would ever take needed to be honors. Don't be freshman year me. Go easy on yourself; the transition to Choate can be challenging. Take the time you need to adjust.

**Two.** You will make friends, and you'll lose a ton more. People change and so will you. You'll

find awesome people but then lose touch. And that's ok! But don't forget that you always have the power to get back in touch. There are some lovely people in our grade that I've never talked to before, and I'll probably never see them again. Everyone here is nervous about making friends; I can promise you that. It's never too late to meet new people. Shoutout to all the fantastic people in Arch who welcomed me with open arms this February. You all mean more to me than you know.

**Three.** Don't get a caffeine addiction. I had one, took Advil for my withdrawal headaches, and then had to take Tums for the heartburn I was getting from the Advil. As a senior who hardly drinks coffee, it's possible to give it up. You'll save so much money too. Being addicted to caffeine is not 'fun' and 'quirky'; please take care of yourselves before you'll need five cups to get you through the morning.

**Four.** Eat as much [expletive] pizza from the dining hall as you want. You've already paid for all this food, make use of it! I've spent too many meals at the salad bar worried about what other people would think of my meal choices. On the other hand, I've also spent too many meals getting my nutrition from Cocoa Puffs. Listen to your body; it knows what it wants. Everyone here is too worried about their self-image to care about yours.

**Five.** Realize that you have limits. My senior fall was spent in agonizing pain due to a stress-induced Crohn's Disease flare-up. I was still dragging myself to school every day and ended up in the hospital the first week of winter term. I wrote college application essays in between episodes of throwing up and spent every moment I was at home in bed. The idea of just going remote for a few weeks never even crossed my mind; I was so

hell-bent on needing to continue on the grind. I was terrified of the idea of going on med-leave. I'm doing much better now, but looking back, I have no idea how I kept going. Please don't see this as a story of perseverance. I don't want any of you to have to go through that. I wish I could tell you to follow my parent's advice and 'just don't be stressed!' but it doesn't work like that. The only advice I can give you here is to push for systemic change. I realized this far too late. I hope the administration can hear this clearly; stress from being at Choate quite literally put me in the hospital.

**Six.** Speak up. Whether it's in class, in a group of people, to the administration. You're more powerful than you think. Look at how many issues the @choate official accounts brought up. Keep posting. Publish pieces, talk to any faculty that will listen. If there's one message you get out of this speech, it's that Choate is far from perfect. This School can do a lot better on a lot of things. Whatever problem you have, bring it up. Shoutout to my ARC girls. We've been pushing against the rampant sexism across the robotics team, and I'm leaving the program hopeful for systemic change.

**Seven.** A message to the upperclassmen: underclassmen have no right to judge you. Watch the Great British Baking Show in the middle of the SAC. Do cartwheels across campus. Wear those neon shoes. Take up a row of couches so you can hang out with your friends. Be loud. If you are an underclassman, the upperclassmen will judge you, I'm sorry about that. But that doesn't mean you still can't do all of these things. You'll never have to see any of these people ever again if you don't want to, and you're only here for a short time. So do what you want!



Aissatou Diallo '21

At 8:28 pm on the night these speeches were due, I texted my friend Reina, "Can you think of something that has happened to me at Choate that is senior speech worthy?" to which she replied, "Study Abroad?" And I instantly began to think of the three months I spent in Rome my sophomore fall. I promise this speech is not an excuse to talk about the fact that I studied abroad. Bear with me.

So I began writing about my "experience", essentially making the same point over and over again: I was genuinely happy to be there, and I am thankful for the opportunity, and we should all be thankful for opportunities. And I believe that. But I also know that Rome me was the same as Connecticut me. And though I got to live out my fantasy of bumping into a hot Italian boy outside of a Basilica during sunset, I was eventually equally as indifferent to my surroundings as I often am on this campus.

And don't get me wrong, I met amazing people along the way, and I cherished them for all that we could exchange in our finite friendships. But they were not you all. They did not wander around the SAC for study rooms, play spike ball on Mem field, or work out in the squash courts.

And sometimes as I feverishly roamed around the Pantheon, played chess with old men in piazzas, and spotted Ursa Major on the basketball courts, I thought of this campus, and the language we all share. And I hate to say it, but I thought about just how much the people here have helped guide me. And I know now that those feelings exist because in all the blurs of good times so good that you can't even pinpoint one to write down, exists this sixth dimension where the people around you represent all the moments you spend trying to get inspired, and they are always better than what you produce. And so in Rome, I was happy until I wasn't until I was again. Because after all, the true tragedy of happiness is that we adapt to our environment. It's that once we know what happiness means to us, once we are finally able to articulate it, it changes. And this campus is one of many places where we pursue it.



Anyway, I will spare you the exhaustive list of memories that this place has gifted to me, but I will share one with you that I think comes closest to conveying my point. There is a special couple of minutes during the Holiday Program every year (well every normal year) where we are all asked to sing a song. And whether we are in the PMAC or Colony Hall, the auditorium is filled with the superbly deafening sound of each of our voices on top of another. And depending on where you are sitting, you can hear the groans of some upperclassmen, who sing despite feeling drained. The overt excitement of some voices that you recognize as just the kind of person to sing that shamelessly. And as I scope the auditorium, making awkward eye contact with you all mid-song, I welcome the reminder that we share more than a campus and a name.

That is the moment every year that I realize I will miss Choate for the way it encour-

**Eight.** Don't think ahead. Every adult listening will probably heavily disagree with this, but I spent too much of my time here worrying about repercussions, what will happen next. Take that class you saw in the catalog that has nothing to do with your college plan. Put off your homework a couple of minutes to go watch the sunset. Spend your weekends with the people you care about, doing things that you care about. I didn't do that, but I know people who did and look at that we're all graduating at the same time. You're allowed to stray from a clear-cut path.

