



# THE CHOATE NEWS

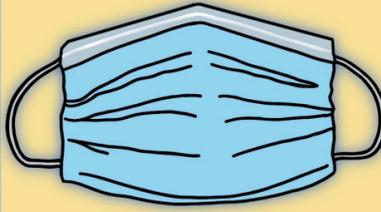
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Graphic by Yoyo Zhang/The Choate News

## NEW COVID-19 POLICIES ESTABLISHED AS CASES SURGE

By **Alexis Lien '23**  
Staff Writer

As daily Covid-19 cases in Connecticut reach their highest numbers since June, the School has made changes to its initial mitigation strategies to meet the challenges of the state's increased infection rates.

Many of the guidelines from when students first arrived on campus remain in place. These include wearing masks on campus except in one's own dorm room, social distancing from others in all public spaces, frequent hand washing, and weekly testing. If a student feels unwell, they must seek medi-

cal assistance from the Health Center and self-isolate in their room in the meantime. The School has been utilizing filtration strategies such as high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters to aid with air circulation in all campus buildings.

However, rising Covid-19 infection rates in certain Connecticut towns have forced the School to reevaluate procedures surrounding day students who could put the community at risk. Although boarders continue to operate in a controlled and monitored environment, day students, faculty, and staff, who

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## CSAA SHINES WITH DIWALI, INDIAN FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

By **Nicholas Ng '23**  
Reporter

With more than 850 students from around the world, Choate encourages the sharing of cultural celebrations and traditions with the school community. On Sunday, November 8, the Choate South Asian Association (CSAA) hosted an event to celebrate Diwali, the Indian festival of lights.

Traditionally celebrated with diya lamps, fireworks, gifts, and feasts, Diwali is typically celebrated at Choate with an in-person Indian dinner and Indian dance performances in the library. However, safety measures due to the ongoing pandemic took this year's celebration to Zoom.

This year, CSAA members created virtual presentations to share the holiday's festivities with the Choate community. According to CSAA President Shivani Sharma '22, the presentations involved answering questions such as "What is Diwali? Why is it celebrated? Who are the gods that play a part in it?" which initiated important conversations.

Club members also presented on special traditions, food, and symbols related to the event. The celebration included an arts and crafts component, in which participants made paper flowers.

**By celebrating these festivals with classmates, even the whole school can enjoy and learn more about that culture and about the world.**

Shivani Sharma '22

The performances of past celebrations were preserved as well: one of the seniors, Amitra Hoq '21, performed a traditional Hindustani vocal performance. In addition, Sharma taught a Bollywood dance routine to participants through Zoom.

Due to the new virtual nature of the event, the planning process involved some unpre-

cedented challenges. Sharma noted that the greatest difficulty was encouraging active participation. Her primary goal was to promote a livelier celebration of the important Indian holiday by encouraging people to join the Zoom call and involve all club members in discussion. Another challenge was spreading the word about the Zoom event to more people. Sharma said, "I wasn't sure how to get people to know about the event virtually."

Despite these challenges, Sharma appreciated the opportunity to host the event. "By finding clubs like CSAA, the Muslim Student Association, the Hispanic-Latinx Forum, and clubs like these, students are connected to people of the same culture," she said. "By celebrating these festivals with classmates, even the whole school can enjoy and learn more about that culture and about the world."

CSAA will host a major event in the spring for Holi, the Indian festival of color.

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## ANNUAL RECYCLING CHALLENGE REIMAGINED

By **Jonathan Zhuo '23**  
Reporter

The Recycling Renaissance, an initiative focused on educating the Choate community about recycling, started on November 2 and will end on November 20, replacing the annual Recycling Challenge due to pandemic-induced restrictions. Covid-19 regulations have forced the C-Proctors to establish a program that focuses on education via virtual platforms like the C-Proctor Instagram.

The initiative, which was put together by the School's C-Proctors, aims to inform the community on how to properly dispose of their waste in the correct bin — landfill, recycling, or compost — around campus. The C-Proctors hope to reinforce previous knowledge about recycling and introduce new information to the student body.

Events planned for the Recycling Renaissance include educational Instagram posts, recycling games, dorm bingo events, educational videos, and more.

"My favorite thing about the Recycling Renaissance is how easy it is to educate the community through fun activities," said C-Proctor Sofia Muñoz '23. "By playing the bingos in the dorms, for example, people can learn about recycling while also having a friendly competition with dorm mates."

Another C-Proctor, Brian Harder '23, said, "The Recycling Renaissance is important because recycling is an essential part of sustainability, and given that many people are spending more time at home nowadays, it is extra important that people know how to sort their waste."

This year has been extra challenging for the C-Proctors as their weekly meetings have shifted to Zoom. Additionally, C-Proctors no longer have the chance to inform the community through in-person dorm presentations or school meetings.

Despite these challenges, the C-Proctors have put in extra effort to make sure that Covid-19 does not have a significant impact on sustainability efforts at Choate. For example,

they've introduced composting bins in dorms and continued to spread knowledge with the help of the Eco-Reps, students who facilitate sustainability in dorms without a resident C-Proctor.

Many students from the Choate community feel that the C-Proctors have done a great job adapting to the pandemic and are excited about this month's program. "I think it is really awesome that the C-Proctors are doing the Recycling Renaissance this year," said Richard Chen '22. "It is a great alternative to the recycling challenge, and I am really looking forward to some of the games and activities."

Mark Hong '23 said, "I watched the video shown during the school meeting about composting, and I also follow the Choate C-Proctors on Instagram. They are doing an amazing job spreading information, and they are an extremely useful resource that students should utilize more often."

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## SLS ADAPTS TO NEW HEALTH GUIDELINES

By **Ryan Kim '23**  
Reporter

Want to learn about a leading cancer treatment or the latest galactic discoveries? Now is your chance to do so. On Wednesday, November 18, seniors in the Science Research Program (SRP) will be participating in the Student Lecture Series (SLS), an annual event in which students present their research from the past summer to members of the Choate community.

The oldest of Choate's signature programs, SRP consists of 16 students in two sections: the biological and quantitative sciences. According to Dr. Selena Gell, who directs the biological section of SRP, the purpose of the program is to "provide students with an opportunity to conduct grad-

uate level research at university labs around the world."

Dr. Chris Hogue, who directs the quantitative section of SRP, added that the program helps foster the atmosphere of a professional scientific research lab and gives students a unique opportunity to conduct research with the support of their peers.

Given the restrictions imposed by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, large portions of the program, including both SLS and the students' summer internships, have been impacted. SLS has shifted to a hybrid format with a maximum of 20 socially distanced and masked audience members permitted inside the presentation room. Each lecture will also be broad-

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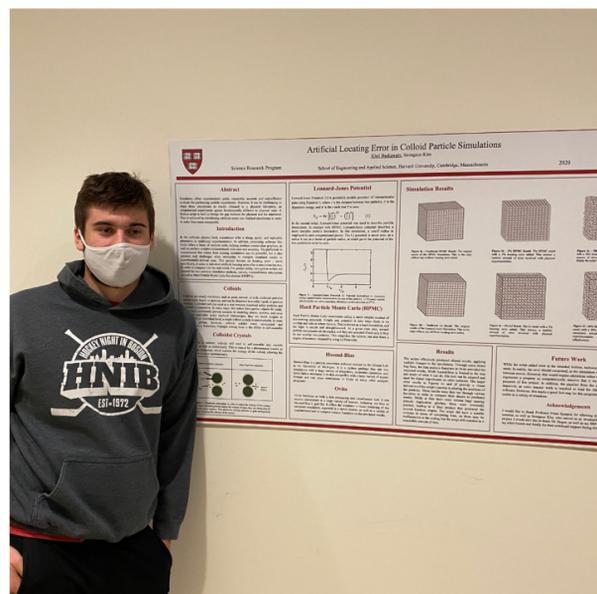


Photo courtesy of Khal Bashawaty

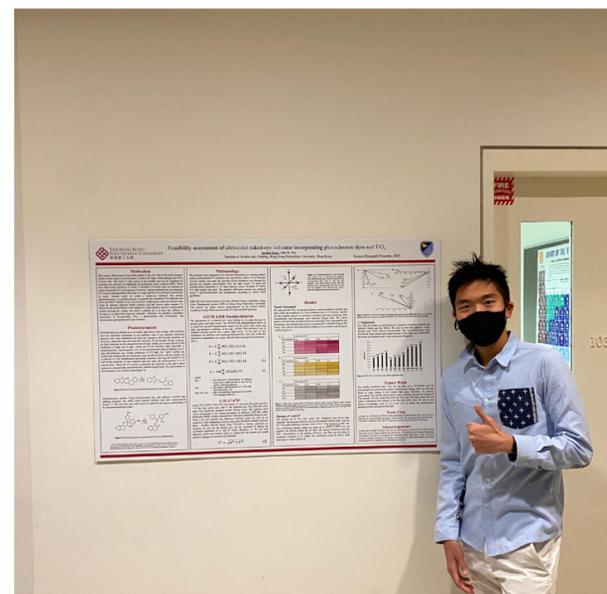


Photo courtesy of Jayden Khuu

SRP students in the quantitative and biological sections will be presenting their summer research.

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After Covid-19 spike, Lyman Hall and Sheehan go virtual.  
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**Poor Connection**  
Praj Chirathivat '22 reflects on learning as a remote student.  
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**The Long Road Ahead**  
Joe Biden may have won, but the fight for justice isn't over.  
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**A Tale of Two Pandemics**  
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## Stricter Guidelines Implemented as Covid Cases Rise in CT

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are in contact with family members and other people residing outside of Choate's immediate campus, are more susceptible to infection. Hence, these members are now required to take three Covid-19 tests per week, twice using a saliva test and once using a nasal test.

Dr. Miriam Cohen, the School's Medical Director, said, "The saliva test is pretty much exactly the same as what we are doing with the nasal swab. It's a PCR [polymerase chain reaction] test, but what's different with saliva testing is that [they] are able to actually group samples together, so it's called pooled saliva testing. They take a tiny bit out from 24 different swabs ... they combine it and run one PCR test on those 24 students or faculty or staff." This method of testing has been utilized by many countries since spring but has only been made available in the United States last month.

Dr. Cohen explained that a negative PCR test is an efficient way to know if the group of 24 individuals are negative. If the test is positive, the 24 individuals are split into two groups, and the test is re-run.

On October 30, Dr. Cohen announced that members of the community who reside in towns with a rate of ten or more cases per 100,000 people but have a seven-day positivity rate below five percent — including Durham, New Haven, North Haven, and Wallingford — are now required to quarantine while at home if they wish to attend classes in-person, or switch to remote learning instead. Quarantine includes wearing a mask at home and

remaining social-distanced from family members. Students from Bridgeport, Southport, and Stratford — towns with over ten cases per day and a positivity rate of over 5% — were required to learn remotely beginning November 2.

On November 6, the guidelines for day students grew even stricter: in her weekly Covid-19 update email, Dr. Cohen announced that all day students living in Fairfield County must now learn remotely while students from Branford, Cheshire, Middlefield, Orange, Southbury, and Southington were added to the list of those who are required to either learn remotely or quarantine while at home. These recent changes were implemented this Monday.

