

# The Stentorian

THE NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS MONTHLY, EST. 1981 | VOLUME XLIV, NO. 3 | DURHAM, NC | FEBRUARY 2025

## EDUCATION



### You Didn't Really Understand The Assignment

**THINK DEEPER.** Dr. Jeff Lichtman, Dean of Science at Harvard University, raised five claims, each answering the question, "What is school for?" If you measure the value of school based on test scores and grades, then I suppose you didn't really understand the assignment.

[SEE PAGE 8](#)

## SPIKEBALL

### Got What It Takes? NCSSM Spikeball Is Not For Faint-Hearted

**SETTLING SCORES.** At Happy Half, the last 30 minutes of the day turn into a battleground on Watts Lawn to settle spikeball rivalries and bond over excuses, laughter and bruises.

[SEE PAGE 8](#)

## JTERM



### I Love Hopi Hot Beef, and Other Things About My Arizona J-Term

**TO THE WEST!** In the week traveling from Southern Arizona to the North, I've learned so much about the landscapes, but even more about the world.

[SEE PAGE 9](#)

## NOW TAKING

Submit a Guest Piece



**YEARLONG.** In addition to staff-written content, The Stentorian encourages members of the school community to submit story ideas, letters to the editor and guest pieces to the editorial board.

## CAMPUS

### Why "Locking In" At The Library Is Hard To Accomplish



PAGE 8

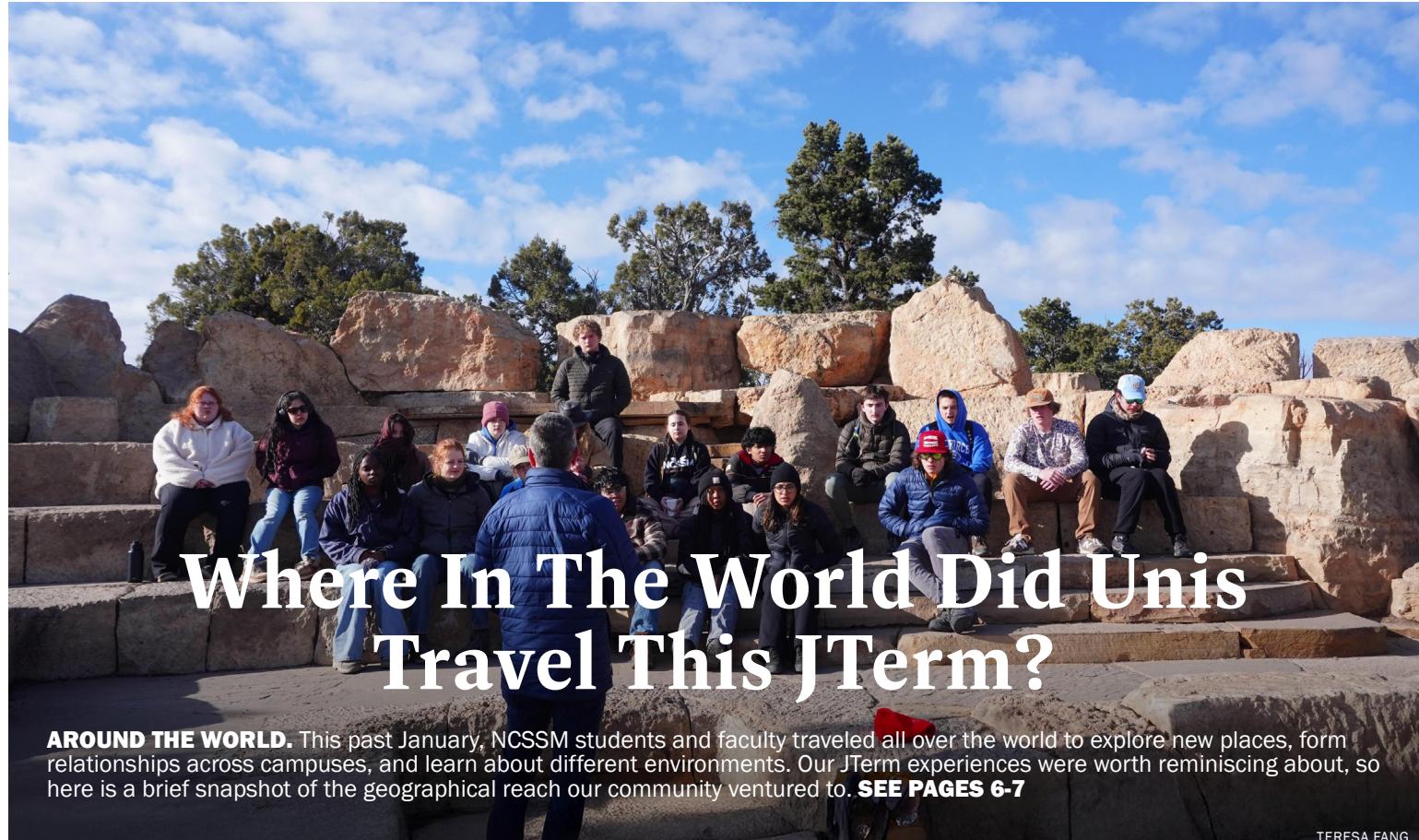
## STUDENT LIFE

### NCSSM Hall Theme Rankings



PAGE 9

## JTERM



**AROUND THE WORLD.** This past January, NCSSM students and faculty traveled all over the world to explore new places, form relationships across campuses, and learn about different environments. Our JTerm experiences were worth reminiscing about, so here is a brief snapshot of the geographical reach our community ventured to. [SEE PAGES 6-7](#)

TERESA FANG

## STUDENT LIFE

### Spoons: NCSSM's Sacred Tradition

BY TEJASVI SHIROLKAR  
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

**U**sually used in a bowl of PFM cereal or soup, spoons are an essential part of the NCSSM dining experience. However, this February marked an annual tradition many chose to partake in: "Spoons." Holding a wooden spoon to their nose, NCSSM students pass through hallways, go up stairs, and to their dorm halls.

To an outsider, Spoons may seem like a silly pastime. However, any NCSSM community member knows that the tradition is so much more; it celebrates the beginning of the Spring semester and allows both seniors and juniors to connect beyond the classroom.

#### The Mastermind Behind This Year's Spoons

Vincent Barboriak '25, from 3rd

West, is this year's supervisor (or "Spoon's Master," as he describes it). As last year's Spoons winner, Barboriak became the overseer for this year. He tracks eliminations, updates charts related to the game, and modifies rules for all participants.

#### How The Game Works

On February 5th, 205 juniors and seniors each received a spoon with another player's name on it—the person the player had to eliminate. For any player to be eliminated, they must be tapped on the shoulder with the spoon.

However, there is a catch: if a player has held up a spoon to their nose, that player is protected. Additionally, educational spaces such as classrooms and the library are considered "safe zones" to

[SEE PAGE 5](#)

## RESEARCH

### Students, Teachers Prepare For NCSEF

BY ANNELIESE HEYDER  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The "Science Season" is upon us: when the summer months start getting closer and science fairs, conferences, and competitions begin popping up like flowers. Throughout the spring semester, students at NCSSM will be presenting their research at school and around the state and country.

The North Carolina Science and Engineering Fair, or NCSEF, kicked off on February 17th at NCSSM as Region 3b, with both juniors and seniors competing by sharing their research with judges, teachers, and students. Some students completed research independently or with a team, while others were part of the RSci or Mentorship programs.

Luke Malta '25 was an RChem student who presented at NCSEF. "I spent a lot of time perfecting my poster, sitting down and making

sure I have as much information as possible," he described his preparation. "I also planned on practicing presenting in front of the current RChem students to get some feedback from them and Dr. Bruno."

Sawyer Kribbs '25 from RBio did the same. "I began to prepare by practicing my speech a couple of nights before presenting it to the judges. I was pretty nervous, but I felt ready," he said, adding that he enjoyed talking with other students about his research and was impressed with the other projects at the fair.

Some of the students who presented did their research at another university with a mentor and a team of undergraduate or graduate students.

"I would say NCSEF was a great experience! It prepared me for future symposiums I plan to attend

[SEE PAGE 4](#)

## APRIL

### Let's Celebrate Our Wins



**DUE APRIL 7.** Send us information about anything you (individual student, club, or team) have won this school year. This issue will be a compilation of great triumphs to lift up our spirits up and celebrate each other.

## MAY

### Senior Wills 2025



**DUE MAY 11.** Each year, seniors can publish a senior will in the issue of the Stentorian. These are short statements in which seniors "leave" memories or a legacy to fellow seniors, juniors, & NCSSM community.

## WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

## A Letter of Action and Relief

BY ELLIE MURPHY  
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Hello, I hope this finds you well. I am writing this to spread information about the vast impacts Hurricane Helene has had on my home community and the surrounding western North Carolina (WNC) region.

My family was fortunate enough to be out of town when the hurricane hit and we are safe and physically well. The county I have grown up in almost my entire life, Yancey County, has been virtually destroyed. It has been extremely disheartening to experience this knowing that people in my own state have little to no knowledge about the severity, because of a lack of media and news coverage.

I understand that this does not only apply to my county but the entire WNC region. If you are willing to read the following about the situation, I ask that you do so with care and attention to detail. I hope that people can grasp at least a sliver of what my community is going through and find sympathy to donate and reach out to those in need.