**Nine.** Get hurt. Not physically, but emotionally. Make those reckless mistakes. Put yourself out there, take a chance and see what happens. You're young. Now is the time to make all of those stupid decisions, because it'll matter more if you make them later. Love people, hate people, hate to love people, love to hate people. Your friends are going to warn you against it, that's their job. Your job is to completely ignore that advice and come crying back to them when things don't work out. Do that for each other.

**Ten.** Forget all of this advice and make your own mistakes. Who do I think I am, knowing all of the secrets to success and how to have the best four years here? I have no idea what I'm doing. I wrote this speech at midnight the night before it was due. I know I'm going to keep making so many mistakes and I have many more regrets awaiting my future.

Maybe your spring won't be under the magnolia tree. Maybe it'll be by Archbold pond or in the Chapel or even at home. Every one of you is going to have your own experience at this school. For some of you, it'll be amazing. For others, it'll be awful. And for the rest of you, you might not be sure yet. I'm still trying to decide if my time here was worth it. But who cares! You can't go back in time, all you can do is keep going.

Make your own advice. Shape your future. Trust your heart a little more than your head, and then get mad at yourself when your head was right. Whatever your time at Choate brings you, I hope you come out of it a stronger version of yourself, ready for all the new mistakes life will bring you.

ages our paths to merge. But it is also one of the reasons I know that the one true grounding principle in my pursuit of happiness is friendship. The people who are better than me, who I feel lucky to know, who make me second guess hating certain parts of myself. They provide me with a new perspective, they remind me that I have gotten as far as I have, they remind me that there is happiness to be found right here, not always out of reach. But most importantly, these people taught me that I deserve it. They are selfish on my behalf. And one day I realized, just as you will, that just because you've been listening to this shared story, and I mean really listening, does not mean that you haven't told your own. In getting to know these people, and in loving them unconditionally, you have been doing the same for yourself.

It is a privilege to even ponder what makes life meaningful and to be presented with so many opportunities to live a fulfilling one. To be in an environment where you have agency over who you know and how you know them. So this is not me asking you to examine all the relationships in your lives, but rather my way of expressing that I believe in us because I believe in our ability to appreciate those relationships for all that they are.

Editorial: Make Time for Self Reflection

The only constant of the Choate experience is change. At the end of each school year, a mix of glee and existential dread fills the humid air. Third-formers feel newly empowered, excited to take on their time as "wise fools," as the etymological definition of "sophomore" puts it. Fourth-formers realize the seniors were never really that tall. Fifth-formers fret over their new responsibility as the School's leaders. And sixth-formers, free of the commitments that once kept them so busy, pause to reflect on their time at Choate. As they look past Christian Street, sixth-formers consider how they will define themselves within the global community that they are closer than ever to inheriting.

Although the faces may change, the process of questioning and reinventing the self within the collective remains an undercurrent of the Choate, and maybe human, experience.

However, amid busy Choate schedules, it's easy to turn a blind eye to such self-revolutions. We get caught up in tests, projects, club meetings, internships, and newspapers (guilty), losing track of the bigger picture.

But last spring, the global Covid-19 crisis forced every person on Earth to pause and consider the self within the collective. This reflection became inevitable, as the pandemic created a kind of glitch in the space-time continuum — even as death rates accelerated, the days lengthened. As the biggest change many of us have ever experienced took over our lives, the clutter got stripped away, revealing to us the gradual changes that often go overlooked: the trees blooming, siblings growing, values slowly toggling.

And as people reflected on the changes they had experienced and the ones they still hoped to achieve, the collective became stronger. The Black Lives Matter movement swept the globe, the 2020 election saw the highest voter turnout in recent history, and, on campus, students' persistence led to actual, actionable administrative change through programming like the Stand In Solidarity event.

So, as a return to normalcy feels more possible than ever, we, the editors of *The Choate News*, encourage all of us not to fall back into the monotonous cycle of change we were once accustomed to. We shouldn't rely on a global pandemic to make time and space for reflection — as students, members of a global community, and humans seeking meaningful lives, it is our responsibility to continue to question. Let's not get caught up in the hustle and bustle of Choate life, but instead keep an active pulse on the changes we are undergoing as we experience them: thank the tree for blooming, play with your sibling, grapple with what you believe both inwardly and reflexively by having meaningful conversations with others.

We hope that this special Year In Review issue will inspire you to think about yourself within the collective Choate community, especially as it played out this past year. It is this constant self-reflection and revolution — and not, say, the sudden privilege to go maskless in public — that will lead to greater connection and better change, as we inch closer to a world not dominated by Covid.



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News



# SEXUAL VIOLENCE PERVADES TIGRAY CIVIL WAR



Photo courtesy of The Mainichi

Women in Tigray are being targeted by military officials.

By **Maggie McCabe ’22**  
*Opinions Writer*

Mona Lisa, a recent high school graduate from Tigray, Ethiopia, lays motionless in a hospital bed. Her right arm has been amputated as a result of a gunshot wound inflicted by an Ethiopian soldier after she struggled to fend off his attempts to rape her.

On November 4, 2020, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared war on Ethiopia’s Tigray region after the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) — the party that currently governs the region — attacked a federal military facility.

Tensions between Abiy’s government and the TPLF had been brewing In 2018, prior to Abiy’s rise to power, Ethiopia’s government was ruled by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The EPRDF was a coalition of four political wings, each representing an ethnic group or nationality in Ethiopia – the Amhara Democratic Party, which represented the Amhara ethnic group, the Oromo Democratic Party, which represented the Oromo ethnic group, the Southern Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement, which represented multiple ethnic groups, and the TPLF, representing the Tigrayans.

Even though Tigrayans make up only 6% of Ethiopia’s population, the TPLF dominated the most important positions in politics and the military. As a result, in 2018, other members of the EPRDF united against the TPLF to elect Abiy, the first Oromo in this position, as Prime Minister.

After Abiy’s victory, the Ethiopian government saw an opportunity to launch a “law enforcement operation,” which was their justification for a full-scale invasion. This invasion has brought up a major humanitarian crisis of sexual and

gender-based violence, largely by the ENDF. Now, over one million people have been displaced and there have been 150 mass killings since war broke out, causing the deaths of over 1,900 Tigrayans.

