



COMMUNITY DISCUSSES HISPANIC/LATINX IDENTITY

By **Ryan Kim '23**
Staff Reporter

On Tuesday, September 28, students and faculty convened in Colony Hall for the first Community Conversation of the year, which centered on Hispanic and Latinx identity. Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers began this series last year to foster “an intentional space and time for all students, faculty, and staff members of the community to come and listen, learn, and educate about a different social identity topic each meeting in a space grounded in mutual respect.”

During Community Conversations, members of the Choate community may anonymously ask questions on a predetermined topic and have members of the identity-based community share their experience with the rest of the student body. Last year, Community Conversation topics included discussions on Pan-Asian, Black, Queer, and Jewish identities.

Topics for Community Conversations are selected by students and faculty. The topic of Hispanic and Latinx identity was heavily advocated for last year. According to Dr. Myers, the topic was selected specifically

for this Community Conversation to coincide with Hispanic Heritage Month, which ends on October 15.

In the 2020-2021 school year, Community Conversations were hosted remotely on Zoom; however, in transitioning to an in-person meeting in Colony Hall, changes were made to the conversation’s format. Mr. Fillipe Camarotti, the Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion, met with Dr. Myers and Choate’s Sound Technician and Assistant Technical Director Mr. Bozzi beforehand to properly configure the space. “We planned how we would set the microphones, who would walk around with the questions, how we would project the questions, and other details,” he said. “In the end, it was a team effort aided in part by Mr. Bozzi’s team, Ms. Sorrells, Ms. Koomson, and Ms. Barrows. Overall, from a logistical perspective, I thought it went really well.”

New students who were unfamiliar with Community Conversations enjoyed experiencing the constructive dialogue. “I thought it was great that the School held such an event at all, and I was genuinely surprised by how much the School thinks about equity. I enjoyed the fact that it wasn’t a lecture

on how to treat people but a thought from the Hispanic/Latinx community,” said Andrew Kim ’25.

Nao Murata ’25 echoed Kim, noting, “I enjoyed it a lot. I’m from a background where there are basically only Asians, so I never had the chance to learn issues within other communities.

Students who identify as Hispanic or Latinx were appreciative of the care and respect that the community demonstrated throughout the conversation. “I do think that the community overall was very respectful of speaking time with correct applause,” said Sofia Munoz ’23. She also felt that the Hispanic and Latinx communities were accurately portrayed, and that everyone was able to share and articulate the different topics that they wanted to discuss.

One noteworthy discussion that arose during the conversation was on the use of the term “Latinx.” “I think it’s important for people to know both sides of the issue. Adding the ‘x’ at the end of ‘Latin’ is very bizarre in the Spanish-speaking community, and it’s very difficult to pronounce so it isn’t really used,” said Bryant Figueroa ’23. Figueroa’s club recently

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Photos by Henrik Torres, Rachel Pittman, and Tiffany Xiao/The Choate News

Portraits of four students who shared their experiences during the Community Conversation.

Mask Mandates and Dorm Visits for the New School Year

By **Yoyo Zhang '24**
Staff Reporter

On October 1, Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez ’00 announced in a school-wide email the return of the visitation policy and the option to unmask in residential spaces. Students can now visit other dorms unmasked, and those in the fourth, fifth, and sixth forms are able to request visitations. However, masks are still required to be worn in all non-residential buildings.

According to Mr. Velez, these changes in campus regulations were made “in consultation with local, state, and federal health and education organizations.” All of Choate’s Covid-19 protocols abide by the executive decisions of Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont, who recently extended the school mask mandate to February; Choate’s senior administrators and the Health and Safety Committee will assess community wellness and adjust protocol accordingly.

Indicating a return to normal life on campus, students are excited to regain visitation and unmasking privileges after a year and a half of restrictions. Squire Stanley prefect Livia Fingerson ’22 recognized the symbolic meaning of entering each others’ living space, saying that “inviting others into one’s personal space is a gesture of trust, security, and connection.”

With almost every community member vaccinated, the safety behind unmasking

in living spaces is well-backed from a medical standpoint. However, Mr. Velez continues to remind everyone to respect the different levels of comfort surrounding unmasking. In the school-wide email, he called for everyone to “be mindful of how you behave and interact in these settings by putting respect for others at the forefront of your actions.”

Living with masks for over a year, some people may regard unmasking as a drastic change. Fingerson found not needing to be masked in dorms overwhelming “simply because it is

so out of the ordinary.” Nevertheless, she feels safe to do so considering Choate’s regimented health and safety protocols.

Although Covid-19 restrictions have been loosened, the School continues to ensure and prioritize the safety of all members in the community. According to Head of Archbold House Ms. Rachel Kesler, the School has also been keeping faculty and staff members safe by discouraging the company of unvaccinated or immunocompromised families. Mr. Velez mentioned how the close communication between the administration, faculty, and staff allows Choate

to be aware of pending policies, hence enhancing transparency and accountability.

Though an entirely mask-free campus is not anticipated in the near future, the recent ease in protocol trends in that direction. “Choate’s unique situation as a boarding community with a 99.4% vaccination rate might allow us to foresee some future changes,” Ms. Kesler said. “Given the current circumstances, we are doing the best we can.”

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Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

CLUB MEETINGS RETURN IN-PERSON

By **Lauren Hsu '24**
Reporter

As campus life returns to its pre-pandemic rhythm, clubs have begun convening in-person after meeting virtually throughout the last school year. Club leaders and members alike are appreciative of this change.

Ivie Ojior ’24, the treasurer of Love Your Locks, felt that club meetings last year were impersonal and not as engaging when held on Zoom. She enjoys in-person meetings more because conversations flow better when participants do not have to deal with the awkwardness often felt over Zoom.

Monty Singer ’22, the president of Maker Club and Do It Club, agreed. “You only really come to club meetings you are passionate about, because you can’t just log on to a Zoom room,” he said. “You definitely get more attentive, more active members when we’re in-person.”

Club life has regained its social bustle as opportunities to build connections with other club members have become easier with the shift to in-person meetings. Zora DeRham

’23, president of Choate Future Farmers of America, President of Muslim Student Association, and member of choate quiz bowl! found that instead of simply logging off at the end of a Zoom meeting, she could continue engaging with peers and continue conversations even after allotted meeting times. Sophia Pandya ’24

agreed, saying, “You really get to be engaged with them and be a part of the whole social aspect.”

However, not all students have been able to take advantage of in-person club meetings. Aria Ramnath ’24 has not been able to attend club meetings that she wished to go to because the timing clashed with rehearsals. Ramnath is part of Chamber Chorus and Wind Ensemble, both of which rehearse multiple evenings a week during times that coincide with the meeting times of many clubs.

Since club meetings, music ensemble and dance rehearsals, dinner, and sports practices are all scheduled on top of each other, many students have

“You only really come to club meetings you are passionate about, because you can’t just log on to a Zoom room. You definitely get more attentive, more active members when we’re in-person.”

Monty Singer,
President of Do It Club

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CHOATE ADMISSION OFFICE RESUMES HYBRID OPERATIONS

By **Lauren Kee '24**
Copy Editor

With Choate returning to a more normal year, the Admission Office has adopted a hybrid model that integrates in-person events with last year's virtual formats to create a more inclusive and flexible process for prospective students and families.

Similar to the previous year, the Admission Office is offering virtual events with teachers and current students as panelists. These events give families a chance to learn more about the Choate experience from different members of the community without needing to travel to campus. Assistant Director of Admission Ms. Courtney Given enjoyed researching ways to reach families through the Gold Key program and virtual events. "This year, we're still able to use a lot of those ideas moving forward, even though families are back on campus," she said.

The Admission Office will only offer interviews on Zoom for this admission cycle due to its success in the previous year. "Last year on Zoom, kids were in

the comfort of their own home," said Chief Enrollment Manager Mr. Jeffery Beaton. He noted that students "were less nervous and more comfortable, which made for better conversations." Interviews can also now be scheduled to suit different time zones seven days a week. After their interviews, students are paired with a Gold Key ambassador to answer any other questions they may have about Choate.

The Admission Office is also holding fully-masked on-campus tours led by the Gold Key ambassadors again. Only six families are scheduled for each tour block, as opposed to the regular eight to ten, to ensure that the waiting rooms are not too crowded. Touring families must also have proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test upon their arrival on campus. In-person tours end with a question and answer session with one of the admissions staff. "It's really a chance to ask any additional questions they may have, as well as questions in particular about the admission process," said Ms. Given.

Although on-campus tours have started for prospective families, over three-quarters of the Gold Key ambassadors have never given an in-person tour due to last year's modified virtual tours. "As one of the few Gold Key leaders and ambassadors who has toured in the past, I feel really honored to be able to pretty much teach the whole Gold Key group how to tour," said Priam Alataris '22. "If anything feels the same, it has to be the funny 'Happy Birthdays' I get when on the path."

As a new tour guide this year, Ava McClatchie '24 enjoyed her first tour, but she wished that there was more time to tell the prospective family the things she wanted to share. "We essentially just had great conversation for an hour," she said. "I'm excited to keep meeting new families and sharing about Choate!"