Before Hurricane Helene even swept through, the region was flooded from predecessor rain events (rain that occurs around 36 hours before a storm and can span 600 miles poleward from the storm's center). These rain events brought in about 12 inches of rain—enough to flood interstates, fill the ground, and create a few inches or so of present groundwater. Hurricane Helene brought a total of 30 inches to my town Burnsville in Yancey County, NC.

On Thursday night and Friday into the early afternoon, Hurricane Helene swept through my county. On Friday morning, I was in contact with a friend in my hometown about the conditions of the area where she had already lost power but was able to communicate through her family's solar-powered

satellite wifi.

After 10 a.m., I was no longer able to contact anyone from my county or surrounding counties. No one else could communicate either, not within the area or outside of it. To give context, in many of these rural communities, families have lived here for generations. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and other family members (of multiple generations) live in the area and these small towns are all their last names have ever known. This area is also one of the most impoverished areas of the state.

For loved ones who were not directly impacted by the storm but were concerned for their family, no communication meant that they had no one to reach out to. Their entire extended family was at risk and suddenly everyone was isolated from one another. Scrolling on Facebook pages of my town was and is still apocalyptic-like. Hours spent scrolling through family members reporting their loved ones missing and asking for any information on specific roads/areas. This absence of communication is still ongoing but has improved daily and there are wifi centers set up, if people can access them.

My dad an OB/GYN and travels to regional hospitals for his work. He was working in a hospital just south of Asheville. Even at a hospital, he had no power or service. He reported to us at 4 a.m. on Saturday that he was okay. The hospital had no source of information besides looking out the windows and hearing reports from people stumbling into the building. My dad was also told that he was the only surgeon in the hospital for the day and night he was there.

From a friend with a family member who works at the hospital closest to my house, the hospital was again described as "an apocalypse" after the storm passed. With no running water or service, people were showing up at

the hospital doors with major injuries, severe limb damage, and pleas for help.

The story of a man who was pinned under a tree for three hours is most haunting. A friend shared with my mom the story of a nearby sheriff: how he worked for 72 hours straight rescuing and searching for others; how his team had to leave bodies floating down flood waters; how the death toll is still increasing as more bodies are uncovered.

Access to emergency facilities was incredibly limited because of the destruction of the roads.

Major interstates are closed between towns and into towns due to fallen trees, mudslides, bridges collapsed, flooding, powerlines down, or the pavement is literally no longer there and swept away by flood waters. This not only applies to major interstates and highways but to almost every single side road, neighborhood, and driveway.

The damage to these roads is severely isolating. Without access to homes by car, people must walk for miles to reach a main highway or even any sort of public infrastructure. To provide additional context, Yancey County has a population of about 19,000 and has a square mileage of 312.6 miles. Durham County has a population of about 333,000 and has a square mileage of 287.5 miles. I include this to say there is no large neighborhood. There is not a centralized location. People across my county are incredibly spread out. There is no interstate in my county, only 2 major highways that connect the thousands of side roads. Bridges that connect these roads to the highways are washed out completely. Hundreds of trees and powerlines have fallen on singular driveways. Many live on gravel roads, and those are completely impassable. It will take months and years to fix this issue and until then, traveling to or from home will be impossible or

extremely difficult.

With this lack of transportation and communication, people are starved of physical resources and resources of knowledge. At this time only a few locations throughout the county have power. Many homes do not have running water, electricity, service, a source of food, or transportation (and for those who do have a way of traveling with their vehicles, there is barely any access to gas). This applies to those fortunate enough to have an intact home. For some, flood waters have destroyed levels of their home, trees have fallen on rooms or entire houses, their houses are completely underwater, mudslides have caused the houses to lose their foundations, or houses near rivers have been swept away entirely.

Damage to this extent has not only impacted homes but also cars and public buildings. The post office closest to my house consists of only the cinder block foundation now. I spent my summers swimming in the South Toe River; the swimming hole is down about 20 feet in a ravine from where you park your car. The river is now level with the road. The multiple bridges to access my house are completely washed out. Our neighbors hitchhiked into town to send us an email urging us to not return for a while.

I have been fortunate enough to hear from a majority of loved ones, but even 48-72 hours from the storm I worry about friends and valued community members. The majority of people are okay but conditions are terrible. Communities have banded together to make it through this. It will take months and years to reach relative stability.

I write all of this to provide context that hopefully helps you to understand the severity of the situation. I strongly urge you to share this email or by word of mouth with everyone: spouses, parents, friends, colleagues, teachers, neighbors, anyone.

Thank you,  
Ellie Murphy ■



HERE ARE SOME BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTOS. I HAVE TRIED TO MATCH THE IMAGE OF DESTRUCTION WITH AN IMAGE FROM GOOGLE EARTH A COUPLE YEARS AGO. WHITE BUILDING IS THE POST OFFICE CLOSEST TO MY HOUSE. IT IS NO LONGER THERE AND THE BUILDING DIRECTLY NEXT TO IT IS MISSING A WALL. ELLIE MURPHY

## WAYS TO DONATE MONEY AND RESOURCES

VERIFIED LIST OF RESOURCES TO GET AND RECEIVE HELP:  
[appvoices.org/helene-relief/](http://appvoices.org/helene-relief/)

NORTH CAROLINA DISASTER RELIEF FUND:  
[pay.payitgov.com/ncdonations](http://pay.payitgov.com/ncdonations)

LIST OF HIGH SCHOOLS HOSTING DONATION DRIVES:



TO HELP NCSSM'S WNC EFFORTS OR ANY NCSSM-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS, EMAIL SERVICE LEARNING COORDINATOR SUE ANNE LEWIS AT [servicelearning@ncssm.edu](mailto:servicelearning@ncssm.edu)

swimming hole is down about 20 feet in a ravine from where you park your car. The river is now level with the road. The multiple bridges to access my house are completely washed out. Our neighbors hitchhiked into town to send us an email urging us to not return for a while.

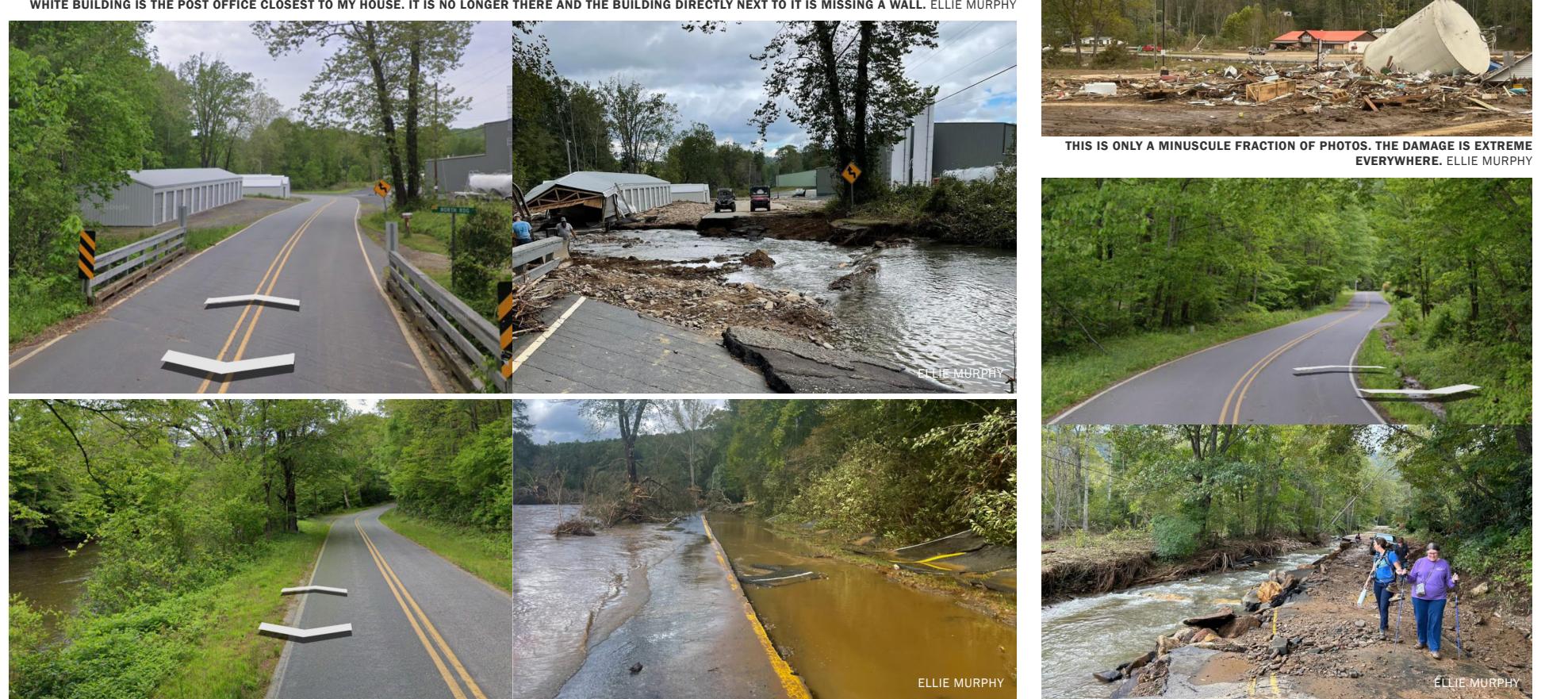
I have been fortunate enough to hear from a majority of loved ones, but even 48-72 hours from the storm I worry about friends and valued community members. The majority of people are okay but conditions are terrible. Communities have banded together to make it through this. It will take months and years to reach relative stability.

