



THE DUQUESNE DUKE

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COVID-19 vaccine on the horizon for Duq students

Hundreds of pharmacy students trained to administer COVID-19 vaccines

KELLEN STEPLER &
ZOE STRATOS

editor-in-chief & staff writer

Levi DeBlase knew that as a pharmacist, giving vaccines was in the job description.

He didn't realize that he would be administering life saving vaccines to combat a pandemic — all as a student pharmacist.

DeBlase is currently one of 322 Duquesne pharmacy students that have completed the pharmacy-based immunization training certificate. By Jan. 29, 115 additional pharmacy students will have been trained to give the vaccine, according to pharmacy professor Tiffany Hatcher.

"Typically, we provide the training to students during their second professional year of pharmacy school; however, this year we have added new opportunities for first year professional students to be trained," Hatcher said.

Duquesne pharmacy students have been able to step up and fill the role of vaccine administrators through the immunization certificate. According to the Pennsylvania Department of State, pharmacy interns who have completed required education and are under strict supervision of a licensed pharmacist who holds an "active authorization to administer injectable medications," are now able to temporarily administer COVID-19



COURTESY OF PHI DELTA CHI

Pharmacy students, although typically not allowed to administer vaccines, have been given emergency training and special authorization from Gov. Wolf to assist in the COVID-19 vaccination efforts. Over 300 Duquesne pharmacy students have been trained and are now certified to administer the vaccine.

vaccinations to people ages 18 and up.

Previously, in Pennsylvania, student pharmacists and interns were not allowed to vaccinate as an intern until December. On Dec. 14, Gov. Tom Wolf signed a waiver allowing supervised students and interns to administer flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

"Because of COVID-19, we're getting this opportunity that we wouldn't normally get," DeBlase, a fifth-year pharmacy student, said.

It's a "once in a lifetime" opportunity, Hatcher said, for student pharmacists to support the community in the midst of a pandemic, and to practice at the top of their pharmacy intern license.

"Students will have gained valuable experience under the supervision of a pharmacist providing vaccinations," Hatcher said. "Additionally, students will have meaningful patient care experi-

ences that will allow them to grow into a compassionate, caring, clinically-confident professional."

Duquesne's school of pharmacy regularly provides vaccination courses, but the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the program to go to online learning.

"Initially, we were unsure as to how the training process would work virtually; however, it has been a great success," Hatcher said. "For students, it allows for them to be able to start the didactic portion of the content without having to be on campus."

Some objectives of the training, Hatcher noted, were to educate patients about the benefits of vaccines — and dispel myths — and to safely administer vaccines to patients via subcutaneous, intramuscular, intranasal and intradermal routes.

"Training is split up into two parts and the APHA [American

Pharmacist Association] uses this training for pharmacists in any state," said Natalie Klek, a professional first-year pharmacy student. "First, you do 12 hours of self-study, you know, reading how and when to give the vaccine. The second is a live eight -hour class where they repeat what you learned in self-study and then learn to do it."

Klek explained that "the first is two practice shots are intramuscular — the normal flu shot — and one subcutaneous — the chicken part of the arm."

Shortly after Klek's certification, she began to administer vaccines at clinics in the area organized through an independent pharmacy. Other pharmacy students are eager to get out into the field and begin administering, like professional year two pharmacy student, Maci Egger.

"We all are willing to give our

time and we're looking forward to doing it," Egger said. "Not only are we helping the community, but we're also getting practice for the future that we normally wouldn't get."

David Rogers, a fifth-year pharmacy student, has participated in clinics since early January, and said he plans on doing it as much as he can.

"It's an experience and a practice that you wouldn't normally have," Rogers said. "It's a great opportunity to give back to people."

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, 770,965 doses of the vaccine have been administered statewide through Jan. 26.

Being able to help administer the vaccine, according to pharmacy student Julian Kleberg, was historic. Kleberg volunteered at a clinic in Peters Township last weekend.

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POLICE BRIEFS

Here are the crimes reported from Jan. 18 to Jan. 25, 2021.

On Jan. 18, Duquesne police responded to a call regarding a small amount of marijuana found by resident staff inside a Towers dorm room. Duquesne police arrived on scene and confiscated the contraband items. The person in the room was referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

On Jan. 21, Duquesne police received a call from a male, who stated that a student would be returning to campus with a bomb. Through a preliminary investigation, Duquesne police were able to confirm the identity of the student and identify who the male caller was. The student was contacted and is safe. The student was not a participant in the threat, and the threat was false. This case is under investigation with possible charges being made at a later date.

COVID-19 NUMBERS

Last semester, Duquesne reported 295 confirmed cases of COVID-19 cumulative over time, and 55 suspected cases of COVID-19 cumulative over time. 140 students were isolated on campus over time, and there were 257 students quarantined on campus over time.

-Total Confirmed Cases Over Time- 5

-Total Suspected Cases Over Time- 0

Total Students Isolated on Campus Over Time- 1

Total Students Quarantined on Campus Over Time- 6

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Grievance Committee: Shank should be reinstated as a Duquesne professor

KELLEN STEPLER
editor-in-chief

Duquesne University's Grievance Committee for Faculty (UGCF) recommended that Gary Shank, the education professor who was fired for using an expletive racial slur in a class lecture during the fall semester, should be restored as a faculty member of the university.

Shank had filed a grievance with the UGCF on Nov. 5. He was terminated from Duquesne Oct. 7.

In a report filed Jan. 14 provided to *The Duke* by Shank's attorney, Warner Mariani, the UGCF found that while Shank "exercised extremely poor judgment in his decision to use the N-word rather than an abstraction," the termination of his tenure and firing were not warranted.

"While Dr. Shank's use of the N-word was misguided, it was not malicious," the report said.

According to Mariani, the report was sent to Duquesne last Friday, and cited the university handbook which states that President Ken Gormley has 15 working days to decide the case.

Mariani also provided a document setting Shank's position to the UGCF's findings. Shank said

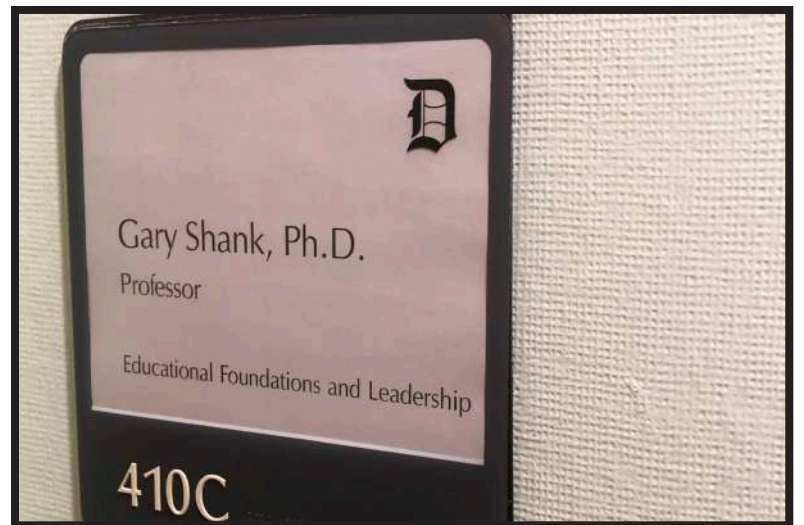
"Disagreement with a professor's style and method of teaching cannot serve as grounds for 'serious misconduct' in violation of TAP 55."

UGCF's report also said that Duquesne did not violate Shank's academic freedom, as the university does not subscribe to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) guidelines on academic freedom. In October 2020, the AAUP wrote a letter to Gormley demanding Shank be reinstated at the university.

Shank wrote that if Duquesne does not subscribe to the AAUP guidelines on academic freedom, and if the use of the N-word is a violation of TAP 55, then Duquesne needs to immediately prohibit the use of the N-word "for whatever reason it may be used."

"For that matter, the university should ban any word that possibly could violate TAP 55 and let the university's faculty know that the use of certain language is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action up to and including their discharge," he wrote.

The report also says that the university provided due process to Shank prior to his suspension



KELLEN STEPLER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Shank's case has been heard by Duquesne's Grievance Committee who recommended that he should be reinstated. President Gormley has the final decision on this matter, and his decision must be made by Feb. 5.

actions "even going so far as to cherry pick reviews of disgruntled former students made over the decades of my teaching at Duquesne."

Citing her testimony, Shank wrote that "The real reason for the termination is made clear by the testimony of Interim Dean Generett when she criticized my teaching style by saying she thought my class presentation was 'thoughtless' because I failed to 'set things up' and also because I did not use derogatory comments as to any other group other than African-Americans."

Shank wrote that, pursuant to AAUP guidelines, he believes that in order for classroom speech not to be protected under academic freedom, the offending language must be "persistent, pervasive, and not germane to the subject matter."

"That is not the case here," he wrote.

Shank wrote that Gormley should recuse himself because Gormley "prejudged me as to whether my conduct was appropriate, and because of the publicity he believes negatively impacted Duquesne University."

Gormley e-mailed all students on Sept. 12 — a day after the video gained traction on social media — writing that the professor "will face very strong disciplinary action pursuant to the procedures set forth in our faculty handbook."