Ms. Given is also excited to resume in-person tours. "I love seeing the hustle and bustle of our tour guides coming in for their tours," she said. "You get that energy and excitement about welcoming families to campus."

Not only is the Admission team greeting prospective families on campus, but they have begun travelling around the country given eased travel restrictions. "I think it's exciting that we're able to not only have families here at Choate, but ... also meet families on the road and see them in their hometowns," said Ms. Given.

Although the Admission team is connecting with more families in-person, quarantine protocols and concerns about health and safety have restricted international travel. "We're seeing a lot of our international families not being able to come to campus, or us not being able to go see them in their home countries," said Mr. Beaton. "I really do miss that."

Anticipating a continued increase in applicants this year, the Admission Office continues to adapt to the unprecedented changes imposed by the pandemic. "We get to be creative, we get to meet with awesome kids, and that's what we're so excited for the year," said Mr. Beaton.

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Gold Key ambassadors tour prospective students at the PMAC (left). Gold Key ambassadors prepare for tours at Archbold (right).



Photos by Junho Lee/The Choate News

Hispanic/Latinx Community Conversation Promotes Discussion



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

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changed its name from Hispanic Latinx Forum to Hispanic Latiné Forum, as it retains elements of the Spanish language while still being a non-binary term. "I feel like it's not a term people have to use, Latinx. I know people that just use Latino, which refers to everybody instead of just male," he said. "I realize that since we're from such a diverse background that many people may not have known but that's how nouns in Spanish work. Latiné, Latinx, use what you're comfortable with but understand why other people may be against it."

Reflecting on the conversation, Mr. Camarotti said he is

humbled to be part of a community where so many people are willing to speak, listen, and share. "To have a space in which people share their true, vulnerable selves with nearly 1000 others is remarkable," he said. "I don't take for granted, for a moment, the gift we all receive when stories, experiences, perspectives are shared in this manner."

The next Community Conversation will take place on November 1, focusing on socio-economic class. Topics for upcoming community conversations include religious identity, multiracial identity, body image, and white privilege at Choate.

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CLUB SCHEDULE RETURNS TO RAPID PACE

Continued from Page 1

been left in a situation where they feel forced to choose between activities. Mr. Gene Wie, Director of Instrumental Ensembles, has been collecting data on tardiness and absences for Symphony Orchestra rehearsal. So far, 22 out of the 73 members of the ensemble have been either late or absent because of scheduling conflicts between sports and trying to squeeze in dinner. Mr. Wie plans on showing school administrators attendance data in hopes of improving scheduling conflicts, which often cause additional stress for students.

"If we're going to be serious about this whole student mental health thing and wellness and not just be performative by claiming we do all this stuff, we're actually going to take a hard look at how we do this schedule," said Mr. Wie. "There needs to be a dedicated time on this schedule for clubs to meet and not force clubs to meet during dinner."

In the meantime, students must learn to navigate the bustling pre-pandemic Choate life, filled with sports practices, music rehearsals, and in-person club meetings.

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STUDENTS EXPLORE THE TOWN OF WALLINGFORD ONCE AGAIN

By **Grace Walters '24**
Reporter

On the weekends, Main Street is once again bustling with Choate students as they return to their favorite restaurants — among them are Mr. D's, Archie Moore's, and Half Moon Cafe. After a year of being prohibited from venturing into Wallingford, boarding students are now allowed to explore the town as an extension of the Choate campus again.

The town of Wallingford gives students the ability to feel integrated into a community beyond the School. Sixth former Charlotte Weinstein '22 reflected on her new-

found freedom and the isolation she felt within the constraints of the campus last year. "It's nice being able to actually feel like you're a part of the town of Wallingford and not just like you're in the middle of nowhere," she said.

Walking into town and seeing new surroundings also gives students a sense of normalcy. Fourth-former Delaney Ellsworth '24 added on, "a change of scenery has allowed us to have more of a normal life and be able to do stuff that we would normally do if we were living at home."

Though off-campus privileges have increased significantly since last year, Choate students are not allowed to ride in Ubers and use

any other ride-sharing platforms to minimize the possibility of Covid-19 transmissions and to ensure student safety. In the rare instance that students may need to use a ride-sharing platform, they must receive permission from their dean and Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen. Silas Streeter '25 said, "I think it can be a little difficult, but it's cool that we have access to town, which also has a lot of resources." Ellsworth said that the policy is a little strange since Uber is a "one-on-one environment where the driver's wearing a mask and you're wearing a mask, and there's less people."

As in previous years, Choate offers a shuttle service for

students to go to shops, stores, and restaurants every Sunday. However, Ava Lee '23 said that the shuttles are too infrequent, since they are only offered for a few hours in the afternoon. As the school year progresses, it's possible that Choate students may be given more privileges.

Returning students who were new last year and could not leave campus are looking forward to using more of these new off-campus privileges. Yoyo Zhang '24 said, "I'm excited to explore more of Wallingford, and to see what wonderful things the town has to offer."

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Choate Prepares to Welcome Families to Campus

By **Tyler Kuo '23**
Staff Reporter

Every year, Parents Weekend allows the parents of Choate students to visit the School for a few days and interact with the community. Although the School cancelled the on-campus component of Parents Weekend last year due to the pandemic, they have implemented changes to ensure that families can safely visit in-person this year. These new safety measures include hosting events outdoors, requiring masks and social distancing at indoor events, capping attendance at indoor events to allow for social distancing, and creating outdoor dining space for visitors.

In preparation for Parents Weekend, the School has a select group of faculty members overseeing the changes; among them are Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen, Director of Parent Relations Ms. Jordan Abbott, and the Director of Studies Mr. Kevin Rogers. A diverse lineup of

hybrid information sessions and in-person art performances are planned for the weekend.

However, one key component of previous years' Parents Weekends that will be missing from this year's lineup due to Covid-19 protocols is having visitors enter academic buildings and going through an ordinary class day with their student. Ms. Abbott said, "The biggest thing that I think parents will miss is being able to attend classes with their children and getting to see the dorms. I received lots of positive feedback last January about virtual conferences, so I think they are a welcome addition to our Parents' Weekend lineup."

Math teacher Dr. Jessica Pfeil reflected on the liveliness of having families join classes live. "Pre-Covid, I always liked to have students solve some problems up at the boards during those classes, and sometimes parents would get up and join in with their child trying to solve the problem, or at

the very least, just enjoyed getting to see what their child's class environment was like and feel pride in watching their child tackle some tough problems," she said.

One particular group of students that will be affected by the changes to Parents Weekend are the students in the Science Research Program (SRP). Not being able to show her posters of her summer research to parents, SRP member Lisa Ji '22 said, "It's a little disappointing that I don't get to show my work to a bigger community since the parents are not allowed to see them." However, she still "hopes that when prospective families come to visit for school tours, they will be able to see our work."

Although parents won't be able to attend, Saturday classes are still being held to encourage families to stay on campus and gain insight into the Choate experience. Dr. Pfeil said, "I believe the rationale for still having classes on

Saturday even though the parents cannot attend classes is it will keep students on campus so parents can still visit on a day they are not working and attend sporting events, and overall get an opportunity to experience the community we have here on campus."

However, some students are disappointed by the addition of Saturday classes. Fifth-former Evan Wu '23 said, "I personally wish the schedule didn't change that much, but I understand that parents want to see how school life is at Choate."

With the ongoing pandemic, international families still struggle with traveling to campus due to safety concerns and travel restrictions. Ji suggested, "One way that international students' parents can be included in parent weekend activities is by incorporating hybrid events, such as concerts, classes, and activities."

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Graphic by Paola Díaz del Castillo Rosique/The Choate News

CHOATE GRAD RUNNING FOR MAYOR OF WALLINGFORD

By **Eva Li '24**
Staff Reporter

In anticipation of the November 2 ballot, candidate and Choate alum Riley O'Connell '14 will run against incumbent Republican Mayor William Dickinson Jr., who is seeking a 20th consecutive term in office.

Mr. Dickinson's campaign is based around maintaining the town's finances and providing dependable services to create a safe, caring, and responsible community. Recently, he has appropriated funds for a new police station on a recently purchased property, added additional staffing in the fire department, and implemented a 24/7 ambulance service. Through the pandemic, he has expressed pride in the Wallingford Health Department's ability to staff vaccine clinics and help small businesses reopen and serve the public – which is one of his priorities for the town.

Mr. Dickinson also hopes to continue purchasing and preserving as much open space as possible. He highlighted a program that allows citizens to lease public land for agricultural use, calling it “an important part of what we see for the future because we don't want Wallingford to lose its rural heritage.”

When asked about his campaign for re-election, Mr. Dickinson responded, “It's the unfinished business that now stretches before us. I believe there are things that must be accomplished and pursued, and



Photo courtesy of Riley O'Connell

Riley O'Connell '14 posing in his campaign photos for the November 2 Wallingford Mayoral election.

I feel that my energy could certainly be part of making Wallingford an even better place.”

Challenging Mr. Dickinson is Mr. O'Connell, a fifth generation Wallingfordian and a member of the Choate class of 2014. He later earned his bachelor's degree at Bowdoin College. Mr. O'Connell was inspired to run for mayor after working as an assistant to the Attorney General in the Department of Justice. Soon, he realized that he could bring much more positive change at a local level than he ever could as an employee at the federal level. “We need the next generation – our generation – of leadership to start taking the

reins to bring us where we need to be and where we want to be in the future, as opposed to being stuck in the past,” said O'Connell.