I write all of this to provide context that hopefully helps you to understand the severity of the situation. I strongly urge you to share this email or by word of mouth with everyone: spouses, parents, friends, colleagues, teachers, neighbors, anyone.

Thank you,  
Ellie Murphy ■



THIS IS ONLY A MINUSCULE FRACTION OF PHOTOS. THE DAMAGE IS EXTREME EVERYWHERE. ELLIE MURPHY



INTERESTED IN ADVERTISING ON THE STENTORIAN?  
EMAIL US AT [STENTORIANADS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:STENTORIANADS@GMAIL.COM)  


## WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

## Western NC Destroyed By Hurricane Helene

BY LAELA CASH  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

*Editor's Note: This article was initially planned to be published in October 2024. The full article can be found on our website.*

On September 27, 2024, Hurricane Helene hit Western North Carolina only two days after it made landfall in Florida. The result? Record-breaking flooding and destruction that most would have thought impossible for an area roughly 500 miles away from the ocean. While not only the Western part of the state was affected, it was definitely hit the hardest.

While rescue efforts started immediately, it was a long time before the full extent of the damage was realized and the timeline of recovery is still unsure.

However, in the wake of this deadly storm, there has been a lot of false information spread about the aftermath. In order to understand the impact that this hurricane has had on communities in Western North Carolina and to grasp the magnitude of the crisis, it is necessary to understand the factors at play and the extremity of the events.

and extreme property damage in addition to flooding. Most roads

were immediately closed and travel bans were put in place to limit unnecessary traffic that may impede the travel of emergency vehicles on the remaining roads that were still accessible.

While rescue efforts started immediately, it was a long time before the full extent of the damage was realized and the timeline of recovery is still unsure.

However, in the wake of this deadly storm, there has been a lot of false information spread about the aftermath. In order to understand the impact that this hurricane has had on communities in Western North Carolina and to grasp the magnitude of the crisis, it is necessary to understand the factors at play and the extremity of the events.



DRONE FOOTAGE ON SEPT. 28 SHOWING FLOODING AND DAMAGE IN THE ASHEVILLE AREA AFTER HELENE DUMPED RAIN AND DOWNDOWN TREES ACROSS WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA. WLOS 13 NEWS



MELISSA SUE GERRITS/GETTY IMAGES



JACOB BIBA/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES

people, especially those in the Asheville area, went even longer, according to the city.

However, Citizen Times reported as of October 18 that only 95% of that water is potable and therefore everyone is being told to boil their water. Without the internet, many people turned to Starlink as their only way to communicate with their loved ones.

Even so, many people did not have the option of getting away from these conditions, not only did they not have the resources to do so but also because the roads were destroyed in many cases, according to the Asheville Citizen Times.

According to WRAL News, these tents were only possible because of federal relief and they also allowed the hospital's staff to treat more people. This was extremely necessary as the hospital was reportedly over 200% capacity on September 27.

While some may regard property loss as more easily replaceable compared to lives, property damage is still life-changing. Governor Roy Cooper's administration released a statement on October 23 estimating 53 billion dollars in damage.

It wasn't only flooding that was breaking records. ECONET weather stations measured wind at a speed of 106 miles per hour on Mount Mitchell, making it the highest recorded since 2011. Similarly at Frying Pan Mountain, winds of 87 miles per hour were the highest recorded since 2004.

Almost everyone who was lucky enough to still have their homes lost electricity, water, and cell service. Two weeks after the hurricane, roughly 14,000 people still did not have power in the state, according to NPR. Many

high winds inevitably led to more dangerous conditions.

According to BBC Weather, one of the reasons that the storm's large impact was unexpected is due to how rapidly it grew. It drew a great deal of its energy and momentum from warm waters in the Gulf of Mexico.

The local News and Observer interviewed head of N.C. State University's Marine, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences department Gary Lackmann in order to answer this question. He stated that these waters were warmer than usual due to global warming, saying that the

Gulf of Mexico had a surface temperature of 86.7 degrees Fahrenheit, which is over two degrees higher than the average previous average, while the hurricane was forming. Water vapor, created due to warm ocean temperatures, fuels hurricanes.

Right before the hurricane hit Florida, it quickly strengthened from Category One to Category Four in just a few days. This hurricane in particular, also had a much larger cloud cover and wind field compared to others, reported BBC. However, this does not entirely explain why the hurricane reached the usually unaffected Appalachian mountains.

Additionally, according to the Washington Post, disaster experts evacuation would have been extremely difficult if not impossible based on the terrain and geography, especially because there are often only a few ways to get in and out of remote, mountainous areas.

As someone from Western North Carolina, I urge you to do your research—this is only an overview of the full story. Everyone's experiences are different and important. After understanding that many people lost everything in just a few days, please help in any way that you can. We have linked additional resources on our website to help you do so. ■

According to BBC Weather, one of the reasons that the storm's large impact was unexpected is due to how rapidly it grew. It drew a great deal of its energy and momentum from warm waters in the Gulf of Mexico.

Some people were entirely unaware that the storm was coming because they did not expect it to become so relevant to their safety. Most eyewitness and news sources say that the last time a hurricane substantially hit the Appalachian Mountains was in 2004. So, not only were many new residents unaware of this possibility, but even people who had lived through hurricane

damage in 2004 would've believed that another would be an unlikely occurrence. This was further extenuated by the fact that the hurricane grew very quickly, giving residents little time to adequately prepare or make evacuation plans.

Additionally, according to the Washington Post, disaster experts evacuation would have been extremely difficult if not impossible based on the terrain and geography, especially because there are often only a few ways to get in and out of remote, mountainous areas.

As someone from Western North Carolina, I urge you to do your research—this is only an overview of the full story. Everyone's experiences are different and important. After understanding that many people lost everything in just a few days, please help in any way that you can. We have linked additional resources on our website to help you do so. ■

## Why Was Helene's Impact So Surprising?

According to BBC Weather, one of the largest reasons is that the Western part of the state is rarely majorly affected by hurricanes.

Some people were entirely unaware that the storm was coming because they did not expect it to become so relevant to their safety. Most eyewitness and news sources say that the last time a hurricane substantially hit the Appalachian Mountains was in 2004. So, not only were many new residents unaware of this possibility, but even people who had lived through hurricane

damage in 2004 would've believed that another would be an unlikely occurrence. This was further extenuated by the fact that the hurricane grew very quickly, giving residents little time to adequately prepare or make evacuation plans.

Additionally, according to the Washington Post, disaster experts evacuation would have been extremely difficult if not impossible based on the terrain and geography, especially because there are often only a few ways to get in and out of remote, mountainous areas.

As someone from Western North Carolina, I urge you to do your research—this is only an overview of the full story. Everyone's experiences are different and important. After understanding that many people lost everything in just a few days, please help in any way that you can. We have linked additional resources on our website to help you do so. ■

## Why Did Residents Not Evacuate?

One of the largest reasons is that the Western part of the state is rarely majorly affected by hurricanes.

Some people were entirely unaware that the storm was coming because they did not expect it to become so relevant to their safety. Most eyewitness and news sources say that the last time a hurricane substantially hit the Appalachian Mountains was in 2004. So, not only were many new residents unaware of this possibility, but even people who had lived through hurricane

damage in 2004 would've believed that another would be an unlikely occurrence. This was further extenuated by the fact that the hurricane grew very quickly, giving residents little time to adequately prepare or make evacuation plans.

Additionally, according to the Washington Post, disaster experts evacuation would have been extremely difficult if not impossible based on the terrain and geography, especially because there are often only a few ways to get in and out of remote, mountainous areas.

As someone from Western

North Carolina, I urge you to do your research—this is only an overview of the full story. Everyone's experiences are different and important. After understanding that many people lost everything in just a few days, please help in any way that you can. We have linked additional resources on our website to help you do so. ■

## INTERESTED IN ADVERTISING ON THE STENTORIAN?

ALL PROFITS SUPPORT THE STENTORIAN

\$20 EACH BAG

uglycat.carrd.co

If interested in buying, please email [uglycat.org@gmail.com](mailto:uglycat.org@gmail.com).

uglycat.carrd.co

uglycat.org@gmail.com

uglycat.carrd.co

uglycat.org@gmail.com

uglycat.carrd.co

uglycat.org@gmail.com

uglycat.carrd.co

uglycat.org@gmail.com

uglycat.carrd.co

uglycat.org@gmail.com

## POLITICS

## DEI Must Die?

**UNDER CRITICISM.** On January 20, 2025, President Trump ordered an end to federal DEI programs, sparking debate over their role in addressing systemic inequalities.

BY VIVIANA GARDNER  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

On January 20th, 2025, President Donald Trump enacted an executive order that sought to end "radical and wasteful government DEI programs and preferencing."

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and policies have existed in many different forms since the mid-1960s when an executive order outlined that government employees were to be hired without bias toward gender, race, or religion. Since then, there have been larger strides to counterbalance the systematic discrimination that exists within our society, such as Executive Order 13985 enacted by President Joe Biden where he claimed in Ex that, "the Federal Government should pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality."