However, Gormley should not recuse himself as final arbiter of the case, the report said, and that as university president, he had a responsibility to "mitigate the damage of Duquesne's reputation" as the video of Shank using the racial epithet gained traction on social media, as well as traditional media outlets. The report says that Gormley was not involved with the investigation of Shank's case, or the decision to fire him. The faculty handbook does not provide an alternative to the president as an arbiter of the case.



GRIFFIN SENDEK/MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

After using a racial slur while teaching, Shank has faced an uphill battle for reinstatement. He has consistently defended his use of the word for pedagogical reasons and upheld his need for academic freedom.

that while the UGCF report gives the "appropriate recommendation" that he be restored as a faculty member, he is "concerned that the [UGCF] recommends that I be sanctioned and also takes a rather restrictive view of the meaning of Academic Freedom on Duquesne University's campus."

"Therefore, I feel it necessary to take exception to several of the Report's Findings in order to make my position clear that sanctions are not called for here, and that an expansive view of Academic Freedom must be asserted not only for me, but the rest of the University's faculty," Shank wrote.

pension and termination, citing sections 9.2 and 9.3 of the Faculty Handbook. The report also said that Shank refused to meet with school of education interim dean Gretchen Generett without the presence of his attorney prior to his termination, and that he was provided the opportunity to appeal the disciplinary actions to the UGCF.

Shank wrote that while he taught his class in a manner that he believed at the time to be "totally appropriate," Generett "committed herself from the onset to the most severe disciplinary action" and searched for a justification to support her

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EXCLUSIVE
COVERAGE
ON
GARY
SHANK



SCAN HERE

Genesius Theater: A new type of performance

ZOE STRATOS
staff writer

As the weather gets colder, the ability for Duquesne students to socially distance outdoors has become more difficult. Outdoor tents, tables and chairs are disappearing outside College and Mellon Hall, and more importantly, the COVID-19 testing tent has been put away for the winter.

With some of the most socially distanced areas on campus taken for dining and studying to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the university had to look elsewhere to provide socially distanced COVID-19 testing during the winter months. The best option became the Genesius Theater.

"We have a fairly open room and other places on campus like the Power Center, the Union Ballroom and the Africa room are all being used for something else important, so they're trying to find other large spaces to keep social distancing protocols in place," said Genesius Theater's Technical Director, Justin Sines. "As somebody who's been at Duquesne as long as I have, it's great to be able to 'pay that back' and be able to do all that I can for the university to come back and thrive again during COVID."

Slightly different than other locations on campus, the Genesius Theater is also home to the Red Masquers, a student organization and amateur theatre company here at Duquesne. Though testing will be going on within the theater, the testing committee is dedicated to allowing the Masquers to continue using the building throughout the semester.

"The Red Masquers are super excited to have partial access to our theater space again," said Red Masquers president, Heather Umbel. "Having the Genesius back in our arms, even just a bit, opens up a lot of opportunities for our organization to safely host small theater productions."

The Masquers plan to produce The Pittsburgh Monologue Project and host Premieres 44, the annual student written works festival, with limited casting, a small live audience and a streaming option for those wanting to attend.

Currently, there is no official date for testing to begin for on campus and commuter students, though the frequency of testing is changing this semester. The university will be using a method of required surveillance testing that will take place every two weeks. Again, testing will be provided by the university at no cost to individuals.

Duquesne awaits vaccine doses, but distribution infrastructure is already in place

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"It was a really good experience," Kleberg said. "The people I vaccinated were really appreciative — some people were crying. It's good to be a part of history."

Pennsylvania is currently in phase 1A of the vaccine rollout: vaccinating those most high-risk of illness, such as health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities, people age 65 and older and those with high-risk conditions.

During the week of Jan. 17, clinical students and faculty were able to receive the first round of vaccinations in the Power Center Ballroom.

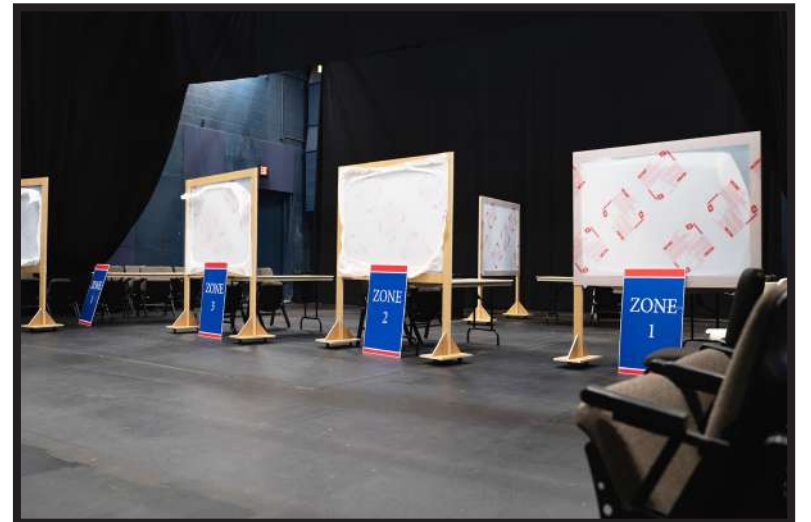
Hosted by the Center for Pharmacy Care, certified student pharmacists were able to volunteer to either administer vaccines or help with other tasks like screening, according to a Facebook post by professional year 2 pharmacy student, Katie Grenell.

Duquesne received 700 doses

nursing and health sciences have been trained to administer the vaccine. We have developed detailed plans to administer the vaccine to our population quickly once we receive the vaccine."

As prepared as Duquesne may be, the rollout time of vaccines in Pennsylvania is less than desired. Currently, according to the New York Times' vaccine rollout tracker, Pennsylvania ranks 42 out of the 50 states. Only 5.1% of the population has received at least one shot.

"We know that Pennsylvanians are ready for the vaccine," Pennsylvania Acting Secretary of Health Alison Beam said in a press release. "We ask for patience as the amount of the vaccine in Pennsylvania and the nation is limited. We want to ensure that the vaccine is provided in a way that is ethical, equitable and efficient, which is why we are taking a phased approach. This way we can make sure the most vulnerable residents can get vac-



GRIFFIN SENDEK/ MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

The Genesius Theater will serve as a testing site for all students, faculty and staff who are present on campus this semester. Everyone present will be tested every two weeks at the theater.



GRIFFIN SENDEK/ MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Until the vaccine is released by the state to Duquesne, regular testing for all present on campus will be the norm. For the foreseeable future, all students, staff and faculty who come to campus will have to be tested frequently in the theater.

of the vaccine; 350 for clinical students and faculty at Duquesne and 350 for clinical students and faculty at CCAC, according Vice President for Marketing and Communications, Gabriel Welsch. The second round of vaccinations are soon to follow once the health department sends them to Duquesne.

Between the successful clinic held earlier this semester, and the hundreds of pharmacy students certified to administer the vaccine, Duquesne is hopeful, and prepared, to receive and administer the vaccine to the general student, faculty and staff population as soon as possible.

"We have all of the capabilities we need at Duquesne to receive, store and administer the vaccine," Welsch said. "Last semester, the university made modifications and repairs to equipment to ensure we are able to store the vaccines at the temperatures required. We have ensured faculty and students in the pharmacy,

cinated now."

But Duquesne continues to lobby for vaccine doses to be allocated to all students, faculty and staff, and has done so since the early stages of the pandemic.

"Duquesne's leadership is in regular communication about the pandemic with policymakers at the local, state and federal levels," Welsch said. "We have communicated with governmental leaders the need to vaccinate our population as soon as possible. We look forward to receiving additional doses of the vaccine in the upcoming days and weeks."

With more populated clinics becoming available in the future, Duquesne pharmacy student Amy Patel — who has already served in over 10 clinics in the Pittsburgh area — said that the opportunity to help administer the vaccine is a good way to put her skills to use in the community.

"It's a pretty exciting and rewarding experience," Patel said. "I've grown as a person and as a pharmacy student."

"We have all of the capabilities we need at Duquesne to receive, store and administer the vaccine," said Gabriel Welsch, vice president of marketing and communications.

"It's a pretty exciting and rewarding experience," Amy Patel said. "I've grown as a person and as a pharmacy student."



GRIFFIN SENDEK/ MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Over 400 students in Duquesne's Bayer School of Pharmacy have been trained and certified in distributing vaccines. This is just one of the ways Duquesne administration plans to assist in Pittsburgh's vaccination rollout.

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OPINIONS

Corporations are to blame for the world's climate emergency

Within the past decade, concerns about climate change have grown significantly as an ever-increasing number of scientists and world leaders continue to raise the alarm about the harmful consequences associated with a warming climate.

From rising temperatures and extreme weather events, to higher sea levels and glacial retreat, the overwhelming evidence clearly indicates that climate change is a very real and formidable threat to our global society.

We know the threat is real. So, we must ask ourselves, who is to blame for our current predicament? Only by identifying the root of the problem can we begin to develop a solution.

Despite a deluge of flashy “green” marketing campaigns, corporations are responsible for a considerable portion of the environmental degradation occurring over the past century. As surprising as it may seem, the 3,000 largest companies in the world generate over \$2 trillion worth of environmental damage each year.

Arising from their constant exploitation of natural resources and unsustainable product offerings, corporate entities are historically one of the largest contributors to climate change around the globe.