According to Madiha Raza, a senior officer with the International Rescue Committee, “Women are having to engage in sexually exploitative relationships to survive, for food, shelter, or a little bit of money. Rape is definitely being used as a weapon of war.” What makes this even more horrific is that the majority of reported cases of rapes have been committed by men in uniform, such as those in the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, Eritrean Defense Forces, and Amhara Special Forces.

The Ethiopian government and its allies are committing genocide: allegations of ethnic cleansing, gang rapes, and extrajudicial killings have continued to surface since November of last year. One woman testified that her rapist claimed he was “cleansing the bloodlines of Tigrayan women.”

Abiy has claimed that he will hold those who were perpetrators of rape and looting in wartime accountable in a court of law, but this would require the Ethiopian government to prosecute members of their own military. It would also be a long and extensive process due to the length of this crisis and the large number of rape and looting cases.

Because of the difficulty of this plan, there needs to be a broader, international program to enforce the prosecution of rapists from not only places like Ethiopia, but worldwide. By doing this we can ensure that victims’ voices are heard properly and brought to justice. There must be an overhead power that can force the Ethiopian government to seek legal justice on behalf of the Tigrayan women.

Additionally, the UN must take preemptive measures to

protect women around the world. Local organizations in Tigray do work to support victims of such crimes, but efforts by a global organization would be far more effective.

An organization with this scope is the UN. An effective program by the UN should have two parts. First, funding must be distributed to improve healthcare systems for the victims of the atrocities in the region. More access to resources and doctors will mean that the women in Tigray will be able to receive the help they need.

Second, steps must be taken to educate the women in these areas on how to prevent and report rape. If people have access to these resources and take advantage of them, Tigray will become far safer and victims will know what to do if they’re ever in a bad situation.

Although the U.S. has a history of intervening in conflicts abroad, it has hardly supported Ethiopia. In March, Democratic Senator Chris Coons, of Delaware, met with Abiy to encourage him to make peace with the TPLF. Soon after, Abiy confirmed the presence of Eritrean troops and of violence. It is evident Abiy cares about his reputation as a global leader — especially with Western countries — and that U.S. and European allies may be able to use their relationship with Abiy to encourage peace.

Violence against women in Ethiopia is a widespread and egregious violation of human rights. Steps must be taken to mitigate the conflict and support the victims of these atrocious crimes.

*To help at-risk children in Tigray, consider donating to Save the Children’s Ethiopia Tigray Conflict Children’s Relief Fund.*

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# A SMARTER SOLUTION TO AMERICAN’S GUN PROBLEM

By **Michael Korvyakov ’23**  
*Copy Editor*

Since the beginning of 2021, there has been a major uptick in gun violence with a total of 147 mass shootings in the United States and a 73% increase in mass shootings from the same four-month period last year. These shootings have also gotten more deadly, with 176 deaths in 2021, compared to 92 deaths from January to April 2020 according to the *Insider*.

Amid the rise in gun violence, gun sales also spiked. According to *Forbes*, in 2020, gun sales increased to nearly forty million, a 40% increase from the year before. The likely cause behind the spike in sales was the effect of the pandemic on law enforcement. Many police departments were unable to respond to some calls, due to a shortage of officers in the department. In addition, the political climate and the protests regarding police brutality in the last year had people on edge.

But this rise in gun violence and gun sales is not restricted to the past year. Over the last two decades, gun-related deaths have increased from 28,874 to around 40,000. Similarly, according to Statista, the percentage of gun ownership rate by American households has climbed from 39% to 42%, a major increase in the number of firearms in the United States when compared to the population growth.

The rise in gun violence has led many people to ask what the solution to this problem is. Some propose instituting more stringent gun laws, such as a ban on “assault rifles,” or raising the minimum age required to purchase a firearm from 18 to 21. Others argue that more guns would allow Americans to better protect themselves from criminal threats. Although finding an agreed-upon solution has proved

challenging in the past, it’s clear that no single policy change is going to eliminate all gun deaths, rather, individual policies can help to mitigate the issue.

Pushed by Joe Biden, The proposed ban on assault rifles was instituted in 1994 and expired in 2004. It has yet to be renewed to this day. While there is no universal legal definition for an “assault rifle,” FBI estimates of deaths by rifles have consistently been in the range of 200 to 400, making them a small percentage of gun deaths, and indicating that policy aimed at removing the ownership of assault rifles would not solve the issue of gun violence as a whole.

Predominantly, gun violence occurs through the use of handguns, whose concealability and semi-automatic nature make them particularly dangerous weapons. Therefore, if any solution to gun violence is proposed, it must target the source of the issue: appalling numbers of individual murders with handguns. Instituting a ban on all semi-automatic firearms may seem effective, but such a ban is an infringement on Americans’ second amendment right, which exists for the purpose of allowing citizens a means of protecting themselves from criminals and the government, should it overstep its bounds. If the government is allowed to put a ban on semi-automatic weapons as a whole, there is nothing stopping them from extending this law to all firearms. This creates a scenario in which the government is the only entity with ownership of firearms. Ultimately, the second amendment, which allows citizens to bear arms, exists not for citizens to protect themselves from each other, but for, as the amendment states, “the security of a free state.” Such a free state can not be maintained if there is nothing stopping the government from imposing its will upon the people.