On the other hand, the January 20 Executive Order, criticizes DEI programs by claiming that the programs themselves are discriminatory, as the order operates off the idea that DEI's goal of advancing racial and gender equity was only favoring certain groups of people, ignoring the centuries

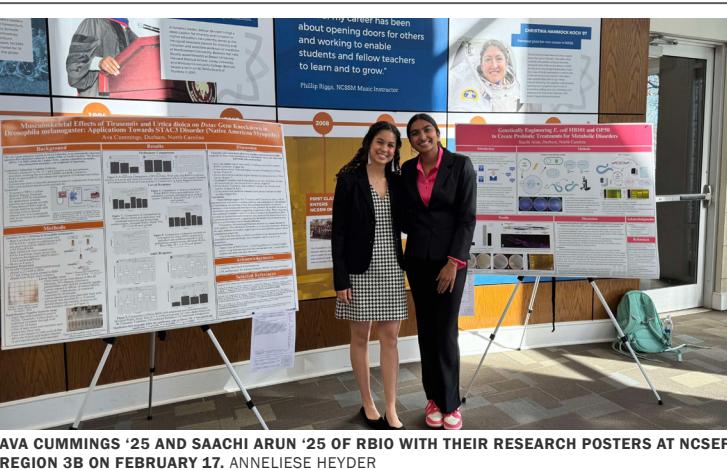
of oppression and biases that still remain within societal structures and government organizations.

In implementing this order, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Attorney General, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) have been tasked with ensuring the end of DEI programs within federal agencies while also reviewing their financial impact. This has affected countless programs and people across the nation—even in our own school, where our DEI-ties program ended and our Student Climate Opportunities, Outreach, and Programming (SCOOP) program began.

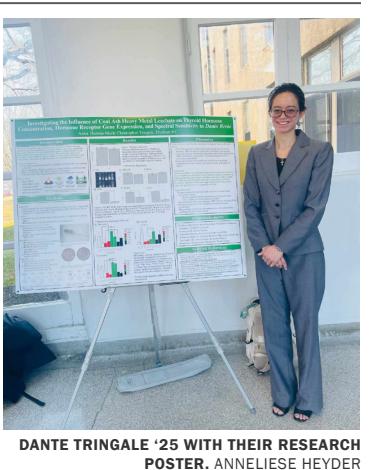
Recently, there has been an uptake in content condemning DEI and celebrating what seems to be the "end" of these programs, with many claiming them to be part of the same "woke liberal agenda" of other policies concerning ethical issues, such as those created by the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG).

Overall, the January 20 Executive Order has sparked debate around the existence of the policies and programs that served to make federal agencies more inclusive. In dismantling DEI programs that have allowed for a more equitable environment and that have addressed the deeply ingrained systemic inequalities, this executive order poses the risk of undoing decades of progress. As the federal government moves forward with these changes, the harm that these changes will and have caused will become a prominent topic and issue within minoritized and disadvantaged communities across the country. ■

## RESEARCH FROM PAGE 1



AVA CUMMINGS '25 AND SAACHI ARUN '25 OF RBIO WITH THEIR RESEARCH POSTERS AT NCSEF REGION 3B ON FEBRUARY 17. ANNELEISE HEYDER



DANTE TRINGALE '25 WITH THEIR RESEARCH POSTER. ANNELEISE HEYDER

## The "Science Season" Is Here: Students, Teachers Share Preparation and Experiences For NCSEF

since there will be judges who are experts in the topic I'm researching, and how to interact with them," said Hima Manne '25, who was part of the Mentorship program.

Manne also explained how she prepared for NCSEF, stating "Planning included updating my research findings on the poster I previously had and prepping for various research topics.

It is also a great way to make connections and meet professionals in the field—for some students, their research is just the first step in their future careers. ■

Most of the eight categories advance the three top winners to the state-level North Carolina Science and Engineering Fair. The categories include Biological Science A, Biological Science B, Chemistry, Environmental/Earth Science, Engineering, Mathematics, Technology, and Physics. There are other special prizes as well, such as the Regeneron Biomedical Science Award, the Stockholm Junior Water Prize, and the NC One Water Award. However, the grand prize is an all-expense paid trip to the International Science and Engineering Fair in May.

Not only must they practice their speaking and speaking skills, but students must also make sure they have all the required documents signed and their posters ready to be presented. Mentors play a significant role in helping their students prepare printing posters, checking over materials, and

organizing the event.

Both teachers and students dedicate their time to making sure the fair goes smoothly for everyone. NCSEF provides an opportunity for peers to show one another their passions and skills and learn about various research topics.

It is also a great way to make connections and meet professionals in the field—for some students, their research is just the first step in their future careers. ■

Keep up with the latest at  
[NCSSMSTENTORIAN.COM](http://NCSSMSTENTORIAN.COM)

## SCIENCE

## How T-Cell and B-Cell Epitope Prediction Help You Fight Against Pathogens

BY TERESA FANG  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

There are always new viruses emerging, and, like SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, they are constantly evolving into different variants or strains. Researchers are racing to find vaccines and therapies that can improve outcomes for patients worldwide, using methods ranging from traditional lab work to computational biology (bioinformatics), and even artificial intelligence (AI). To understand vaccine development, we first need to understand how our immune system fights germs.

"The scientific world is constantly on the lookout for potential new pandemics so when there is a new virus, we would be

able to quickly predict and measure the immune response," said Dr. Alessandro Sette, a professor at the La Jolla Institute for Immunology in San Diego, California, and Director of the Center for Vaccine Immunotherapy and Center for Vaccine Innovation. Being able to predict and measure how the body's immune system will respond to viruses is essential to developing effective vaccines. The immune system recognizes, remembers, and destroys disease-causing organisms, called pathogens, and can provide long-lasting protection from future attacks. Pathogens are made up of antigens, which activate the immune response.

The body's immune response is mediated by B cells and T cells. They do not recognize pathogens as a whole but

instead recognize epitopes, which are unique markers on the antigens. If you've ever seen pictures of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the spikes on the virus's surface are the antigens that allow researchers to develop COVID-19 vaccines. These are critical for the immune system's ability to identify and respond to foreign invaders such as viruses and bacteria.

## Predicting B-cell vs. T-cell epitopes

The difference between B cells and T cells makes it necessary to have multiple methods for predicting their epitopes.

B cells produce antibodies that usually bind to cell-surface epitopes that are folded in a three-dimensional structure. This method used for B-cell epitope prediction is called discontinuous 3D structure-based epitope prediction.

"Antibodies recognize things on the outside and often recognize three-dimensional structures that are made out of discontinuous epitopes," said Dr. Sette. "These are epitopes that are made from parts of a protein that are not necessarily like ducks in a row."

T cells are entirely different: They recognize chopped-up fragments of proteins bound to human leukocyte antigen (HLA) molecules. Also known as major histocompatibility complex (MHC), these are specialized molecules on a cell's surface for detection, holding important epitopes, for T cells. T-cell epitope prediction, therefore, is not limited to far-apart 3D structures like B cells are. Instead of discontinuous epitopes, T cells recognize linear epitopes. This method is called linear

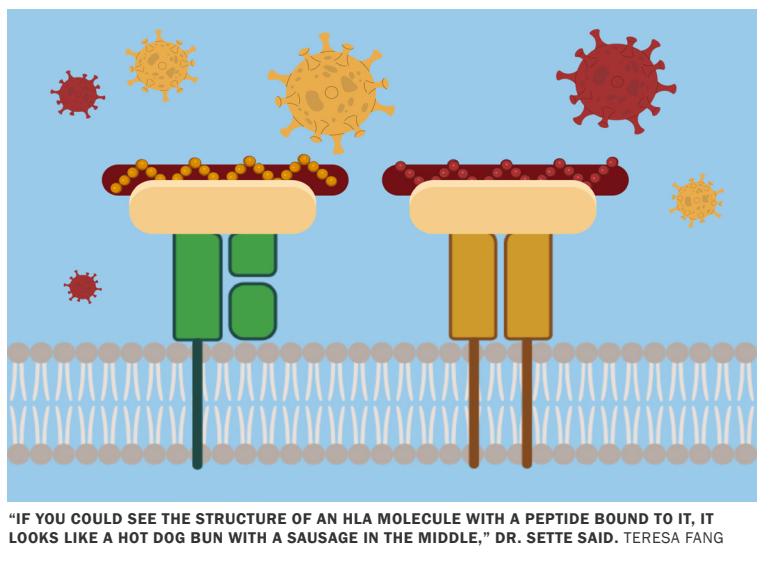
sequence-based epitope prediction. "If you could see the structure of an HLA molecule with a peptide bound to it, it looks like a hot dog bun with a sausage in the middle," Dr. Sette explained. "That is the fragment where the peptide is stretched out."

Currently, most vaccines and therapeutics target B cells because antibodies are easier to measure than epitope fragments in T cells, although both are important for vaccine design.

**Bioinformatics in advancing epitope prediction**

In the past, vaccines were developed by using whole inactivated pathogens (such as in polio), an approach that was not always successful, or by predicting epitopes using traditional lab techniques, which are laborious and time-consuming. Recent advances in computational biology and bioinformatics have significantly improved the ability to predict epitopes for B-cell and T-cell activation in a time-sensitive manner.