According to the 2017 CDP Carbon Majors Report, a mere 100 firms were accountable for more than 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. The report also discovered that “Over half of global industrial emissions since human induced climate change was officially recognized can be traced to just 25 corporate and state producing entities.”

Although the oil and gas industries are to blame for the major-

ity of greenhouse gas emissions, a mountain of evidence suggests that mankind's massive environmental footprint is not only attributable to the energy sector.

In fact, the top 15 food and beverage companies in the U.S. produce approximately 630 million metric tons of greenhouse gases per year. As a comparison, this combined amount is more than Australia's total annual emissions.

Additionally, in terms of cost of



NOAH WILBUR

opinions editor

damage to the environment, utilities, basic materials, consumer goods, and industrials all rank ahead of the oil and gas sector.

Armed with this knowledge, what actions can we take to urge corporations to end their destructiveness?

With the planet on the brink of devastation, consumers must pressure major corporations and multinationals to implement sustainable processes, policies and production methods to reduce their environmental impact.

Concerned mainly with increasing profits and improving brand reputation, corporations are particularly receptive to changes and trends in consumer behavior. Big business is historically known for

bowing down to the public and changing its ways in the wake of consumer pressure.

In turn, everyday people – like you and I – hold the power to actualize true change by driving sustainability in the business community.

Let's look at some examples. In 2015, Tyson Foods – the largest producer of poultry in the U.S. – began removing human antibiotics from its products. Another example is PepsiCo's 2015 announcement that it will no longer use the artificial sweetener aspartame in its Diet Pepsi. In both cases, two large firms buckled under pressure in response to fierce public outcry.

With an intense focus on the top- and bottom-lines, businesses are vulnerable to changes in consumer behavior. Therefore, fearful of losing existing or potential customers, individuals can compel companies to commit to sustainable compliance by making an effort to only purchase eco-friendly products and services.

Corporations possess the resources and influence necessary to achieve global sustainability. Thus, to create a greener corporate landscape, we must become “conscious consumers” by changing our shopping behavior and purchasing products and services from those who incorporate sustainable principles and values into daily operations.

As the climate emergency threatens the future of humanity, it is imperative that consumers young and old use their purchasing power to press the business community into committing to environmental reform.

Without swift action and global collaboration, the planet will continue to suffer from the actions of the world's largest public and private entities.

Letter to the Editor: Concerns about Brottier COVID policy

I am extremely concerned about the COVID-19 situation in Brottier Hall. I live here and when I moved in, they did not ask me to provide proof of a negative test even though it was posted on the door that it was required (and was also required to attend anywhere on campus- even off campus activities that were affiliated with the university).

Also, somebody on my floor recently tested positive and Brottier did not inform me nor anybody else on the floor or in the building. When I emailed [Brottier Hall Resident Director] Nick DuBos, he replied with, “we do not inform residents of positive cases” which is extremely irresponsible, con-

sidering other on campus housing is required to report. I had to find out from the person who had COVID-19 themselves, and had I not talked to them, I very possibly could've been in contact with somebody who tested positive.

When I asked them about this policy, they said that they could do it because they require those who test positive to be isolated in the building, or at home. The person who I contacted that had COVID-19 said that there were no precautions in the building put in place to make sure that he did not break quarantine and expose other residents, other than not being able to swipe back into Brottier if he leaves.

Theoretically, somebody could contract COVID-19, choose not to quarantine, and infect unknowing residents because nobody is informed of the presence of positive tests.

I understand that since they are an independent apartment building they can chose their policies and do not have to adhere to Duquesne's COVID-19 rules, but Brottier is still a part of Duquesne's campus considering that they are staffed by Duquesne RHA staff (RA's, RD's, etc).

Best,
Caroline Nolf
Senior, middle years education major

STAFF EDITORIAL

‘Get our city out of your mouth’

On his first day in office, President Joe Biden signed 17 executive orders that focused on reversing Trump administration policies – including a letter that states the country's intent to re-join the Paris Climate Agreement.

In 2019, President Trump notified the United Nations that the U.S. would be withdrawing from the accords, removing the country from a list of nearly 200 others vowing to reduce planet-warming emissions. On Nov. 4 – the day after Election Day – the U.S. formally withdrew from the agreement, and will officially rejoin less than four months later.

While Biden has received widespread support for his immediate decision, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, has voiced his disagreement – and brought Pittsburgh into it.

The day of Biden's inauguration, Cruz tweeted that Biden's decision to rejoin the accords “indicates he's more interested in the views of the citizens of Paris than in the jobs of the citizens of Pittsburgh.” A day later, he shared an image of a free bumper sticker with the words “Pittsburgh > Paris” – in Pittsburgh's famous black and gold colors.

It seems like Cruz's new campaign strategy is to replace facts with something much more spicy: hypocrisy.

While Cruz might not realize that the Paris Climate Agreement has nothing to do with Paris – besides being the location the accords were signed in – he must also be forgetting the vote he cast a few weeks ago disputing the election results in Pennsylvania.

Cruz's intent to disrupt one of the core processes of democracy contradicts whatever loyalty he claims to Pittsburgh and strips him of any responsibility he may think he has to “stand up” for it. That vote he cast in the Senate chamber is a slap in the face to Yinzers who made the decision to participate in the electoral process and vote in November.

Moreover, Cruz has no factual basis to his assumption that Pittsburgh will suffer when the U.S. rejoins the agreement. As Mayor Bill Peduto stated in a response to Cruz, “there are more jobs in the renewable/green industry in Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) than oil, gas & coal industries combined.” Peduto has since reaffirmed his pledge to follow the commitments of the agreement and reduce the city's emissions.

Cruz has no reason to imply that rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement will take away American jobs and harm Pittsburgh's blue collar workers. Sustainable industries offer no less economic resources to Americans than the fossil fuel industry, and provide jobs that preserve Earth's quickly-depleting natural resources.

The residents of Pittsburgh and Paris – and all the cities of the almost 200 countries that signed the agreement – breathe Earth's air and drink Earth's water. A threat to global climate is a threat to everyone's climate, and by committing to the promises outlined in the Paris Climate Agreement, the U.S. joins the pledge for a better future for both Pittsburgh and Paris.

Live in the moment rather than capturing it

KATIA FAROUN
features editor

Though it's in the name, a photographer's goal should not be a photo-op. Merriam-Webster defines "behold" as to gaze upon, usually something of impressive beauty. Multiple religions place an emphasis on beholding the glory of nature. The Judeo-Christian worldview encourages believers to see God's presence in nature and to respect it as part of his creation. Aesthetic philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant, use nature as a basis to analyze judgments of beauty. In the metaphysical realm, nature is revered and respected as at least complex and at most holy.

But now, nature seems to play a different role.

I've been blessed with experiencing countless stunning landscapes — ones of majestic mountains, colorful skies at sunset or deep blue oceans splashing against a rocky coast. Almost as soon as my eyes land on the beauty, I whip out my camera and spend the next 10 minutes clicking open the shutter, shifting to get the perfect angle and lighting. At minute 11, I look out of the viewfinder and face an exhausted scene somehow not as striking as it is on my camera display — and walk away, already scheduling

what time a post that evening would gather me the most Instagram likes.

Only later does the guilt set in — that I have the blessing of a camera on hand to forever document a fleeting piece of history, but instead of beholding the spectacle with my eyes, I see it through an expensive hunk of glass. I approached a piece of beauty, a combination of the forces of nature and science, and abused it by viewing it in angles, white balance and framing.

Yes, a photographer's responsibility is to photograph compelling images — and time can limit our ability to enjoy the scene we're photographing. But it's also our responsibility to honor Earth's greatness. Viewing a spectacle of nature as a canvas is just another way to exploit the natural world — a way to demean the grandeur of Earth by seeing it as something to consume, rather than to behold.

Today, beholding nature seems like a lost art. Technology has brought recent generations an abundance of convenience and joy — but as always with ease, there comes the temptation to take for granted exactly what this convenience is granting us access to.

It's not always photographers that commit this crime. Tourists walk down streets taking selfies with La Sagrada Familia and

spend lunch editing pictures of the beach they're sitting on. Teenagers seek out scenic places and spend the entire time taking photos of each other, not stopping for one moment to admire the beauty they're trampling.

The truth is, it's easy for photographers to get caught up in our job. Our natural urge when seeing something beautiful or photo-worthy is to capture it — and to capture it well. But the techniques used to take a good photo are inherently distracting, and it's inevitable for any photographer to not be truly in the moment when on the job.

However, with all things, there's a balance. While it may not be possible for photographers to photograph nature unhindered by a lens, it is possible — and essential — for us to take a moment and simply be a human beholding a marvel of nature.

It's humbling to recognize the grandeur of nature and our finiteness as human beings. Voyager 1's 1990 image of Earth surrounded by the vastness of space reminded mankind just how small the pale blue dot we call home actually is. To be reminded of our seemingly insignificant mark on the history of the universe forces us to reckon with our pride.

For at our core, we are all human beings. Yes, we may wear



COURTESY OF UNSPLASH

Features Editor Katia Faroun encourages us to live in the moment.

a lab coat or a badge, and for a moment, resort to this temporary identity. But first and foremost, we are complex anatomical beings, consisting of various biological systems. We are the result of millions of years of evolution, and we most likely won't be the last versions of our species.