Mr. O'Connell has expressed disapproval over several issues in Wallingford, including many unfilled positions in town. He also mentioned the most recent census data that showed Wallingford's first-ever population decline. He stressed that the 25 and under population has dropped in what he described as a “death spiral,” decreasing by 15% in the past ten years.

Determined to create a long-term strategic plan for the town, Mr. O'Connell has focused his

platform on three main priorities. His first proposal is to freeze the mill rates for a few years. While Wallingford's tax rate is rising, the town's savings account is also growing. Mr. O'Connell notes that “this basically means that we are taking more money from people who are spending more money.” He believes that if Wallingford's tax rates continue to rise, it will make it increasingly difficult for people, especially retired residents, to live in the town.

Mr. O'Connell's second priority stresses a need to invest in more infrastructure. He argues that not only are schools, roads, the community pool, and

the town hall itself are decades behind, Wallingford also lacks basic technology development, such as email capacity in the town hall and the ability to pay bills online. “These are all common sense 21st century things that we don't have because the mayor is kind of stuck in the 80's,” he commented.

Mr. O'Connell's third priority is to transfer more power from the mayor to the town council by pushing to revise the town charter. Currently, although the town council can make decisions via vote, the mayor still has the authority to veto completely.

“My argument is that whenever one person has complete unilateral authority, things tend to slip through cracks, and mistakes are made. I'm just asking essentially for checks and balances to be reestablished between the council and the mayor,” Mr. O'Connell explained.

As a Choate alumni, Mr. O'Connell credits much of his current political philosophy to the School, noting that “[I] would have never been exposed to so many different perspectives from all over the world.”

One memory that Mr. O'Connell highlighted was of an eye-opening field trip to Washington D.C. as part of a course on American Political Institutions, which gave him insight into government and the public service sector. HPRSS teacher and JFK program adviser Mr. Ned Gallagher, who was also Mr. O'Connell's cross-country coach and government teacher, said, “I kind of discovered over the summer that this is what he's been wanting to do, and I think it's terrific [...] he's doing a very good job running a high-profile race.”

Mr. O'Connell urged young students to explore politics. “Most of the issues we have in Wallingford and in our country would be solved if we had more people, especially people our age, participate in the democratic process.”

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Former Wallingford Police Chief Joins Choate



Photo courtesy of Record Journal

Mr. William Wright will serve as the new Director of Operations at Choate.

By **Ryan Kim '23**
Staff Reporter

After serving the past 24 years as the Wallingford Police Chief, Mr. William Wright announced last April that he would be retiring from his position to join Choate as the new Director of Operations.

Mr. Wright first joined the Wallingford Police Department in 1995, citing hopes to have a tangible effect on his community. In those two decades he was impressed with the dedication and efficiency of the department. “The rules and policies were very clear and consistent,” he said. “As a young police officer, I was never left in any doubt about what I should be doing, what direction the agency was heading, and what our role in the community was.”

Reflecting on his decades of service with the department, Mr. Wright especially emphasized

the Police Department's collaborative bond between the people of Wallingford and the Choate community on various occasions upon request for police support from the School. “I'm hopeful that when people reflect on my time as the Chief, they find that I operate in the same way; that I wanted our agency to be fully embedded in the community as a partner with everything going on,” he said.

One pivotal experience during his law enforcement career was the two years during which he worked at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). He was assigned as an agent in August of 2001, just one month before the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. Mr. Wright noted that his work during that time gave him clarity on his career choices, “I think it was a defining moment in my career and made me realize that I had chosen the correct career, that I had chosen it for the right reasons, and that

Police Departments are meant to serve communities.”

At Choate, Mr. Wright serves as the Director of Operations, a critical role that oversees community safety and risk management for the School. His recent work included supervising the repaving and reorganizing of roads on campus. Mr. Wright said of the interview process: “I went through several interviews and when I was offered the position after a comprehensive background investigation was completed by Choate – that's what caused me to retire from the Police Department.”

He continued, “If it wasn't for this opportunity here at Choate, I probably would still be there.” Mr. Wright further stated that he is excited to serve and protect the Choate Community in his new position.

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CONNECTICUT WELCOMES AFGHAN REFUGEES

By **Sabrina Wang '23**
Copy Editor

In one of the largest mass evacuations in U.S. history, nearly 130,000 people were airlifted out of Afghanistan this past year. On Friday, September 17, Governor Ned Lamont stood in front of the Connecticut state capitol building to discuss this issue. He stated, “These evacuees are our allies and have supported our country for years, and it is our turn to return the favor. Connecticut has a legacy of being there for those in need, and we are proud to answer the call.”

Although no specific dates have been set, in the coming months, at least 310 refugees from Afghanistan are expected to make their way to Connecticut. Many of the refugees are translators, drivers, and others who have helped the U.S. over the last twenty years and fear the repercussions of the Taliban. “We owe these Afghan allies the safety and escape they need from murder and torture they face, and their families face, in Afghanistan,” U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal said at a news conference in New Haven. “They sided with us. They went into combat with our troops. They protected them and our diplomats. They now have targets on their backs.”

As soon as the Taliban seized control of Kabul last month, many government, local, and non-profit organizations in the U.S. began making plans to welcome the refugees. In Connecticut, formal organizations such as Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS)

and Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants (CIRI), created a program called Community Co-Sponsorship in order to partner with organizations such as Welcome U.S., a bipartisan group committed to helping Afghan refugees resettle, and the non-profit Danbury Area Refugee Assistance (DARA). “When we get a family assigned to us, we have already found them an apartment, we have furnished the apartment with donated furniture and household goods,” said Barbara Davis, President of DARA. “We go and pick [the refugees] up at the airport and bring them to their new home, and then we help them over the course of at least the next six months to get their children enrolled in school, connect them with healthcare services, help find them jobs, and help them with their social benefits.”

In addition, there are also many individuals who are helping take charge. Fairfield resident Mr. Alex Plitsas was an Afghanistan war refugee and owes his life to an Afghan interpreter who helped him escape the Taliban. Mr. Plitsas is part of a larger network of military veterans and others with contacts in Afghanistan, called “Digital Dunkirk.” They use social media, off the grid communication apps, and satellite maps to communicate with local Afghans and help them escape safely. Although the work comes with many grievances, many war veterans understand the value of their work, and the dedication and meaning behind the work is extremely valuable to Afghan refugees and families.

According to officials, all of the refugees who plan on arriving in Connecticut will be fully tested for and vaccinated against Covid-19. Additional Covid-19 guidelines are currently unclear. Now, attention is turned to where the refugees will live. Resettlement agencies, including two in Connecticut, have been tasked with finding permanent homes for refugees. Currently, hotels are being considered to serve as a short-term residence for the refugees. Mr. Blumenthal noted that he is pushing Congress to approve aid for housing, jobs and other services for the refugees.

Susan Schnitzer, a member of CIRI, stated, “We're setting up apartments, we're looking for employment, helping kids get into schools and we need your help doing all of that.”

Although these families will be provided with many resources and aides, there is still more to be done. Churches, mosques, synagogues, and colleges across the state have stepped forward in efforts to help Afghan refugees start new lives in Connecticut. Schnitzer has requested for items like donations, volunteers to help with tutoring and even landlords who can offer affordable housing. In the coming months, as an estimated 1000 refugees, mostly from Afghanistan, will be coming to Connecticut and both donations and the support of the government will become even more urgent.

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Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

Connecticut plans to welcome more than 1,000 refugees this year.

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START THE CONVERSATION ABOUT COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

By **Sofia Muñoz '23**
Opinions Writer

When I was little, the school I attended in Bogotá, Colombia offered standardized testing every year in November. I remember sitting in my seat, my feet barely touching the floor, as I wrote my name on the cover page of the test booklet and filled in other basic information.

I always dreaded reaching the question that asked about my race and ethnicity. I'm half Colombian and half American, but there is no clear way to indicate that on a form. Should I have bubbled in the circle that said I'm white? The instructions said I could only fill in one, but I also identified as Hispanic, which wasn't an option under the racial identity question. This was a tough question for a nine-year-old to answer, but even to this day, I still grapple with the question of how to label myself.

So, when Choate began hosting the series of community conversations for different identity groups last year, I was relieved that communities at Choate would be able to discuss their experiences freely, allowing others to learn and grow from what was shared. However, when the Hispanic-Latinx community wasn't given the opportunity for a conversation last spring due to scheduling issues, I felt outraged. Despite this incident, the first community conversation of this school year was announced to be "Everything You Wanted to Know, But Were Afraid to Ask About Hispanic-Latinx Identity." And, this first conversation came with a major change to the format: it was to be held in-person at Colony Hall.

I was initially nervous about how the community conversation would go, since I didn't know if students or faculty would be willing to get up in front of nearly one thousand people to share their personal experiences. However, I was pleasantly surprised that it worked as well as it did. Under this new format, Dr. Rachel Myers, Mr. Filipe Camarotti, and other faculty members stood in different sections of the auditorium and passed around microphones to people who wanted to speak. Students were randomly selected to draw anonymously-submitted questions from a bowl and announce them in the microphone. Unfortunately, I felt that too much time was spent selecting a student to read out the questions, taking away from the time spent on actually answering the questions.