Day student Mirielle Ma '21, who lives in Glastonbury, said, "As day students, we have to be really careful about going out in public and even interacting with our family, which can be a bit stressful. At least for me, being on campus and attending in-person classes is worth the extra precautions."

Every decision to make Choate "safe and sounder," as the School's public-service campaign puts it, has gone through a long and elaborate deliberation process.

Dr. Cohen said, "I have discussed this with experts at Yale who are public health Ph.D.s, that are infectious disease MDs, that are epidemiologists, to ask their opinion on different ways that we can make our campus safe."

Although more stringent measures have been established, there remains some apprehension about the effectiveness of these measures.

Day student David Garsten '23, who lives in North Haven, said, "Based on people I've talked to, most people faced with a choice of stay home or quarantine from their parents will just choose quarantine from their parents and then not actually do it."

The Covid-19 task force at Choate consists of a group of faculty and staff who showed interest in working on the necessary strategies to keep Choate safe, including several administrators, and those in oversight positions at Choate. The Adult and Student Health Safety Committee, which was created this summer in response to the pandemic, was also consulted in the planning process of these new policies.

In response to safety measures implemented, Spanish teacher Ms. Nancy Burrell, who is a non-residential adviser in Archbold, said, "I suspect that the mitigation measures may feel odd and uncomfortable to students who are used to having more freedom. The threat that Covid-19 poses to all of us is so significant, though, that I hope and expect that students recognize that these new measures are necessary for now."

Despite the challenges presented by Covid-19, members of the Choate community have been working hard to maintain good health and safety. Dr. Cohen concluded, "The numbers are rising around us, and, fortunately, we are not seeing numbers rise within our Choate community, so just a big thank you to everybody."

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## SLS TO BE PRESENTED VIRTUALLY

SCIENCE RESEARCH PROGRAM  
STUDENT LECTURE SERIES 2020  
Wednesday, November 18  
Livestream on Zoom: 2:00 - 4:40 pm  
Each talk lasts ~20 minutes

Image courtesy of Niki Gummadi

This year's Student Lecture Series will be broadcasted on Zoom.

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casted live on Zoom so that the entire community can watch the presentations.

Unlike previous years, the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) main stage theatre will serve alongside the Getz Auditorium in the Icahn Center for Science as the second physical venue, replacing the much smaller Elman Auditorium in Lanphier Center. In an effort to minimize contact between students, all 16 talks will be conducted on November 18 instead of being split across two days as in previous years.

Regarding the summer research portion of the program, the Covid-19 pandemic greatly affected some student internships depending on the lab, location, and topic of research. Dr. Hogue said, "The range of what students did and took away was very different, but it mirrored the real world. Some labs had a very normal summer while there were others that were more or less shut down."

Max Fan '21, a student in the quantitative section, was on the

former end of the spectrum. "My lab was purely computational, so it was very conducive to remote research. Other labs had to drastically change their technique to adjust to remote research, which must have been difficult," said Fan.

Max O'Connor '21's lab work was significantly impacted by the pandemic. He said, "After spending a year researching cardiovascular disease and induced pluripotent stem cells in preparation for an internship in the Ashley lab at Stanford University, it was hard to process that my internship had been canceled due to Covid-19."

Despite the changes, he was grateful for the support of the SRP community. "Dr. Gell helped ensure that I would still be able to work on a fascinating scientific research project over the summer. I worked on a data analysis research project with a company called MILRD," he concluded.

The ten-minute talks will begin at 7:00 p.m. — check your Choate email for Zoom information.

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## Student Council Recap

By Prim Tangkaravakoon '24  
Reporter

In light of the difficulties and stress that students are facing due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the 2020 U.S. presidential election, the Student Council has been working to support students.

A proposal by Fourth-Form Class President Ava Maha '23 created in response to student concerns over increased homework levels passed on October 20. "Part one is a 10 to 15 percent reduction of the current homework expectations, and part two is an efficient homework survey, collaborated with the Choate Programming Union," explained Maha. Students will be able to fill out the survey if they feel that a specific teacher is assigning too much homework.

A proposal focused on cultural understanding, proposed by Fifth-Form Representative Abby Lu '22, has passed. The new initiative hopes to improve cultural understanding at Choate by offering an array of monthly events at which students can discuss different cultures.

The Council has also been developing other proposals, such as mental health awareness conversations, remote form events, new parking spots for day students, dorm competitions, and online study spaces.

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## WITH ANXIOUS EYE, CHOATE WATCHES ELECTION RETURNS

By Joy Bang '22  
Staff Reporter

In light of the 2020 U.S. presidential election and its possible impacts on the members of the diverse Choate community, student groups and the administration both arranged a number of special programs on and after Tuesday, November 3, Election Day.

On election night, the cabinets of Young Republicans and Young Democrats each hosted an election viewing party in separate locations. The Young Republicans watched Fox News's election night coverage, while the Young Democrats mostly watched CNN's coverage throughout the evening.

The leaders of the clubs aimed to provide spaces where students could gather and engage in discussion. President of Young Democrats Rory Latham '21 said, "I wanted to have a place where the Democratic students can come together so that they could comfort one another or celebrate together as the votes were counted."

Similarly, President of Young Republicans, Conor Brown '22, said, "One of my chief responsibilities as the president of Young Republicans is to provide a sense of community and to provide a forum for people of a conservative disposition to express their beliefs freely on campus."

Ashley Jiang '22, who participated in the Young Democrats event, said, "It was nice to be around like-minded people and engage in constructive discourse with them about the election. We were all pretty nervous about the state of the union, but at least being together assured our fears that we weren't alone."



Photo courtesy of Katie Jewett

Young Republicans held its watch party in Elman Auditorium on Election Night from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The Young Democrats' viewing party lasted for two hours from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. in Lanphier Center. Due to the unexpectedly high turnout, upperclassmen gathered in Lanphier Commons while the underformers gathered in two other classrooms. The Young Republicans hosted its collective viewing party in Elman Auditorium from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Both of the viewing events allowed for spontaneous discussion to take place. Brown said, "It was as much of a social thing as it was a political thing." For the Young Republicans, the viewing event also served as a reminder to respect

other members of the community, even if election results did not go as they hoped.

Brown said, "One of the main things as a club that night was to make sure the people understand that going forward, especially when the result of the election is fully known to the American public, it is critical that we are more conscientious and respectful towards our left-leaning peers."

He added that he felt a duty to promote more positive discourse, especially between those of difference political parties. He said, "I recognize that it is our responsibility as their friends and peers to make an effort to not antagonize them too much."

On Wednesday, November 4, the day after Election Day, faculty and sixth-form students led over a dozen affinity and discussion spaces for members of the community.

A few of the events included "Discussing the Election: International Students' Perspective," "Affinity Space for Students of Color," and "Choate for Women — Post Election Day Support."

These spaces were provided to ensure that students and faculty felt safe and supported by the School amid one of the most divisive presidential elections in U.S. history.

Ms. Helene Ramirez Guerra, who organized the affinity

space for BIPOC-identifying students, said, "I believe the conversations were helpful in helping all who participated to process how we were feeling, to find support and community, and to have tangible self-care takeaways to put into practice."

Ms. Guerra also stressed the importance of providing affinity spaces for students of color in a predominantly white institution. "We have to remember that historically these places were not built with BIPOC people in mind, so we have to be intentional about creating spaces for our communities," she said.

The events also served as a platform for virtual learning

students who had not been able to regularly engage in political discussions on campus. Sabahat Rahman '21 led the election discussion for international students along with Sesame Gaetsaloe '21, Andrew Lee '21, and Spanish teacher Mr. Sergio Lopez.

Rahman appreciated the opportunity to discuss politics with the Choate community. She said, "It was nice to talk with people about the election — especially because as a virtual student, I haven't had many opportunities to do so in the dorm, walking between classes, and so on."

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## THE VOTES HAVE BEEN COUNTED: WALLINGFORD'S ELECTION RESULTS

By **Renee Jiang '22**  
Copy Editor

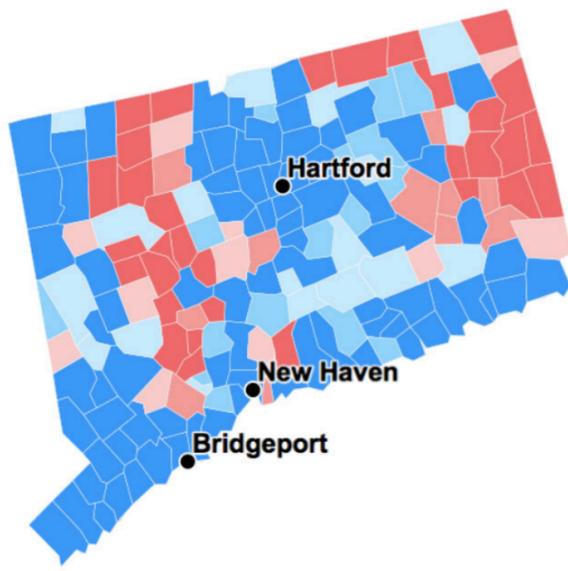
On Saturday, November 7, major news outlets declared Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and his running mate, Senator Kamala Harris, the president-elect and vice-president-elect after a historical election that kept the nation on edge for days.

In Connecticut, this election brought unprecedented polling numbers with an increased voter turnout of nearly 80% compared to 74% in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Though the state has voted overwhelmingly democratic since the 1988 U.S. presidential election, this year's election has been particularly polarizing. The past four years under the Trump administration have increased the concerns of Democrats and Republicans alike regarding President Donald Trump's P'oo position on several social issues such as health care, immigration, and women's rights.

"People were eager and passionate about casting their votes," said Hartford Mayor Mr. Luke Bronin, who is a Democrat. "We've had a president that has divided us on every line possible."

Due to rising tensions around the nation, many Connecticut voters avoided in-person voting, fearing violent disruptions at polling stations, and the coronavirus. An act passed by the Connecticut General Assembly in July allowed all voters to request absentee ballots, resulting in nearly 600,000 registered absentee ballots.



Graphic courtesy of CNN

Presidential election results in each CT town with the percent margin of the win.

The state reported no major issues throughout the election process though there were a few power outages at polling stations caused by high winds and a mishap for some voters in New London who had received the wrong ballots for House candidates.

Shortly after polls closed at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday night, the *Associated Press* called the race in Connecticut for Mr. Biden — though the counting of absentee ballots continued through Wednesday.

Results for the House of Representatives were also called the following day, with the Democratic Party candidates, each an incumbent, winning in all five

districts. In District Three, which includes Wallingford, Democratic U.S. Representative Ms. Rosa DeLauro was reelected for her 16th term after facing Republican challenger Ms. Maragret Streiker, ultimately receiving 57.3% of the vote in comparison to Ms. Streiker's 41.3%.

In the town of Wallingford, the elections kept officials busy with work even months before Election Day, largely due to the increased number of absentee ballots. Twenty-two people, including the moderator, worked on processing the absentee votes.

