



THE DUQUESNE DUKE

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"A change is gonna come," Celebrations from Freedom Corner after Chauvin verdict

KELLEN STEPLER &
COLLEEN HAMMOND
the duquesne duke

A stoic hush fell over the 150-person crowd at Freedom Corner on Tuesday as they waited in heightened anticipation for the announcement of the verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial.

Chauvin, a former Minneapolis police officer, was found guilty of all three charges, including second-degree murder, for the death of George Floyd.

"All three counts. All three counts," the crowd chanted after the verdict was announced.

The crowd then took several moments to celebrate as individuals hugged and began to dance while Beyoncé's "Freedom" blared in the background.

"Thank you for caring about humanity, and thank you for always being ready," said Brandi Fisher, chief executive of the Alliance for Police Accountability.

The movement, Fisher said, is not about the individual but rather about the collective, and systemic change.

"We do not forget that an entire country was on edge," she said. "An entire country was not sure what the verdict would be. After we all witnessed a very long and tortuous murder in front of



COLLEEN HAMMOND | NEWS EDITOR

"Sister Frankie" waved around the Pan-African flag, a symbol of Black unity, as she danced to Beyoncé's "Freedom" on Freedom Corner just minutes after Derek Chauvin was found guilty on all three counts in the death of George Floyd.

monial, with organizers inviting all Black people present to gather together in a circle to perform "libations."

This ceremony, an African tradition honoring the dead, was led by LaKeisha Wolf. She proceeded to pour water into the center of the circle as she listed

Duquesne football player Marquis Jaylen Brown.

After Wolf concluded the libations, she invited a series of artists to come forth and share their work, including Jacquea Mae. She sang Sam Cooke's iconic "A Change is Gonna Come," an apt anthem for a historic day in the new civil rights movement.

After Mae's song, Fisher once again thanked the crowd for their attendance and gave instructions for the demonstrators who planned on marching with her. Before she led the crowd down the hill, she introduced and gave the mic to some of the local, political figures in the crowd.

Among them was democratic mayoral candidate Rep. Ed Gainey, magisterial judge candidate Raymond Robinson and congressional candidate Jerry Dickinson.

Dickinson spoke about his own experiences with police brutality. "I've only ever been able to watch one second of the video," Dickinson said.

He then described a familiar scene. Some time ago, Dickinson says he was stopped by police officers, placed in handcuffs and was restrained by an officer who placed his knee on Dickinson's back — akin to the fatal final moments of George Floyd's life.

"We got a lot of work to do to change the laws that are on the books right now, to ensure that we have justice," he said.

African-American men and women in the city of Pittsburgh have been disproportionately affected by over policing in 2020, Dickinson said.

The guilty verdict brought hope, according to Dickinson and Gainey, but also calls for continued criminal justice reform. Many speakers noted that there is more work to be done — discussing the recent killing of Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old Black man who was shot by a police officer about 10 miles away from where Floyd was killed on April 11. Gainey spoke of the importance of the continued fight for justice — not just the momentary celebration.

"We got justice today, and tomorrow we should be optimistic," Gainey said.

The demonstrators marched from Freedom Corner toward Forbes Ave., heading to Oakland. As they marched through Uptown, they chanted, "Black people used to live here," and "Liar, liar, gentrifier."

After reaching Flagstaff Hill in Schenley Park, the crowd, which had thinned out by this time, began to peacefully disperse.



COLLEEN HAMMOND | NEWS EDITOR

Demonstrators marched down Crawford Ave. Tuesday evening, commemorating the conviction of Derek Chauvin and honoring the death of George Floyd.

our eyes, we still were not sure what would happen."

Once the relief and jubilation set in, the demonstrators gathered around the steps of the me-

several names of victims of police brutality. She then asked the crowd to call out the names of others who were taken too soon. Among those names was former

Picnics and friendship: The dynamic duo behind PGH's very own Blanket & Board

GILLIAN FITZGERALD
staff writer

In a year marked by chaos and uncertainty, Tierra Thorne and Colleen Peddycord decided to take matters into their own hands. Their female-owned, Black-owned, philanthropic, event-planning business, Blanket & Board, is giving Pittsburgh picnics a serious upgrade.

Motivated by Thorne and Peddycord's own notions of self-care, Blanket & Board is dedicated to providing luxury picnics with charcuterie boards in Pittsburgh parks. They also cater private events around the city, all while supporting local nonprofits by donating 10% of their monthly proceeds to organizations committed to equality and human rights. Thorne and Peddycord accommodate every type of celebration—and dietary restriction—to provide their customers with a

their 'self-care-Sunday' tradition became a functioning business based on providing people with safe spaces.