The solution to gun violence shouldn’t be one which results in

law-abiding American citizens getting their firearms taken away, but rather one which prevents guns from getting into the hands of people who pose a threat to others. One solution that addresses the source of the problem is a law that allows family members and some medical professionals to petition for the removal of a firearm from a person if they believe there is a risk to others. A trial would follow the petition and should the person be deemed a danger to others, they would be barred from owning the weapon. The issue of the constitutionality of such a law goes to the question of when these firearms are removed from the possession of the prosecuted person. If the firearm is removed at the moment of petition, before a trial, this would be a violation of the fifth amendment, which states that “No person shall be ... deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”

If the seizure of the weapon occurs after a court determines that the ownership of a weapon is likely to put others at risk, this law would be consistent with other laws that prevent certain people from owning guns; this includes people who were dishonorably discharged from the military, those who have convicted on a misdemeanor of domestic violence, and those who have been deemed mentally unstable. Restricting those who are able to petition for the removal of a firearm to just family and certain medical professionals would prevent government abuse of this policy.

While an effective change in gun policy can save lives, we must ensure that the federal government does not violate the constitutional rights that this country was founded on.

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Photo courtesy of The World

AR-15s are one of the most popular rifles in the United States.

# The Looming Threat of Space Junk

By **Mealy Cronin ’23**  
*Opinions Writer*

What do a golden olive branch, art by Andy Warhol, and three golf balls have in common? They’ve all been left behind on the moon! And, while these items may be sentimental favorites, among this group are also three moon buggies and 54 unscrewed probes. All of this debris adds up to 190,000 kilograms of human-made material strewn about the moon. Space junk, however, isn’t exclusive to the lunar surface; the Earth’s orbit has 2,000 active satellites, 3,000 inactive satellites, 34,000 pieces of space junk larger than ten centimeters, and 128 million pieces larger than one millimeter.

But does space junk pose a danger to humans on Earth? Will the trash only pose a short-lived impact, such as the threat of falling objects, or will the detritus have a lasting effect, as space exploration programs are releasing tons of carbon into the atmosphere?



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

the descent of China’s Long March 5B rocket into the Indian Ocean. On a daily basis, copious amounts of space garbage circling the Earth descended into the atmosphere where much of an object’s components disintegrate due to the heat.

However, the long term impact of carbon emissions is alarming. Even when rockets

and satellites incinerate upon re-entry, the process scatters alumina particles which do impact the environment. Alumina is a highly reactive oxide ceramic material widely used in fueling rocket boosters — the larger the space object, the bigger the fuel system, which ultimately creates more alumina particles. These particles

get trapped in the stratosphere and deplete the ozone layer, allowing the effects of ultraviolet radiation to seep through.

As new companies like SpaceX emerge, there is no doubt that there will be more rocket launches, increased space junk, and further re-entries into Earth’s atmosphere. This has led scientists to rethink the manufacturing materials for rockets and spacecraft, with the goal of finding those that don’t generate alumina particles. Recently, a Japanese company made inroads by developing a wood-based technology with the aim of reducing harmful alumina particles. The United Nations has also gotten involved by requesting the removal of satellites from space within 25 years after final missions. Creative solutions as to how exactly this will be accomplished include dragging dead satellites via harpoon, net, or magnets, into the atmosphere where they will ultimately burn up.

Speaking on the Chinese rocket that landed in Indian

Ocean on May 9, U. S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said, “Spacefaring nations must minimize the risk to people and property on Earth... to meet responsible standards regarding their space debris.” In the 20th century, and more notably, the 21st century, ascent to space has become a more global endeavor — for example, the space agencies for the United States, Russia, Europe, Japan, and Canada work collectively on the International Space Station Program. Given the collaborative nature of space exploration, the solution to the problem of space junk must be a collaborative one. Because of the impact space activity has had on our Earth’s environment, world powers especially those who intend to to “colonize the cosmos” such as internet tycoons Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos must address the growing environmental implications of space trash.

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## CHOATE'S SOCIAL-SCIENCES GENDER GAP

Female students are interested in pursuing economics, political science, and more. What's holding them back?

By Claire Yuan '21

Editor-in-Chief, 114<sup>th</sup> Masthead

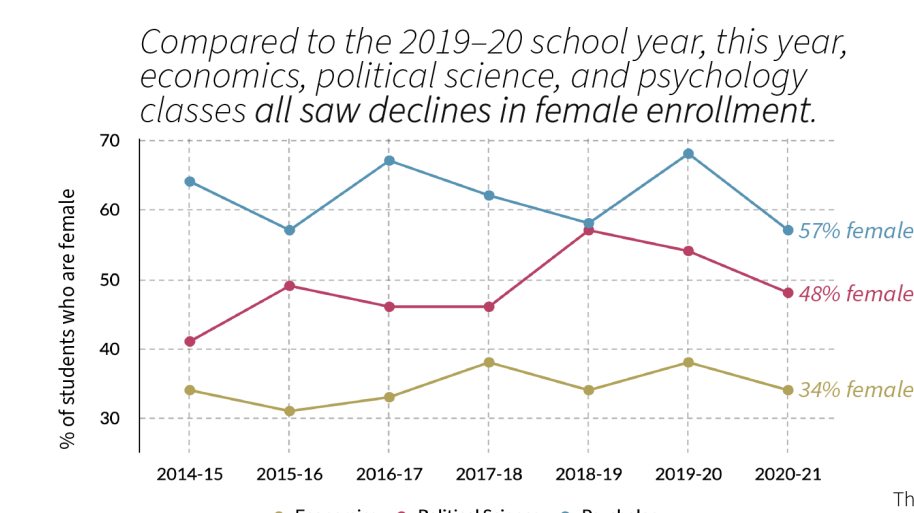
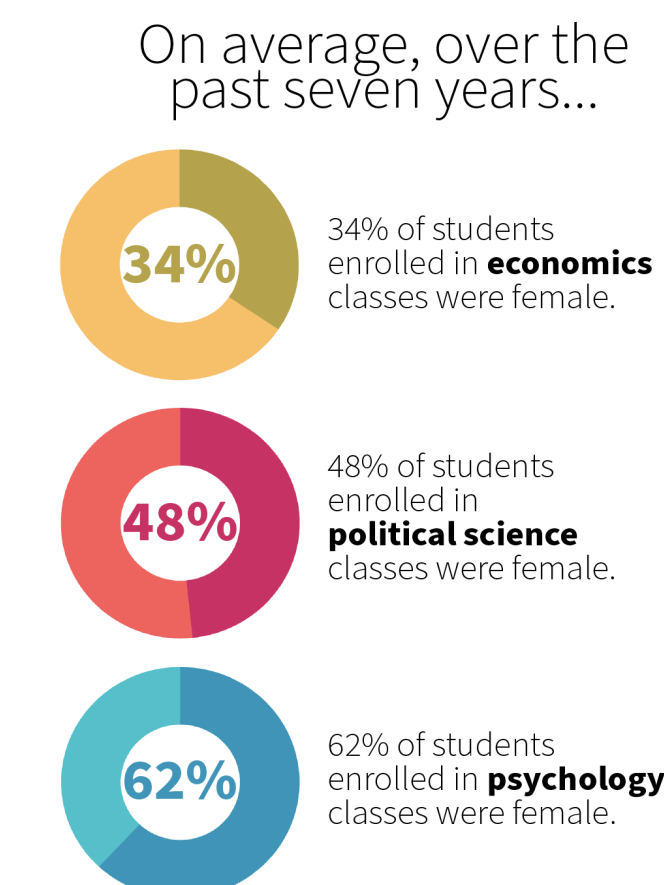
Tackling the gender disparities in STEM has long been a topic of interest at Choate and beyond, but the spotlight on gender inequality in the social sciences has not shined as bright. Many Choate students, regardless of their gender identity, have felt the impact of a gender imbalance in classrooms and the club life of social science disciplines like economics, government, and psychology — fields that men typically dominate.