Dr. Sette is part of a team that develops and oversees the national Immune Epitope Database (IEDB), a free, widely-used bioinformatics resource database for storing epitope structures. It has two purposes: to function as a catalog for epitopes and as a collection of epitope prediction tools for immunology research around the world. The IEDB uses many methods to predict epitopes and is always being updated. Generally, it analyzes patterns in already-known epitope structures to predict the epitope for an unknown one



"IF YOU COULD SEE THE STRUCTURE OF AN HLA MOLECULE WITH A PEPTIDE BOUND TO IT, IT LOOKS LIKE A HOT DOG BUN WITH A SAUSAGE IN THE MIDDLE," DR. SETTE SAID. TERESA FANG

STAY UP TO DATE WITH OUR NEWSPAPER. READ MORE AT  
[NCSSMSTENTORIAN.COM](http://NCSSMSTENTORIAN.COM)



IF YOU COULD SEE THE STRUCTURE OF AN HLA MOLECULE WITH A PEPTIDE BOUND TO IT, IT LOOKS LIKE A HOT DOG BUN WITH A SAUSAGE IN THE MIDDLE," DR. SETTE SAID. TERESA FANG

## LOCAL

## Top Sports Teams in the Triangle

BY PRESTON MULLINS  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

The Triangle region of North Carolina has plenty of exciting options for sports fans to indulge in. Whether you want to watch the tactical show down of a soccer match or the fast-paced action of a basketball game, a wide variety of major sports are available. This comprehensive guide will detail all of the teams that a fan can see in the Triangle area.

## Carolina Hurricanes



SPECTACULAR MAG

The Hurricanes of the National Hockey League (NHL) are the only team in the Triangle from one of the "Big Four" North American sports leagues: the NHL, Major League Baseball (MLB), National Basketball Association (NBA), and National Football League (NFL). The "Canes," as fans call them, are consistently competitive at North America's highest level of hockey, winning the Stanley Cup in the 2006 NHL season. Head over to the Lenox Center in Raleigh for some exhilarating professional hockey!

## UNC Tar Heels, Duke Blue Devils, and NC State Wolfpack

The Triangle has the unique privilege of being home to three college sports powerhouses, offering fans in the region the opportunity to experience a multitude of National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Division I athletic events from field hockey to football. All three of these schools compete in the Atlantic

Coast Conference and have plenty of national championships across all of the sports they field, so you are sure to see a high level of play when attending one of these events.

## North Carolina FC and North Carolina Courage

North Carolina FC and North Carolina Courage are the Triangle's respective premier professional men's and women's soccer clubs. They compete in the United Soccer League (USL) Championship and the National Women's Soccer League respectively. The clubs' home stadium at WakeMed Soccer Park is the epicenter of Triangle soccer and a great place to catch a match. Fans can take a trip over to Cary to see goals galore scored by these two excellent clubs!

## Durham Bulls

The Durham Bulls are a minor league

baseball team; the Triple-A affiliate of the Tampa Bay Rays. They play at Durham Bulls Athletic Park, conveniently located in downtown Durham, and games there are always exciting—a great way to see upcoming Major League Talent play before they head up to the big leagues. The Durham Bulls bring the fun of professional baseball to the Triangle!

## Carolina Mudcats

The Carolina Mudcats are the other minor league baseball team in the Triangle, but they play three levels below the Bulls as the Milwaukee Brewers' single-A affiliate. Mudcats games are another great professional baseball option; lower-level minor league games showcase raw talent unlike the developed players of the higher levels who are on the cusp of reaching the major leagues. The Mudcats currently play at Five County Stadium in Zebulon but will be moving to Wilson in 2026. ■

## SPIKEBALL



COOPER UHL

## Students Press for Return of Happy Half on Hill Street

BY ANNELEISE HEYDER  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

people moving and it brings the school together. It really builds a community to be able to come out to," said Hannah Amadi '25.

Rishi Jalagam '25 believed spike ball was "the greatest thing in the history of the school." When asked to elaborate, he replied, "Are you gonna do a legislative law? Because I'm all for anarchism."

There is quite a divide between students when it comes to who should dominate the last 30 minutes before check—some are upset

with the addition of spike ball, and others believe it brings something new and exciting to the atmosphere.

Landon Jiminez '25 expressed the idea of a compromise. "I don't think it's bad, but I also feel that we need normal Happy. Maybe we can make a deal—three days a week, 1-2 nets. But 4-5 nets every single day... it's just kind of ruining Happy for years to come and the years to follow."

After a minute, he added,

"We're losing our tradition as the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics!"

Ethan Burkett '25 agreed. "You don't get to hear about the daily shenanigans, and you miss out on the socialization and familial ties of Happy Half."

What happens if spike ball suddenly dies out? Will Happy Half continue on the Royal Lawn? Traditions are important to students at NCSSM—it's what makes the two years we spend together memorable. However, who says that traditions can't change? Maybe it's time for the classes of 2025 and 2026 to add their own traditions to the mix. ■

## The Stentorian

## EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Teresa Fang '25

Laela Cash '25

Anneliese Heyder '25

Om Nair '25

## STAFF WRITERS

Mabel Kennedy '25 - Opinion Editor  
Preston Mullins '25 - Sports Editor  
Hima Manne '25 - Sports Editor  
Viviana Gardner '25 - Opinion Editor  
Caroline Downs '25 - Puzzle Editor  
Marcellus Day '25 - Puzzle Editor

## GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

Ellie Murphy '25  
Lily Galapon '26  
Tejasvi Shirolikar '26

## SPONSORS

THE REGULATOR BOOKSHOP  
720 9TH ST, DURHAM, NC 27705  
VAGUELY REMINISCENT  
728 9TH ST, DURHAM, NC 27705  
UGLY CAT  
STATEWIDE, BASED IN NCSSM

## ADVISOR

John Kirk

## CORRECTIONS

The Stentorian is committed to accuracy in its reporting. Factual errors are corrected promptly online. Readers with information about errors are asked to e-mail the editors-in-chief at their student emails or at [stentoriansocials@gmail.com](mailto:stentoriansocials@gmail.com).

For sponsorship/advertisement inquiries, please reach out to Teresa Fang or [stentorianads@gmail.com](mailto:stentorianads@gmail.com).



**Winter Olympic Experience, Utah**

"Favorite memory was... downhill skiing and spending time on the slopes. -Utah trip Insta

**New York City, NY**

Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Top of the Rock, Empire State Building, 9/11 Memorial, the Summit, Saint Patrick's Cathedral

**Topsail Island**

PRESTON MULLINS

**Land of Fire & Ice, Iceland**

Godafoss and Gullfoss Waterfalls, to the hot springs at Blue Lagoon, to the black sands of Reynisfjara Beach

**Cityscapes & Minds: London, Paris, Rome**

"Favorite memories were... exploring historic landmarks during free time and embracing the culture outside of the tour itinerary!" - Hima Manne '25

HIMA MANNE

**Italian Culture & History, Italy**

"We walked to the outskirts of Florence and climbed stairs and stories of stairs and angled roads just to visit an old quaint church on top of the largest hill around; the air's never been more crisp and the view had me loving the city." - Jett Mu '25

**The West! Arizona**

"My favorite memory was throwing a rock from the top of the Grand Canyon and watching it fall." - Reid Burgess '25



TERESA FANG

**Baja Marine Science Adventure, California**

"Favorite memories were... snorkeling with sea lions, camping on an island, exploring the beauty of a new country!" - Louisa Weinard '25



LOUISA WEINARD

**Amazon Rainforest Expedition**

"Favorite memories were... the interactions with the people, like the locals that welcomed us with open arms, and the tribes that showed us their ways." - Amazon trip Insta



@NCSSMAMA-ZON25

**Sail Away, Caribbeans**

"I really love just seeing all the wildlife. The goats were literally my favorite and snorkeling and sailing were so much fun." - Hannah Stevens '25



CARRIE ALTER

**The Golden Route, Japan**

Mount Fuji, Arashiyama Bamboo Forest, shrines...

**New Zealand to Australia**

Sydney Opera House, Great Barrier Reef, Hobbiton...

**JTerm Travel Guide**

This past January, NCSSM students traveled all over the world to explore new places, form relationships across campuses, and learn about different environments! Our JTerm experiences were worth reminiscing about, so here is a brief snapshot of the geographical reach NCSSM students ventured to, and some of their favorite memories.

## EDUCATION

## You Didn't Understand The Assignment

BY TERESA FANG  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Two weeks ago, Dr. Jeff Lichtman, Dean of Science at Harvard University, began his research talk with five claims, each answering the specific question, "What is school for?" Together, the five claims expanded on education in the 21st century, stemming from a variety of philosophical considerations throughout his 50 years of teaching.

If you consider that almost everyone in the world (or at least, in this country) has access to a phone, "nearly all knowledge is at one's fingertips" which is the first claim Lichtman makes. I agree. I also agree with his fourth point, on behalf of educators: "The peril of education in the information age: because of the glut of information, professors are necessarily teaching an ever-smaller proportion of the extant data."

But the fifth point raises a series of questions as Lichtman questions the ways in which educators "fail" their students. Of these five claims, as someone who cherishes the value of education, I was curiously intrigued by his thoughts.

Rather than dissect his claims, I would like to summarize his argument, which he does himself quite nicely:

"First, irrelevancy. The subjects we [educators] teach are irrelevant to your ultimate career plans. For example, in medical school, you don't use calculus. A doctor uses 0% of the calculus knowledge they learned in school."

After presenting his points, Dr. Lichtman asked the audience of high school student researchers if they disagreed with anything he said. I was already responding to his points mentally, so I took the first microphone immediately. "Why is that a failure?" I asked. When I emphasize the importance of school, like Dr. Lichtman, many people echo similar claims that most of what you learn in school will not be applicable in the real world or that they will forget nearly everything they once learned. But I say the answer



HARVARD DEAN OF SCIENCE DR. JEFF LICHTMAN PRESENTED HIS THOUGHTS ON STEM EDUCATION AND HIS NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH AT THE HARVARD NORTHWEST BUILDING ON FEBRUARY 14. TERESA FANG

depends on what type of learning we're referring to: the type on the whiteboard or the type beyond the whiteboard.