"We were in quarantine and weren't really seeing each other, and then we were just like, 'let's start a business,'" Thorne said. "We both like creating and providing those safe spaces where people can come together—birthday, anniversary, whatever it may be. Nature, being out in parks, or exploring green spaces in the city is really cool, so we wanted to provide people with an opportunity to do that."

Thorne and Peddycord briefly met in grad school, but it wasn't until they began working alongside each other as social workers—and went salsa dancing together—that they became best friends. Their love for charcuterie boards and giving back to the community has been with them the whole time.

"We started the business in



COURTESY OF TIERRA THORNE AND COLLEEN PEDDYCORD

Longtime friends and colleagues Tierra Thorne and Colleen Peddycord combined their shared love of philanthropy and self-care into Blanket & Board, an event planning business featuring charcuterie boards and the beauty of Pittsburgh parks.



COURTESY OF TIERRA THORNE AND COLLEEN PEDDYCORD

Blanket & Board creates custom charcuterie boards for picnics in Pittsburgh-area parks, combining all the best of the 'Burgh.

fun experience, great food and a chance to relax with loved ones in an outdoor setting.

In the wake of the new civil rights movement and the national racial reckoning, Thorne and Peddycord found themselves searching for ways to process the recent events, including the Derek Chauvin trial. Little did they realize that their afternoons of self-care would blossom into a business.

"Colleen and I were sitting on our porch one day and it was in the midst of everything that had just happened with George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and the protests, and I was just like, 'let's do a self-care Sunday—let's get people together that are close to us in a safe, socially distanced way, and laugh, cry and go over the things that were weighing on us,'" Thorne said.

The two co-owners are also full time social workers and have spent time as trauma therapists, so they understand the strain and burnout of service work. It was natural that

the mindset of being social workers," Thorne said. "So it's weird to consider ourselves event planners even though that's what we are, but, really, social work is what makes Blanket & Board. It allows us to give back to the communities that are near and dear to our heart while providing that safe space for people through outdoor picnics."

The year-old business has donated to many nonprofits in Pittsburgh, mainly focusing on ones that support young girls and at-risk populations who don't have access to much-needed resources. Since their inception, they've partnered with Fro Gang, a local organization that helps young Black girls embrace their hair, and Strong Women Strong Girls, a nonprofit that empowers young girls through mentorship and leadership programs.

In the coming months, Blanket & Board will be partnering with Community Kitchen PGH, a local nonprofit with a workforce

development program for people who have been recently released from incarceration. Community Kitchen PGH also provides free workforce restaurant training to them. They're collaborating with Blanket & Board to teach presentation for charcuterie boards and food preparation.

"The thing that makes us unique is the giveback, the philanthropic section of Blanket & Board—how we are dedicated through our business to really give back to disenfranchised populations and being able to invest in other small, local minority-owned businesses," Thorne said. "We're 100% women-owned, and partially Black-owned so that's something in Pittsburgh that separates us. And I think that we're unique in the sense that we've been able to get creative and provide a safe, socially-distanced way for people to come together again."

Along with their passion for community-oriented service, the pair traveled together frequently, often finding ways to travel on a budget.

"We would travel together and since we're both social workers, we were poor," Thorne said half jokingly. "So instead of going to fancy restaurants, we would go to Trader Joe's, come back to our AirBnB, and make charcuterie boards. We brought those two things together, and that's how Blanket & Board came about."

Although Thorne and Peddycord said it is challenging working full-time as social workers on top of their picnic company, they love the work they do and the friendship that has united them.

Thorne happily noted that Blanket & Board has complimented their friendship and attributes the success of their business to the growth they've gone through together.

Being a female-owned and Black-owned business is something Thorne is extremely proud of, and she looks forward to setting an example for future generations of girls and minority children, including her son.

"As a Black woman, having opportunities that we weren't afforded previously and being able to show my son that he does have a seat at the table—including the importance of building generational wealth and having multiple streams of income—while also staying true to who you are and your roots is really important to me," Thorne said. "I've always known that I wanted to be a business owner and that I didn't always want to work for somebody else, so having that autonomy to stay true to your core values, I think, is extremely important. Just being an example for young girls and for Black and Brown boys and girls shows that it's possible in a world that sometimes tells you that it's not."

And for Thorne, "buying small" means even more for women and minorities in the Pittsburgh community, where investment in women-owned and minority-owned businesses can be lacking.

"I want there to be an initiative to help and support more local minority, and Black-owned and women-owned businesses. I've seen some of them pop up, but sustaining them is difficult,"

Thorne said.

Intentional strategic investment in these businesses is necessary, according to Thorne. By supporting one another locally, citizens can help create a more powerful local economy, aid one another in growing small businesses and be there for one another during the tough times facing the community.

Both Thorne and Peddycord hope to spread these aspirations of comradery, self-care, and safety with those in Pittsburgh—both physically and emotionally—through their own friendship, their collaborations throughout the city, and the unique services they provide. They're Thorne's favorite parts about Blanket & Board.