For many female students, it can be discouraging to pursue interests in these male-dominated areas. Alicia Xiong '21 has long been interested in economics. She said, "I think that girls feel uncomfortable with economics itself. Frequently, we are told to stay away from STEM fields, and economics does somewhat fall under this category since it requires a strong background in math. As a result, we see fewer females represented in those fields and even fewer in power." Indeed, according to the American Economic Association, just 33% of American doctoral students studying economics are women, and only one woman, Janet Yellen, has ever served as the chair of the Federal Reserve.

This attitude carries over into social sciences-related Signature Programs. Although the John F. Kennedy Program in Government and Public Service intentionally selects a near-equal number of male and female students regardless of the breakdown of its applicant pool, Rory Latham '21, a member of the JFK program, noted that "people are more surprised when a girl says she's in JFK than when a guy does, based on some cultural expectation that politics, at least at Choate, is male-dominated." In fact, 35 female students and 30 male students, along with one nonbinary student, have been offered spots in the JFK program over the four years it has existed.

This culture of exclusion seems to also carry into social science-oriented extracurriculars. In a project on the gender dynamics of Choate's club life that she completed in the winter term for her women's studies class, Charlotte Myers-Elkins '22 "traced [the male-dominated speaking time of many clubs] to the environment of mansplaining, talking over girls, discouraging them, and making them feel less confident in their answers."

For the 2020-2021 academic year, the majority of social science clubs at Choate, such as Economics Club, Young Republicans, and Choate Finance and Investment, reported more male members



than female, with the exceptions of Young Democrats, which this year counted 41 female members to 38 male ones, and Psychology Club, which counted 20 female members to just four male ones.

The Choate Economics Club reported an especially drastic gender disparity, with 27 male members to just three female ones. Xiong, a former cabinet member of the club, believes there is a connection between the disparities that exist in club life and in the classroom. She said, "It is saddening to see this gender disparity exist in the club, and I think part of that stems from the academic side of economics, which is also male-dominated. Our club has struggled with trying to increase female participation."

But, even clubs whose memberships are relatively balanced between genders, such as Young Democrats, aren't immune to these issues. Latham, a former president of Young Democrats, noted that the club sees "more regular male speakers, and I

think that could discourage women who would otherwise speak up, seeing a couple guys talk for a few minutes straight and at least seem like they know a lot about the topic. It might discourage someone who knows just as much but doesn't have the same confidence or support to speak up."

Instead of feeling uncomfortable fighting for speaking time in male-dominated club environments, some female students choose a different path: female-oriented affinity spaces. Myers-Elkins, the president of Choate Women in Business, explained, "Because women are discouraged from going to these clubs like Choate Finance Club, they try to find a more supportive environment where they're able to pursue that passion, and that's typically in clubs with the word 'women' or 'girl' in it."

In spite of these affinity groups, the widespread attitude and discomfort in club life has, to some degree, fed back into the enrollment patterns that drive

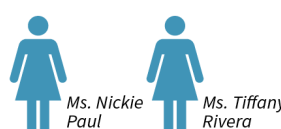
Choate's gender disparity among social-science disciplines is reflected in the gender breakdown of those disciplines' teachers:



All four of the School's **economics** teachers are male.



The School's **political science** section has one female teacher to four male ones.



Meanwhile, the School's two permanent **psychology** teachers are both female.

This year, Choate Economics Club had

**3 female members** compared to 27 male ones.

On the other hand, Psychology Club had

**20 female members** compared to 4 male ones.

The Choate News sincerely thanks Amy Gosztyla, Colleen Kazar, Kyra Jenney, and Ned Gallagher for providing us with this data.

Graphic by Kate Bailey/The Choate News

female students away from economics classes. Myers-Elkins said, "Girls are kind of discouraged from taking higher-level economics classes at Choate, and a lot of it has to do with the confidence they feel when entering a club environment where they've been made to feel less educated in a specific topic." This year, nearly twice as many males as females took an economics class at Choate. Still, at 51 females (to 98 males), that's the highest number of female economics students since 2012, when records began to be kept.

As HPRSS Department Head, Ms. Kyra Jenney pointed out that female students are certainly interested in economics classes, and "the introductory courses don't necessarily have a gender imbalance." Unfortunately, she continued, "I think that probably becomes less so the case as you advance along in the discipline, and when you get to some of the higher courses, whether that's advanced topics, monetary theory, or international economics. That's where we're starting to see

more of the gender imbalance crop up, where there are fewer young women continuing past those introductory courses."