"Second, prematurity. When the courses are relevant, we [educators] hardly explain why they are, so you can't focus on what is important as it is presented long before you might use this material, maybe 5-10 years later."

I might not remember that Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492 in twenty years when I'm trying to interview people for a job hiring. But I will definitely remember a friend saying,

"you should design the poster art because you're good at art, and I'll write the content in the meantime." I learned that designating tasks to an appropriate individual with the perfect skillset will finish our task faster so we can finally eat our meals during lunch break.

where the 'right' answer is unknown."

Besides calling the entire occupation of researching science an "enterprise" (throwback to my previous piece on nesm.edu's misrepresented marketing of students) as if the sole purpose of research is to generate economic value, I think the preoccupation with the "right" answer is a universal failure that permeates through all subjects, not just in STEM. We endure numerous

"irrelevant" courses in history, English, physics, and math, not because we intend to become an academic jack-of-all-trades (go on, make your snarky "erm, actually's"), but to develop our method of thinking and reasoning. Will I ever need to prove the Pythagorean theorem using geometry postulates when I'm in my late-30's? No. But will

I ever need to make a claim, learn how to support it with evidentiary facts, and arrive at a logical conclusion? Yes. I think me writing this article proves that I can.

Thus, school is for teaching you how to think. Not what to think, but how to think. You are getting your critical thinking in, your collaboration skills, and most importantly, the connections you might need later in life, aka your support system or your potential business partners.

Indeed, you could think of this column as the sequel to my article "Settling the debate between STEM and the humanities." Do I wish that more people were aware that "Frankenstein" is more than just a classic Victorian novel but a commentary on Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis, and much more? Or that Emerson and Thoreau are two completely different people camping around the same pond? Of course, I'd love if America's level of general knowledge of literature, and social studies, or just being more news-savvy about the world was more proficient, but I do not think that it is equivalent to physics slightly less soul-crushing.

"Last but not least, the fear of failure. Solving a problem often requires showing all reasonable ideas fail. Failure is a necessary part of finding a solution."

School is not a promise of success and prosperity, but I do think that Dr. Lichtman and others are approaching school with misguided expectations. He makes many sound and fair points, and undeniably, it's important that students learn the curriculums they are taught in the classroom. But they shouldn't walk away with report cards and memorized flashcards. They should be walking away with new and improved models of thinking and an arsenal of approaches for the real, structure-less world.

It's undeniable that the quality of our education system, federally and at NCSSM, is flawed. Nonetheless, there is still value in it. But if you measure the value of school based on test scores and grades, then I suppose you really didn't understand the assignment. ■

## SPIKEBALL

## NCSSM Spikeball Is Not For The Faint-Hearted

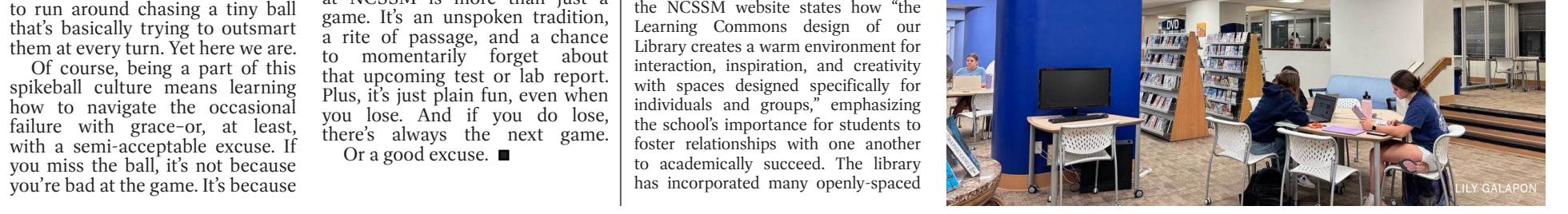
BY HIMA MANNE  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

NCSSM Spikeball is not for the faint-hearted. It's a high-stakes battle for pride, glory, and satisfaction of proving absolutely no one can beat your superior reflexes—at least until they do, and then you make excuses.

There's an art to this madness, a rhythm that combines the agility of a jungle cat with the competitiveness of a caffeine-fueled teenager. At its core, spikeball is about spiking a ball onto a tiny trampoline with a ferocity that makes it difficult for the opposition to spike it back onto the net within three passes.

No earlier or later than 9:30 p.m., three spikeball nets are set up on Watts Lawn with dozens of people leaving the Happy Half scene to instead witness spikeball rivalries. For a school that takes pride in its STEM prowess, you wouldn't think people would be so excited to run around chasing a tiny ball that's basically trying to outsmart us at every turn. Yet here we are.

Of course, being a part of this spikeball culture means learning how to navigate the occasional failure with grace—or, at least, with a semi-acceptable excuse. If you miss the ball, it's not because you're bad at the game. It's because

BY LILY GALAPON  
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

## CAMPUS

## Why "Locking In" At The Library Is Hard To Accomplish

BY LILY GALAPON  
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

"the wind caught it," or "the net was uneven," or "I wasn't ready," or "the classic 'my partner didn't set me up right.'" There's a whole catalog of explanations ready to go at any moment, because no one ever truly misses a spikeball. It's always the environment conspiring against you.

Still, for all the sarcasm and the competitive edge, spikeball at NCSSM is the best kind of chaos. There's something oddly satisfying about diving for a ball that's already out of reach, or that rare moment when your team pulls off a combo so perfect that the other team can only stand there in awe (or confusion—either works). You bond over the shared frustration of a close game and the memories that come from all the laughter and bruises. Because let's be real: if you're playing spikeball and you're not leaving with at least one new bruise, did you even play?

At the end of the day, spikeball at NCSSM is more than just a game. It's an unspoken tradition, a rite of passage, and a chance to momentarily forget about that upcoming test or lab report. Plus, it's just plain fun, even when you lose. And if you do lose, there's always the next game. Or a good excuse. ■

design elements for groups of students to work together in, whether that be the multiple yellow study rooms built along the left wall of the space, or the many circular tables, some of which are embedded within the not-so-soundproof glass lounges. By incorporating friendly architectural designs to bring people together, Borden Mace has allowed positive community building to prosper, though, often with its downsides.

Because the library has majorly devoted the working space for groups of people, a lot of students are naturally inclined to hang out with their friends, leading to an avoidance of accomplishing the objective at hand: Their assignments.

As one junior complains how "all of my friends are there and I can't lock in...there's no quiet rule", the social restrictions of the library—or lack thereof, have allowed noise levels to get extremely high without consequences.

This has contributed to the development of an unbounded gregarious workspace with little to no "work" getting done. One senior notes how "a library is a social place, not a study place", highlighting the reality for many other students how the design features of Borden Mace have

strayed far from its original purpose.

However, the bustling scene at the library is not inherently bad for those who need to finish their work. One student states, "The library is a place to socialize and interact, but it has areas where you can lock in, like the little cubbies at the sides and the quiet rooms", showing how while much of the area has been mapped out for groups of people to collaborate (or socialize), there are still individualistic spaces for students to meaningfully work—one just has to make sure to not overlook them, and create real action in finding a spot with less social distractions.

While strife with socialization with its people-friendly architectural features, the Borden Mace Library has not necessarily become a doomed place for studying. The flexible grounds for academic collaboration do not automatically lead to collective loss of concentration among students, but could instead allow the enhancement of it as long as one takes initiative in how to approach their work, and where to mark the line between studying and socializing. ■

Somewhere between tumbling over rocks at Picacho Peak and getting lost at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, I realized something: nature keeps moving forward, with or without me. The saguaros at Saguaro National Park, towering and ancient, continue to stand tall. The indigenous stories and artifacts at the Heard Museum are preserved and shared, even as modern life moves on. In Bisbee, a town full of cowboys and artists, the people seemed frozen in a perpetual, quiet celebration of life, adapting the past into a present that felt both nostalgic and brand-new. Just ask Anisa Hasanaj '25 about the psychic lady who foretold her "strong bloodline."

And in my own way, I was moving forward, too. At Montezuma Castle, I stared up at the five-story cliff artifact or a philosophical truth—it was Hopi Hot Beef. Fry bread, beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, a dish so good that it earned my eternal love and gratitude. Thank you, Hopi Nation. Thank you, Navajo Nation. Thank you, Arizona. And most of all, thank you Dr. Cantrell, Mr. Chris Thomas, Ms. Michelle Bremmer, NCSSM Foundation, and sponsors for

THE STENTORIAN  
FEBRUARY 2025THE STENTORIAN  
FEBRUARY 2025

## STUDENT LIFE

## NCSSM Hall Theme Rankings

BY LILY FRANK  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

We spend almost half our year on campus, so our RLAs and CCs work hard to make the cold halls (especially in recent days) feel more lively so that one day, we might consider NCSSM home. However, not all themes create as much joy or jealousy as others. In the following pages, I will give you my completely subjective and untrained opinion on this highly pressing matter. As was the case last year, I have removed my hall, 2nd Beall, to remain "neutral"...

**3. 2nd East: Pokemon**  
I like it relevant, infinite decoration potential, and nostalgia. The individual Pokemon cut out for the theme board shows dedication, though I feel like you are missing a few hundred Pokemon...

**4. 2nd Hill: 2HL Grand Prix**  
NCSSM already moves fast enough, living here would just stress me out. Unless we are talking Spec Miata. For a hall displaced in the mods this is a very solid theme, and even without a themeboard, they make up for it with creative door decks.