Still, though the existence of the human race may only be a small finger nail shaving off the wingspan of time, there are things that have lasted much longer. There are mountains and ravines, valleys and oceans, volcanoes and water-

falls that rise and fall at Earth's command. And as we enjoy our short time on this beautiful planet, we can humbly look on, reminded of our identities as its visitors.

As the book of Genesis reminds us, "For dust you are, and to dust you will return." Who are we to exploit this wonder-filled planet by shoving DSLRs and smartphones in its face? We at least owe it the respect of beholding its non-man made beauty, and making that the image we walk away with.

Put the camera down, and enjoy the view.

The Chinese Communist Party embodies aggression and tyranny

ALEX WOLFE
staff columnist

Starting the new year with a fresh, clean slate is always good in theory, but I believe it's extremely important this year. We have a new American president, a new party in total control of the federal government and the national hope that life will return to normal at some point this year.

With that in mind, I'm opening my first column this year by looking at China in a new light, with much more cynicism than in previous years given the events of the past year in particular. Frequent readers of this column, or those who know me on campus, may know of a particular obsession I have with studying China; and for the past seven semesters I've written columns for *The Duke*, I have never been slow to criticize China, especially in contrast to the previous American administration.

The current genocide of the Uyghur population in Xinjiang and systematic crackdown on democratic activists in Hong Kong are the true face of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and American leftists giving China a pass because the country is run by communists must wake up to the Chinese government's true authoritarian nature.

A splendid national railway system and a daily reminder of the national commitment to upholding a socialist vision does not account for the fact that the Chinese people do not control the means of production. It's a sub-contracted communism whereby the

people may hold national asset portfolios rather than the national assets themselves. The total control of large-scale national assets and suppression of both minority and political opposition is closer to fascism than communism.

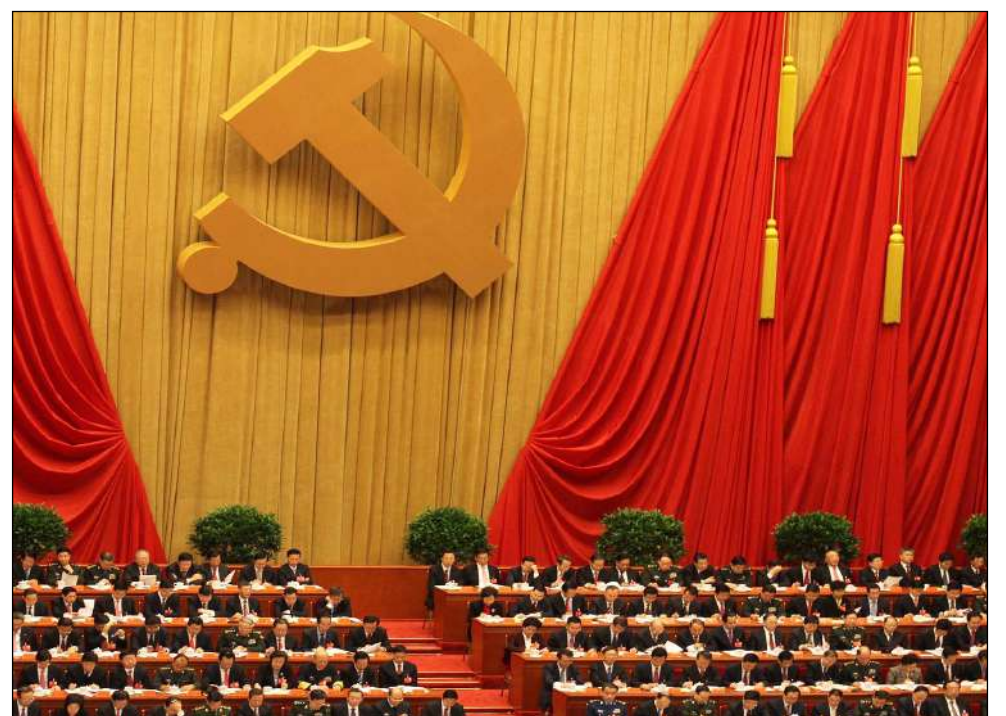
I don't doubt the reasoning behind the CCP's genocide — to establish an utterly secure and ethnically homogenous trade node for its transcontinental railroad to Istanbul, Moscow and the rest of Europe — but that can never excuse a policy of extermination. Forced sterilization, torture, family separation and detention are only one step away from large-scale executions.

It's as if the Chinese government analyzed the Holocaust and presumed that they could commit these human rights violations as long as they didn't make murder the official policy, and that analysis seems to have been correct.

The only strong international voice attacking China on this issue has been former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the same person who joked abroad that the Trump administration would have a second term. The silence on this is deafening, and to the CCP, compliance is approval.

Similarly, the terribly strategic adoption of a new national security law in the wake of the 2019 protests has allowed the Chinese government to abduct and detain Hong Kongers who supported or helped coordinate those protests.

Furthermore, the withholding of COVID-19 aid to Hong Kong from the central government has hamstrung



COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Chinese Communist Party commits more human rights violations now more than ever.

the Hong Kong government's ability to combat transmission, and many Hong Kongers have begun adopting permanent residence in mainland China out of concern for their personal health.

2020 was a momentous year for the CCP — the year of followthrough on a decade of grand strategy to rebuild international economic access and national pride — but 2021 has been set by the CCP as the target date for China to

be a "moderately well off society."

It should be noted that the arbitrary designation of "moderately well off" is very much a designation meant to be confirmed by the Chinese people as opposed to some international monitoring organization. In this way, China's being well off is a measure of the national confidence of its people, which incorporates both economic and political achievements of the CCP.

Presentation reminds students of the real MLK

GILLIAN FITZGERALD
staff writer

Racism. Say it, name it and call it what it is.

In celebration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., keynote speaker Charles McKinney presented “Martin Tried to Tell Us: Confronting King as the Nation Chooses Chaos over Community.” The presentation discussed the discrepancy between all that King fought for and what he’s remembered for today.

McKinney is the Neville Frierson Bryan Chair of African Studies and Associate Professor at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. He is a renowned Civil Rights Scholar who has numerous distinguished publications, and came to talk to students, faculty and professors about a simple, yet important question: “What would happen if we listened to Dr. King’s words?”

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion held several events last week honoring King’s legacy on racism, discrimination and poverty in the U.S. It ended the week on Friday with McKinney’s presentation.

In the wake of the riot in the nation’s Capitol building at the beginning of January, King’s words could have been written yesterday. They apply to American society just as much today as they did 50 years ago, as seen in King’s book “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?”

“... A minority of whites who genuinely want authentic equality ... are balanced at the other end of the pole by the unregenerate segregationists who have declared that democracy

is not worth having if it involves equality,” wrote King in the book.

Yet, when the monument to violence by white extremists occurred just three weeks ago, McKinney noticed that King’s words were nowhere on television networks or connected to this insurrection. He urged the audience to think about why there is a disconnect between King and these violent images, and why King is only brought up when Black people are using violence — but not when whites are perpetrating violence.

“There’s a reason why we don’t grapple with the real King,” McKinney said. “We don’t think of King in truly, authentically expansive ways ... we don’t think of King in all of his prodigious work and the way they touched on every aspect of American society.”

When people talk about King — most only honoring him once a year — who are they referencing? Unfortunately, it’s usually what social activist Julian Bond referred to as the “master narrative” that surrounds the Civil Rights Movement in our country: Once King led the protest movement, backed by the “sympathetic government,” America understood discrimination was wrong and instantly changed — it was a victory for our great country.

“It’s the history we’re taught versus the history we should know,” said Anthony Kane, the director for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at Duquesne.

King’s monument in Washington D.C. itself has 14 of his own quotes written on it — yet not one of them contains the words racism, segrega-

tion or racial inequality.

The master narrative avoids the actual substance of King and refuses to call what he fought what it really is: racism. McKinney explained that not only is this narrative ignorantly racist, it is perpetrated even further when it is made gendered, classist and heteronormative — all while lacking accountability in society.

“So much of our issue today ... is our discomfort and inability to name the thing that we are combating,” McKinney said. “We battle against evil content, but there are no evil doers: misogyny without misogynists, racism but no racists, homophobia but there’s no homophobes.”

This behavior and mindset often motivates the way America goes about interacting with the rest of the world as well. However, it brands it with the notion that our country’s actions are always right, ignoring its history of violence and poverty both inside and outside its borders.

McKinney went on to explain how this toxicity is revealed in militarism, as seen at the Capitol last month and in the way we engage in war. It results in racism and poverty going unchecked, as many people are “violently opposed to the construction of a multiracial democracy” in a nation that “manipulates the poor,” as King said.

King not only fought for a nation of equality, but also for war to be seen as an attack on the poor. He saw the connection between the breakdown of poverty programs and the buildup of war in Vietnam — something that continues to occur today because, as McKinney



COURTESY OF FLICKR

King fought for more than just equality: He also fought against violence and poverty.

stated in his presentation, “perpetual war will always come at the expense of marginalized people at home and abroad.”

“Immoral behavior erodes our moral fabric when we don’t ask hard questions about the way we move in the world,” McKinney said.