Indeed, for some students, it is their experience inside the classroom that stops them from pursuing more advanced classes in a particular discipline. "At least for me, I don't like to be in a male-dominated classroom because I tend to shrink back in conversation," said Xiong.

One critical issue that students and teachers alike point to is the issue of representation within the classroom. Noticeably, all of Choate's economics teachers are white and male — a disparity that seems all but guaranteed to affect the class environment and students' experiences, especially those of women and students of color. In contrast, the psychology teachers are all women and include a woman of color. As it happens, Psychology Club's roster is over 80% female, and this year, 56 females took a psychology class, compared with 43 males in those classes.

## LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC: SOME CHANGES ARE HERE TO STAY

By Sabrina Wang '23

Copy Editor

When students and faculty shifted to remote learning in the spring term of last year, no one could predict the challenges of the year to come. Over a year later, as we look forward to potentially maskless and closer-than-six-feet life, many teachers are considering ways to implement some of the methods they have learned into their post-pandemic classrooms.

For one, many departments agree that remote learning came with surprising benefits. In terms of academic life, many enjoy the new advising block on Mondays for students and the 60-minute class schedule that allows daytime classes to wrap up at 2:30 p.m.

In addition, according to Director of Studies Mr. Kevin Rogers, the night-time H and I blocks allow for smaller classes than in pre-pandemic years, and many students enjoyed that higher level of classroom intimacy. Although the schedule for

next year will revert back to a pre-pandemic schedule with 70-minute-long classes and no night classes, Mr. Rogers said, "We continue to look at ways we can optimize the schedule. When we are looking for things that we might carry on in the future, we are looking at things that we've really enjoyed about the current schedule."

**Say you're not feeling well, and you're in the health center. [Next year and beyond] you could actually Zoom into classes if you're feeling up to going to classes but not physically.**

Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen

In terms of student life, the Student Activities Center held much of their fall programming virtually — including club meetings, Club Fair, and leadership training. Once students came out of quarantine, more in-person programming was feasible, but students now needed to sign up for events in advance to ensure that social distancing would be possible. However,

the virtual aspect of student life did provide some benefits.

"One of the most successful things I saw this year was in the spring when we hosted a club fair for accepted families," said Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar. Typically, the spring revisit day club fair happens in person for families at the SAC. This year,

the School's virtual revisit day programming featured a virtual panel with club leaders and Zoom Q&A booths for individual clubs.

"It was incredibly successful," said Ms. Kazar. "We got some great feedback from admissions, families, and students. Whether we get club fair in-person or virtual next year, [we] will be able to host a virtual student

panel or virtual programming, in addition to in person things, [to] give access to people who aren't here on campus."

Perhaps the most significant pandemic-induced change — remote learning — could be here to stay, too. "As far as remote learning, at times it might be a good idea to have that available," said Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen. She continued, "Say you're not feeling well, and you're in the health center. You could actually Zoom into classes if you're feeling up to going to classes but not physically."

Dr. Cohen also appreciated the increased collaboration that came out of this year. "I spent the year collaborating with many different faculty and staff members on campus in ways which typically I wouldn't do," she said. She hopes that people continue to utilize virtual platforms, like Zoom and FaceTime, to collaborate and connect after the pandemic.

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## 10 Students' Bucket Lists: September vs. Now

Last September, staff reporter Brian Harder '23 interviewed ten students about their biggest — and smallest — goals for the school year.

Scan this code with your phone to read a follow-up on these students' journeys — plus more online-only content from *The Choate News*!



"Hi, Brian. I didn't do any of that, lol." — Zoe Tray '21

Claire Yuan may be reached at cyuan21@choate.edu

## WHAT IS THEATRE WITHOUT TECH THEATRE?



The Tech Theatre program helped build the outdoor stage for *Urinetown*.

By **Ryan Kim '23**  
Staff Reporter

Envision a stage with mysterious lighting and eerie noises surrounding a desolated mansion. Imagine another stage with no music, lighting, or props. The distinction between the two is apparent. This is the magic of technical theatre — it draws the audience to a particular setting, a specific time period, and a certain mood. Its artistic expression is beyond spoken words, as it enables both the artists and the audience to position themselves into the theatrical narratives.

Mr. Mark Gostomski, Technical Director at the Paul Mellon

Arts Center (PMAC), reflects on the tech theatre program on campus.

**Ryan Kim:** What is tech theatre?

**Mr. Mark Gostomski:** Tech theatre is anything that is backstage during the show, including lighting, sound, scenery, costume, props, production, puppetry, and special effects.

**RK:** How often does it meet and which terms is it available?

**MG:** It is available every term with two sections: costume and props, and scenery and lighting. About particular schedules, that is dependent upon the term and the production being done. Certain productions have more needs than others and may need

more things done. It is during the afternoon time slot — same time as intramurals or sports.

**RK:** What are students expected to do?

**MG:** I'm in charge of the scenery and lighting section. For scenery and lighting, you will be learning how to do woodworking, work with tools, and operate theatre systems (including lighting, sound, fly system for flying scenes, and more).

It's getting really hands-on into aspects of backstage theatre. Something I find super fun is that it voyages across so many different disciplines: in carpentry we could be talking about math and physics for constructions, for machinery we could



Photos by Linda Phan/The Choate News

be discussing engineering and robotics, and for painting we will be talking about the visual arts

**RK:** Is prior experience required?

**MG:** No, and it can be taken multiple times!

**RK:** What's something about tech theatre you wish more students knew about?

**MG:** There's so many other disciplines that feed into it, and you can use the skills that you already have, just in new and different ways. This is very hands-on, getting involved, and your work will always be seen on stage. Everything you do will be used for the production that term, so you truly are a part of what is happening with the production.