And, while questions like "Can someone identify as Hispanic if they aren't 100% His-

panic?" gave partially-Hispanic people like me a chance to express their uncertainty on their racial and ethnic identities without being judged, I wish the question had been phrased differently. In its current form, this question puts the community in a position to debate who should and shouldn't be allowed to identify a certain way, opening up an opportunity for further exclusion — despite the obvious fact that a percentage is not a defining factor of someone's identity.

While it's key to acknowledge the questions that the community may have, the phrasing of some questions should have been edited to ensure that they were respectful. As another example, one question on the slideshow made an obvious stereotypical claim asking, "Is all Hispanic food spicy?" The phrasing of this question emphasizes negative stereotypes, causing more harm than support

for the community it addresses. Going forward, a stricter review process of the questions would make the conversation more productive for both curious allies and students who are a part of the identity group.

Furthermore, through this review process, questions should be designed to give students space to share their experiences — not to educate. Rather than placing that burden on the shoulders of students who identify with these respective groups during community conversations, it is the School's duty to educate us through class discussions, meetings, and other resources. I hope that community conversations can continue to exist as a platform for amplifying student voices — somewhere I can share the uncertainty of what to bubble in for my race and ethnicity on a test booklet.

Sofia Muñoz is a fifth-former from Greenwich, CT. She may be reached at smunoz23@choate.edu



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

I CHOSE CHOATE FOR ITS RANKING. THIS IS WHY I STAYED.

By **Tiffany Xiao '23**
Photography Editor

I applied to only three boarding schools on the east coast: the top three.

During the summer of seventh grade — months before I began the high school application process — Choate was ranked fifth among private high schools and third among boarding schools by Niche, the popular online resource that ranks K-12 schools and colleges. According to Niche's 2022 rankings, Choate now holds the title of "The third best private high school in the United States," an improvement from the past few years.

However, despite Choate's high-standing reputation on Niche, when I first received my acceptance letter from Choate, I was inclined to turn it down for two main reasons. The first was that I had a great experience attending public school — one that I didn't want to give up just

yet. But, more importantly, Choate's ranking came with a price: the pressure to gain admission to an elite university.

College is the elephant in every classroom, hallway, and building on campus. To no one's surprise, the "college" factor accounts for over 50% of the weight in high school Niche rankings. More specifically, 28.5% of the ranking is based on the Niche scores of the universities that their students attend after high school, 20.1% is based on standardized test scores, and 16.9% is based on the percentage of students at the school who go on to attend college. In other words, the ranking and quality of a school on Niche is not determined by course variety or quality of education, but rather where students go after they graduate. With this ranking system, Niche perpetuates a biased and faulty notion that success is seeded in college admissions.

Furthermore, the sources of the data used by Niche are questionable. While the statistics on college enrollment and student-to-teacher ratio are based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, other data — such as the top colleges attended after graduation or standardized testing scores — are measured through surveys submitted by Niche users, a small and selective sample size. Because these statistics and the reviews on the website only consist of those willing to share this information publicly, Niche fails to provide a comprehensive representation of the school as a whole.

Besides the inaccuracies in data collection and skewed information towards college matriculation, correlating college admissions with the quality of a school ignores the hard work of the students who attend the school. Although a school can provide knowledgeable teachers and a rich curriculum, college

admissions are more often a reflection of an individual student's talent, diligence, and passion than of the school itself. Contrary to popular belief, Choate does not give its students a shortcut to an Ivy League. As a Choate student, you are competing for college admission in a pool of highly-qualified applicants who have already been filtered through a low high school acceptance rate. Choate can foster growth, but it does not create student success. Students, themselves, create their own success.

I've learned that coming to Choate with the sole goal of attending a good college enables a toxic mindset. Before arriving at Choate, students are often the "golden child" of their hometown, excelling in academics and extracurriculars. But, it is impossible to be perfect at Choate. You cannot get flawless grades, be the president of a thousand clubs, and be the captain of every sports team while also having an adequate social life with healthy lifestyle habits. It's simply not sustainable. By associating high school with the goal of building a college resume, classmates become competition, and every mistake feels like failure.

That said, while I do not regret coming here, the way I think about Choate has changed drastically. I now know that at Choate you must be prepared to fail, accept failure, and try again. You must prioritize learning and growth over grades. And, the parts of this school I love the most — the teachers, the Harkness tables, the community, the arts program, the dining hall conversations, the friendly hellos on the paths, the strolls around campus, and the dorm movie nights — are all aspects of the Choate experience that can never be embodied by a ranking.

Tiffany Xiao is a fifth-former from Irvine, CA. She may be reached at txiao23@choate.edu



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

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Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

DEAR NEW STUDENTS, HERE'S SOME ADVICE

By **Lily Hrazdira '24**
Opinions Writer

Dear new student,

Congratulations on getting through your first month at Choate! As most students can attest, Choate is very different from other schools, so it's normal to feel a bit overwhelmed as a newcomer. It's also just as normal to still feel overwhelmed even after being here for a while. I've been here for more than a year, and I'm still learning new things about myself and Choate every day. While the first few weeks of school are filled with back-to-back meetings, ice breakers, and trying to get settled amidst the chaos, it's in these next few weeks and months that you'll be able to find your place in the community. Get out of your comfort zone; make sure to try something new this year. There's a whole community behind you to support you. So, here's some advice from a sophomore who was once in your shoes:

As Dr. Curtis said during Matriculation, this year brings new changes to the Choate community. Compared to last year, there are fewer Covid-19 restrictions, like no required masking outside academic buildings and no six-feet social distancing. Take full advantage of these new freedoms — hug your friends, high-five your teammates, cram around the dining hall tables! Be grateful that our dining hall conversations will no longer consist of us yelling "what?" at our one friend sitting six-feet across the table. Also, explore Wallingford — there are some great spots to visit around town. Reach out to your prefects or other upper-classmen for recommendations — my friends and I always go into town with the plan of try-

ing something new, but we end up eating Half Moon's pizzas every time.

It's still not too late to meet new people! While it may seem like others have already found their friend groups, a lot of students don't meet their closest friends until years into their time at Choate. Whether for the arts, athletics, or academics, it's easy to find people to be friends with in and out of activities. The best places to meet people are in classes and afternoon sports or activities, because of how frequently they meet. Special shoutout to Choate Girls' Varsity Hockey for being the very best team on campus, and for being my go to people for a laugh. So, try to introduce yourself to people in your class, and get to know them! During online school last year, I made friends by telling them Homer was my grandfather. Too many people believed it.

Most importantly, (this may sound cliché) but have fun. Choate, like any other high school, is not perfect, and yet it's such a special place. While you may often feel stressed from the heavy workload or find yourself suffering from imposter syndrome, keep an open mind and engage yourself. Know that you belong here and that you will find your place. If you've had a rough past year and a half, Choate is a place where you can find all the comfort and support you need. Some last bit of advice: learn the school song — you don't want to have to mumble along when they don't project the lyrics on the Colony Hall screen. Or, God forbid, pump your fist at the wrong time. That would be embarrassing.

All the best,
Lily

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

THE CIA MUST REFORM COUNTERINTELLIGENCE MEASURES

By **Campbell Pflaum '23**
Opinions Writer

American counterintelligence is in a state of crisis: the *New York Times* recently reported on a leaked cable (a confidential text-based system) that indicated dozens of informants for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) — America’s only international intelligence program — were killed, arrested, or turned into double agents. This information paints a significantly different picture of the intelligence community than most would assume; it claims that in recent years, the Agency has been plagued by a number of issues, including depending on unreliable sources and paramilitary activities.

This comes at a time when U.S. relations with China and Russia are intensifying, heightening the need for trustworthy intelligence services. Texas A&M University Professor Jim Olson, the former CIA Chief of Counterintelligence, broke down a few declassified stories from his time at the CIA and outlined the challenges the Agency faces. Olson identified Chinese espionage as America’s biggest national security threat.

Mr. Olson’s solution to this issue is counterintelligence. He



Photo courtesy of Foreign Policy

believes that the CIA isn’t investing enough resources in counterintelligence technology. Douglas London, a former CIA operative, offered similar views in his book *The Recruiter: Spying and the Lost Art of American Intelligence*. London agreed with Olson that

the CIA mistepped in choosing to rely on paramilitary operations as opposed to more reliable sources, that a return to old-fashioned intelligence techniques — namely interpersonal control and handling of informants — will result in a more effective agency.

Ultimately, neither the cable nor the assessments by former agents can provide enough information to pinpoint a solution to the CIA’s issues. However, given the increasing threats from foreign intelligence agencies and the chilling aftermath of the war in Afghani-

stan following years of CIA paramilitary intervention, it is clear that the Agency must turn away from the policies it has employed over the last few decades.

However, the fate of the CIA rests more so on the Biden Administration than the Agency itself.