Blanket & Board may only be their first year, but they are excited to continue to grow and to see where the city takes them. Whether it be working with local organizations to uplift underserved people, advocating for change on social media or delivering DIY boxes of their Instagrammable charcuterie boards to the community, Thorne and Peddycord are constantly finding new ways for their business to burst in the hearts, minds, and mouths of Pittsburgh.

"Being able to collaborate with who we want is my favorite, and, if I'm being honest, being able to do what I want too," Thorne laughed. "But being able to do what I love with someone that I love—Colleen and I are really great friends—we laugh, we cry, we fight, but at the end of the day we have each other's backs."

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repeatedly do.

Excellence, then, is

not an act, but a habit.”

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Letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced and include the writer's name, school/department and phone number for verification. Letters should be no longer than 300 words and should be delivered to *The Duke* office at 113 College Hall or e-mailed to theduqduke@gmail.com by 5 p.m. Tuesday. The editors reserve the right to edit any and all submitted copies. All letters must be verified before being published.

Corrections/clarifications

Readers should report any story or photo error to *The Duke*. All legitimate errors will be corrected in print the following edition.

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My final word: So long, farewell from the opinions editor



GRIFFIN SENDEK / MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Four years ago, upon first arriving in the Steel City, my expectations were lofty as I said farewell to my small hometown in West Virginia and relocated to a much larger urbanized region of the country. Apart from the Pittsburgh Steelers and the many bridges that cross the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, I knew very little of the city and her surrounding beauty.

Since then, there have been countless unforgettable experiences with a number of wonderful people, many of whom are now lifelong friends. Not to mention, during my time as a student in the Palumbo–Donahue School of Business, it feels as if for the most part, I did indeed learn a vast amount of meaningful and valuable information, albeit a few courses felt painstakingly excessive and slightly ostentatious. Nevertheless, I am now entering the “real world” as a well-rounded individual who is more than prepared to move forward and tackle the challenges that life inevitably throws at each of us.

From the annual ice skate rink at PPG Place, to the infamous Primanti Brothers sandwich shop (you will be greatly missed), Pittsburgh has been a home away from home by providing a place for me to learn more about myself and grow as a person along the way.

That being said, although brimming with ambition for the first few years, it still felt as if something was missing in my life, as if there was a void wait-

ing to be filled by some sense of purpose and aspiration. I was certainly going through the motions required by our very existence, but I continuously failed at actually living in the moment.

There seems to always come a time, after feeling down for too long, when we must reflect on our current way of life, and then make a decision on what is best for us moving forward, in connection with our own personal goals, desires, values, and interests. This is the moment



NOAH WILBUR

opinions editor

when we finally discover something worthwhile, an aspect of life that fulfills the void and drives purpose in some fashion, shape or form.

By and large, this moment for me, at least during my time in college, was when I joined *The Duke* as a staff writer, and then later transitioned into my current role as the opinions editor, where I've remained for the past 9 months.

My time has not only been

remarkably rewarding, but also an enjoyable experience overall as I formed relationships with important people in the Pittsburgh metro area, while also making new friends with my fellow editors and staff writers.

Even after this difficult year with our entire newsroom battling the innumerable obstacles stemming from the emergence of COVID-19, we still managed to enjoy our time together while also continuing to release meaningful and inspirational articles that we sincerely believe had a positive impact on the student body, as well as the community.

I would be remiss not to mention the nod of appreciation that Duquesne University undoubtedly deserves as the union between *The Duke* and I might've never occurred if not for the administration's intense focus on developing a tremendous extracurricular experience, with a multitude of resources and opportunities available to support those students interested in getting involved.

Despite the good old days now behind me and all the great memories that came with them, I am truly prepared, and excited, to take the next step in life, the “Great Leap” so to speak, as I once again move to a new and unknown city to accomplish the dreams that I set out to achieve years ago.

Thank you to everyone who made my experience here at Duquesne so special — you know who you are.

STAFF EDITORIAL

*Even with such
uncertainty, our mission
remains unchanged*

In the immortal words of Duke editor-in-chief Kellen Stepler, “It’s that time of year again.”

After a year like no other, *The Duke* is concluding another chapter in its storied history.

This year, we, as a staff, have done our best to forge a path back to normalcy. But since the pandemic hit, it has been extremely hard for us to do so.

We mourned the heartache of goodbyes that were said too soon. We faced illness and loss as we tried to man the ship back to “normal life.” We tried to stay afloat amidst a sea of uncertainty, doubt and ever-changing circumstances. There were many nights where we questioned whether we were up to the challenge this year’s stories placed before us.

But what we realized is that we have spent so much time worrying about the future that we haven’t stopped to appreciate all we have accomplished — our new normal.