*Several students also reflected on their experience with the tech theatre program.*

Samuel Qin '22 participated in tech theatre two years ago, when he worked with back-end construction and helped man the stage ropes. He enjoyed tech theatre for its laid-back atmosphere, as he had time to chat with friends while brainstorming design ideas. "The best part of tech theatre is definitely the performances, since you get to see everything come together," he said.

Mikey Sanagustin '23, who operated one of the spotlights for *Urinetown*, said, "I am very glad I chose this as my 'sport.'" Aside from lighting, Sanagustin

also practiced woodworking to help build the stage and props. Also, he assisted in setting up the stage, which showed him the versatility of tech theatre.

Chizzy Ogbutor '23, who gathered costumes and painted sets for *Urinetown*, found tech theatre enjoyable because of the fun people he worked with. Ogbutor said, "I would definitely recommend costuming to others. Personally, I think being able to know what's going on behind the scenes, and being part of such a vital role for the musical is the best part of tech theatre."

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## ARTS DIRECTOR MS. KALYA YANNATOS TO LEAVE CHOATE



Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

During her time at Choate, Ms. Kalya Yannatos worked alongside Choate dancers as a teacher and mentor.

By **Laya Raj '24**  
Reporter

Ms. Kalya Yannatos, who has directed Choate's Arts Department for a decade, will be starting a new chapter of her career as a Development Officer at The Putney School in Vermont. Ms. Yannatos came to Choate in 2011 after having worked at Putney as the Arts Department Chair and the Director of Dance and Evening Activities.

During her time at Choate, Ms. Yannatos adopted a growth mindset, building upon the foundation that was laid before her. "I don't think there is ever an arrival point with any of this work. There is always a need to keep your finger on the pulse of evolution and the student body," said Ms. Yannatos.

With the goal of broadening the arts at Choate, Ms. Yannatos expanded the guest artist pro-

gram, which features invited artists who explore the intersection of arts and other fields of study, such as history, physics, and language. "It has been very important to me that the Arts Center isn't just this thing down the hill that's thought of in its own little bubble, and that it connects to the community in ways that serve," said Ms. Yannatos.

After ten years of hard work, Ms. Yannatos is proud of where the arts community on campus is now. She worked closely with all members in the Arts Department—from faculty members who have many years of experience to those who were newly hired — to ensure that the department catered to the needs of the student body and to the calls of the global community.

Reflecting on her experience working with Ms. Yannatos, dance teacher Ms. Pam New-

ell said, "She has exceedingly high standards and knows how to keep it real, keep it light, and enjoy the ride." It is through this balance that Ms. Yannatos was able to lead the Arts Department in continuously growing into its most robust form.

Sabrina Carlier '21, who has been one of Ms. Yannatos's advisees for four years, described Ms. Yannatos as her first female role model in the arts. She said, "She was able to have such a strong position of leadership and mentorship, while being one of the kindest people."

Every year, Ms. Yannatos welcomes the entire School to come to the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC), telling them, in one way or another, "Please come inhabit it and own it; bring it to life." She aimed to make the Arts department a place where all students,

including those who may not identify as artists, can belong, contribute, and learn. Ms. Yannatos hoped that all artists on campus, both those who spend their afternoons rehearsing and creating and those who typically don't, can continue to stay engaged in the arts. "It is just so critical," she said, "that all people find their creative voice, whatever form that takes for them."

As she prepares to return to Putney, Ms. Yannatos said that she is confident in the extraordinary people that make up the Arts department. She is leaving the School, she said, "for my own growth, but I also feel like it's important for the growth for everybody around me to have a fresh voice and new energy to come and build upon the seeds I've sown."

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Photos courtesy of Arts Department

Dancers performed in the Arts Fest Dance Concert.

# MEET THE NEW BOAR PEN



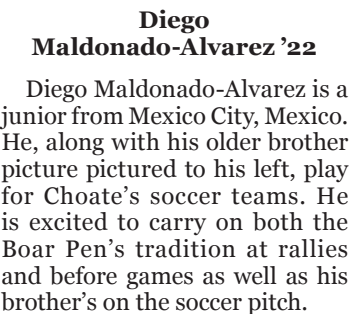
**Dylan Allen '22**

Dylan Allen is a junior from New Jersey. She runs cross country and also captains the Girls' Varsity Lacrosse Team. She said, "I've dreamed of being on Boar Pen since I was sitting on the woodcourt in the X at pep rally freshman year. Seeing the way, the four seniors on stage were able to hype up a whole crowd of athletes and supporters was exhilarating."



**Naomi Fleisch '22**

Naomi Fleisch is a junior from Westport, Connecticut. She, like Allen, plays for Choate's Girls' Varsity Lacrosse Team. She said, "Everyone would agree that school spirit on campus was lacking this year: sports games were limited, there were no SAC dances, and there was an overall loss of tradition. Because of this, all of us on Boar Pen are super excited to bring the hype back to campus next year and make things feel normal again. Roll Boars!"



# BOARS TAKE ON HOTCHKISS BEARCATS



**Diego Maldonado-Alvarez '22**

Diego Maldonado-Alvarez is a junior from Mexico City, Mexico. He, along with his older brother pictured to his left, play for Choate's soccer teams. He is excited to carry on both the Boar Pen's tradition at rallies and before games as well as his brother's on the soccer pitch.

**Boys' Varsity Lacrosse**

Boys' Varsity Lacrosse went up to Lakeville on May 15, to play against the Hotchkiss Bearcats in the team's last game of the season. The team got off to a slow start when the Bearcats got an early lead. However, in the second half of the game, Choate rebounded with goals from Erik Vozeh '21, Ben Wable '23, Zach LaPolice '21, Braydon Ellis '22, and Andrew Carmody '21. A tremendous defensive play by goalie Patrick Yowan '21 and defenseman Ryan Doyle '21 led to a strong end to the season.

**Boys' Varsity Tennis**

Boys' Varsity Tennis' had a great final match against Hotchkiss, including a dominant win by John Henderson '23. The team looks forward to next spring, when talented players like Jack Benavides '22 and William Ji '23 will return to the courts. "The team gave a great overall effort, and it was a good finish to the season" said Oscar Hellandsvik '22.