The presentation discussed how King’s anti-poverty and multi-racial movement is the narrative the U.S. needs as it continues to go through another political and human rights crisis, due to the fact that Americans didn’t actually or fully listen to King in the past. It also spoke on the United States’ deep-rooted issues and educated the Duquesne community on the real purpose behind King’s words, along with how the country is reliving a time where people are choosing chaos over community.

McKinney claimed that Americans are in a position where they must continue King’s work, and he

advised students to build their community, engage in freedom dreams and be bold and unrepentant in telling the truth: Call racism what it is and figure out what that looks like on campus.

“Be prepared, willing and able to engage in dialogues, meetings, and workshops ... and be prepared to engage in sit ins and non-violent direct action activities when folks aren’t hearing you,” McKinney said. “Have all channels open, and then move forward in confidence that you all are engaged in what Martin King called ‘the beautiful struggle to make a new world.’”



J-Term in review: Student reflects on semester like no other

KELLEN STEPLER
editor-in-chief

Duquesne students began spring semester classes Thursday, Jan. 21, but Allison Mackenzie started taking classes offered by the university two weeks earlier.

That’s because the second-year law student decided to participate in Duquesne’s online J-Term. Geared for enrichment purposes only, and for no credit, 19 free asynchronous courses were available to students interested from Jan. 7 to Jan. 20.

The university originally planned for the first day of the spring semester to begin Jan. 7, but delayed the start by two weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Virtual J-Term lets us reward students for the hard work they did to keep the campus safe during the fall semester,” university Provost David Dausey said in an email to all students in October, announcing Duquesne’s first-ever J-Term along with the spring schedule. “Having the opportunity to take a quick course on a subject that seems interesting can help get students ready for their return and enrich their overall experience.”

Mackenzie said that as a law student, the non-graded J-Term classes were more “low-key” than her law classes. She took three of the J-Term classes — Divine Comedy: Theology through Stand-Up; He Called Me a Mud-Blood! Exploring Racism and Classism in Harry Potter;



GRIFFIN SENDEK / MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Second-year law student Allison Mackenzie appreciated how “low-key” her three J-Term courses were.

and Presidential Honeymoons: The First 100 Days of an Administration.

“Those were the ones that sparked my interest,” Mackenzie said.

With an undergraduate degree in political science from Duquesne, Mackenzie said that the Presidential Honeymoon course was her favorite of the three. For someone who has been enrolled at Duquesne for five years,

the J-Term was a “way different experience” compared to typical fall and spring semester courses.

“The biggest difference is flexibility — the J-Term was for learning purposes only,” she said. “Semester courses are not as flexible; like deadlines, for example.”

For someone who never took a J-Term before, Mackenzie said that she would do it again.

“It’s great for Duquesne to offer,” Mackenzie said. “I appreciate that they recognized that COVID changed how people are learning. If someone had an open mind and wanted to learn more, I’d definitely recommend.”

Duquesne professor Kathleen Roberts taught the J-Term course New Year, New World: 14-Day Challenge. With the longer break between the fall and spring semesters, Roberts said that by January, she’d be missing her students a lot, and her favorite part of her job was interacting with students.

“Most typical new year’s resolutions are self-serving, and that’s one of the reasons why they don’t work,” Roberts said. “I wanted to change ‘new year, new me’ to ‘new year, new world’ — that if we make changes this year, they should benefit others.”

Roberts said that the changes are easy to make because there are so many resources out there to make the change last as a lifelong habit.

“The open flow of ideas was similar to a semester class, but maybe it was also heightened by the short and intense nature of the class,” Roberts said.

If Duquesne offers a J-Term course in the future, Roberts recommended that other professors sign up to teach a class.

“I hope there will be more courses like this, beyond J-Term, that Duquesne could open up to our alumni and members of the community,” Roberts said. “It’s exciting to think of a university as a place for lifelong learning, as leaders in the intellectual life of the community.”

Men’s hoops team hits 14 treys, annihilates Fordham

ADAM LINDNER
sports editor

Following a disappointing letdown against St. Bonaventure over the weekend, the Duquesne men’s basketball team throttled Fordham on Wednesday evening en route to its largest margin of victory ever in an Atlantic 10 road game.

The Dukes (5-6, 4-5 A-10) hit a season-high 14 3-pointers and shot 50% from the floor against the Rams (1-8, 1-8), who struggled in their first game following the departure of coach Jeff Neubauer.

Freshman Chad Baker scored a career-high 23 points and frontcourt duo Marcus Weathers and Mike Hughes each posted double-doubles, propelling a Duquesne team that led by as many as 35 points in the 86-62 thrashing.

The victory was Duquesne’s most complete of the campaign — a welcomed reprieve for a team that has struggled to score the ball this season. The Dukes entered Wednesday’s matchup as the conference’s second-lowest scoring team, ahead of only lowly Fordham. Seven 3-pointers from Baker and two each from Weathers, Tyson Acuff and Mike Bekelja helped Duquesne build a lead that would put the game out of reach by halftime.

Baker, a 6-foot-7 freshman from the Dominican Republic, enjoyed quite the 21st

birthday on Wednesday evening. The freshman wing hit 7-of-11 of his 3-point attempts against the Rams — becoming the third freshman in DU history to hit seven or more 3-pointers in a game — before coach Keith Dambrot serenaded him in the locker room after the game with his very own rendition of ‘Happy Birthday’.

Despite Baker’s prolific shooting performance, Dambrot insisted Baker is still underachieving and won’t begin to realize his full potential until he starts to take more pride in the little things.

“He’s just scratching the surface,” Dambrot said postgame. “He’s a guy that should be the best defender, should be the best passer, should be the best ball-handler, should be the best shooter. And as crazy as it sounds, he’s underachieving.

“I have high expectations for talented people. ... When he finally decides he’s going to work at this game and put everything he has into it, you’ll see something even better than this. He’s got good instincts, and he’s confident as hell.”

Baker, who left his native Dominican Republic for the United States prior to his junior year of high school, said he’s grateful for Dambrot’s criticisms.

“When I first got to Duquesne, [Dambrot] literally told me this: ‘Do you want to be great?’ I’m like, ‘Coach, I left everything back home to make it. Do what you gotta do to take me to



COURTESY OF DUQUESNE ATHLETICS

Duquesne guard Tavian Dunn-Martin draws contact on his way to the rim during Duquesne’s 86-62 win at Fordham on Jan. 27. Dunn-Martin, who’s been thrust into the starting point guard role following the departure of Sincere Carry, finished the Fordham game with eight points and seven assists. Head Coach Keith Dambrot said following the game that Dunn-Martin has been dealing with back discomfort recently, and that the point guard will play better once he’s completely healthy again.

that next level.’ And if it’s to yell in my face — even when I’m right — I’m going to take it, because at the end of the day, he just wants me to become better,” Baker said. “I cannot take that personally.”

At any rate, Baker’s recent emergence as a scoring threat has been a positive development for the Dukes, who have struggled offensively since the departures of three starters (guards Sincere Carry and Lamar Norman Jr. entered the transfer portal; wing Maceo Austin stepped away from the program for personal reasons and hasn’t played since Jan. 5).

Fellow freshmen Acuff and Bekelja — both of which have struggled to impact Duquesne’s offense since their arrivals on campus — made strides against the Rams, scoring 11 and six points, respectively. Acuff, a stocky point guard, looked comfortable with the ball in his hands against Fordham, a positive development for a team suddenly in dire need of playmakers. Bekelja, who started for the first time in his collegiate career on Wednesday, added six rebounds in his 27 minutes of action.

It was the stellar play of Weathers and Hughes, though, that may be the game’s foremost takeaway. The veteran tandem combined for 32 points and 23 boards on Wednesday, marking the first time since a Nov. 15, 2019, win over Lipscomb that both forwards posted double-doubles.

COVID-19-related postponements and can-

celations have proved to be detrimental for Duquesne’s conditioning efforts, with Dambrot stating on numerous occasions that his team was not where it needed to be conditioning-wise. Weathers, who spent the summer away from Pittsburgh to tend to family matters, was one of those most affected by the pandemic’s ramifications. Only now is the slashing forward beginning to look like his customary self.

Hughes’ strong play as of late — the center averaged 14.6 points on 70% shooting in the three games prior to Wednesday’s shellacking — coupled with Weathers’ promising outing in the Bronx should bode well for the Dukes, who are now set for a Saturday showdown against conference cellar-dweller Saint Joseph’s (1-13, 0-8).

“We have to use [this win] to catapult into becoming a better team, a more consistent team,” Dambrot said. “A team that starts to believe in themselves a little bit. I mean, obviously we had to have some self-doubt — me included.

“We’re playing a bunch of guys that haven’t played,” the fourth-year coach continued. “The thing I did know is [we can play] with everybody in the league. I know we’re competitive. It’s just — I didn’t know if we could win consistently. You just don’t know until you make strides.

“Now, I really believe if everything goes right, if we can show some maturity, we grow up, we can do some good things.”



COURTESY OF DUQUESNE ATHLETICS

Duquesne freshman wing Toby Okani drives toward the rim during a Jan. 9 home victory over Fordham.