The status quo has changed for journalists, and we dared to change with it. We have been through so many deeply profound and historical moments as a community this year, and we, your Duke staff, were able to continue our mission through them all.

We faced a once-in-a-century pandemic, and we’re all still here. We stood on the forefront of the racial justice movement and consistently discussed how we would grapple with it as a campus.

We hiked up Freedom Corner and scoured across campus to keep you up to date on the Danielle Brown and Gary Shank cases. We spoke truth to power and put our ears to the ground to get to know the Black community in a new and honest way. We ran into the street in the middle of the night to cover civil unrest in our neighborhood. We piled into a Subaru and raced to hear President Joe Biden speak the night before the 2020 election. And Tuesday, we marched up to Freedom Corner — where this whole year began for us — to cover the conclusion of one of the defining trials of the decade.

As we move forward and start a new chapter in Duke history, we will carry with us the lessons we have learned along the way. After all we’ve accomplished this year, one thing is clear to us: *The Duke* will continue to use its voice to serve those in our community who need it most. We take our role as a force of change on this campus very seriously, and we cannot wait to continue on this journey next fall.

My final thoughts as we continue to inch closer to graduation day

ALEXANDER WOLFE
staff columnist

I didn't decide to come to Duquesne until 17 days after I'd put the security deposit down at 11:59 pm on May 1st of 2017. It was originally a safety among safety schools for me, back when where I went to college seemed like a life-defining decision. In some ways it was, but in many ways it was just one part of a continuation of everything that had already come along.

Yet despite the fact that I arrived at Duquesne as a third or fourth choice, and very much treated it accordingly at first, I can't help but look back fondly upon my experiences and some of the non-COVID ways my life changed after moving into a 50-year old dorm with unrenovated dorms.

If there was a single worthwhile theme that hindsight seems to draw out, it's that in the long run, the choices you make and the habits that drive those choices matter. The payoff for doing hard work, rarely appears quickly. Without sounding like a Monday motivation podcaster, I have genuinely discovered that the effort to read the book (sometimes), attend a supplementary lecture, or put your passion into your work is

usually, but not immediately, worth it.

It's this idea of passion that I think many of us get hung up on. We seniors are graduating into a world that is both opening fast with exciting new opportunities, and in which at least a third of all employees describe their work as unfulfilling or meaningless. No amount of university core curriculum can prepare us for utterly meaningless work, it will forever be a terrible bane of contemporary society.

We'd all like to hope that a degree is what gives us the tools to pursue our dreams, but it's never that simple. We have to first, know what our dreams are, understand what we need to do to achieve them, and then actually go out and do it, but it's that first part that I think the most people struggle with. I suspect plenty of us have dreams that aren't stamped onto a diploma, and the data tells us that a good majority of people work in fields that have nothing to do with their undergraduate degree, so was there a point?

That answer is really up to you. For me, I was able to travel across the world, make lifelong friends, and study something I was truly passionate about, so I feel quite fortunate to say that even in

the face of COVID, the past four years have been worth it.

Unfortunately, I know plenty of people who wouldn't be too quick to say the same thing, but if you're one of those people, I encourage you to explore that reality. You should have something now that you didn't have four years ago, so it's worth exploring yourself.

Duquesne has undeniably given us some modicum of freedom to explore ourselves, even if only for fleeting moments, so if you have a fulfilling memory of some kind, explore it. Something that I came to understand as the years went by was that I had an expectation that Duquesne would do a lot more for me personally.

Because I was paying tuition, I was entitled to some kind of special treatment, or because I was studying something unique, everyone should be interested in whatever it is I'm doing. This kind of pettiness couldn't be further from the truth, because the reality was much simpler.

Tuition was merely the entrance fee, like a fee to enter an amusement park, the real choices that determine your enjoyment come from how you spend your time. If you chose to earnestly, if not naïvely, use your classwork to prepare yourself



GRIFFIN SENDEK / MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

With the semester coming to an end, seniors reflect on their time Duquesne.

for life after graduation, you're probably leaving with a better plan and a better mind.

So as we crowd around a screen for commencement and we put on the blue robes for pictures on A-walk, enjoy a moment of reflection. Reflect on whatever you've achieved, whatever you've learned, and how you're going to bring everything together at some point in the future.

Reflection has shown me how

tremendously thankful I am for my opportunity to write for the Duke these past four years. From interviewing faculty to covering the Westboro Baptist Church to receiving disgruntled emails from administration vice presidents, I've had a ridiculous experience writing for the newspaper. I've written a lot of articles that people have read, and a lot that people haven't, but having the opportunity to spout off in a column for the past three

Did you know that your local pharmacy technician is severely underpaid?

MOHAMMAD SAJJAD
staff columnist

As I was scrolling through Facebook, I noticed a post from a local supermarket chain advertising for several open Pharmacy Technician positions. Having worked in a pharmacy and understanding how busy it can be, I was not surprised to see that they needed help.