Counterintelligence is ultimately a tool of the Executive Branch, and the Agency will adjust its actions and focus only if they align with Presidential orders. The Biden Administration’s public animosity towards the Russian and Chinese governments likely indicates that the CIA is already increasing the presence of intelligence in these nations. So, Paramilitary missions like those seen in Afghanistan could escalate very quickly to a full scale geopolitical conflict in these countries.

Now, the CIA is at a crossroads. It has the potential and the pressure to reshape its program to better suit American interests by hiking up counterintelligence. In order to better protect both the American government and American citizens, the Agency must turn away from paramilitary endeavors to protect civilians of other nations and return to more covert operations, specifically interpersonal handling, to avoid informants being killed or turned in. With the appropriate measures, the CIA can become a more moral and effective agency.

Campbell Pflaum is a fifth-former from Nashville, TN. She may be reached at cpflaum23@choate.edu

GLOBAL CORPORATE TAX TO BE IMPLEMENTED



Graphic by Yujin Kim

By **Lex Njomin '23**
Opinions Writer

On October 8, 2021, 136 countries agreed upon a deal with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to enact a global corporate tax, which has been considered by experts and world leaders alike to be a significant breakthrough in the elimination of tax havens.

Members in confirmation included the U.S., China, the European Union, and all other G20 countries. Although the deal has previously been attempted and discussed many times over, the proposal gained traction under President Joe Biden’s tenure and was successfully passed with the newfound support of a few former opponents, namely Ireland, Estonia, and Hungary. Despite this progress, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Kenya have continued to withhold support. Now, the next step is for economic advisers representing the G20 economic powers to officially support the blanket policy at a financiers’ meeting in Washington D.C. on October 13. If the deal goes through, it would then be passed onto the G20 leaders to formally confirm during a conference at the end of the month.

This deal is, simply put, an assault on tax havens for megacorporations, or as classified in the official OECD statement, Multinational Entities (MNEs). The OECD/G20 framework, referred to as the Inclusive Framework (IF), curtails the profits of global corporations in two prongs.

The first and more problematic “pillar” is a broad levy on the profits of MNEs with total sales over 20 billion Euros and profitability over 10% (before tax/revenue). It mandates that 25% of a company’s profit in excess of 10% of its total

revenue must be evenly allocated as tax revenue to any member states where the corporation has consumers. Not only is this amount likely to be small and insufficient for states already struggling to balance a budget, it also comes with a catch. States who agreed to the deal must abolish all existing forms of digital service taxes, which according to CNBC, “would be unlikely to recoup the revenue they may lose from existing digital service taxes.”

The second and more noteworthy “pillar” is the 15% minimum corporate tax for all MNEs that meet the 750 million Euro profit threshold. This rule, as outlined by the OECD, would be strictly enforced on all IF members. Non-complying nations with corporate taxes under the minimum 15% corporate tax rate would be mandated to pay other developing IF members the difference between their actual tax and the minimum 15% rate. That is to say, if Ireland kept its corporate tax at the status quo of 12.5%, it would be due to pay back the remaining 2.5% of missing tax revenue generated by all its corporations profiting over the threshold to IF members.

Again, this deal comes with another drawback. A “substance carve-out” mentioned in the OECD statement would allow corporations to pay a reduced tax in regions where they employ a substantial amount of workers or have many tangible production assets, like factories and machines. This is patently a loophole to the already somewhat lenient 15% minimum threshold and simply allows MNEs to bypass corporate tax laws by restructuring production lines and aspects of their manufacturing process.

On balance, while the global corporate tax deal has generated a lot of positive feedback, it ap-

pears that resistance to the proposed policies is not uncommon. Domestically, it is essential that Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen negotiates Congress’s support, as the U.S.’s commitment to the new guidelines will determine the success this deal will have on a global scale. According to Rebecca Christie, a visiting fellow at a Brussels-based Bruegel economic think tank, “The U.S. decision to commit to the global minimum tax was absolutely essential to reviving the OECD talks.”

Internationally, concerns have been raised about the feasibility of implementation, as the official OECD statement pushes for a timeline of implementation by 2023 for both “pillars.” Additionally, a rushed concession added a ten year implementation period for countries to formally implement the 15% minimum tax rate and for corporations to adjust to the policy, effectively leaving the deal with “no teeth,” as stated by Oxfam. Finally, others have even expressed their concerns about the leniency of the policy, as some, like Yellen, believe the 15% minimum tax rate is simply too low to be effective, but was necessary to attract the support of states such as Ireland.

While the new corporate tax deal has made relative leaps and bounds to restrict the formation of tax havens, its policies are far from failsafe, may cause some losses in tax revenue for certain states, and are not close to a consensus on what is a reasonable and effective corporate tax rate. Before total tax havens for megacorporations can be eliminated, more work must be done.

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TO THE NINES: THE PERFECT NUMBER OF SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

By **Michael Koryakov '23**
Opinions Writer

Since its inception in 1789, the Supreme Court has been a critical part of the American system of checks and balances that holds the government accountable to the American people. The Court has the power to strike down any law it deems unconstitutional, which prevents any infringements on the rights of citizens.

Former U.S. President William Howard Taft said, “Presidents come and go, but the Supreme Court is forever.” Or so it was thought, until recent years. Following former President Donald Trump’s P’oo term, in which he appointed three Supreme Court Justices, some politicians revitalized the idea of adding Justices to the Supreme Court — an act known as “court-packing.” Such a move would undermine the independence of the Supreme Court and remove accountability to the Judicial and Executive Branches of government.

In Federalist No. 51, James Madison emphasized the importance of the separation of powers within the federal government. Specifically, he said that the Justices appointed to the Supreme Court “must soon destroy all sense of dependence on the authority confirming them.”

And this was not without reason: if Supreme Court Justices are reliant on Congress, they lose their ability to both impartially hold that branch of government accountable for its actions and strike down laws that it deems unconstitutional, in fear of backlash. This is specifically why the U.S. Constitution does not allow changes to the salaries of the Justices during their terms — the framers do not

want other government officials to influence the judiciary.

Allowing additions to the Supreme Court enables whichever party that controls Congress to decide the political breakdown of the Court. If Congress doesn’t appreciate the six conservative and three liberal judges on the court? No problem. They can add four more liberal judges using their senate majority, and the Court will now rule in favor of the majority party every time. This places the Court at the mercy of whichever party holds the Senate.

There are a few measures that can be taken to prevent court-packing and mitigate other existing issues: the first step is to ensure that the number of Supreme Court seats does not exceed nine. This can be codified into law by passing H.J. Res. 95, also known as the Keep Nine Amendment, to the US Constitution. This amendment has the support of numerous congressmen on both sides of the aisle, and the two-thirds threshold required to overturn an amendment would make it impossible to reverse without substantial bipartisan support.

There are other reforms that can be made to the Supreme Court that would move the Court closer to the vision that the founding fathers initially dreamed up. One of the issues the Court currently faces is political partisanship. Ever since the number of votes required to end debate in the Senate dropped to 51, there have been multiple partisan appointments of Supreme Court Justices. This is evident in the 6-3 conservative lean of the Supreme Court today. If certain Senators are unhappy with a nominee, they can filibuster and prevent the Senate from voting. If

the number of Senators required to end a filibuster is raised back to 60, bipartisan support would be required to select a Supreme Court Justice. This would allow for less partisan and more clear-minded voices on the Supreme Court.

Another popular solution to the partisanship of the court is Supreme Court Term Limits. The Supreme Court Term Limits and Regular Appointments Act of 2020 would give justices 18-year staggered term limits and require Presidents to appoint a Justice every two years. Because the presidency tends to alternate parties, a balance in the Supreme Court is far more likely with this policy. The proposal would also remove the concern regarding Supreme Court Justices resigning in time for a President of their party to appoint someone with similar political beliefs. A notable case of this was when former Chief Justice Earl Warren resigned under Lyndon B. Johnson, fearing that a Republican may take office and be the one to replace him if he was to die during their term.

Regardless of how you believe the Supreme Court should be reformed, it is clear that adding Justices to the Supreme Court would accomplish nothing but destabilize the judiciary and offset the powers within the American federal government. As Irving Kaufmann said, “The Supreme Court’s only armor is the cloak of public trust.” It is up to us to protect the sanctity of the court and the great experiment that is the American system of governance.

Michael Koryakov is a fifth-former from Greenwich, CT. He may be reached at mkoryakov23@choate.edu



Graphic by Yujin Kim

Thirty-Six Seniors Prepare to “Cap” Off Choate Careers

By Laya Raj '24
Reporter

The Capstone Program, one of Choate's seven signature programs, provides seniors with the opportunity to work one-on-one with a faculty member to design a customized curriculum drawing on multiple classes and to create a final project of their choice. The topic of a student's Capstone is based on their own interests, rather than a set of required classes, so the topic possibilities are endless. Marcus Ding '22, Irene Garcia Gutierrez '22, and Monty Singer '22 have recently begun the process of creating their final presentations that the Choate community can look forward to in the spring.

Garcia Gutierrez, who hails from Villahermosa, Mexico, is focusing on the post-revolutionary history and economy of Mexico for her Capstone. The idea for her Capstone stemmed from the appreciation of history she gained while taking World History and U.S. History during her past two years at Choate. “I wanted to do something that would allow me to learn more about Mexico, because I felt I didn't know much about my own country,” she said.