Men’s Basketball A-10 Standings

Rank	Team	Conf.	Overall	Streak	Next
1.	St. Bonaventure	6-1	8-1	W6	1/30 vs. George Mason
2.	Davidson	6-2	10-5	W4	2/6 at Fordham
3.	Richmond	4-2	10-4	W1	1/29 vs. 22 Saint Louis
4.	UMass	4-2	5-4	L1	2/3 vs. Fordham
5.	VCU	4-2	11-4	W1	1/30 vs. La Salle
6.	Dayton	5-3	9-4	W1	1/30 vs. Rhode Island
7.	Rhode Island	6-4	9-8	W2	1/30 at Dayton
8.	George Mason	4-4	8-6	W2	1/30 at St. Bonaventure
9.	G. Washington	2-3	3-9	L2	2/6 vs. 22 Saint Louis
10.	Duquesne	4-5	5-6	W1	1/30 vs. Saint Joseph’s
11.	La Salle	4-5	7-9	L1	1/30 at VCU
12.	Fordham	1-8	1-8	L6	2/3 at UMass
13.	22 Saint Louis	0-1	7-2	L1	1/29 at Richmond
14.	Saint Joseph’s	0-8	1-13	L5	1/30 at Duquesne

Women’s Basketball A-10 Standings

Rank	Team	Conf.	Overall	Streak	Next
1.	Dayton	5-0	6-1	W5	1/31 at St. Bonaventure
2.	UMass	6-2	10-3	L1	1/29 vs. Saint Joseph’s
3.	Fordham	5-2	8-3	W2	1/31 at Davidson
4.	Richmond	5-2	8-4	W2	1/29 at G. Washington
5.	Rhode Island	5-2	5-5	W3	1/29 vs. La Salle
6.	VCU	5-2	7-7	W1	1/29 at George Mason
7.	Saint Joseph’s	2-1	4-1	W1	1/29 at UMass
8.	Davidson	3-3	6-6	L3	1/31 vs. Fordham
9.	La Salle	4-4	8-7	W3	1/29 at Rhode Island
10.	Saint Louis	1-2	3-2	W1	1/29 at St. Bonaventure
11.	Duquesne	1-4	2-7	L6	2/7 at St. Bonaventure
12.	St. Bonaventure	1-6	2-8	L2	1/29 vs. Saint Louis
13.	G. Washington	1-7	4-10	L3	1/29 vs. Richmond
14.	George Mason	0-7	3-11	L7	1/29 vs. VCU

Pirates commit offseason to acquiring young talent

LUKE HENNE
staff writer

In just over a year on the job, Pittsburgh Pirates general manager Ben Cherington's flurry of transactions have made it clear that the franchise is headed in one direction: Rebuild mode.

While the notion of rebuilding has become far too commonplace among Pirates fans, it is a direction in which Cherington and his bosses have deemed to be necessary.

Following a 2019 season in which the Pirates endured a 6-25 stretch from mid-July to mid-August and ultimately played to an ugly 69-93 record (leading to the departure of long-time manager Clint Hurdle and general manager Neal Huntington), Cherington was tasked with changing the team's identity from one that endured annual mediocrity to one that would be atrocious for a few years but could restock its farm system in the meantime.

In January 2020, the three-time World Series champion executive dealt center fielder Starling Marte — the team's longest tenured player at that point — to the Arizona Diamondbacks in exchange for shortstop Liover Peguero and pitcher Brennan Malone. Both prospects rank in the top 10 of the Pirates' prospect system, according to MLB.com.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Cherington used the 2020 MLB Draft in June to select middle infielder Nick Gonzales with the draft's seventh overall selection. Without playing a game since the end of his collegiate career in March 2020 at New Mexico State University, Gonzales has already ascended to the top spot of the Pirates' MLB.com prospect list.

In an abbreviated 60-game 2020 campaign, the Pirates won just 19 games, earning the league's worst record and guaranteeing them the opportunity to select phenom pitcher Kumar Rocker of Vander-

bilt University with the first overall selection in the 2021 MLB Draft. Adding Rocker to a farm system that is consistently improving should certainly help to expedite the process of returning postseason-caliber baseball to PNC Park.

Cherington was also able to use the 2020 season to evaluate his roster and determine which players would be kept and which would be moved on from. While it is clear that young stars like third baseman Ke'Bryan Hayes — who hit .376 and five home runs upon being promoted in early September — will be in it for the long haul, Cherington's actions have made it clear that he is committed to retooling the club wherever he sees fit.

The always-busy Cherington used the final weeks of his first season to grab some low-risk, high-reward type of talent, claiming outfielder Anthony Alford and pitcher Carson Fulmer off waivers. Alford hit a home run and drove in four runs in five games with Pittsburgh prior to a right elbow fracture ending his season. Fulmer did not pitch at all for the Pirates, but does carry the pedigree of being the No. 8 overall selection in the 2015 MLB Draft.

The flurry of moves continued into October, when pitchers Chris Archer and Keone Kela were granted free agency. Both were acquired by Huntington at the 2018 trade deadline as splash moves that were hoped to put the Pirates back into the playoffs. That was not the case, and allowing them to pursue other teams signaled Cherington's commitment to building a competitive roster in a way he sees fit, undoing mistakes made by Huntington at any and every avenue possible.

Near October's end, Cherington took the opportunity to pounce on some much-needed catching depth, claiming Michael Perez off waivers from the Tampa Bay Rays. Perez — who drove in 13 runs in just 84 at-bats in 2020 — will likely get the im-

mediate opportunity to serve as the back-up to Jacob Stallings.

November saw the franchise release fan-favorite starting pitcher Trevor Williams. Williams' 3.11 earned run average in 2018 brought much hope to the fanbase, but the following two seasons saw the right-hander post a 5.38 ERA in 2019 and an even worse 6.18 ERA in 2020, prompting the decision by Cherington to let on-field performance speak louder than popularity.

December brought about the end of the tenure for power-hitting first baseman Josh Bell. After a signature 2019 in which Bell hit 37 home runs and competed in the league's Home Run Derby, his 2020 was anything but signature, as he hit a meager eight home runs. While he still had any value, Cherington took the opportunity to move on, dealing Bell to the Washington Nationals in exchange for pitchers Wil Crowe and Eddy Yean. Yean already ranks in the top 10 of the Pirates' top prospect list, whereas Crowe is almost certain to make the major league roster (either in the rotation or out of the bullpen) after breaking into the big leagues with Washington in 2020.

Cherington swung another big trade earlier this month, shipping starting pitcher Joe Musgrove to the San Diego Padres in a trade that saw the Pirates acquire four prospects from a loaded Padres system, including another top-10 prospect in outfielder Hudson Head. The trade also saw the Pirates add young relief pitcher David Bednar — a native of nearby Mars, Pa. — to what will be a bullpen starved for fresh arms.

Earlier this week — not even a week after Musgrove was dealt — fellow starting pitcher Jameson Taillon was dealt to the New York Yankees in exchange for a package of four prospects headlined by 22-year-old pitcher Miguel Yajure, who struck out eight batters and pitched to a 1.29 ERA in seven innings of work in 2020. Cherington was able to net the prospects despite Taillon having not pitched

since May 2019 due to recovery from a second Tommy John surgery.

With approximately two months to go before the start of the 2021 regular season, very few players left on the major league roster will be off the table. Second baseman Adam Frazier was very likely to be traded entering this offseason, and the recent signing of Wilmer Difo — a longtime middle infielder for the Nationals — only reaffirms that possibility.

It is not always popular to deal away fan favorites left and right, but in doing so, Cherington has made it clear that in order to compete in today's Major League Baseball, the Pittsburgh Pirates will need to commit a few years to reestablishing a farm system rich with talent that can eventually produce at the major league level.



COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS
Ke'Bryan Hayes, pictured in 2018, is an integral part of the Pirates' plans for the future.

Hebda: Cherish Roethlisberger if he returns to play in 2021-22

JACOB HEBDA
staff writer

Super Bowl LV is officially set. Kansas City and Tampa Bay are slated to battle on Feb. 7.

Patrick Mahomes' Chiefs find themselves on the doorstep of a second consecutive championship. They would be the first team to accomplish that since the Patriots won back-to-back in 2003-04 and 2004-05.

Speaking of that legendary New England team, their former quarterback is hoping to win his seventh Super Bowl, albeit for the Buccaneers this time.

Every Super Bowl is heavily anticipated, but some years even more so. This is one of those instances, as the NFL will witness its brightest star of the past two decades facing off with the future of the league.

Per tradition though, the penultimate week of the season will feature no competitive action other than the generally unnoticed Pro Bowl. This season, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there isn't even a customary Pro Bowl.

So, with what is essentially a two-week lull for the NFL, this seems like a proper time to evaluate Pittsburgh's own football team.

With a record six Super Bowls for the Steelers, the city's fans are accustomed to winning. In recent years though, those expectations have undeniably diminished.

In what has become a disturbing trend, Mike Tomlin's team experienced another late season collapse. A historic 11-0 start was quickly blemished by three consecutive losses. Then, in a playoff game where they were widely favored, the Steelers fell to Cleveland, 48-37.

Now, Pittsburgh is at a crossroads. With the roster aging earlier than hoped, especially on offense, the championship window may be closed.

It's unfamiliar territory for the storied franchise. When a future Hall of Famer leads your offense for 17 years, as Ben Roethlisberger has, a Super Bowl always seems within reach.

That mission remains the same now, though the prospects for the 2021 season are far murkier than in years past.

The Steelers looked elite at various points early in the season, but their eventual implosion raises legitimate concerns about the future.