What triggered me, however, was how the company enthusiastically boasted a starting salary of \$13 per hour for the position. While this may not seem bad initially, it is abysmal once you know how much knowledge is required for the position and the stress technicians endure on a daily basis.

Pharmacy technicians, specifically those that work in retail settings, deserve higher starting pay. Not only will this accurately reflect the work they do, but it may reduce the high turnover rate that is often seen with technicians.

When you pick up a prescription at your local pharmacy, you're more than likely to interact with a pharmacy technician. They are the ones that will greet

you at checkout, find your medication, and ring you out. While this interaction may leave you thinking they are a glorified cashier, this could not be further from the truth.

Patients fail to realize that there is much more to preparing a prescription than putting pills in a bottle and slapping a label on it. This is only a fraction of the process, which technicians are responsible for leading.

When the pharmacy receives a prescription, technicians are responsible for transcribing information from it, whether it's handwritten or electronic, into the computer system. In order to do this, technicians must be able to recall generic and brand name medications, recognize prescription abbreviations, otherwise known as sig codes, and in the case of a handwritten prescription, decipher nearly illegible physician handwriting.

Another responsibility that can fall on technicians is dealing with insurance. If someone is a new patient at the pharmacy, technicians are responsible for gathering their insurance information and entering it in the system so they can bill their

insurance company. This requires being able to read an insurance card and understanding how transactions work between pharmacies and insurance companies.

Oftentimes, claims to insurance companies are rejected and it's up to technicians to resolve these. In some cases, a patient's insurance won't cover a particular medication and it falls on the technician to explain this to them. Understandably, patients get upset, but they often misdirect their anger towards technicians and pharmacy staff because we're not giving them the medication they need.

With COVID-19, the number of responsibilities that fall upon technicians has only increased. With some pharmacies offering drive-thru COVID-19 testing, pharmacy technicians are responsible for administering these tests and explaining to patients how to complete them. In addition, with vaccine rollout on the rise, pharmacies are only getting busier as more people rush to get immunized.

As you can see, being a pharmacy technician requires a vast amount of knowledge; yet, many



COURTESY OF UNSPLASH

With abysmal starting pay, pharmacy technician turnover rates remain sky-high.

technicians get paid just as much as gas station employees. Because being a technician requires a large skillset, the compensation should reflect this.

Unfortunately, technician turnover is common, with pharmacies regularly having to train new employees. One way to retain technicians, especially high-caliber ones, is to increase their pay. While there will always be stress associated with

the job, technicians will have peace of mind knowing they are being compensated fairly and able to handle an increasing cost of living.

While pharmacists may lead the pharmacy, pharmacy technicians are their backbone. It's about time that technicians get paid what they deserve. While it may cost more for companies initially, it's an investment that will surely pay off in the long run.

One last bye-line: Features Editor says farewell

KATIA FAROUN
features editor

Pinned next to my computer in the newsroom is a stack of little green papers, each printed with some sort of superlative or title next to a Clipart image of a gold star with “you tried” written in Comic Sans. These papers are my *Duke Awards*: sometimes cute and usually sarcastic “awards” the editors give each other at the end of each academic year when we publish our last paper.

One of these awards — from my first semester as an editor, back in the fall of 2018 — bears the words “Rookie of the Year Award for seamlessly blending into weirdness that is the *Duke* staff.” And out of all the pieces of paper I received that semester as a newbie, that’s the one I felt most honored by, and still do to this day.

The first time I walked into that newsroom was as an extremely shy and very-aware-of-my-age freshman looking for ways to “get involved” and “establish a community,” like all the adults I knew told me to. That night, I picked up a position as a volunteer photographer and left feeling intimidated, but accomplished.

Half a year later, I was back in that newsroom — this time for a job interview. And I was twice as intimidated as I was the first time.

The people I found in that room were comfortable and con-

fident. The walls and desks were littered with images alluding to inside jokes, their conversations riddled with sarcastic, yet affectionate jabs. Through the air of professionalism, I could feel the strength of their friendships, and wanted in.

When I found out I got the job, I think I almost cried. It felt unreal that after only one year studying journalism and photographing for *The Duke*, I was going to be their photography editor. In a professional, journalistic sense, this was probably the best thing I could’ve done for my resume. But for the sake of community and quality of life, this would be one of the most rewarding decisions I ever made.

I never expected to make some of my best friends at this newspaper. It was easy for me to feel out of place — I lacked the boldness, knowledge and cleverness that I saw in my fellow editors. I wanted to make myself part of the group but without trying too hard, and the best way I felt I could do so was by pulling pranks on the other editors — some that may have gone too far (sorry about your butt, Raymond).