According to Wallingford Town Clerk Ms. Barbara Thompson, Wallingford officials

started crossing voters off of an official list on October 26 and worked through November 4.

When an absentee ballot is officially registered, the voter's name is marked with a red "A" next to their name on the list. "The red 'A' is next to the name so if the person was to try and go to the polls, they could not vote," Ms. Thompson said. "It was a very tedious process, but it works, because there's a lot of eyes on the ballots and a lot of double checking, so we were very successful."

Ms. Thompson's office was specifically in charge of sending absentee ballots to registered voters and scanning the completed ballots to produce reports for the state.

"We issued over 9,000 absentee ballots and received back 8,100 prior to election day. Between November 2 and 3, we received back around another thousand ballots to get to the total of 9,086 absentee ballots."

The Wallingford Town Clerk's office finished counting absentee ballots on Wednesday and submitted its report to the Connecticut Secretary of State's office on Thursday.

When asked if any unexpected difficulties arose during the elaborate election procedures, Ms. Thompson said, "It was really the sheer number and volume that was hard to deal with. We had to close our office at noon to the public starting around September 20 and just do election work."

In regards to the state's role during this entire process, Press Secretary at the Office of Secretary of State Ms. Gina Atanasoff said, "The election is administered at a local level by the election officials of each town. The Office of the Secretary of the State is responsible for overseeing the towns' functions and maintaining contact with them as well as the State Election Enforcement Commission (SEEC) in the case of any legal questions or issues."

Despite the increase in absentee ballots, an estimated 75% of voters opted for in-person voting, crowding Connecticut's polling stations as early as 6:00 a.m.

English teacher Mr. David Loeb, who voted in person at Moses Y. Beach Elementary School,

said, "So many people had reasons to vote by mail or absentee this year, but I felt safe enough and knew that there wouldn't be a mess about my voting in-person, and there might have been with the ballots."

Choate students who were eligible to vote in Connecticut were given exceptions to campus Covid-19 guidelines and permitted to leave campus to vote in person.

Overall, Wallingford had an 87% voter turnout, with over 13,000 votes for Biden, closely followed by almost 12,000 votes for Trump.

All 151 seats in the Connecticut House of Representatives and 36 seats in the Connecticut Senate were also up for election on November 3.

For the 34th Senate District elections, the majority of votes from Wallingford citizens went to Republican candidate Mr. Paul Cicarella. Mr. Cicarella will be serving his first term, following in the footsteps of Senator Mr. Len Fasano, who announced that he would not be seeking re-election earlier this year.

Wallingford citizens voted in Republican candidate Mr. Vincent J. Candelora for the 86th House District, Democratic candidate Ms. Mary Mushinsky for the 85th, Democratic candidate Mr. Jim Jinks for the 90th, and Democratic candidate Ms. Liz Linehan for the 103rd.

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## The Connecticut Art Trail Celebrates 25th Anniversary

By **Bella Capuano '21**  
Staff Reporter

The Connecticut (CT) Art Trail, a partnership between museums and historical sites in Connecticut, launched the "Made in Connecticut" exhibition on October 15 at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum in Hartford in celebration of its 25th anniversary.

Open through February 21, the exhibition consists of 69 pieces from 22 institutions, museums, and historic sites across the state. "Made in Connecticut" not only pays homage to the state's rich art history and heritage but also its robust manufacturing industry. "Everything has a CT connection — an artist must have resided in CT and a manufactured object must have been made in CT," says James Prosek, the exhibit's curator. "There are a lot of amazing artists who lived and worked in Connecticut like Alexander Calder and Helen Frankenthaler — just an endless list." The exhibition includes educational programming and other anniversary events to celebrate the immense growth of CT Art Trail.

In an interview with *The Hartford Courant*, Ms. Cary Mack Weber, volunteer president of the CT Art Trail and director of Fairfield University Art Museum, said, "The Art Trail is about lifting up all of the museums in the state. When one museum is doing well, we are all doing well." Her goal for the exhibition is to increase the publicity of the museums, stating that, "Sometimes I don't think Connecticut residents know about the jewels in our own backyard."

Especially in the midst of the pandemic, the number of patrons visiting museums has declined, so "Made in Connecticut" serves to both increase attendance at museums and offer a fun family outing.

Mr. Prosek — who is also an American artist, writer, naturalist, and a current Artist In Residence at the Yale University Art Gallery — was asked ear-



Photo courtesy of James Prosek/The Hartford Courant

Prosek's 'Connecticut Composition No. 1' is currently on display.

lier this year by Ms. Weber and Mr. Thomas Loughman, Director of the Wadsworth, to curate the exhibition. Mr. Prosek has also included one of his personal works into the exhibit; Connecticut Composition No.1, an oil painting that he made this year, depicts the American Robin and two Mountain Laurels — the official state bird and flower of Connecticut — surrounded by hundreds of different types of wildlife native to Connecticut and the Long Island Sound.

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum is the oldest public art museum in the nation. Some of the highlights from the museum that are also featured in this exhibit include a 1966 sports car made in Bridgeport by inventor and race car driver Mr. John Fitch; a case of brass buttons that represents the city of Waterbury's brass industry; and a rubber desk made by Charles Goodyear whose invention of vulcanized rubber led to mass production of rubber products.

The exhibit coordinators also wanted to acknowledge the Na-

tive history of Connecticut by including Native artwork. "There were not a lot of pieces in the museums that represented the Native people the way they wanted to be represented, so I reached out to the cultural director of the Mohegan tribe," said Mr. Prosek. As a result, a necklace made up of wampum by a member of the local Mohegan Tribe William (Smiling White Wolf) Doheny will be on display at the exhibit.

There are also several virtual events that are accessible to all. One option is "Connecticut Connections," an event that will be hosted on November 14. It allows attendees to design artwork inspired by the exhibition, participate in a visual scavenger hunt, and watch art-making demonstrations.

To visit the CT Art Trail and the "Made in Connecticut" exhibition, guests can purchase the \$25 Passport, which gives them year-long access to all of the 22 museums and art institutions on the trail.

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## Wallingford Public High Schools Struggle to Stay Open

By **Trista LeBlanc-Serbyn '22**  
Staff Reporter

Following the emergence of several Covid-19 cases in Wallingford Public Schools and a shortage of teachers willing to teach in person, Lyman Hall High School and Mark T. Sheehan High School temporarily switched to online classes from October 30 to November 5.

Upon returning to in-person learning on November 6, Lyman Hall students were informed that the schools would once again close and return to virtual classes at least until November 16.

As of November 5, 49 Covid-19 cases were confirmed at several Wallingford Public Schools, with 37 students and 12 faculty members testing positive. During the schools' closures, any student who tested positive or was suspected of having close contact with those who tested positive, were asked to quarantine for two weeks. Close contact individuals were determined by a team composed of a school administrator, the school nurse, the nurse coordinator, and the local health department.

Mr. Stephen Civitelli, the Wallingford Health Director, said, "We're finding that there

are a lot of private gatherings in homes that are becoming what are known as 'super spreader' events that we're trying to avoid."

He added, "The unfortunate thing of those events is it's having a negative impact on not only our businesses, our schools, and our community, but also on the ability to provide services on the municipality side, as well as the school side."

According to Lyman Hall students, a large Halloween party and several other close contact gatherings are to blame for the spread of cases among the student body. "I am glad the school closed for the week. There is no way to monitor who bumps into who in the hallways, so there is no 100% guarantee that contact can be traced," said McKenna Neeman, a senior at Lyman Hall.

Although many students have apparently chosen to disregard Covid-19 guidelines outside of school, Wallingford Public Schools have set a strict standard of expectations during classes.

Neeman said, "In school, the virus is handled seriously. Masks are required to be worn at all times — covering the nose — unless we are outside for gym class. Antibacterial wipes are used by all students at the end of each

class on desks, chairs, and any shared supplies. We have one direction hallways and a one person per bathroom rule. So, in-school precautions are the best that can be done for the situation."

While Wallingford Public Schools are working hard to safely remain open, faculty and administrators continue to request that Wallingford residents work to mitigate the spread of infection to ensure both individual and public safety. To further inform the community about Covid-19 prevention methods, the Town Health Department hosted a virtual information session on November 9 covering general Covid-19 guidelines and restrictions.

A statement on October 29 by Wallingford Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Salvatore Menzo urged for the cooperation of the town.

"Your cooperation is the key to keeping our schools open," the statement read. "Without your due diligence, with your students, with your families, with your community, we cannot maintain the resources to have our schools open every day."

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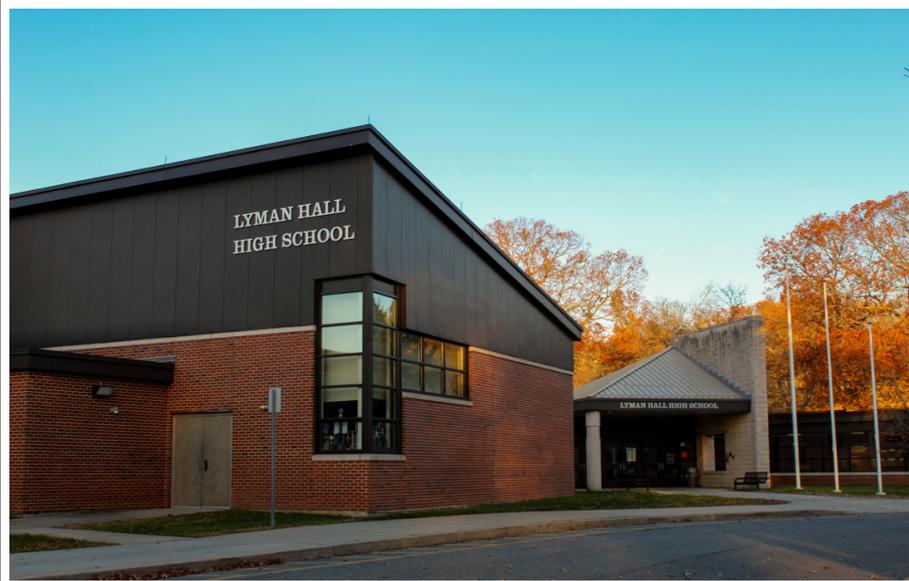


Photo by Trista LeBlanc-Serbyn/The Choate News

Lyman Hall High School temporarily cancelled in-person classes after a rise in local Covid-19 cases.

# THE CHOATE NEWS



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## Finding Connection as a Virtual Learner



Graphic by Athena Liu/The Choate News

By **Praj Chirathivat '22**

Copy Editor

A soft ringing from the alarm I'd set on my phone signaled the beginning of my first class of the week. It was Monday at 6:55 p.m., and I had just finished a delicious dinner of Panang curry and kai jiew (Thai-style omelets). After scrambling upstairs to my study, skipping every other step as I went, I flipped open my laptop and joined the Zoom room for my Science Research Program (SRP) class.

An unfamiliar sight appeared. Instead of the usual floating heads on my screen, I saw a classroom in the Science Center with all of my masked classmates sitting at their socially-distanced desks. "Hi, Praj!" they waved at me. I waved back with excitement and perplexion. Today was the first day students were allowed to attend in-person classes. Although I was the only student who attended class virtually, I still looked forward to reliving the sensation of learning in an actual classroom. The experience, however, was underwhelming.