A return from Ben, which seems likely, would be the best path to a postseason berth. Despite stumbling down the stretch, Roethlisberger still showed glimpses of his former

self. No game better encapsulates his erratic play than the playoff loss against Cleveland, in which he threw four interceptions and four touchdowns.

Bringing Ben back would come at a cost though. \$41.25 million, to be exact. That's good for the most expensive salary cap hit in the NFL.

If Roethlisberger retires, the Steelers would save money, but it also dampens postseason aspirations. They would still owe him \$22.5 million, too.

The remaining roster features a decent array of talent, particularly on defense. Mainstays T.J. Watt, Minkah Fitzpatrick and Cam Heyward will lead what should be a stingy group.

Offensively, the receiving duo of Diontae Johnson and Chase Claypool is a bright spot. Beyond those two though, the prospects are questionable.

A once-dominant offensive line has finally succumbed to age. Former All-Pro Maurkice Pouncey and David DeCastro, as well as Alejandro Villanueva, could retire.

An already rapid backfield projects to lose its top runner this offseason, James Conner.

The offensive line and run game are the only two units in particularly poor shape, but the path to repair is unclear.

Pittsburgh can draft linemen or a new

running back, but there is no guarantee of immediate contribution. Adding impactful veterans via free agency is highly improbable given the cap situation. A trade would cost Pittsburgh a key player for next year or a draft pick for an eventual rebuild.

No clear solution exists, which is why it will be months before a plan truly comes into fruition.

The Roethlisberger Era could be barreling toward an ignominious conclusion, but the Steelers still have a puncher's chance next year. Their fate next season is anyone's guess.

Perhaps the best strategy, then, is for observers to simply appreciate what should be Roethlisberger's last playoff push.

Few franchises are ever graced with a quarterback as accomplished as the two-time Super Bowl-winning Roethlisberger.

The list of active quarterbacks with two championship wins is brief: Brady, Roethlisberger and, if he beats Tampa on Feb. 7, Mahomes. It may be decades before another quarterback of Roethlisberger's talent arrives in Pittsburgh.

Ben may not be the same player he once was, but he's good enough to give his team a chance. With the clock ticking on this golden era, we should enjoy the final ride before Roethlisberger finally hangs up his cleats.

PSO musicians persevere in the midst of pandemic

OLIVIA BURIK
staff writer

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced many states into lockdown, concert halls around the nation went silent.

Jim Rodgers, principal contrabassoonist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, recalled March 13, 2020 as the day everything changed.

"We were told to go home and that we were going to be initiating lockdown," Rodgers said.

With rising fears of the spread of COVID-19, the PSO was not the only group to halt its plans.

Rachel Stegeman, a Pittsburgh-based violinist, was normally involved in multiple ensembles throughout the year.

Wheeling Symphony Orchestra, where Stegeman serves as concertmaster, was the last ensemble she rehearsed with before the shutdown in March.

"We did the whole rehearsal, and at the very last second, the board came on stage and said, 'we can't have the concert,'" Stegeman said.

Despite the abrupt end to the season, she described feeling a sense of closure.

"That dress rehearsal really felt like a concert somehow. It had exceptional energy and passion," Stegeman said.

Once the nation traded suits for sweatpants and the workday commute for instant Zoom meetings, the classical music world began to adapt in its own ways.

The musicians of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra released online content throughout the onset of the pandemic.

"We actually realized that we could still connect with our audiences and with the community through video and social media," Rodgers said.

According to Rodgers, "Sunday Night Live concerts" featured different individual musicians each week. The "Practice! Practice! Practice!" segment provided guidance for young musicians. "Bright Spots" were videos of short pieces recorded by musicians who then spoke of their personal connection to the music.

An ongoing video series, "Front Row," features small groups of PSO musicians playing in Heinz Hall as well as other well-known local backdrops.

Social distancing, mask wearing, and self-assessments of health were required for the PSO musicians to return to work.

Both Rodgers and PSO second/utility trombone James Nova emphasized the importance of safety for everyone, while also acknowledging the danger of COVID-19 for wind and brass players, who directly rely on their respiratory health for their careers.

Beyond their online presence, some PSO musicians participated in local "porch concerts" for limited audiences, according to



COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

With patience, Pittsburgh performers adjusted their typical routine to accommodate pandemic protocol.

Rodgers. He participated in a few of the weekly Sunday concerts in the Highland Park neighborhood.

"I remember we played our first piece, and I heard applause. And I almost started crying because I was thinking I haven't heard applause since the middle of March," Rodgers said.

PSO cellist Karissa Shivone performed as part of a socially-distanced and masked string quartet for a drive-in concert in Homestead. The performance included several movements from Mozart string quartets. A large screen projected the live performance, and the audio was accessible to audience members in their cars via radio, according to Shivone.

The Pittsburgh Opera put together a production of Mozart's "Cosi fan tutte" with a modified ensemble size and run time for a limited audience.

Charles Stegeman, violinist and husband to Rachel Stegeman, is the concertmaster of the Pittsburgh Opera and Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre Orchestras. Rachel is the assistant/associate concertmaster for both groups.

Charles Stegeman said that the normal orchestra size for a production of "Cosi fan tutte" is about 35 to 55 players. The Pittsburgh Opera's performances cut that number to 13. The audience appeared to be around 30 people in total, according to Stegeman. The production took place at the opera company's building in the Strip District.

According to Charles Stegeman, instrumentalists who could not wear masks due to the technicalities of their respective instruments were spaced 10 feet apart from each other, with plastic sheets to catch any droplets. The string and percussion sections were also separated from the winds and brass. Vocalists wore specialized masks.

The Wheeling Symphony Orchestra also performed live, including one outdoor concert and a

few concerts live streamed remotely in Oglebay for socially-distant ballroom dinners, according to concertmaster Rachel Stegeman.

Also concertmaster of the Youngstown Symphony Orchestra, Rachel Stegeman led a chamber orchestra concert in November at the DeYor Performing Arts Center for a socially-distanced audience of 100.

Beyond the organizational level, many individual musicians took the time to engage in projects of their own.

Nova, a PSO trombonist, said he has used the extra time to work on his audio and video skills, producing his own content and also assisting other musicians with their projects.

"I have treated this as an unplanned sabbatical," Nova said.

Contrabassoonist Rodgers said he found himself frequently using the Acapella app, where users can layer multiple videos to create harmony, as a way to create content for the PSO as well as for his own use.

Cellist Shivone began to experiment with writing new arrangements of music for both herself and her husband, a bass baritone in the Pittsburgh Opera. The duo was featured in one of the PSO musicians' "Sunday Night Live" performances.

Rachel and Charles Stegeman moved their annual violin and viola summer camps completely online and even found the virtual versions to be more effective in some respects.

Though many musicians and music organizations have found ways to innovate in this unprecedented era, the adjustment to the new normal has been difficult.

Without the live element of "high pressure concerts," many "powerhouse players" began to feel "rudderless," said Nova.

Shivone said she especially misses greeting audience members before concerts, a somewhat new tradition for the PSO.

"It was a great opportunity to get to know the people who love the orchestra and wanted to be there every week," Shivone said.

Even more disheartening is the fear that some orchestras may not be able to survive this pandemic.

"I do definitely worry about some of the smaller orchestras in the country," Shivone said.

She said that community ensembles can play a crucial role in the development of a young musician, and she hopes that future generations are able to benefit from these opportunities.

But it isn't just the smaller organizations that are being affected.

Perhaps most shocking to the classical music industry was the New York City-based Metropolitan Opera's decision to cancel its entire 2020-2021 season and leave many musicians without pay.

"Because of the lack of protection in their contract and the lack of sympathy and support of their management, they were basically let go without any indication of when they would come back," Rodgers said.

The Met is "going to pay an enormous artistic cost for decades because of this," trombonist Nova said. "Musicians have a long memory."

However, there is still hope for other orchestras who are pulling through with the support of donors and subscribers.

"I'm kind of an eternal optimist. I believe that when things do have the chance to bounce back, they're going to bounce back incredibly strongly," said Rodgers.

Shivone mentioned that her music-making used to feel more about herself, but she now sees it as a gift of healing, something she believes the world will desperately need after the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I think people have realized, now that we're not able to have [live music], how important it is to us all," Shivone said.

WEEK'S EVENTS

COVID-19 Mask Distribution
Jan. 29, @ 9 a.m.

Go to the Office of Commuter Affairs (room 112 in the Union building) for a chance to grab a free mask!

DPC DUNite: Philly Pretzel Factory
Jan. 29, @ 9 p.m.

Stop by the Union NiteSpot for some free soft pretzels!

UPCOMING RELEASES

OK Human Weezer
Friday, Jan. 29th

American rock band Weezer is set to release their 14th studio album, allegedly about being "isolated, alienated and secluded."

The Little Things
Friday, Jan. 29th

Directed by John Lee Hancock and featuring stars such as Denzel Washington, Rami Malek and Jared Leto, this film features an officer on the hunt for two serial killers.

CAPRI'S COMPLAINTS

Newsflash: Online learning still sucks

This is not new information, but I cannot keep up with HyFlex!

I feel like I never know where I'm supposed to be when, and I already feel behind on assignments - and it's barely the second week of school.