Thankfully, these people have a sense of humor, and I wasn’t fired for creating a toxic workspace. In fact, they welcomed me with open arms, creating the most accepting space I’ve found on this campus. And as they welcomed me into their hearts, they found a special



KATIA FAROUN / FEATURES EDITOR

Duke adviser Paula Reed Ward laughs with staff members during production on a Wednesday night in February 2020.

place of their own in mine.

Without their support, I never would have grown from being daunted by writing to embracing it. By pushing me outside of my comfort zone and having more faith in my abilities than I did, they encouraged me to pursue stories I felt incapable of covering, validated my ideas and put me in my final position of features editor, giving me control over a whole section and a team of writers. They saw in me what I never saw in myself, and I’m forever grateful for that.

I’m not good at goodbyes, and I tend to bury any sentimental feelings with facts and humor. But if there’s ever a time to feel nostalgic, now’s the moment.

I will never forget the wild and almost-too-detailed stories shared in between fits of tearful laughter at 2:30 a.m. on Wednesday nights (Thursday mornings?). I won’t forget sitting on leather chairs with the other editors in a random Baltimore coffee shop, sharing a comfortable silence as we each read books borrowed from the shelf behind

us and sipped hot tea. I won’t forget newsroom naps, birthday celebrations at Milano’s, chasing last-minute stories around the city and our adviser’s “don’t get arrested” texts.

Here’s to *Duke* staff — past, present and future. To Paula, one of the women I most admire and look up to, and whose encouragement has made me the journalist I am today. To the Duquesne Media Department and its wise, adventurous and ambitious professors.

And, of course, here’s to big J Journalism.

Year in review: Ad manager reflects on year like no other

CARISSA HASLAM
ad manager

If you added it all up, I’ve probably spent a fairly significant amount of my time at Duquesne complaining about College Hall.

Back in the days of in-person class, most of my classes took place in College



KELLEN STEPLER / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Staff members Carissa Haslam and Katia Faroun.

Hall. Plus, I’ve attended countless meetings there and spent far too many hours in the Media Department computer labs dispersed throughout the building. Consequently, I’d spend a lot of time complaining about its lack of water fountains, the faint old person smell, the confusing room numbering and its cave-like windowless design.

But during my senior year, I found that buried in the basement of College Hall is one of the most magical places on Duquesne’s campus: College Hall 113.

It too lacks windows and has a peculiar smell — most likely due to the mysterious and ancient fridge that’s tucked in the corner — but it also contains thousands of beloved memories from the years of student journalists who’ve called it home. It will forever be a privilege that College Hall 113 now holds my beloved memories as well.

It took three years of hearing my best friend and roommate, Katia, talk about the newsroom like it was some mystical place full of joy for me to apply to be on staff at *The Duke*. I’m not a journalism major and I had in fact never sold an ad before this year. But my year here has taught me that going outside of your comfort zone has major benefits. In this case, I’ve had the benefit of working with some of the coolest people on campus and getting to play a small part in helping create something meaningful every single week.

I now understand why Katia was so happy about spending 12 hours every Wednesday in the basement.



GRIFFIN SENDEK / MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Duke staff gathers in the newsroom after attending mass at the Duquesne Chapel in March 2020.

I’m immensely grateful to the *Duke* staff for welcoming this fake journalist onto the team and making me feel like I belonged — even though I still don’t know much about AP Style. I will cherish every super late night, every inside joke, every fancy dinner meeting over Chick-fil-A and every popcorn copy-editing session we’ve shared inside pastel blue walls of College Hall 113.

To my fellow *Duke* staff: I’m so proud of

the work we’ve done this year and I hope you are too. I’m excited to watch you all go off into the world and become the most bad-ass “big J journalists” the world has ever seen.

It seems that in 20 years what I’ll remember about College Hall isn’t its weird smell or its major design flaws — it’s the magic of Room 113 and the beautiful people who created it.

DU hoops team seeing high roster turnover in recent weeks

ADAM LINDNER
sports editor

It would be fair to call the 2021 college basketball offseason, despite being just under three weeks old, one of the most hectic periods of player movement in collegiate sports history.

There are several reasons for such tremendous roster shuffling in today's age of college hoops, including loosened transfer rules and extra years of eligibility being given to all athletes that competed during the 2020-21 COVID-19-ravaged campaign.

Furthermore, the coronavirus has complicated the process in which coaches typically recruit prep players (partially due to the fact that numerous prep seasons were either postponed or canceled due to COVID-19). Many freshmen

As a result, an astounding 1,435 names currently sit in the NCAA transfer portal, according to Verbal Commits. By comparison, there were 694 total transfers in 2019, per an online NCAA study.

Duquesne has been no stranger to roster turnover in the past. This past season, the Dukes saw two starting guards — Sincere Carry and Lamar Norman Jr. — depart from the team mid-season and subsequently enter their names into the portal. Carry has since committed to Kent State, while Norman is bound for Western Michigan.