As a part of her project, Garcia Gutierrez is taking the Colonial Latin America, International Economics, Developmental Economics, and Political Ideologies classes. Under the guidance of her faculty adviser, Mr. Craig Johnson, she is working on writing a research paper that will detail her findings about Mexico. Through her deep dive on the country's recent history and present economy, Garcia Gutierrez hopes to gain a better understanding of how her country's present economic and political environment came to be.



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

Marcus Ding '22, Irene Garcia Gutierrez '22, and Monty Singer '22 have each created a highly personalized senior-year curriculum.

son, she is working on writing a research paper that will detail her findings about Mexico. Through her deep dive on the country's recent history and present economy, Garcia Gutierrez hopes to gain a better understanding of how her country's present economic and political environment came to be.

The focus of Ding's project is also personal identity — specifically, the identity of Asian Americans as created by society. Ding hopes to create a podcast series of around seven 20-minute episodes that provide an overview of the socially-engineered Asian American identity. Among the

episode themes he is considering are the effect of World War II on the status of Japanese and Chinese Americans in the U.S., anti-Blackness within the Asian-American community, self-stereotyping, and the role of mainstream media in the proliferation of Asian stereotypes.

Ding was inspired to focus on this topic last year while taking American Studies, a class taught by his now-faculty adviser Mr. Tom White. “I can attribute it to that class that I have a greater social awareness. I spent a lot of my life running parallel courses to the Asian community, trying to fit

into a certain standard,” he said. Through sharing his podcast series with the community, Ding hopes to amplify the conversation about Asian American identity. He said, “If everyone understood 1% more about their peers, the world would be a much kinder place.”

Singer is exploring the history of risk-taking for his Capstone in hopes to be better equipped for his own future adventures. Under the supervision of his faculty adviser, Mr. Jim Davidson, he will be studying varied religious perspectives on risk and the historical changes in the nature of risks through courses such as Philosophy, The American West, and Monetary Theory. He will also be focusing on space exploration, which he identified as “the next risky frontier.” He said, “We've covered a lot of Earth [but] we haven't covered a lot of spatial areas.” Singer plans on compiling the information he finds from his study into three documentaries that will be available to watch on his YouTube channel come spring.

In the months ahead, these three students, along with the 33 other students pursuing Capstones, will continue to dive into their academic disciplines of choice. Stay tuned for May, when they will present their final projects — perhaps exactly as they're thinking now, or maybe completely reimaged.

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FACULTY TACKLE UNHEALTHY EATING CULTURE ON CAMPUS

By Melody Qian '24
Staff Reporter

On Monday, September 27, Choate's faculty gathered for a seminar on cultivating body confidence and minimizing toxic diet culture on campus.

During the seminar, an external facilitator came in to lead a professional development presentation on disordered eating habits, their warning signs, the intersection of toxic body culture, diet culture, the “grind” mindset, and how all of that is exacerbated in the age of social media for young people in particular.

Especially amidst the pandemic, the number of adolescents struggling with disordered eating and exercise habits have skyrocketed. In part, this is due to an increase in time spent on social media where many influencers unwittingly encourage harmful habits. Additionally, many teens have turned to diet and exercise as ways to stay “productive” during pandemic lockdowns.

In light of this context, faculty were instructed on ways to be more in tune with the social-emotional needs of students and create a culture that is more supportive of all bodies. For example, it is critical to acknowledge and disrupt the mindset that labels certain foods as good or bad, healthy or unhealthy — or, in the case of Choate's dining hall, green, yellow, or red.

“If I eat all red foods, I might feel bad about myself. That creates a value hierarchy among our food options,” said Ms. Kyra Jenney, the chair of the HPRSS department. “We shouldn't place moral judgements on foods or the decisions we make, because we can internalize our choices and that leads to negative self-esteem.”

Although students' struggles with eating may seem like an issue that's not affected by the behavior of adults on campus, that isn't always the case. Becca Alston '22, president of The Body Project, a club on campus that aims to create a space for members to develop healthy body image and self esteem, noted how faculty impact student's struggle with body image through sports. “A lot of athletes look to coaches for how they should treat their bodies, and there are sports where they're encouraged to gain or lose weight when the focus should be on making sure the student is in a healthy place and taking care of themselves,” she said. “They're not always conscious of the effects on the students when they give instructions like those.”

As such, the Health Center, Counseling Team, and Deans' Office are thinking about ways they can facilitate body positivity programs on campus to address the challenges many students might be experiencing. In the meantime, faculty members are figuring out

how to be involved in creating safe spaces and facilitating dialogue about issues related to eating.

Many students would like to see faculty be more invested in students' well-being. Lisa Ji '22 is a founding member of iloveme, an organization that raises awareness of the effects of mass media and advertisement on appearance anxiety. She said, “I think the faculty, especially in underformers' dormitories, should be keener to students' mental and physical wellness by caring for students' sleep schedule and diet.”

Ji proposed that faculty and student leaders could collaborate on the issue, saying, “Peer Educators and other student leadership groups could partner with the faculty members to facilitate conversation among the students about these topics.”

Ms. Jenney agreed. “We really need wellness programming, especially coming into our second year of pandemic learning. We need to intentionally carve out time to have meaningful conversations on a variety of topics.”

However, she also acknowledged that pre-planned meetings can't solve every issue. “In addition to formal programming, it's important for us to be organically talking about these things together with students so it's not always in the context of a pre-scripted meeting,” she said.

Some faculty believe that advisories — gatherings less formal

than scheduled meetings but still fairly structured — could be apt to deal with these challenges. Ms. Amy Howland, a fourth-form dean and HPRSS teacher, added, “I'd love to see advisory groups tackle serious conversations about topics that are relevant to us. As far as a more interwoven aspect of Choate, one of the best forums for that narrative are advisory groups, because they're composed of students that are familiar with each other and the adult(s) running it.”

Especially for those who are individually struggling, though, Alston hopes students will be more comfortable reaching out to faculty for help and advice. “Kids need to know that teachers are a resource for eating disorders and other body image issues,” she said. I think that people don't think they can go to teachers.”

“Body confidence isn't just something students are dealing with,” Ms. Jenney concluded. “These are things that our faculty struggle with too, so there's an incredible moment for community connection and empathy there because this isn't just a student experience.”

If you're struggling with an eating disorder, please contact the Health Center or the National Eating Disorders helpline at 1-800-931-2237.

Melody Qian may be reached at mqian24@choate.edu

DRAW FOUR - Objects That Tell Your Story -

This week's Draw 4 interviewee is **MR. BEN SMALL**. A transplant southerner, Mr. Small grew up in North Carolina. On campus, Mr. Small teaches anatomy and physics in the science department and coaches winter diving, along with intramural sports in the fall and spring terms. This year marks his 26th year at Choate!

Mr. Small's 4:
1. Disc Golf Frisbee
2. Model Canoe
3. Hiking Boots
4. Dog Leash

“I began to play frisbee golf last year during the pandemic and got completely hooked. I built a little nine-hole course on campus that I encourage anyone who wants to go out and play. There's actually a pro tour and tournaments, and I've played in a couple. There's a really nice course in Wallingford as well, and I've played on courses in six different states now.”

“I love being out in nature, and my wife and I often canoe in the summers. We have done a couple of long trips, like a two-week trip through Canada. Being in the woods for two weeks where you don't see any people and instead just see bears, moose, and birds is a great experience. It's something that my wife really got me into, and we now enjoy it together often.”

“Going along the same theme, I very much love being outside, and some of my proudest accomplishments are some of the big hikes I've done. About ten years ago, I climbed Mount Aconcagua, which is the tallest mountain in South America. Two years after that, I led a group of 20 Choate students and faculty to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa.”

“One of the challenges of the time we're living in is our dependence on technology, and I think the antidote for that is getting outside. I have a retired racing greyhound named Tesla, and my very favorite part of my day is getting up early and taking her for a long walk on the cross country track. I get to watch the sunrise and just be in nature.”

by
Brian Harder

TWO STRANGERS, ONE CONVERSATION, & SOME FRIES

By Sydney Alleyne '23
Copy Editor

Last Thursday, Amanda Benneh '24, a returning sophomore from Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, and Lilli Schmidt-Engelbertz '23, a new junior from Hamburg, Germany, were complete strangers. After a lunch conversation featuring high-stacked plates, curly fries, and ketchup, the two girls left with a broadened perspective and perhaps a new friend.

First, we asked a classic ice-breaker: **Dead or alive, who is your ideal dinner date?**

Amanda Benneh '24: Okay, I would probably want it to be — I know this is very cliché — Michelle Obama.

Lilli Schmidt-Engelbertz '23: Oh, yes, okay. Why?

AB: She, from a young age, has really influenced my life, and not really because she was the first lady of America, but because of the things she did within that title. They helped define how I want to be when I grow up. I've always wanted to have a conversation with her and be able to ask her for advice.

LSE: Yeah, I totally understand that. I think I would eat

with Albert Einstein or someone like that. Especially because I'm really interested in the sciences, especially physics, and I feel like talking to someone who figured out so much about the concept, I just think that'd be really mind-opening.