A week after in-person classes resumed, our teacher tasked us with estimating the total number of outwardly-exposed bricks

on the Science Center. Instead of roaming around outside in the fresh Wallingford air and talking with my classmates in real life, I was confined in my room, analyzing the building via Google Earth and discussing my ideas through the sluggish internet connection.

Because SRP takes up two consecutive blocks on Monday, we are allowed a ten-minute break after the first block. Instead of everyone turning off their cameras and muting themselves like we did during quarantine, my classmates walk out of the classroom together, chatting with each other as they stroll away. I am left alone in the silent classroom with my face still exposed on the Virtual Student display. Each Monday during the break, an aloof silence pervades my study. When I trudge downstairs to grab a snack, I wonder what my classmates are talking about outside in the hallway. What were they laughing about? Where were they walking? What conversations was I missing? Even though teachers are trying their best to make remote learners feel integrated into the community by finding accommodations more adept to a virtual

setting, connecting with my class is still challenging. I do not want to admit it, but I feel left out.

On-campus students have many opportunities for interaction and collaboration: afternoon sports, SAC activities, dorm life. As a remote learner living on the other side of the world in Thailand, I encounter frequent issues in connecting with the Choate community — both in and out of class. Because of the difference in time zones, I'm not always available for collaboration and lose out on spending time with my peers. Because in-person interactions aren't possible, it's challenging to maintain my friendships and establish new ones.

However, a helpful remedy for this detachment is communication platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Discord, which allow me to converse with my friends, club members, dormmates, and teachers. Whenever I have free time, I use Discord to reach out to my friends to chat and play games online. With the popular games Among Us and Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, I can continue to enjoy activities with my Choate friends despite the physical distance separating us.

The integration of Microsoft Teams to the Choate community allows me to continue interacting with club members and classmates when I have questions. Despite the lack of real-life interactions, these platforms help reestablish some degree of contact with the community, and I encourage other virtual students to take advantage of them.

This fall has been one of my toughest terms at Choate, especially mentally. The pandemic has posed many obstacles that prevent me from receiving the Choate experience I once knew. Nonetheless, I am still grateful for the many digital platforms that allow me to retain my relationships with the community and the effort that faculty continue to make to include remote learners into daily campus life. Virtual learning is obviously challenging, but finding connections with people on campus makes us all feel a little closer together — even in a world where we are anywhere from six feet to six thousand miles apart.

**Praj Chirathivat** is a fifth-former from Bangkok, Thailand. He may be reached at [pchirathivat22@choate.edu](mailto:pchirathivat22@choate.edu)

## EXPERIMENTATION OVER SPECIALIZATION

By **Harry Chen '22**

Staff Reporter

Though I find it rather cringe-inducing now, I distinctly remember writing my Choate application essay about wanting to "broaden my horizons" and "take advantage of all the different opportunities offered" at Choate — you know, the classic drivel that eighth-graders write in attempt to impress admission officers. Still, at the time, I truly believed that I would expand my horizons at Choate. I wanted to try new things, meet new people, and take new classes. I wanted to dabble in robotics, play some squash, and maybe even take a dance class.

However, I soon realized that at Choate, dabbling in various activities and subjects is not commonly accepted within the culture. From an extracurricular standpoint at least, Choate is a place where the good go to get better — not to try new things. Often, students only pursue what they are already good at in hopes of using these talents to boost their college resumés. Students become so caught up with padding the extracurricular section of the Common Application that they lose sight of the diverse opportunities offered at Choate. When the time one spends on campus is used solely as a stepping stone to college, the opportunities offered at Choate can't be fully appreciated.

I've always loved basketball and always will. When I was younger, I would watch in awe as my brother dribbled up our driveway. Since then, my dream has been to play in the NBA. However, as my years at Choate have gone by, I have been less inclined to spend time on the court. As a 5'4" freshman, there

was never a moment when I felt confident in my decision to play basketball at Choate. I was told both implicitly and explicitly that my participation in the sport was a "waste of time." If I wanted to practice, I rarely could — open court time is almost always reserved for the varsity team. Slowly, I let my basketball dreams rot away and turned my attention to things that "actually mattered" — things that I was good at, like cross country.

I don't think I'm the only one who has experienced this kind of defeat. Frankly, this toxic culture reveals itself the moment students step foot on campus. In the opening days of freshman year, students hear all kinds of talk about each person's "thing": "She's a math genius," somebody says, or, "He's a theater kid." Before you've even begun to explore the many possibilities at Choate, you're labeled and confined. You find yourself zeroed in on excelling in one or two areas — a sport, an academic subject, art — and before you know it, you've forgone all the opportunities, events, and paths that make Choate special.

So, here's my advice: when you find yourself feeling restrained by external expectations, ask yourself "Why did I come to Choate?" Where else can you do research in the Kohler Environmental Center during the day and learn jiu-jitsu at night? So often, we focus so solely on what's been placed in front of us — this essay, this monologue, this free throw — that we lose sight of the vast possibilities all around us.

**Harry Chen** is a fifth-former from Vancouver, Canada. He may be reached at [hchen22@choate.edu](mailto:hchen22@choate.edu)

## Milky Ways and Mansplaining: Gender in the Classroom

By **Honor O'Donnell '22**

Opinions Writer

I was my first-grade teacher's favorite student. Every week, Ms. Holland gave a Milky Way candy bar to the most well-behaved student in class, and I won more than anyone. She told other students to behave like me — to raise their hands before speaking and to always say "please," "thank you," and "I'm sorry." It wasn't until years later that I realized she had only ever used girls as examples, lauding our docility. Not a single male student won a Milky Way that year.

My experience is not isolated. Research on gender bias in elementary school classrooms shows that teachers praise compliance and penalize disobedience in female-identifying students at a much higher rate than in male-identifying students. That treatment has led to a gender gap in higher education. According to a 2013 study by Oregon State University, in the average high school classroom, boys take up nine times more linguistic space than girls. While boys are inclined to dominate discussions and answer without the fear of being wrong, girls tend to speak only when they are certain of their answer. From a young age, girls are taught that our silence is worth more than our words, yet once we reach higher education, teachers expect us to speak assuredly in a classroom.

Many classes at Choate weigh participation just as heavily as written work. What does that mean for the girls who came from first-grade classes like mine? For those who were taught that their words are worth less than those of men? Although the outspoken boys in Ms.

Holland's class might not have won any Milky Ways, they now dominate conversations and ace graded discussions. Perhaps if I had been one of the "troublemakers" in first grade, I wouldn't struggle to actively participate in class now.

I've recently become more aware of how my gender affects my classroom performance. While many of my male classmates don't seem to care if their answers are wrong, I often refrain from participating, afraid of sounding stupid. Last summer, many posts on the @LifeAtChoate Instagram account expressed similar sentiments. Students pointed out teachers' favoritism toward male students, and Choate women acknowledged prefacing their contributions with apologies or disclaimers. With every hesitant response I give in the classroom, I feel closer to losing my teachers' and classmates' respect. I'm constantly trying to prove my intelligence as a female-identifying stu-

dent in an environment where my voice is often diminished.

I regularly witness other female students apologizing and introducing their thoughts with statements like "This might be wrong, but" or "I'm not sure, but." These disclaimers are often aptly referred to as "feminine qualifiers." Similar to low levels of class participation, the use of these qualifiers is rooted in elementary school classrooms. When young girls are praised for being demure, they equate self-assurance with conceit. I'm guilty of this: I apologize when people bump into me; I begin emails with phrases like "just to clarify"; I end sentences by asking if what I've said makes sense. While I know that feminine qualifiers undermine my words, I also don't want to be seen as arrogant — it's a vicious, interminable conflict between a desire for others to take me seriously and a fear of being perceived as cocky.

I have a request for students, teachers, and parents of all genders. My resolution for 2020 was to catch myself before using a feminine qualifier and participate more in class. I'm asking all of you to do the same: open your eyes and acknowledge gender inequality in the classroom. It's no coincidence that in a class full of male students, female students often have the lowest levels of participation. Teachers should consider their bias toward students of all genders and intervene when male students make condescending remarks to female students or begin to "mansplain." Remind girls, as well as gender non-conforming or non-binary students, that their words are valued and require no justification. It's time to give all students, regardless of their gender, a reward greater than a Milky Way: respect

**Honor O'Donnell** is fifth-former from New York. She may be reached at [hodonnell22@choate.edu](mailto:hodonnell22@choate.edu)



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### SAVE THE CELEBRATIONS. WE HAVE WORK TO DO.



Photo courtesy of Vox

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris in Wilmington, Delaware last week.

By **Rory Latham '21**

Opinions Writer

On Saturday, November 7, the *Associated Press* called Pennsylvania in favor of the Democratic Party, pushing former Vice President Joe Biden and his running mate Senator Kamala Harris past the 270 electoral votes threshold for a definitive win in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

A democratic win would not have been possible without the huge turnout of African-American voters in the urban centers of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Nevada, Arizona, and Georgia. This, combined with Biden's appeal to white suburban residents, carried the Democratic campaign.

Since more and more Americans are staying up-to-date on politics and taking advantage of different voting options — such as filling out an absentee or mail-in ballot — the U.S. could see a sizable increase in voter participation over the next few years. This would mainly benefit Democrats, as we have seen this election season.

After hearing of Biden's victory and reflecting on the exceptional voter turnout, I couldn't help but feel relieved. However, this feel-

ing was short-lived. Other matters soon occupied my mind. I know that this election was not about me — an affluent, straight, white male. I was not in danger of losing my life or any of my rights.

I know that even though Biden won, we still have a long road ahead of us. The harsh truth is that over 70 million Americans voted for President Donald Trump P'00 — a man I consider racist and bigoted.

Democrats cannot simply let that go and just call it a day. We do not yet have a majority in the Senate — which will make passing substantive reform a challenge— and we are also outnumbered in the Supreme Court.

So, how do we move forward?

First, I encourage everyone to support Democrat Jon Ossoff's campaign against Republican Senator David Perdue and Democratic challenger Raphael Warnock against Republican Senator Kelly Loeffler in the two Georgia Senate run-offs. Whether that is through phone banking, donations, or any other medium of volunteering, please get involved. These two seats will ultimately decide if the Senate majority is Democratic or Republican.

Second, I encourage you to model decency and compassion. Even though we will likely never win over Trump supporters, stooping to their level by calling them names and condoning hatred is not what Democrats — or any decent human being — should stand for.

As former First Lady Michelle Obama has said, "When they go low, we go high." This is not to say that we shouldn't be aggressive in our activism or proud in our beliefs. Activism on a local level will be critical in the next four years, especially if Senator Mitch McConnell controls the Senate. Make your voice heard and do your best to enact change wherever you can.

I'd like to leave you with a line from Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris, delivered after her election marked a multitude of firsts for the office of vice president. During her victory speech on Saturday, she said, "America's democracy is not guaranteed. It is only as strong as our willingness to fight for it, to guard it — and that's exactly what we did."