In the two-plus weeks since Baylor's national title game victory, Duquesne has continued to see players both enter and exit its program.

Marcus Weathers, Amari Kelly and Chad Baker have each reportedly departed from the Duquesne program, while several newcomers

brothers last played together in 2016-17 at Miami (Ohio).

Kelly, one of the last remaining members of coach Keith Dambrot's eight-man 2018 recruiting class, entered the portal last week. Kelly played in 29 games during his freshman season before suffering a torn ACL in March 2019.

Kelly returned to action in 2020-21 after redshirting the 2019-20 campaign, seeing the court in 14 of the Dukes' 18 contests this year.

Baker, perhaps the Dukes' most promising freshman in 2020-21, is reportedly leaving the program due to "philosophical differences" between the wing scorer and the coaching staff, according to Pittsburgh Sports Now. A native of the Dominican Republic, Baker averaged 9.5 points per game for Duquesne in what will seemingly be his only season as a Duke.



COURTESY OF MERCER UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

Leon Ayers III (right) speaks to a Mercer teammate during a game last season. Ayers averaged 12.2 points per game in 2020-21 despite playing only 23.5 minutes per game for the Bears. Mercer fell to UNC Greensboro in the Southern Conference championship game on March 8, 69-61. Ayers scored a team-high-tying 16 points against the Spartans in the title game.

in the class of 2020 weren't able to visit their prospective campuses prior to committing to their schools during last year's recruiting period, making for a generous amount of odd program-player pairings.

suddenly populate the Dukes' roster.

Weathers, Duquesne's leading scorer in 2020-21, has pledged to play at Southern Methodist University in Dallas next season alongside his twin brother, Michael. The twin

Conversely, several newcomers have been added to Duquesne's prospective 2021-22 roster, including three transfer players and three prep signees.

R.J. Gunn (Division II Lenoir-Rhyne), Tre Williams (Indiana State) and Leon Ayers III (Mercer) have each signed financial aid agreements with Duquesne, officially making the trio a part of the team's 2021-22 plans.

Gunn comes to the Bluff after spending four years in Hickory, N.C., at Lenoir-Rhyne. A 6-foot-7 swingman, Gunn averaged an impressive 19.6 points per game for the Bears in 2019-20, but saw his scoring average dip to 16.6 this past season.

Dambrot called Gunn a "real sleeper" in a program press release, saying, "he's a big, strong, athletic inside-out guy with terrific range on his jump shot who can play multiple positions for us."

"Some may judge a Division II player a little differently, but as someone who has coached at that



COURTESY OF INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

Tre Williams, pictured during a game against Illinois State, is set to join Duquesne in 2021-22 after spending his first two collegiate seasons at Indiana State.

level, I know how many quality players there are in D-II."

Williams, a 6-foot-7, 250-pound forward, spent his first two collegiate seasons as an Indiana State Sycamore prior to hitting the transfer portal. Williams was named to the Missouri Valley Conference All-Defensive Team in 2021.

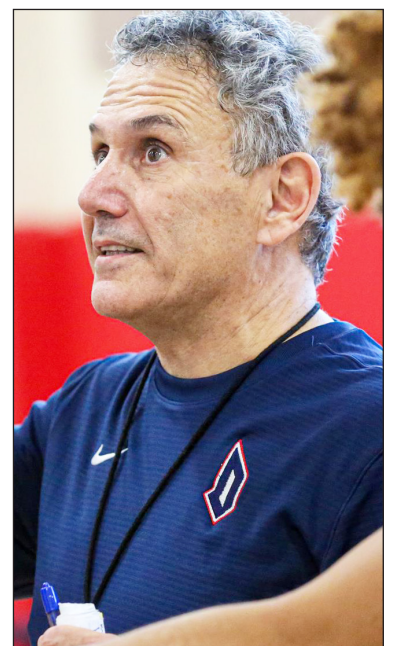
"Tre is a very, very experienced player who will be a great addition to our frontcourt," Dambrot said in the press release. "His numbers at Indiana State — in a very good conference — were very similar to Marcus Weathers' at Miami before he transferred in."

"With our philosophy of getting the ball to the post, I look for his offensive numbers to make a real jump."

Williams averaged 9.0 points and 6.0 rebounds per game last season for the Sycamores in 30.5 minutes per game.

Ayers, a Michigan native, averaged 12.2 points and 3.8 rebounds per game for Mercer last season in his lone campaign as a Bear. The 6-foot-6, 180-pound guard scored in double digits 20 times for Mercer despite starting only seven contests.