AB: I would do that, too, but with the first doctor who performed heart surgery, for example. I want to know how they even thought of that and what was going through their mind — they've literally shaped so much about the medical system today. So, I think I'll

change my answer to that.

After breaking the ice, and discovering their mutual affinity for the sciences, the conversation continued with a more personal question: **When was the last time you felt lucky to be yourself?**

LSE: Wow, that's such a good question.

AB: This morning, because I woke up, and I was able to walk.

LSE: It's the little things.

AB: Yeah, and I remembered how annoyed I was when I couldn't walk because I hurt my leg. Kind of puts things into

perspective. Now, I can finally walk in the morning.

LSE: For me, it was talking to my brother last night about when I could come visit him. Now that we live so close to each other, it just felt nice to have the option.

AB: Where does he live?

LSE: New Haven, so not too far.

AB: Aw, it must be so nice to have him there.

LSE: Yeah, I'm lucky that he lives close to me now!

And with that, the two girls shook hands and headed their

separate ways. Regardless of whether or not they cross paths again, they both left parts of themselves in this conversation. Once strangers, now well acquainted, they are just a glimpse into the world of strangers whom you may never imagine connecting with until they randomly sit down at your lunch table — so next time, try striking up a conversation with someone new.

Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity.

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“BE”WEAR! CHOATE FALL 2021 FASHION IS HERE

By **Tess Taetle '24**

Reporter

To shop like Ximena Castillo Núñez '24, a student from Mexico City, you will need a plane ticket. Her T-shirt is from a local boutique in Mexico, her gold jewelry was passed down from generation to generation in her family, and her other pieces were found in thrift stores.

When deciding what to wear, Castillo Núñez first considers the weather. If it is sunny, she will reach for a skirt — a black mini skirt in this case.

Then, she tries on different clothing combinations until reaching the set that suits her.

Castillo Núñez's go-to style is layering. A simple white t-shirt and jeans outfit, or even button-up blouses

and tank tops, can all be transformed into a fashion statement by simply adding on an oversized blazer. The backpack is another essential part of school outfits, so she changes the bag according to different looks. The gray puffer shoulder bag in this look, for example, suits the color scheme of her mostly monochromatic outfit. The mix-and-match style allows Castillo Núñez to find creativity and diversity within just a few pieces.

Her attention to layering reflects what Castillo Núñez loves about fashion: the freedom to experiment and be spontaneous in her outfit choices. “I do not like to define my style,” she said.

Tess Taetle

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By **Ximena Castillo Núñez '24**

Reporter

Manuela Sepulveda '23, a student from Mexico City, takes closet inspiration from the 1990s' anti-fashion movement when many women chose to steer away from traditional feminine outfits and instead incorporated T-shirts, jeans, tanks, and oversized silhouettes into their closets. “I am very much influenced by 90's fashion,” Sepulveda said. “It comes naturally at this point.”

Big jeans, tight tops, oversized sweaters, and neutral colors are staples in Sepulveda's wardrobe. On a gray Tuesday morning, she brought out her trusty pair of oversized Levi's, a military-green printed mesh top

with red exposed seams, and a pair of emerald green Chuck 70's Converse. Her combination of the tight mesh top and oversized black pair of jeans is, once again, reminiscent of 90's fashion.

Her outfit is the “perfect combination of masculine and feminine silhouette[s],” said Sepulveda — boxy at the bottom and fitted at the top. While experimentation is a huge part of Sepulveda's style, she finds comfort in “stick[ing] to the same silhouettes and the same forms that work.” To Sepulveda, fashion isn't necessarily about venturing outside one's comfort zone; rather, it's about discovering a style that fits the individual in every way.

Ximena Castillo Núñez

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By **Yoyo Zhang '24**

Reporter

Summer Xu '22's outfit consists of a blue-and-white gingham polo and a white tennis skirt. As a firm believer of “dressing to the feeling” instead of adhering to a specific style, Xu allows herself the freedom to experiment with a wide variety of outfits. “I would put on something edgy and bold one day just because I'm feeling vibrant and energetic,” she explained. “The next day, though, you might see me in Choate sweats from top to bottom, because I want to go for a more comfy look.”

On school days, when there is less time to analyze her wardrobe, Xu describes her outfits as “spontaneous.” On the other hand, if she

is going out on the weekends, she will take the time to coordinate a more refined look. “I think picking out different outfits is fun, so I would spend time on them whenever I can,” Xu said.

Xu is working towards being bold enough to wear whatever she feels representative of herself. Generally, she is open to trying anything fresh, young, and out-of-the ordinary, even though she prefers monotone or blue-and-white outfits.

“You don't need to be a fashion icon,” Xu said. “Dressing according to what you feel like is more important than dressing according to a specific style.”

Yoyo Zhang

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CHOATE AS RUNWAY

Students and faculty share their perspectives on Choate fashion

MR. DERON CHANG

Perhaps the pandemic has put the nail in the coffin of weekend dress and work dress having different standards. I like it that we no longer have a “strict” dress code, as I think it allows students to be who they want to be with how they dress or not use clothing to express who they are.

PORTIA CHUNG '24

I think a lot of people make an effort to put nice outfits together and it definitely shows. In terms of trends, I've noticed a lot of bright and vibrant colors which certainly gives the campus a happy, fun feel! I think this helps demonstrate what a diverse student body we are.

ADAME SOWE '23

“Comfort over presentable.” Some students do not care how they look to others, which is a good thing! My advice, while getting dressed in the morning: stare in the mirror to see if you feel good. Ask yourself, “Am I comfortable?”

MRS. ANNE ARMOUR

The lack of a dress code means that Choate students can theoretically express their individuality through their choice of outfits, and I do see some of that, but it seems as if comfort dictates most choices. I think if members of the Wallingford community beyond Choate or members of our community who are not here every day make any assumptions about what our clothes say about us, that is archaic thinking. It is just as easy to be smart wearing construction boots as it is to be smart wearing a tuxedo, and vice versa.

FIONA FU '25

I've noticed that students at Choate generally dress very well and always look quite put together, which is somewhat different than the hoodie-and-sweatpants situation I was expecting. Most people express their style quite a lot and there is a variety of different “vibes” people go for, which I think accurately reflects the wide range of tastes here.

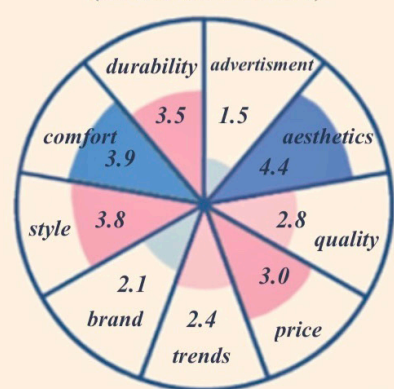
MS. AMY SALOT

I'm seeing a lot more sweatpants and pajama-type things than I ever used to. I'm wondering if that's from the Zoom, the Covid, as we're so used to looking decent from the chest up. I'm frankly a little sorry, because I think the way you dress communicates how seriously you take the environment.

NOAH MCBRIDE '23

I think our community generally has a laid back attitude especially when it comes to getting to and from class during our busy schedules. What people do wear, in my opinion, isn't a true judgement of who they are, but it does reflect a certain pedigree of Choate students. I don't think clothes are an overt symbol of your values or who you are, but subliminally it does convey a certain message.

Importance of Each Parameters (on a scale of 1 to 5)



The pressure to follow trends:



Top 3 Shopping Places

Online: 82%
Thrift-shops: 55%
Local Boutiques: 44%

Most Influential Platforms

Instagram: 70%
Pinterest: 43%
Fashion Influencers: 31%

Most Impactful Sources:

1. Oneself

2. Family & Friends

3. Online Platforms

Perceptions about Fashion

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree
What I wear is a reflection of my identity					
I buy new fashion looks only when they are well accepted					
Fashion seems to be a superficial subject to me					
I usually stick with one style and I rarely experiment others					

Graphics by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

@DRESSEDFORDISTRACTION SHOWCASES FASHION AT CHOATE

By **Reagan Colton '24**

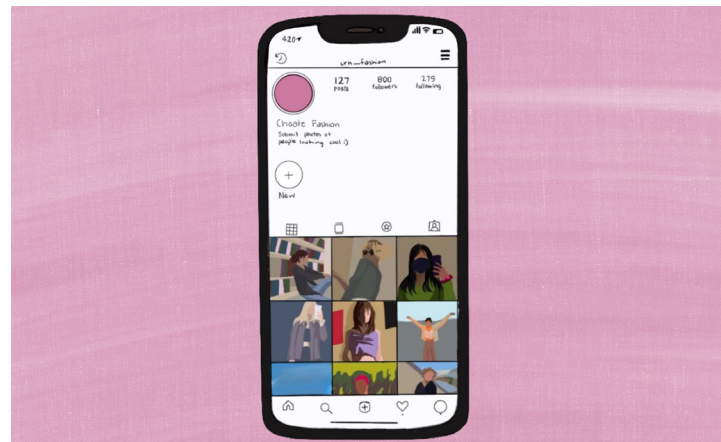
Reporter

A close-up of orange butterfly clips, an action shot of a girl walking away donning a black leather coat with white boots, a boy sitting back in a lawn chair with a Yankees baseball hat over his eyes, and a trio of friends wearing various shades of green are all captured on @dressedfordistraction, an Instagram account created by Blake Bertero '22 to celebrate the fashion scene at Choate.