**Rory Latham** is a sixth-former from New Haven. He may be reached at [rlatham21@choate.edu](mailto:rlatham21@choate.edu)

### ENDSars Movement Combats Police Brutality in Nigeria

By **Anika Midha '22**

Staff Writer

On October 8, after a video of a Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) officer ruthlessly murdering a young Nigerian man in the southern Delta State went viral, protests erupted across Nigeria. This is only the latest instance in SARS's history of unlawful murder, abuse, and corruption. More broadly, the occurrences signify a global trend of government-funded police forces neglecting their duties to protect citizens.

SARS was founded in 1992 as a task force dedicated to investigating armed robberies, kidnappings, and other violent crimes through covert operations with police officers working in plain clothes, using unmarked cars, and wearing masks.

SARS notoriously targets young men and accuses them of being online fraudsters. Once the young men are detained, they have to pay excessive bail fees to be released or face years in prison without a proper sentencing. This illegal detention, coupled with an unsystematic criminal justice system, has forced 72.5% of local inmates to serve time without an official sentencing.

In reaction to this injustice, 10,195 people signed a petition to disband SARS and submitted it to Nigeria's National Assembly in 2017, signifying the start of the EndSARS movement.

Although some Nigerian senators supported the disbandment of the task force, the National Assembly decided to reform the squad instead of completely dismantling the ruthless group. In response to this decision, Nigerian citizens conducted peaceful protests in a number of Nigerian cities and states, demanding for the government to abolish SARS.

Finally, Nigerian Vice President Mr. Yemi Osinbajo ordered for the dissolution of SARS in August of 2018. However, the "dissolution" was merely a change of name from SARS to Federal-SARS (F-SARS).

Obviously, this did not solve the problem. Amnesty International reported 82 cases of human rights abuses by SARS between January 2017 and May 2020, including numerous judicial killings,

physical assault, shooting detainees, and threats of execution.

After the video went viral, protesters slept outside of the Lagos State Governor's House from October 8 to October 9. The Deputy Governor of Lagos State Mr. Obafemi Hamzat then addressed the protesters, speaking out against police brutality.

Unfortunately, Mr. Hamzat's condemnation and pledge to investigate the allegations against SARS did not resolve the issue.

As a result, on October 11, protesters made five demands: release all protesters who were detained, give appropriate compensation for the families of deceased victims, establish an independent investigative body for prosecution of all reported acts of misconduct, retrain SARS officers and make them undergo a psychological evaluation before they can resume their duties, and increase police salaries.

In response to the protests, F-SARS and other tactical units were relieved from all police activities, and, on October 11, the Nigerian Police Force announced the complete dissolution of the SARS unit. Nonetheless, many Nigerians remained skeptical and continued their protesting.

#EndSARS has garnered support on Twitter, and numerous demonstrations have occurred in-

ternationally in Canada, Germany, Ireland, the U.K., and the U.S.

There are many parallels between the circumstances of police brutality in Nigeria and the U.S. George Floyd's murder back in May was one in a string of deaths of black men and women at the hands of white police officers. Similar abuses of power around the world beg the question: What steps should we take to ensure officers are held accountable for their actions?

First, we need to firmly re-establish the purpose of police forces: their mission is to protect citizens by working with communities and not by employing deadly force or intimidation.

Second, more resources need to be dedicated to police training.

Finally, all police officers must be held accountable for their actions. The demands made by the EndSARS protesters are also effective mechanisms to enhance the performance of police forces and the relationship between the community and the police.

I am optimistic that reform will happen in the U.S. and Nigeria, and I hope that citizens will feel safer in their communities. Although change takes time, we are, in fact, making progress.

**Anika Midha** is a fifth-former from Singapore. She may be reached at [amidha22@choate.edu](mailto:amidha22@choate.edu)



Photo courtesy of The New York Times

Protests continue in Nigeria, demanding the disbandment of SARS.

### TRUMP LOST. REPUBLICANS MAY WIN.

By **Wesley Boatwright '22**

Staff Writer

On Saturday, November 7, major news outlets called the 2020 U.S. presidential election for former Vice President Joe Biden.

More than half the country breathed a sigh of relief; the national nightmare that is President Donald Trump's P'00 presidency was finally coming to an end. When the news came, the streets of New York City echoed with celebratory claps and cheers as people started to regain hope in U.S. democracy.

But amidst the celebration, a dark reality remains.

Although Trump lost the presidency, the conservative supermajority in the Supreme Court means that liberal policies will be gradually but surely struck down on the basis of constitutionality. This will undoubtedly endanger basic human rights.

Furthermore, Biden will enter the White House a step behind his predecessors. While the past three presidents all began their term with their party in control of both houses of Congress, Biden will likely have to manage a hostile Senate that can limit any liberal changes he tries to enact.

What's more, Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky, who is known to be hugely conservative, has made it clear he



Photo courtesy of The New York Times

On Saturday, November 7, major news outlets declared former Vice President Joe Biden winner of the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

will do whatever it takes to further his personal and his party's agenda. He doesn't care about what is right, and he is solely focused on attaining power — exemplified in the Republicans' blatant hypocrisy regarding the Supreme Court nominations of Merrick Garland in 2016 and Amy Coney Barrett this year.

Unfortunately, Democrats must prepare for gridlock and petty obstruction.

Democrats will complain, and Republicans will win. Time is a flat circle. The poor get poorer. The rich get richer. Corporate interests infest

Washington, trading money for influence. Conservative shells on the Supreme Court will eviscerate campaign finance laws, so our democracy will be further prostituted to ensure the few can retain control over the many. Nobody is protecting the ideals of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness — just rich, white men hoarding power and influence until there is nothing left of our democracy.

The Democratic Party is either complicit in this charade or so incompetent that they fail to see why they are the serial

losers. Trump was a historically unpopular president. But instead of driving turnout among younger and more diverse voters, Democrats subscribed to the idea that the path to victory was through Republicans who despise Trump.

Unfortunately, Republicans seem all too willing to choose an immoral Republican over an honorable Democrat. Time and time again, throughout the Trump administration, Republicans refused to stand up definitively against racism, sexism, nativism, and xenophobia.

Where is the Republican moral compass? Trump may be gone, but the Republican establishment is not.

I can't shake the feeling that this presidential victory will only make the Republicans stronger. The Republican party will rebrand themselves, claiming that they left behind Trump and his extremism. Their danger will likely become more subtle and thus more insidious.

Conservatives will vilify figures like Representatives Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar by asserting that their progressive

policies are socialist, and the Democratic establishment will likely agree. The center is always safer.

However, all hope is not lost. The Republicans don't have control over the Senate just yet. Both Georgia senate seats are still up for grabs. For Democratic challenger Jon Ossoff, the late surge of Democratic votes prevented Republican incumbent David Perdue from reaching 50% of the vote. This means the election for this crucial Senate seat will go to a runoff in January.

The other Senate seat in Georgia is in the middle of a special election, and it will go to either Republican Kelly Loeffler or Democrat Reverend Raphael Warnock. If the Democrats somehow win both run-offs, they will control the Senate.

In the case that both Republicans secure the seats, the only hope for change during Biden's presidency is if the Democrats gain control of the Senate in the 2022 midterms.

With a Democratic House and Senate, Biden could implement popular progressive policies and lead our country into the future. Hopefully, my pessimism is misplaced, and the country will heal instead. Or, maybe not. Welcome to politics in 2020.

**Wesley Boatwright** is a fifth-former from San Francisco. He may be reached at [wboatwright22@choate.edu](mailto:wboatwright22@choate.edu)

## A TALE OF PAST PANDEMICS: 1918 SPANISH FLU, SWINE FLU, AND COVID-19

By **Brian Harder '23**  
Staff Reporter

While attending Choate in the middle of a pandemic seems like a once in a lifetime event, Covid-19 is not the first pandemic to make a mark in the School's history. In fact, the School has some experience dealing with contagious diseases such as the 1918 Spanish flu and the 2009 swine flu pandemics. Choate's response to Covid-19 is similar to how the School combated these past pandemics. While the circumstances were certainly different, many current policies on campus related to the coronavirus are rooted in how the school adapted to similar occurrences in the past.

The 1918 pandemic, or the Spanish flu, made its way onto campus just a few months into the school year, but preventative safety measures started even before then. Many of the School's actions have been recorded in the yearbooks from the time.

The correspondences between Mr. George St. John, the headmaster of Choate Rosemary Hall at the time, and students' parents also provided further insight of the School's actions during the pandemic. "In October, the students were put in quarantine because there's a fear, not because

they had a case on campus," explained Assistant Archivist Ms. Stephanie Gold, who is currently analyzing Choate's responses to past pandemics.

Choate took this precaution to further ensure the school's protection from the virus, an almost identical measure implemented in the first week of in-person schooling this fall; no cases had been diagnosed, but all students were quarantined as a safety measure. However, the quarantine period back in 1918 was more lenient since students still had some freedom in terms of movement around campus. However, entering town was strictly prohibited.

Unfortunately, a case of the Spanish flu was diagnosed on November 13, 1918. Similar to Covid-19, the disease spread quickly. Mr. St. John "was very careful and aware of all the cases that were coming close to campus," said Ms. Gold. He ensured that the then medical director was vigilant in monitoring the conditions of the flu — a response similar to current Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen's vigilance of Covid-19 on campus. Nonetheless, Spanish flu cases continued to rise on campus, and the School had to adapt. "They ended up having three different buildings on campus used as infirmaries,"

Ms. Gold said. The capacity of the Health Center is a potential concern for the coronavirus, but Choate has been able to combat this problem in the past.

The Spanish flu conditions on campus eventually worsened

and students were encouraged to study from their textbooks. Some sent their work to their teachers via standard mail.

While the quarantine did reduce student activity, this aspect of the Choate experience was

"football games were still covered in *The News* but were not mentioned in George St. John's correspondences, so it's a mix-up I still have to figure out," Ms. Gold said.

While not as much information has been found on Choate's reactions to the 2009 swine flu pandemic, the School was still heavily affected. Students were chosen at random to test for the swine flu, and some of the results began to come back positive. In September, Choate faced its most severe outbreak of this virus, averaging 70 cases per day. The Health Center was expanded once again to make room for the infected students, given that 50-100 were coming in every day with swine flu symptoms.