Some professors are quite diligent when it comes to updating their syllabi or reminding students of upcoming due dates, but some... are not. And it's getting quite confusing already in this lovely spring semester.

I think the extended winter break is partially to blame, as I have not opened my laptop in almost two months.

I can only handle so much Zoom fatigue to process what comes next, not to mention the bags under my eyes, but I guess I'll find out the hard way sooner or later.

-Capri Scarcelli

Sabrina Carpenter's 'Skin' faces backlash from fans

CAPRI SCARCELLI

a&e editor

Olivia Rodrigo's "Driver's License" has been no. 1 on Billboard's Top 100 for two weeks now.

Remember the "blonde girl" she references? Yeah. That's Sabrina Carpenter. And she took it to a whole new level with her new single, "Skin."

Well-known for her role of Maya Hart on Disney's *Girl Meets World*, the young actress took to focusing on her music career signed with Hollywood Records, debuting her EP *Can't Blame a Girl for Trying* (2014) followed by her studio albums: *Eyes Wide Open* (2015), *Evolution* (2016), *Singular: Act I* (2018)

and *Singular: Act II* (2019). Now signed with Island Records, Carpenter got to work right away with a surprise for the pop industry – perhaps a hit- and-run.

Released on Jan. 22 with over 800,000 streams, Carpenter brought in her perspective of the ordeal, addressing the drama surrounding the love triangle between herself and *High School Musical The Musical: The Series* (HSMTMTS) co-stars Rodrigo and Joshua Bassett.

The song took to social media immediately, becoming a part of the "Driver's License" trend on TikTok, Instagram and Twitter to dissect these young performers' love lives.

According to an article by Vulture, fans speculated that the

on-screen, off-screen romance between Rodrigo and Bassett came to a halt around Halloween, where Bassett and Carpenter made a flirty TikTok together, and had been spotted driving around his neighborhood just weeks later.

While Rodrigo's "Driver's License" confirmed the rumor of their breakup, Carpenter's "Skin" reaffirmed these speculations – especially with her defensive tone throughout the song.

Fourth year pharmacy major Adele Sciarroni said "I'm so excited about the publicity the songs have gotten ... the one bad part of the publicity is all the hate they are getting, especially Joshua [Bassett] and Sabrina [Carpenter]."

The parallelism between "Skin" and "Driver's License" is quite obvious, as Carpenter addresses specific lines in Rodrigo's single while also adding to the narrative. Lines such as "maybe we could've been friends/If I met you in another life," "Maybe blonde was the only rhyme," and, of course, the chorus: "You can try/To get under my, under my, under my skin/While he's on mine," all seem to be a call-and-response to Rodrigo's breakup with Bassett.

However, according to Carpenter's Instagram post, her new single "isn't calling out one single person."

"I wasn't bothered by a few lines in a (magnificent) song and wrote a diss track about it,"



COURTESY OF DISNEY

The HSMTMTS lovebirds stirred drama in the pop world with their alleged breakup.

Carpenter said. "people can only get to you if you give them the power to. and a lot of people were trying to get to me."

Fans of Rodrigo were quick to come to her defense, with some TikTok users saying that 21-year-old Carpenter is "bullying" her, being that the young actress/singer-songwriter is only 17.

Sophomore political science and international relations major Riley Moore said that the drama following "Driver's License," was "completely unintentional," though she thinks that Carpenter's new single "took things a little too far."

"After listening to ['Skin'] I felt that [Carpenter] went out of her way to lyrically attack Rodrigo," Moore said. "While it definitely could be a publicity stunt, I feel like Olivia [Rodrigo] released her single with good intentions and the drama that followed was just circumstantial. I definitely think

the way each artist approached the rumors surrounding them says a lot about who they are."

Sciarroni disagreed, saying, "I don't think Sabrina deserves the backlash she has gotten because it doesn't seem like she's actually done anything wrong."

"Olivia [Rodrigo] never blames her in 'Driver's License,' she almost compliments her by saying 'she's everything [i'm] insecure about,'" Sciarroni said. "I also think Sabrina's statement made some very good points. She's not playing dumb – she owned up to the fact that parts of the song are about 'Driver's License,' but made it clear that the song in general is more about all the hate she's been getting."

The drama may be a long road ahead, but fans can look forward to more answers from these artists with Bassett's upcoming EP release on March 12, where Carpenter will be featured.



GRIFFIN SENDEK, MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Former Disney star Sabrina Carpenter responds to hate with her daring lyricism.

WandaVision introduces a pop of color to the series

GRIFFIN SENDEK

multimedia editor

WandaVision episode three "Now In Color" sheds the black and white and plunges itself into a vibrant technicolor display, replicating the look and feel of 1970s sitcoms.

"Now In Color" is filled to the brim with playful gags and charming character moments centered around Wanda's (Elizbeth Olsen) inexplicable, unnaturally quickly progressing pregnancy.

In terms of delivering answers to any questions posed by the previous two episodes or substantial progression of the plot, this chapter of *WandaVision* continues to be skimpy.



COURTESY OF DISNEY

WandaVision emerges from its '50s feel.

A third of the way through this nine-episode series, and there is still little clue of where this show is headed.

The best moments the series has to offer are the brief glimpses into the world outside this fantasy land of classic television, and the glimpse "Now In Color" delivers is the best of the show so far.

The playful antics and classic television tropes with a superpowered twist are still lovely to behold; Paul Bettany continues to be immaculately charming in the role of Vision.

The fact that *WandaVision* is light on the overarching mystery and heavy on the laughtrackable moments is not necessarily a bad thing. Had the show been conceived purely as married life sitcom – no ambiguity, no intrigue, no real impact on the MCU, *WandaVision* would still be enjoyable and well worth the watch.

Without the hindsight of where the rest of the series will go, this episode is difficult to gauge – if "Now In Color" was the beginning of something new or just more of the same, remains to be seen.

Opposed to Netflix's binge model, the weekly release Disney+ has implemented for its shows is excellent for maintaining hype, keeping its series in constant conversation. For *WandaVision*, with its trend of slow burns and subtle hints, it's unclear if the weekly episode releases



COURTESY OF DISNEY

With a whole new look, the MCU plot thickens with a buzzing romance between Wanda and Vision.

were the best choice.

Waiting an entire week for 25 minutes of content, with only five of those precious minutes worth of significant story progression, makes for a slightly underwhelming viewing.

The last five minutes are some of the best yet, they left me wanting more, but their impact is dampened by the brevity and knowledge of waiting through an entire week and more sitcom antics before

receiving any worthwhile plot details.

The mysteries of the show have been building for three episodes now, and the expectations for a worthwhile payoff continue to rise.

The show has teased just enough to keep viewers coming back for the next installment, but hopefully the next episode will provide some much needed answers.

Episode four of *WandaVision* will premiere on Jan. 29 only on Disney+.

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(section 6308 of PA crimes code)

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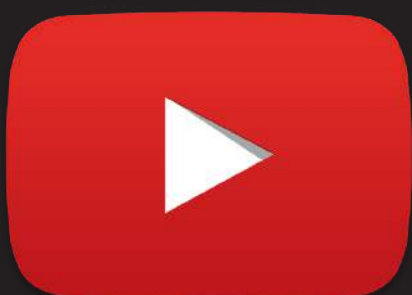
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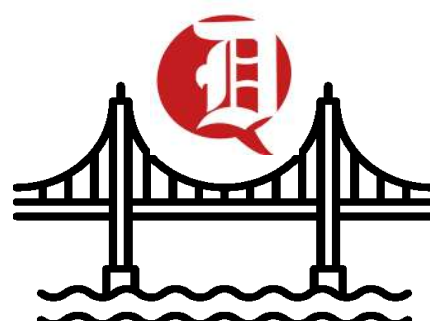


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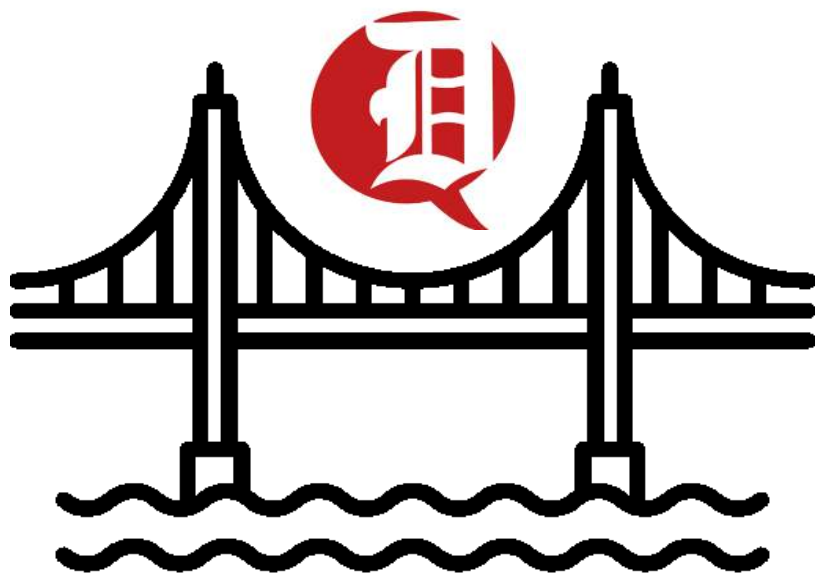
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