The name of the account is a reference to the dress code at the School. A quick glance over Choate's dress code will reveal phras-

es such as “no exposed midriffs” and “clothes that bare the back,” citing “respect for the learning environment and the comfort of other members of the community.” Bertero believes these restrictions stem from the notion that certain parts of the female body distract men in the workplace, making it necessary for women to cover up. The name “Dressed for Distraction” rebels against this censorship of women's bodies. “That's the point, we are dressed to distract — it's kind of sarcastic,” she said.

Bertero created the account with hopes to inspire creativity within the student body's style choices and to empower people to



Graphics by Evelyn Stanley/The Choate News

dress for themselves. “I'm a very big fan of experimentation,” she said. “The ability for me to try a bunch of new things shows people that they can do it as well.”

student body, no matter their gender, to feel more comfortable expressing themselves through their fashion. “The girls dress [like] it's a fashion show — the girls strut around campus. The guys, I mean sure there are some that do it, but in general I do think [fashion is] pretty segregated,” said Bertero.

Some of this division, Bertero explained, stems from the toxic masculinity standards of male gender expression. By featuring male-identifying individuals on her Instagram account and showing off their outfits, Bertero hopes to combat arbitrary gender stereotypes. “Bridging the gender divide within fashion is such a statement, but

I don't think it needs to be such a statement. Instead, [I'm showing] just a spectrum of clothing.”

Since creating the account, Bertero has noticed the changes in people's willingness to embrace more pronounced outfits. “Some even came up to me and said that seeing my outfits and the looks that I posted on @dressedfordistraction empowered them to wear the clothes that really represent them because they realized that there is no need to dress like other people — there is no rule in dressing,” said Bertero.

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Photos by Tiffany Xiao, Olivia Siegel, Angel Guo, and Gaby Nirmal/The Choate News

FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record
31 - 44 - 3

Varsity Games

Boys' Soccer (3-5-1)
vs. Andover, 0-2

Girls' Soccer (4-2-1)
vs. Andover, 1-2

Girls' Volleyball (6-3)
vs. Andover, 3-1

Boys' Football (2-1)
vs. Avon Old Farms, 19-50

Girls' Field Hockey (0-5)
vs. Andover, 1-3

Girls' Cross Country (0-2)
vs. Taft, 21-38

Boys' Cross Country (2-2)
vs. Andover, 23-32

Boys' Water Polo (1-6)
vs. Andover, 11-8

J.V. Games

Boys' Soccer (2-4)
vs. Andover, 1-4

Girls' Soccer (1-5)
vs. Andover, 1-4

Girls' Volleyball (5-1)
vs. Andover, 1-3

Boys' Waterpolo (3-1)
vs. Andover, 8-7

Girls' Field Hockey (1-4)
vs. Andover, 0-4

Boys' Cross Country (2-2)
vs. Andover, 15-50

Thirds Games

Boys' Soccer (0-4)
vs. Andover, 0-5

Girls' Soccer (0-1-1)
vs. Andover, 0-7

Girls' Volleyball (2-1)
vs. Taft, 3-1

SAIF NAZER: CHOATE'S SPORTS VIDEOGRAPHER



Photos courtesy of Saif Nazer



Photo by Sam Anastasio/The Choate News

Saif Nazer '23 is currently working on a football documentary.

By **Alex Skyrpek '23**
Staff Reporter

Whether at a football game or at an off-season basketball practice, Saif Nazer '23 can be found on the sidelines, capturing the action with his camera.

Nazer discovered his passion for videography in the fall of his sophomore year after receiving a camera for his birthday, though it wasn't until a few months later that he fully realized his interest in the art. At first, Nazer admitted to lacking a particular "passion" for photography. His boredom with taking conventional photos eventually led to his exploration and love of film — a change he would have never anticipated a year ago. Videography gave Nazer "the freedom to make [content] with...zero creative restrictions." As a primarily self-taught filmmaker, Nazer's exploration has been one of the joys of his journey.

"I don't think anything beats the feeling of scoring a goal or winning a trophy," Nazer said. "[But] getting a great video of that moment feels almost as good." He tries to focus on every aspect of sports videography, capturing not only highlight plays but funny moments and rituals between players. After a big game, Nazer appreciates seeing the players' reactions to his work — in fact, he credits his friends for convincing him to pursue his passion at school.

Although he is currently focusing on the football team, Nazer considers no single sport as his specialty. Nazer's experience ranges from clothing brand advertisements to cinematic sports recruiting videos, but he is always engaging in new experiences that will broaden his skill set. In his videos of the football team, Nazer utilizes these skills in hopes to highlight the energy of each play. While Nazer may

miss the feeling of playing on the field, he said that by spending time at practices and games with the Choate football team, he shares the joy after a win and the same somber mood following a loss. This term, he is also working on a longer term project: a documentary about the Choate football team.

With his work on the field this fall, Nazer hopes to inspire budding photographers and videographers. His key piece of advice: focus on your mindset. "[You] will inevitably face challenges," he said. "All it takes to overcome them is hard work." Reflecting on his artistic career, Nazer said, "there have been times where I doubted myself, but I kept working. It has almost been a year since I got my first camera, and I could not be happier that I never quit filming."

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PLAYER PROFILE

Gabi White Breaks Records



Photo by Noah Molina/The Choate News

Gabrielle White '24 poses with Girls' Cross Country coaches Jim Davidson and Fran O'Donoghue.

By **Sam Anastasio '23**
Copy Editor

When the pandemic ruined long-time swimmer Gabrielle White '24's swim season, she was devastated. But, decided to pick up another cardio sport — running. More specifically, she started competing in cross country and track & field. Little did she know that in less than two years she would go on to break Choate's 5k course record. On October 9, in a race against Taft and Trinity-Pawling, she ran a time of 18:54, smashing the previous record of 19:33 by 39 seconds.

White's introduction to running was rocky, as she did not know how best to train. "My best friend coached me all summer, and I got so much faster. Once I started really doing a lot of distance, I started to plateau and didn't know

how to train anymore," she said. Her freshman year, White worked with a coach who helped her improve her times. Unfortunately, during the indoor track season, White was injured, sidelining her for a few weeks. Nevertheless, White would go on to qualify and place sixth at the USATF National Junior Olympic Championships in the 4000-meter race.

Choate's 5k course is renowned among all who have run on it for its challenging elevation changes and sharp hills — the most infamous of which is "Mt. Doom," the steepest part of the course. White's consistent training on the course, and her experience racing it, made her confident that she would perform well. White says the hardest part of running a race is keeping mentally strong. "Your legs will do their work but training your mind to love the feeling of lactic acid building up in your legs

and not being able to breathe is how to run a really good race," she said. With the whole season ahead of her, White approached this race as an opportunity to gain experience and get into the racing mentality — she was not going for the record whatsoever. It was not until there was such a large gap between her and the person behind her that she realized she might be on pace to break her own personal record, let alone that of the course.

Only a sophomore, White still has two more years of Choate Cross Country ahead of her, and she hopes this race will mark the beginning of a long running career at Choate and beyond. "It was inspiring to know I had the capability to go fast on my own without anyone there to help push me."

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COACH PROFILE

IN THE ZONE WITH JONAS AKINS

By **Ming Qian '25**
Reporter

In his four years at Choate, Mr. Jonas Akins has made his mark on the Choate campus in and out of the classroom. During the class day, he can be found in a variety of HPRSS classes, teaching everything from history to Contemporary Issues. But when the class day is over, he can almost certainly be found on the football field.

Choate is Mr. Akins' third stop in his multi-sport coaching career. In September of 2001, he began teaching at the Sedbergh School in England, where he coached the school's youngest boys on the rugby pitch. Prior to Choate, he spent four years coaching American football and squash at the Kent School. This fall marks his fifth season coaching football and squash at Choate.

Mr. Akins's involvement with athletics didn't begin as a coach. He began playing football at the Milton Academy in ninth grade. In his senior year, he won the New England Championship as a starter on an undefeated Milton team. He went on to play for Harvard Football as a walk-on athlete for all four years. "The opportunity to be a small part

of such a proud tradition was deeply meaningful," he said. Mr. Akins's favorite part of football is the team unity it fosters. "That it takes eleven players to contest the possession and position of the football is, to me, one of the great joys of the game. There's a particular satisfaction in being part of a larger effort, a team that transcends any individual effort," he said.

Mr. Akins came to boarding school for the opportunity to connect with students in all their different roles — as students, players, and people. He believes that being a coach has made him a better teacher, inspiring him to emphasize the concepts of shared effort and purpose in the classroom. Reflecting on his time as a teacher, a coach, and a player, he shares this advice with the community: "Embrace every opportunity to represent your school. Learn the history of your school or your team or your dorm and take seriously the chance to build on that legacy," he said. "The warp of the rich tapestry that is our school may have already been set in the preceding 131 years, but the weft is still up to us."

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Photo by Ava Persaud/The Choate News

Coach Jonas Akins runs an afternoon practice.