**1. 4th Bryan: Cat Cafe**  
The theme board is top-tier, I can only imagine how cozy 4th Bryan must be. The RLAs also go above and beyond, adding extra cat themed decorations outside of the hall for valentines day. Thank you for making the treacherous journey to physics slightly less soul-crushing.

**2. Reynolds: Strawberry Shortcake**  
This theme gives off so much 2010s nostalgia, and makes for such cute decorations. Because Reynold is

turning 40 this year, I think it's appropriate to trashing the entire education system.

**3. 3rd East: Super Smash Brothers**  
I love seeing Papa Louie on my Hall pilgrimage journeys staring at me from Royal Lounge. A theme that is so original, that I am stunned.

**6. 3rd East: Super Smash Brothers**  
I have no notes. Just another

**9. 3rd Beall: Pillow Pets**  
3rd Beall does a great job of turning a seemingly simple hall theme with little possibilities for decorations into a soft patchwork blanket, pillow pets, and clouds.

**10. 4th East: Ancient Greece**  
This theme hurts no one, and exists as a good neutral, like the plain toast of hall themes. It's not particularly exciting or in reference to something that connects our generation, but there is no reason to complain about it.

**11. Reynolds 1c2c1d: Beach Vacation**  
In light of the recent weather, I am craving a sunny beach. Do you think Reynolds 1c2c1d stays warmer in the winter?

**12. 1st Hunt: Cars (the movie)**  
This is like 2nd Bryan, except "movie" is singular.

**13. 1st Beall: Tropical Rainforest**  
An ambitious choice, because the only thing tropical about NCSSM's buildings is the unpredictable temperature control.

**14. Reynolds 1e2e2d: Winx Club**

## JTERM

## I Love Hopi Hot Beef, and Other Things On My Arizona J-Term

BY TERESA FANG  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

sprinkled every intersection. Phoenix, Bisbee, Flagstaff, the Hopi reservation—each place, a stark contrast.

At the Hopi reservation, I kneeled in a millions-year-old bed of shells overlooking a huge limestone canyon. Our tour guide told us to express our thanks to the earth. I'm not religious or spiritual, but in that moment, I felt incredibly grateful. It's amazing to think this Earth is the same Earth that everything I have seen in museums has also lived on and interacted with. It's amazing to see exactly how the Hopi ancestors interpreted and interacted with this Earth (and the stars) on this land, especially through my own eyes. This firsthand experience has given me another perspective on what means to live in the now—with appreciation and cautiousness of the past.

**Stop looking for "the point" all the time**

On day five, we visited the Museum of Northern Arizona. The tour guide was passionate but had a voice that could put even the most enthusiastic historian to sleep. The poet who wrote us custom pieces delivered one that was painfully generic, even though I had specifically asked for something that connects our generation, but there is no reason to complain about it.

At the Grand Canyon, I took the Junior Ranger oath. "Don't feed the squirrels" was the only part I really remembered, but in a way, that summed it all up. Maybe the awe of the canyon, vast and unchanging, wasn't meant to provide some grand revelation. Maybe I didn't need to extract meaning from everything—I could just let it be.

**Things go on**

Through writing this, I may have admitted publicly that I eat a lot (big backlog had to be an obligation before it became a choice, alright). But my greatest discovery of the trip wasn't an ancient artifact or a philosophical truth—it was Hopi Hot Beef. Fry bread, beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, a dish so good that it earned my eternal love and gratitude. Thank you, Hopi Nation. Thank you, Navajo Nation. Thank you, Arizona. And most of all, thank you Dr. Cantrell, Mr. Chris Thomas, Ms. Michelle Bremmer, NCSSM Foundation, and sponsors for

## REFLECTION

## Dear Seniors...

BY TEJASVI SHIROLKAR  
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Late campus walks, no longer stressing about grades and walking to Ninth Street every day. Ding, ding, ding! That is the sound of a second-semester senior's life at NCSSM.

As a current junior, I have watched this life from afar; knowing it will be mine next year, but still looking at it wishfully.

Transitioning from a large, public high school to a smaller one was not an easy decision for me. From taking new, rigorous coursework to watching life pass by without me at my home high school, I was terrified during my first semester at NCSSM.

There seemed to be no end at the tunnel; with assignments piling on and winter drifting in, I settled into a familiar routine: study during the week, study during the weekend.

However, I soon found my own pockets of community within NCSSM. With friends in my hall and classes, I realized that through all the studying, the tight-knit sense of belonging I acquired was what kept every senior going, even during their junior year. "Maius Opus Movo," or in other words, "Accept the Greater Challenge."

With spring on the way and cap and gown ceremonies near, I would like to send my seniors off with this message: thank you for your guidance, your unwavering support, and your belief. Through you all, I have seen what NCSSM embodies; a small-yet mighty-community of future changemakers. ■

Disagree? Prove us otherwise in a dissenting article.  
NCSSMSTENTORIAN.COM



TERESA FANG



TERESA FANG



TERESA FANG

letting me go on such an adventure. Things go on. My Arizona J-Term has ended, but its memories continue etched into my notes, my mind, and now, here. And I will continue, too, maybe with a slightly fuller stomach, a slightly fuller suitcase, and a wealth of stories that don't always need a point. ■

## GOOD NEWS

Person Behind Stentorian Hate Account, The Uranus, Found

BY TERESA FANG  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A super confidential investigative report into the disappearance of the Instagram account, NCSSM Uranus, which erased their carbon footprint with just one conveniently-placed "delete account" button, was created for the purpose of being rivals with The Stentorian. According to third-party investigator Shrew D. Dodgers, the account was run by one man who claimed his application was rejected by the editorial board. As the editorial board, we have no recollection of this man because he simply did not submit the application in time. He was recently found in the corner of the PFM, building a makeshift newspaper box using an amalgamation of scrapped 3D-printed parts and frozen earthworms as glue, for the latest issue of Uranus. Dodgers did not permit the public release of the suspect's name, in fear it was the password for a hidden contraption.

"Idiot. Only live earthworms are sticky enough to use as glue." – Jesus Berhardt, Box Engineer

"Look, I've been saying it for a long time, I know it, everybody knows it, this man is bad news. Bad. Terrible guy. Very mean." – Donald Grump, Stentorian Communications Specialist

"He was funny until he spelled my name wrong." – Dominique A\$djajm\\a, Stentorian Email Spellchecker ■

## NOT SO GOOD NEWS

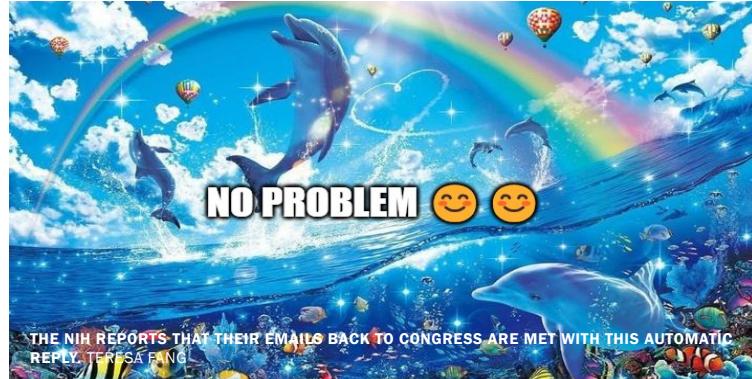
NIH Discovers Healthcare Breakthrough by Cutting Funding and Praying for Innovation

BY TERESA FANG  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In a groundbreaking study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH)—right before their budget was unceremoniously slashed—scientists discovered that medical research does, in fact, require money. This shocking revelation, published in *The Journal of Things We Already Knew*, came just in time for Congress to announce its latest fiscal strategy: cutting NIH funding in favor of more "cost-effective" scientific solutions, such as wishful thinking and essential oils.

Dr. Evelyn Carter, lead researcher at the now-defunct Institute for Curing Everything, expressed her concerns. "We were this close to finding a universal cancer vaccine. But, hey, I'm sure tax breaks for billionaires will cure in Mercury retrograde."

At press time, Congress was considering reallocating NASA's budget to astrology, citing "strong" public interest in Mercury retrograde. ■



## AWESOME NEWS

Best Day Ever of Western Civilization To Be Reached This Friday at 11:11 A.M.

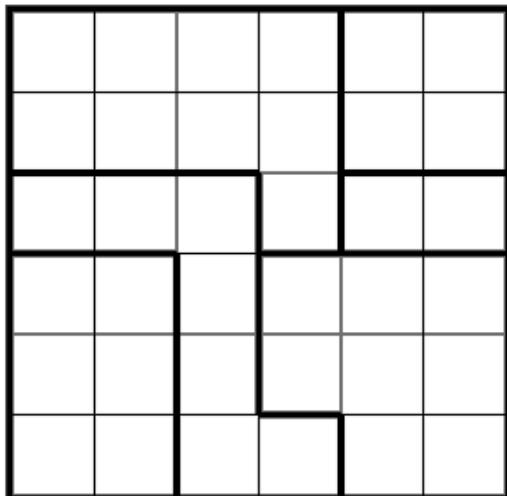
BY TERESA FANG  
STENTORIAN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

According to a panel of leading doctors, people with PhDs, online influencers who don't have PhDs, historians, and so-called "almond moms" announced this week that Western civilization will reach the "best day ever" starting at 11:11 A.M. Friday.