# Girls' Lacrosse and Field Hockey Less Supported, Team Members Say

By **Paul Montrone '22**  
Reporter

A few months ago, during the annual NCAA March Madness college basketball tournament, images of womens' lackluster facilities stood in stark contrast to those of the mens' luxurious amenities. The womens' weight room, for instance, consisted of a single rack of dumbbells and a small number of yoga mats, while the mens' equivalent was fully stocked with machines and weights.

Further outrage ensued when the womens' teams were allegedly provided with less reliable Covid-19 tests than those administered to the mens' teams. Blaming the disparities on issues caused by the pandemic, the NCAA haphazardly attempted to remedy the situation by hastily bringing the womens' accommodations and amenities up to par with the mens'.

Such gender inequity evident even at the top-level of collegiate sports raised the question: Are Choate sports also affected by gender inequity?

Girls' Varsity Lacrosse Co-Captains Natalie Schwab '21 and Dylan Allen '22 say that they have received less institutional support than their male counterparts, especially in terms of recruitment. "For girls in the recruiting process, we've had instances where our PlaySight camera wasn't even on the ball," said Schwab. Game footage is often sent to prospective college coaches — but, Schwab contends, when the technology



provided by the School doesn't allow girls to show their skills, the recruitment process is made more difficult.

Allen, who hopes to play lacrosse in college, shared Schwab's frustrations, "Lacrosse was the main reason I came to Choate, and was it really disappointing to feel that I didn't have as much support as I needed through the recruiting process."

The inequalities appeared to persist past the recruiting process. At the beginning of their season, Girls' Varsity Lacrosse found that many of its uniforms were either unavailable or missing. The boys' team seemed to have been given brand-new uni-

forms. According to several members of the girls' team, for the first week of their season, they were told that they did not have set locker-room space, while the boys locker had already been secured. "It seems like we always have to fight for things that we should be guaranteed," Allen concluded.

Athletes on Girls' Varsity Field Hockey, who share uniforms with Girls' Varsity Lacrosse, say they have faced similar discrepancies in treatment. "Choate doesn't consistently repaint the field hockey field, used daily by the team, but, as soon as the football team had an under-the-lights game, they repainted the field lines," said Isabel MacArthur '21.

Athletic Director Roney Eford said that equity is "of paramount importance" to Choate Athletics.

While Mr. Eford did not speak directly to the concerns expressed by members of Girls' Lacrosse and Field Hockey, he did say that he and his department have worked to ensure that athletes of all levels are supported by the School. By way of example, he said, "One of the things we've been looking for over the years is making sure that our J.V. and thirds teams have uniforms that fit."

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# SENIORS BRING BACK CAMPUS GOLF

By **Sam Anastasio '23**  
Copy Editor

Senior Spring is filled with iconic traditions like Garden Party and Last Hurrah, but one tradition often overlooked is Campus Golf. Chris Lin '21, one of the students who regularly plays the course, said, "Campus Golf provides me with the much needed way to have fun with my friends while getting better at the sport of golf." Players use orange squishy balls instead of actual golf balls to avoid damaging buildings and hurting people.

Because students may not leave campus this term, many students are turning to Campus Golf as a way to unwind and try something new. "The sport of golf is a lot of fun, and a lot of us realized that it's something we wanted to try," said Allen Zheng '21. He continued, "It

is an extremely social activity, and it's nice to spend time with the people who have made Choate special for me."

Many of the Seniors have never played golf before Choate, including Allen, who has played soccer his entire life. Both reiterated their desire to continue playing golf at an actual golf course in the future.

Below is a version of the Campus Golf course revised to be more playable by Vas Konachekov '22 and a course scorecard. The record currently stands at 19, set by Konachekov. Although there is not handicap curve for the course, players new to the game can expect a much better experience as hitting a tennis or foam ball is much easier than trying to drive a normal golf ball.

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Photos by Tiffany Xiao/The Choate News

lot of work culminating in a lot of great results." In particular, Choate's throwers and 4x4 runners showed personal improvement. Aronov said, "Overall, this was a great end to my Choate athletic career, and I am happy to have captained such a great group."

**Girls' Varsity Golf**

For Girls' Golf, the long bus ride back for Hotchkiss was a happy one — they'd played a great match against Hotchkiss. Mia Scarpati '21 said, "Team morale was consistently really high this season, thanks to our coach, Jackie [Marrinan], whom I will really miss next year." As the team loses three seniors, Co-Captain Stephanie Su '21 thought the match was "a good way to close out our Choate golf careers." The team will be left in good hands with two freshmen, Selam Olson '24 and Cassatt Boatwright '24, who played in all of this year's matches.

**Girls' Varsity Tennis**

Girls' Varsity Tennis held its senior day at home and found great success against a talented Hotchkiss team. Cap-

tain Greer Goergen '21 said, "It was nice to be able to celebrate our last match, even if our season was disrupted by Covid-19." Despite the virus presenting obstacles, the team was able to find great success with its season culminating in, according to Goergen, "a great day for Choate tennis and a bittersweet day for us seniors."

**Girls' Varsity Lacrosse**

Girls' Varsity Lacrosse also had its senior day, on Choate's Class of '76 field. Co-Captain Natalie Schwab '21 said of the game, "As a Captain, I was so proud to see how much we grew together from our first away game versus Hotchkiss to our last." The team celebrated the memorable day with the seniors dressing as superheroes. Schwab concluded, "Despite the circumstances, we were able to continue our senior traditions, so we are so grateful for the juniors and underclassmen."

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## Choate Campus Golf

Play the new, revised Choate Campus Golf course!

(cut this card out)

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total:
Par #	4	3	5	3	5	4	4	3	4	36
Par:										

• Play with Tennis or Foam ball.

• One stroke penalty for water hazards.

Graphic by Richard Chen/The Choate News