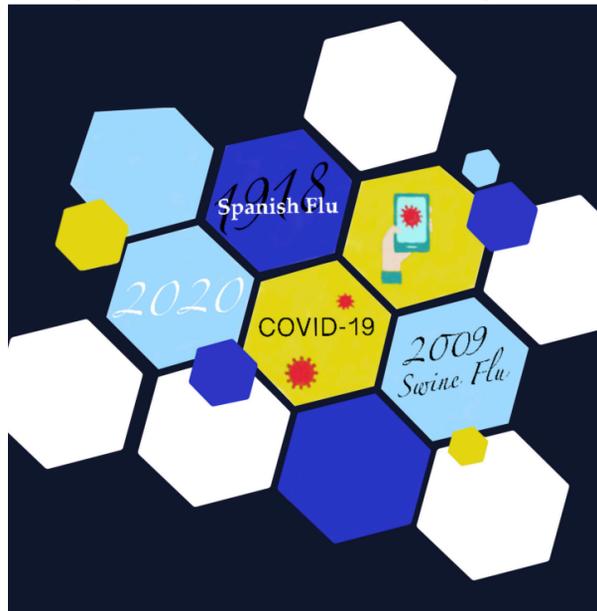
In December, swine flu conditions improved. Although a vaccine was released, some students and their families were skeptical about receiving the vaccine. "Some parents [didn't] want their children to get the vaccine because it [was] so new, and its side effects [were] relatively unknown," an article from *The News* at the time reported. Though this is similar to how some feel about a possible Covid-19 vaccine, the circumstances of Covid-19 differ since the approaching winter months are of even greater con-

cern. Combined with spread of the seasonal flu, the coronavirus could be even more dangerous.

Ms. Gold is currently working on an exhibit to showcase her research on this topic that will be available online during the winter term. It will include many images along with some of the primary documents she has been examining, such as letters and yearbook pages. Many questions have come up about these past pandemics, so this exhibition aims to provide some answers by presenting as complete a history as possible. The exhibition, Ms. Gold said, "is a hodgepodge of different things, but it'll be broken up into how [the pandemics] affected the head of school, the students, the faculty and staff, and the alumni."

Choate's responses to the Spanish flu, the swine flu, and Covid-19 have had similar aspects to mitigating the spread of these highly contagious diseases. Student life has perhaps been hit the hardest by the coronavirus, but the health of the Choate community is the School's first priority. Ms. Gold's exhibit will further demonstrate how Choate was impacted by past pandemics, including what we can learn from them.

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Graphic by Yuko Tanaka/The Choate News

with 30 active cases reported at one point. Mr. St. John then made the drastic decision of closing down the School in mid-November, sending students on an "early vacation," according to Ms. Gold. During this time, stu-

somewhat revived after the extended vacation. Festivities and dances still occurred despite the fact that cases were still recorded in February and March of 1919. Athletics may have continued in some form or another since

## THE BRIEF IS COMING TO YOU!

By **Praj Chirathivat '22**  
Copy Editor

The sudden closure of the campus during spring term last year created unexpected challenges in nearly all facets of Choate. The student-led Yearbook Club, in particular, has encountered unprecedented limitations imposed by the global pandemic to deliver *The Brief*, the School's coveted yearbook, to the Choate community.

Many of the activities the publication planned to feature, such as sports and arts events, were canceled. Since *The Brief* had already purchased a contract for a 350-page yearbook, they were bound to this number of pages that had to be published.

*The Brief's* Editor-in-Chief Laura Jiang '21 explained, "Every year, we make an [outline] for the whole yearbook. We plan out exactly the 350 pages and what each page is going to be. This past school year has been the first time where we had to completely change everything in the spring, and that includes canceling certain arts and sports pages."

Assistant Editor-in-Chief Isabella Grau '22 added, "We had a hard time figuring out what we could do with [the empty sections]."

Even before the unexpected pandemic, the theme for last year's yearbook was "Piecing Together 2020," utilizing puzzle pieces as its core symbol.

After communicating with *The Brief* faculty adviser and math teacher Ms. Andrea Sorrells over the summer, Jiang decided on the theme "More and Less," emphasizing how, as Jiang said, "Everything is changing. Due to Covid and [other] situations in the country, we are losing a lot of things, but we are gaining a lot of other things."

*The Brief* also decided to alter the conventional structure of the yearbook to adapt to the unpredictability of the current school year. Jiang said, "This is going to be the first yearbook in a long time where we are not going to do it by sections. We are doing it chronologically. We don't know what will happen each month." So far, *The Brief* has incorporated the quarantining process during October and the comparison of the "day in the life" of remote and on-campus students.



Graphic by Rose Shen/The Choate News

As there were no spring sports, *The Brief* had to find creative ways to fill in the blank spaces in pages that were initially meant to include team photos and interscholastic competitions. The publication decided to add more commentary from team captains by interviewing them over Zoom and using pictures posted to the teams' social media accounts. The commentaries mainly shared the captains' experiences at Choate and their thoughts on the campus closing during the spring term.

Jiang said, "For the spring sports, our mission is to try to capture everyone who is involved in every part of the campus. Getting rid of this page is not on our minds. At least the pictures of the captains who worked so hard can be shared on the yearbook."

The editors accounted for events outside of academics and extracurriculars that affected students. The publication also added more information about social activism and Covid-19 towards the end of the yearbook.

In regards to meetings and assigning tasks, the editors encountered several obstacles since many students returned to their hometowns. Before the pandemic, staff meetings were held every Saturday. As *The Brief* transitioned their meetings to a virtual setting, they had to arrange a compatible time slot for all the editors to meet. Since members of the publication live all over the world, Grau said, "It was hard to get in contact with our staff. We had a lot of [students] in China who work with us as editors."

Perhaps the most profound loss, however, was the lost sense of celebration and community when the yearbook was released. In past years, *The Brief* has held an annual yearbook distribution event at the Student Activities Center (SAC). "In the normal years, it would be the last two weeks of school. People would come and pick up their books and sit there, read through them, and have a good time. That's definitely something that's missing," Jiang said.

Because Lifetouch Services, the company that manufactures yearbooks for Choate, closed during the spring because of Covid-19, *The Brief* received their issues in late September, which was months after their expected May delivery. As a result, the Class of 2020 had their yearbooks sent to either their home or university via mail. For returning students, *The Brief* members have been delivering the books dorm to dorm due to the new safety protocols implemented at Choate.

As the school year progresses, *The Brief* will continue to make this upcoming issue the best it can be. Jiang said, "We are getting help from many new active students who will do any task you give them. We have a strong team right now, and we have to continue communicating with each other. This will be the book that future members of the community will [remember] because they know this is a special year. It's not going to be a perfect book in any way, but it's going to be a unique and important one."

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## So You Want To Be A Choate Teacher?

By **Begum Gokmen '23**  
Staff Reporter

It's weird to think of teachers' lives beyond their assigned homework, quizzes, and class plans. Students often forget that the people that stand before them in the classroom were once exactly in their shoes. So, driven with curiosity to figure out what led teachers to a Choate classroom, I went to the sources themselves and asked them why they became Choate teachers.

"As a student, I never expected to be on the other side of the desk," said Sixth-Form Dean and Spanish teacher Ms. Julia Brown, who graduated from Choate in 1983.

This was a common answer among many of the interviewed teachers. For most, becoming a teacher wasn't what they saw themselves doing when they were younger. Biology teacher and Science Research Program adviser Dr. Selena Gell said, "I always enjoyed teaching, but I originally thought I would be a full-time scientist." She added, "My mom was a teacher, my grandmother was a teacher, my great-grandmother was a teacher, so teaching always came naturally to me as it had been such a big part of my family life."

Third-Form Dean, French teacher, and English teacher Dr. Katie Jewett said, "I loved the

teachers in my life. Most of all my mother, who was my first and best teacher."

Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00 said, "My adviser and English teacher during my sixth-form year at Choate inspired me to become a teacher."

How was it actually stepping into a classroom? "It was terrifying," recalled English teacher Mr. Mark Gosztyla: Teaching, he said, "requires a willingness to fail with a group of students, which can be really scary."

Mr. Velez experienced a challenge that stemmed from his identity as a young alumnus teacher: "One of the most challenging tasks was calling my former teachers by their first names!" he said. Fair enough; it would be weird coming back to your high school and working alongside your old teachers. (Frankly, I can't imagine calling them by their first names, either!)

Dr. Jewett said that working as a teacher "was and is a process of learning of content and skills but also of learning about oneself, others, and about life. I think I'm still becoming a teacher." She added, "It's like Michelle Obama said, 'Becoming is never giving up on the idea that there's more growing to be done.'"

So, what led these teachers to Choate? Ms. Brown said, "I went

on the Choate website to find a booklist. Then I saw they had an opening for a part-time Spanish teacher who was on maternity leave. I taught for three months, and I just loved it."

Like all jobs, educating has its ups and downs. "Adolescents are so dynamic and unpredictable," said Dr. Jewett. "When you mix them with good ideas to talk about, you never know what you are going to get."

Thus, motivation and perseverance are key. "Helping individuals reach their own goals and aspirations while also equipping them with essential skills that will allow them to excel beyond their time at Choate is what keeps me working to be the best educator possible," noted Mr. Velez.

Finally, I asked for some advice. Ms. Brown said, "You have to be passionate. Learn, learn, learn."

Mr. Gosztyla added, "Do everything you can to not be the teachers that taught you, even the best ones." He said, "You need to be your own individual, to handle situations your own way, to pursue things that you're curious about, and to show, more than anything, how much there is in the world to be curious about."

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Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

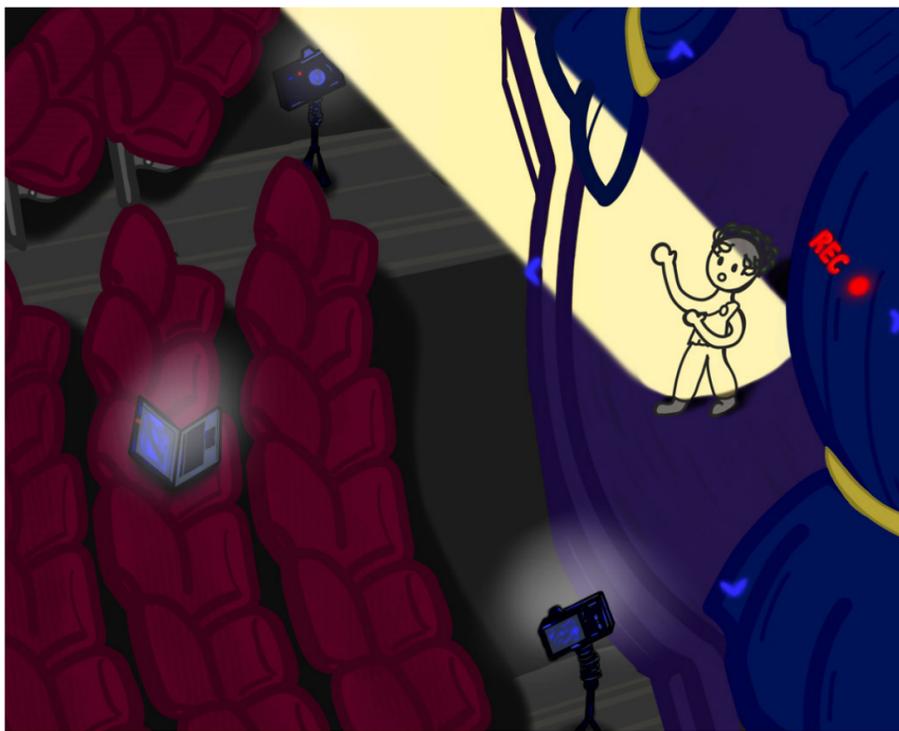
## Fall Play *Take-Away* Takes Off Into Space and Onto Screens

By **Angel Guo '22**  
Staff Reporter

Have you ever peered into the sky on a night out with friends or while stargazing solitarily during a stressful week, and suddenly thought you saw a bizarre moving silhouette? The fall play, *Take-Away*, invites its audience into a world of magical realism where unlucky high schoolers encounter an UFO in an eccentric adventure before their graduation.