"From the data I got staring at the sun yesterday to analyzing the

## STAR BATTLE

Place hearts on the grid such that there's 1 heart on each column, row, and shape. Hearts cannot be adjacent to each other in any way.



STUMPED? NEED A HINT?  
CHECK THE ANSWERS WITH  
THIS QR CODE, OR VISIT  
NCSSMSTENTORIAN.COM



MORE PUZZLES! Play FREE from The Stentorian's archives of puzzles, diversions, and editorial cartoons at: ncssmstentorian.com/puzzles/

## DIY CALENDAR

March						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Extended Weekend
2 Extended Weekend	3	4	5	6	7 Carbon Closet	8 Thrift-a-Bull Market
9 Daylight Saving Starts	10	11	12 SSen Primaries Begin	13	14 Holi	15
16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19 SSen Speeches	20	21 Extended Weekend	22 Extended Weekend
23 Extended Weekend	24 Extended Weekend	25	26	27	28 Cross-Cultural Bazaar	29
30	31 Eid al-Fitr					

MORE PUZZLES! Play FREE from The Stentorian's archives of puzzles, diversions, and editorial cartoons at: ncssmstentorian.com/puzzles/

MORE PUZZLES! Play FREE from The Stentorian's archives of puzzles, diversions, and editorial cartoons at: ncssmstentorian.com/puzzles/

## LOVE &amp; FRIENDSHIP &lt;3

NCSSM Administration to start "Palentines" initiative

BY MARCELLUS DAY  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

Due to these concerning statistics, NCSSM administration is developing a new initiative for Valentine's Day called Palentines. This initiative would seek to increase community on campus by giving students time to build friendships. The program would randomly pair each person on campus with a Palentine and mandate that they spend an hour of "quality time" together before logging their experience in Schoolinks.

"This will be greatly beneficial to the larger community, as we all know that forcing students to do something is the best way to get them to enjoy it," an administrative staff member reported. This initiative is currently being tested on lab rats to ensure statistical success, and if successful, it will most likely be initiated in 2026. ■

LIKE READING SATIRE  
AND FUNNY CRITICISM?  
OR WRITING SATIRE  
YOURSELF?  
READ MORE AT  
NCSSMSTENTORIAN.COM



## SUPER BOWL

Mixed Opinions of Super Bowl LIX

BY PRESTON MULLINS  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

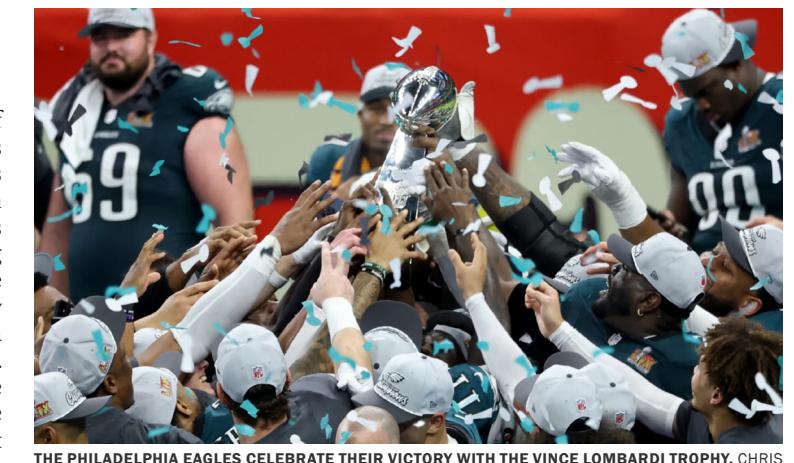
Every year, there is great excitement leading up to the Super Bowl. Viewers around the world flock to their televisions to watch the game, halftime show, and unique commercials. This year, Super Bowl LIX drew mixed opinions from those who watched. The game itself was viewed by many as one of the worst in recent history, but Philadelphia Eagles fans certainly enjoyed watching their team beat up the Kansas City Chiefs 40-22. There

was no suspense whatsoever as the Eagles had control of the game from start to finish.

Kendrick Lamar's halftime performance was much anticipated and viewers were divided on whether or not it was a success. For some, it was a terrible, boring performance and for others, it was the best halftime show they had seen recently. One thing is for sure though, it had plenty of controversy as Lamar performed his viral Drake diss track, "Not Like Us." Finally, we arrive at the commercials. Super Bowl commercials have always been a fun part of the broadcast as

viewers watch to see what kinds of iconic and wacky advertisements companies have created. This year, however, those who tuned in pointed out that the commercials were not nearly as eye-catching and unique as usual, with the exception of a few, specifically the Mountain Dew "Kiss from a Lime" commercial featuring Seal.

The only thing we can be sure about when it comes to the reception of Super Bowl LIX is that there is no clear consensus on the public opinion of the broadcast. Some aspects were subpar and others were on point, but no one can agree on the quality of most of



THE PHILADELPHIA EAGLES CELEBRATE THEIR VICTORY WITH THE VINCE LOMBARDI TROPHY. CHRIS GRAYTHEN/GETTY IMAGES

world come together to watch each year and no one ever truly knows what to expect! ■

## SENIOR NIGHT

The Senior Night Spectacle for Uni Basketball

BY PRESTON MULLINS  
STENTORIAN STAFF WRITER

best seasons in their history; a win here would go a long way for their hopes of qualifying for the 2A State Playoffs.

There was a little extra excitement on the air on the evening of February 3rd, 2025. It was Senior night and the Class of 2025 players, managers, and cheerleaders would be recognized pregame.

Franklin Academy would hold a 59-57 lead with ten seconds to play, but the Unis had the ball. Guard Ethann Burkett '25 was fouled with 4.5 seconds to go, which meant he would head to the free throw line to take

out a hunk of what looked to be a skinned squirrel with her teeth. "God knows I trust those 'see-in-tists' completely. Our budget's been constrained to the point we've had to scavenge for roadkill, and my little meat-eaters cannot be living on protein-less spinach and greens and less-than-quality red meat."

Despite the panel's findings, many

are skeptical that humanity will see a new change on Friday, claiming that good things in life are only rewarded to those who act. The same terrible things happening in the world are likely to continue as egg prices rise to \$1000 per carton and ICE becomes SHICE, now

committed to deporting all people with small hands, which are of course "unmanly" and "un-American." ■

On the ensuing Patriot inbounds pass, Forward Jay Peng '26 stole the ball and took a mid-range jumper as the seconds ticked toward zero. Swish. The buzzer sounded; the

Unis had won! The fans and players from the bench stormed the court and crowded around Jay, cheering.

What a thrilling night for Uni basketball! I got a chance to speak with Peng, as well as Burkett and Harry Gribbin '26, a fan who was in attendance that night.

When asked about that final shot, Peng said, "I can't say I've ever practiced that shot before but as it was leaving my hands I knew it was going in. I didn't think about it, I just let it fly. When the game ended, the feeling was surreal. As the students rushed the court, I felt on top of the world. These are the moments you dream of; it felt like a dream come true."

When explaining how he felt as he stepped up to the free throw line, Burkett said, "I knew that I couldn't let the doubt and nervousness overcome me. I had to step up and be confident that I would

hit those shots. I shot the first one and it felt just right so I knew as soon as I shot the second one that it was going in too."

Finally, Gribbin described his experience as a fan by saying, "It was the most exciting last minute of basketball I've ever witnessed. When Jay Peng stole the ball and swished the most incredible buzzer-beater I've ever seen, the gym erupted in cheer and we stormed the court, celebrating with the team."

Not only did this game deliver a thrilling finish, but it was also the perfect Senior Night result and a critical shot in the arm for the Unis, who were already having an extremely successful season. Nobody entering the building that night knew what was about to transpire, but it would certainly be a game that the students and fans would never forget. ■

**The REGULATOR**

**BOOKSHOP**

Catch your next wave with a tantalizing book at The Regulator Bookshop, now with a 10% discount for all those who mention The Stentorian at checkout.

Open Monday-Sunday 10-6.

**Regulator has the waves.**

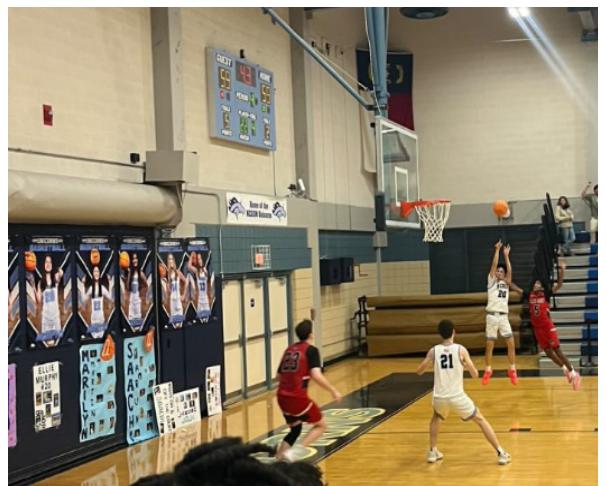
[regulatorbookshop.com](http://regulatorbookshop.com)





## Men's Basketball Playoffs & Senior Night

PHOTOS BY LOUISA WEINARD & PRESTON MULLINS



## AfricaFest 2025

PHOTOS BY LOUISA WEINARD

**SIKHADU LA: EXPLORING THE GOLDEN CITY.** The Black Student Union (BSU) organized and hosted AfricaFest 2025 on February 22 in the ETC Auditorium. This festival showcased a variety of incredible performances, spoken word, songs, and marches highlighting African, African American, and Afro-Caribbean cultures.