The playwrights of *Take-Away* — English and acting teacher Mrs. Kate Doak, Ethan Bardoe '21, Maxwell Brown '21, Eliza Marovitz '21, and Audrey Lim '23 — began penning the script over the summer, envisioning a play in a less common genre of theater: science-fiction.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic forced the writers to make considerable changes to *Take-Away* which differentiate the play from productions shown outside of a pandemic. Ms. Doak and the group of students wrote the play in hopes that it would allow all interested students to participate, whether they were learning in-person or remotely. With this in mind, the writers formatted *Take-Away* as a performance specifically made to be recorded and shown asynchronously. To allow for more flexible casting, they also wrote gender neutral characters whose identities go beyond gender caricatures.



Graphic by Tony Lee/The Choate News

Over the summer, the writers frequently communicated with each other and shared their visions for each character. In combining differing ideas and perspectives, the writers hoped to breathe life into the characters they created. According to Marovitz, this process enriched the characters and made them more grounded and interesting. She also enjoyed the opportunity to incorporate her own personality and life experiences into the characters.

“Having actors read what we write — things that are actually about our lives, but they don’t know — has been really exciting and interesting,” said Marovitz.

When choosing the play’s setting, the writers contemplated whether to create a piece that reflects the current situation in modern-day America or present an escape from reality through a fantastical setting. The writers ultimately decided to set the events of the play several years before the present

day, in a time when Zoom was first introduced.

“We decided not to take a stance on the current issues, because we tried to make something that people can just enjoy without thinking about the events happening around us,” said Bardoe. “What is great about theater is that it is a way to make the world around you not always be pushing down on you.”

The playwrights are not participating as actors, as they hope that the student-actors will in-

terpret the script through their own eyes.

In virtual rehearsals during September remote learning as well as the mandatory quarantine period, students rehearsed their roles as usual within the safety of their individual rooms. Over the summer, the playwrights included scenes that were intended to be filmed outdoors and did not anticipate that masks would need to be worn outside. The cast subsequently had to quickly pivot from shooting outdoors to filming exclusively in green-screen rooms. After coming back to campus, every cast member was assigned to a specific room in the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) — each including a green screen, a microphone, and a complete video recording set-up — for filming. Since each PMAC room was only accessible to one actor, actors were allowed to remove their masks inside their assigned room.

With this new change, though, the actors had to learn how to perform not onstage, but rather in front of a green screen. This included familiarizing themselves with camera angles, learning the specific positions to stand in to appear like they are looking at each other in the gallery view on Zoom, and adjusting the equipment in their room.

“Theater is immediate; we are always bouncing off each other and trying something new. But with the

current format, there are millions of new technical and organizational elements that we need to be attentive to,” said Marovitz.

It wasn’t easy for actors to present their characters without the theater’s physical sets and close proximity to other cast members. However, Marovitz noted that the virtual play allowed actors to explore a film-focused format of theater that they had never ventured into before.

Ms. Doak and the cast initially aimed for *Take-Away* to be a mix of pre-filmed video clips and a live performance on Zoom regulated by Zoom add-on tool ZoomOSC, which enables control over spotlighting, video, and gallery layouts. The cast also planned on utilizing OBS Studio, a streaming software that controls a virtual camera and the audio input and output for the video recording and live Zoom stream.

The live-broadcast premiere of *Take-Away* was originally scheduled for this weekend. However, technical setbacks led the group to delay the premier until winter term and to film every scene, removing the live component completely.

Featuring a quirky crew of personalities ranging from a firm believer in UFOs and extraterrestrial life to a cautious skeptic, *Take-Away* is set to premiere next term.

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## A Cappella Persists Despite Rocky Return to Campus

By **Tiffany Xiao '23**  
Reporter

In a normal year, you can often hear a cappella group harmonizing in the Seymour St. John Chapel or the Paul Mellon Arts Center gallery on a Friday evening or Saturday afternoon. However, this year, with many students learning remotely, these flocks of songbirds have encountered challenges from low recruitment to complex safety procedures during rehearsals.

Since a large group of senior members graduated last spring, recruitment was a key concern for Choate’s five a cappella groups this fall. The groups’ recruitment strategy differed greatly from past years. Normally, a cappella would be introduced to new students at Club Fair, where students could watch brief impromptu performances and talk to group presidents at their booths. This year, in order to reach students across grade levels virtually, all of the groups compiled videos and introductions, which were featured on Choate arts social media accounts and in weekly School Meeting videos.

A cappella leaders found this new approach of recruitment to be particularly challenging since not everyone has access to social media, and there are few other options when it comes to publicizing the groups. Consequently, the audition process had a rocky start with relatively low interest from students. Although the a cappella groups initially set the deadline for audition forms submission on September 16, they ended up pushing that date back to October 6 because of a lack of submissions.

To find interested students, the a cappella presidents had to get a little more creative and resourceful than usual with outreach. Since many of the a cappella presidents are also prefects, they were able to convince their prefectees to audition. After the extended deadline and this extra advertising,

the groups were able to find fresh faces to fill the spaces left by recent graduates.

Now, a cappella faces yet another challenge with the campus safety protocols in place that makes it difficult for the groups to meet in person and sing together. In light of the recent surge of Covid-19 cases in Connecticut, the School is staying vigilant with its health guidelines as it remains on the orange alert level of precautions with some day students no longer allowed on campus. In order to forge bonds between members despite the coronavirus-related restrictions, the a cappella groups have explored new activities beyond singing and taken advantage of time on campus to meet in person.

The Whimawehs, an all-female a cappella group, have discussed playing *Among Us*, a popular online multiplayer game, together. Another group, Bellacanto, has planned to order pizza and chat outside. Meanwhile, Maiyeros, the only all-male a cappella group, hopes to continue to hold virtual and in-person rehearsals spiced up with humor.

“We have a strong tradition of making memes during rehearsals, and I have a feeling that will continue and help with morale, too,” said Lucas Eggers '21, one of the presidents of Maiyeros.

As the year continues on, the a cappella groups plan to resume in-person rehearsals with appropriate social distancing measures, including the use of singing masks that help amplify sound and allow users to sing more comfortably.

Although various popular a cappella performances that usually take place in the fall and winter terms — such as Parents’ Weekend, Holiday Programming, and dorm-to-dorm performances — have been canceled, the five a cappella groups plan on recording performances to share with the community within the next few months.

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## VISUAL ARTS CONCENTRATION ADAPTS TO RELOCATION AND REMOTE WORK

By **Adrienne Chacón '22**  
Copy Editor

The Visual Arts Concentration program for this year’s new group of students has been modified to accommodate Covid-19 health and safety guidelines. With nearly half of the fall term being held remotely and Visual Arts Concentration advisers Ms. Smita Sen and Mr. Aaron Sober exclusively teaching online the entire term, the program has had to take extra steps to support student-artists.

The program’s designated space in the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) is different from previous years. The group used to be situated on the second-floor balcony of the PMAC gallery with work stations arranged in a wide semi-circle, where sun and snow shone through the building’s glass ceiling and provided the artists with creative inspiration and an abundance of natural lighting. This year, the balcony was revamped as the new meeting space for studio arts courses such as drawing, with furniture reconfigured to accommodate a large Virtual Student display and socially-distanced desks and easels.

Past the second-floor balcony and through creaky glass doors, the studio previously used for visual arts classes is now the new home of Visual Arts Concentration. The spacious studio used to be split into three sections. One third held the colossal Rosemary Hall quilt, supplies shelf, as well as easels and still-life configurations for drawing and oil paint-



Photo by Tony Lee/The Choate News

The PMAC balcony, formerly home to the Visual Arts Concentration program, is now an art classroom.

ing classes; another third housed antique chairs, belovedly-named plants, and more easels for life drawing classes; the last third was created in between the other two by movable drywalls, forming an enclosed space with a grey carpet and colorful cushions for artists to meditate or chat in.

Where there used to be cushions, books, and decor, now the studio consists of one continuous space with two rows of seven desks lined roughly six feet apart. The change in their workspace from a light-filled balcony to a carefully organized studio has made a noticeable impact on the Visual Arts Concentration students.

“Previously, the atmosphere of being in the PMAC was being a close community, now it feels very clinical with all the desks spaced apart,” said Macie Simmons '22,

a fifth-former in the program. In the past, students could gather together to review each others’ work, discuss creative ideas, or simply fraternize. Now, however, since students must socially distance, the artists are suddenly deprived of the collaborative aspect of their creative process.

Still, the camaraderie and sense of community established by the Visual Arts Con cohort remains strong through the efforts of the program’s advisers. Unable to visit and instruct the artists in person, Ms. Sen and Mr. Sober have come up with fun ways to continue engaging with the student artists through Zoom calls. During the biweekly Arts Concentration meetings, the advisers start meetings by sharing performances and art pieces that they found to be particularly interesting.

The advisers also regularly review students’ work and offer feedback through Google Drive, where the artists upload their works in progress as opposed to physically presenting their pieces. This new digital system has offered Arts Concentration members more autonomy than in the past.

“The advisers check in on us, and we have to upload things into our Google Drive folder. I still feel like I’m making progress and working well even though I’m not being monitored by teachers all the time,” said Audrey Kaye '22, another fifth-former in the program. “Mr. Sober and Ms. Sen have been sensitive to students’ heightened levels of stress and check in with students about their well-being. It makes me feel more comfortable when I know that the advisers and the other students care about how I’m doing.”

Yet another hurdle the pandemic poses for Visual Arts Concentration is that campus will soon close for Fall Break, and all classes and extracurricular activities will take place online until at least January.

According to Simmons, being cognizant of the privilege of having access to the PMAC facilities has made her more appreciative of the studio. “Last year there would be times when I didn’t want to come into the PMAC that day,” she said. “Now, I’m always very glad to be here.”

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Photo by Tony Lee/The Choate News

## SENIOR SOCCER'S NEWEST OPPONENT: THE PANDEMIC



The senior soccer team sporting this year's team items.

Photo courtesy of John Cobb

By **Naomi Fleisch '22**  
Reporter

Every fall, a group of Choate sixth-formers partake in a unique afternoon activity: Senior Soccer. Unlike some of Choate's other sports offerings, seniors are not allowed to play thirds or JV soccer, leading those who wish to play soccer during their senior fall in a less competitive atmosphere to join Senior Soccer. While some players have previous soccer experience — either from Choate teams or from home — others are completely new to the sport. Many seniors find the intramural activity to be a way to relieve stress during an otherwise difficult time in their high school career.

Students participate in Senior Soccer for various reasons: some join the team simply because they do not have a fall sport and are looking to try

something new, while others have been planning to join since they arrived at Choate.

Lucy McGrath '21, a member of the team, said, "I signed up for Senior Soccer because, since my first year at Choate, I have always seen it as a valuable tradition and a really fun way to branch out during my last year."

Another player, Aissatou Diallo '21, added, "To me, Senior Soccer feels like a rite of passage."

Regardless of the reason each member of the team has to participate in Senior Soccer, they all work together to create a fun and relaxed environment that serves as a haven from stressful classes and college applications.

In past years, the Senior Soccer team has challenged various interscholastic teams on campus to scrimmage matches, including the thirds and JV soccer teams, as well as

other sports such as intramural crew. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing pandemic, the team was forced to adapt to many Covid-19 restrictions. "We are not allowed to scrimmage or play real soccer games this year due to social distancing requirements," said McGrath. "We are definitely still making the most of it though, playing very entertaining soccer games, doing different drills, and even some fun non-soccer activities." Trying to relish their Senior Soccer experience, many members of the team also have a similar mindset as McGrath.

Over the past few weeks, the team has gone on hikes and competed in scavenger hunts. Senior Soccer continues to serve as a great outlet for seniors to have fun with their peers while staying active, even if it looks a little different this year.

The unique and diverse group of people is an integral element of why many seniors find the activity so enjoyable, as they get the chance to grow closer to their peers.

"My favorite part of Senior Soccer is that it is always comprised of a group of people that would not be together under any other circumstances. It is always so random, and I love that," said Diallo.

The versatility of the students and coaches that comprise the team creates a one-of-a-kind Senior Soccer experience. Until the fall season is over, the members of Senior Soccer will continue to have fun practices and cultivate close friendships despite the many challenges imposed by the pandemic.

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## SENIORS REFLECT ON THEIR FINAL SEASON

By **Bo Goergen '22**  
Reporter

Not able to compete in their final year of high school, senior athletes have begun to reflect on their unique legacy and last season at Choate as the fall term draws to a close.

To continue staying active and boost the morale of student athletes at Choate, the Athletics Department has attempted to implement full practices and intersquad competitions this fall. The School, despite the new social distancing guidelines, is determined to hold senior day celebrations.

Varsity Field Hockey Co-Captain Page Wildridge '21 said, "Obviously, with the masks and regulations, practices look and feel a bit different, but I think that both field hockey and Choate Athletics are putting in a lot of effort to bring some normalcy back to our final season, such as still celebrating our senior day." She added, "I think all our seniors are just grateful for a chance for a season as a whole and are focusing on the positives about the fall."

Wildridge's thoughts have been echoed by many seniors, who lament the canceled season but also appreciate how hard their teammates and the School have worked to celebrate their final seasons.

Despite challenges brought on by the pandemic, seniors' last seasons still carry sentimental weight. Reminiscing about his love for football at Choate, Varsity Football player Charlie Tait '21, said, "Choate Football is an environment that welcomes ev-

erybody and anybody with open arms. It's taught me so much about how to push myself, and I've been able to create relationships that will last forever." He also mentioned how athletics has played a major role in his life and many others' at Choate.

Girls' Cross Country Co-Captain Taylor Mitchell '21 echoed a similar sentiment. She said, "Over the past couple years, the cross country team has become like a family to me. Even though we weren't able to compete against other schools, we were still able to form those same connections and show up for each other at every practice."

Choate seniors have also left a lasting legacy on the School. Many underclassmen have praised their seniors' hard work and leadership and will be following in their footsteps.

Girls' Varsity Volleyball player Sasha Moran '22 said, "The seniors on Choate Volleyball have been nothing but amazing this year, and I truly believe that their leadership will help propel the volleyball team for years to come. The entire team follows their lead as they arrive on time and are ready to give 100% effort at every single practice, even though we are not competing against other schools this year."

Even though sports have been very different this season, the Class of 2021 has left a lasting impression on Choate Athletics and will continue to shape the program for many years to come.

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## SPOOKY SPIKEBALL: INSIDE THE HALLOWEEN TOURNAMENT

By **Mark Fernandez '21**  
Reporter

On October 31, many Choate students made their way to the Class of 1976 turf field to participate in a school-wide Spikeball tournament hosted by Boar Pen.

Players, who were looking to not only compete but also have an active and enjoyable time, signed up with a partner from their family units. To celebrate Halloween, many students also dressed up with their partners.

JP Rush '21 and his partner, Bauer Swift '21, had won Boar Pen's first Spikeball tournament the weekend before and were looking forward to defending their title. Dressed up as National Football League Draft busts Johnny Manziel and Marcus Mariotta, Rush and Swift achieved their goal, beating Olly Coplestone '21 and Luke Foster '21 in the final round.

Speaking about the finals game, Coplestone said, "Luke and I had a great time and played well, but unfortunately lost to JP and Bauer, who are very skilled opponents."

But, Rush and Swift's road to victory was not smooth sailing. The competition was fierce, and the winners encountered many close games along the way.

"Our toughest game for sure was when we played John Rhodes '21 and Gil Salzman '21 in the semi-finals of the second tournament. They were up by four at one point. JP and I rallied and managed to break Gil on his serve several times, though," Swift said.

Rush said his team's mantra going into the tournament

was simple: "No one is going to beat us." The pair uttered the catchphrase throughout the competition, confident in their strategies and game plays, which allowed them to have an edge over their opponents.

"There were a bunch of teams that would've been great matches and better competition if they had just strategized like me and Bauer," Rush said.

Their strategy consisted of Swift setting up Rush on every possible serve for him to spike, one of his major strengths. "If you have one really good spiker on your team, then you can just serve to them every time. But usually people won't realize that, and they'll just hit it to one person, even if their slams are not great," Swift said.

"People don't realize how key the assist is to the game," Rush added.

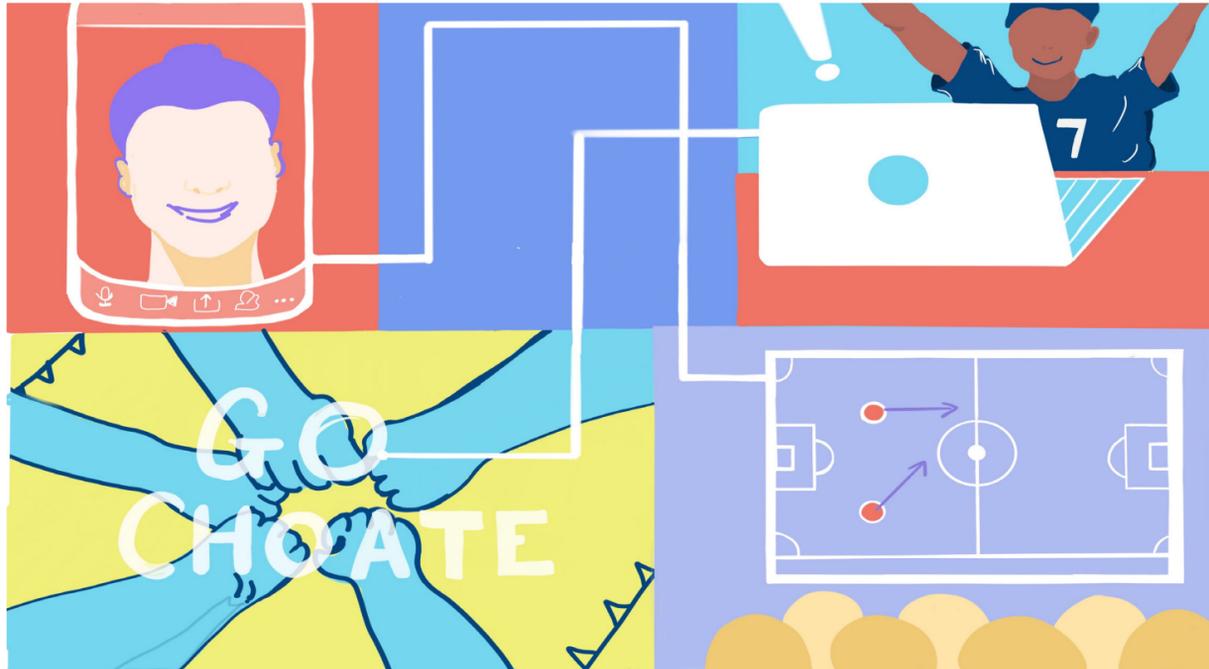
Technical strategies aside, many students enjoyed and appreciated the camaraderie the tournament engendered. Rush said, "It was nice to just see everyone outside of the dorms [and] outside of the classroom and come together as a community. In such tough times, it's so important."

Coplestone added, "The tournament was an exciting activity that finally brought together the senior class along with other, younger classes."

Swift echoed this sentiment, saying, "I think stuff like this is really good for [the] campus. If we can do stuff like that every weekend, it'll kind of cheer everyone up a little bit."

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## Captaining Varsity Teams from Hundreds of Miles Away



Graphic by Rose Shen/The Choate News

By **Naomi Fleisch '22**  
Reporter

This fall, a group of juniors and seniors have had the unique experience of captaining their sports teams hundreds of miles away from Choate's playing fields.

Captains, remote or in-person, play a crucial role in leading practices, being role models, and building team chemistry. They also help set the tempo for competitive play during practices and games. This year, with the ongoing pandemic, captains have had to be extra flexible, and those who have chosen to remain off campus had to make serious adjustments.

One of the remote captains this fall is Ashley Lensch '21, who is currently at home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Lensch is one of the captains of the Varsity Field

Hockey team, along with Claire Gavin '21 and Page Wildridge '21, who are both on campus. Although she still finds ways to communicate with her coaches, co-captains, and fellow teammates, captaining from afar has been challenging. "I think the biggest struggle of captaining remotely has been not being able to participate in the fun activities field hockey is doing," Lensch said.

Speaking about Varsity Field Hockey's senior night, which was celebrated on October 30, Lensch said, "I'm going to Zoom in, but it's definitely not the same. I can't talk with my teammates in the same ways I normally would be able to."

In order to continue supporting their teams from afar, remote captains like Lensch have quickly adapted to the unusual circumstances. "As a remote captain,

my biggest role has been cheering on my teammates over Zoom during practice and helping the team stay on top of administrative tasks, like thank you letters to our Play for the Cure [field hockey's annual game for charity] donors," said Lensch.

Girls' Varsity Volleyball Co-Captain Morgann Skoda '22, who is learning remotely from Montreal, is also captaining from a distance. Additional challenges arise for Skoda and her co-captains, Renee Jiang '22 and Ella Sklar '22, since they are all juniors who have never been in the leadership positions on the team before.

Skoda said, "One of the biggest struggles of captaining remotely is definitely getting to know the new kids and being connected with the team. It's also hard to captain a team remotely, especially when

the rest of the team isn't [remote], because you're not really there to participate in the team bonding."

She added, "The biggest change was not being able to compete with my teammates, because that's usually how I get to know people the best."

This season might be different and unexpected, but Skoda "is trying to make the most of the experience," as she puts it, and still tries to get the ball in her hands whenever she can.

This fall's remote captains, including Girls' Cross Country Co-Captain Esther An '21 and Boys' Varsity Water Polo Co-Captain Jack Sun '21, have been able to maintain team bonds from their own bedrooms.

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