"I think Leon can be a real good scorer for us. He's terrific with the ball and can shoot it at a high level," Dambrot said in the



COURTESY OF DUQUESNE ATHLETICS

Duquesne Head Coach Keith Dambrot, pictured during a team practice at the on-campus Power Center, has seen a good deal of roster additions and departures over the past few weeks.

release. "He has a great upside."

In addition to Duquesne's portal-related acquisitions, prep players Primo Spears and Jackie Johnson have officially signed with the Dukes, joining 6-foot-6 guard Andy Barba in the current recruiting class.



COURTESY OF DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

Chad Baker, pictured during a game at Dayton Jan. 13, will reportedly not return to the Duquesne basketball team next season. Pittsburgh Sports Now reported on April 20 that Baker and the team have parted ways due to "philosophical differences."



COURTESY OF LENOIR-RHYNE UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

R.J. Gunn, a four-year player at Division II Lenoir-Rhyne, is set to spend his final season of college eligibility as a Duke in 2021-22. The 6-foot-7, 245-pound Gunn, who has signed a financial aid agreement with Duquesne, averaged 16.6 points per game last season for the Bears.

Griffin Sendek snaps last shot as multimedia editor

GRIFFIN SENDEK
multimedia editor

“What are you looking at?” were the first words spoken to me in Room 113 College Hall, the newsroom, as the section editor tried to persuade freshman-year-me to join the journalism staff.

With no journalism experience whatsoever and fully convinced that my writing ability was purely dismal, I walked into *The Duke* open house solely interested in photography. However, the Arts and Entertainment editor managed to get ahold of me first and convinced me to give his section a shot.

I still remember writing my first article, a movie review on *Tomb Raider (2018)*, with complete trepidation. I truly thought the editors were going to rip the thing to shreds. Then, it was published with positive feedback and I saw my name printed in the newspaper for the very first time. It was at that moment I realized that this whole journalism degree might not be a complete and utter mistake.

I stumbled my way into this college, into this major and into this newspaper and I’m still stumbling my way out. I arrived four years ago very lost with no idea what I wanted to do. This paper became a sort of guiding light, a beacon of support, with assistance and friendships that pushed me in the right direction to find what it is I love.

My camera and I are attached at the hip, literally. It’s rare that I go anywhere without it. I doubt there’s hardly anyone I meet that ever associates me without one. As I scramble across campus going on my weekly photo scavenger hunts for each issue of *The Duke*, I always wonder if anyone ever recognizes me as “that blonde dude with the camera.”

But that wasn’t always the case. I really only began taking photography seriously sophomore year and I didn’t take my first portraits until the spring.

Since then, I’ve been able to grow so much; it shows how much can really change in the span of two years.

If this virus has proven anything, it’s to never get too comfortable with where you’re at, because it can all change faster than the click of a camera’s shutter.

No one planned for their senior year to end this way. These last two semesters were meant to be spent surrounded by friends in a collective last-ditch effort to have as much fun as possible before taking the deep dive into the “real world” and becoming an actual “adult.”

COVID-19 has stolen moments from all of us that will never be returned. Perhaps years worth of anxiety, heartbreak and isolation jam-packed into a sweet little package has expedited years of learning and wisdom.

It’s a lesson that no matter what you prepare for, life might always have other plans.

Who knows what this year would have been had it not been for COVID-19, but dwelling on this alternate reality is a waste of time. What I do know is that this past year has taught me more than any recent memory.

I’d like to think if freshman Griffin could see me he’d be proud. There’s so much advice I wish I could go back and give the little guy: first of all, get a haircut.

Given the chance, there are many things I’d do differently, but without a doubt, joining *The Duke* isn’t one of them.

Something I learned along the way that I will always carry with me is that the power of a good story or decent photograph has the



GRIFFIN SENDEK / MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Griffin started as a staff writer in spring of 2018, but eventually moved on to editor positions starting with features, then photo and ending with multimedia.

power to make someone happy. It’s something I will not grow tired of.

Seeing the pure exhilaration and joy that some people get when you reveal that their story is important and that you want to share it with the world is absolutely unmatched.

Journalism has the capacity to do so much good and the power to

enact change. But it also has the ability to make someone’s day, to bring a smile to their faces — and that will never grow old.

As excited as I am to graduate, to say I’m not a tiny bit afraid would be a bold faced lie. Finding a job in the midst of a pandemic isn’t exactly an easy, nor exciting, process. But wherever I end up, I can confidently say there will always be a camera not so far away. Even if I stray away from the world of journalism, I will strive to always find a way to keep telling stories.

113 College Hall became a home away from home. I loved this place, I loved spending time here almost more than anywhere else, and I fell in love with everyone inside. Wednesday nights, despite being work, were always something I looked forward to.

There are forged memories within these pale blue walls that I will never forget. Years down the line when I’m looking back at my time at Duquesne University, the newsroom will be the staple of my college experience. That room will always hold a place in my heart.

I find it difficult to say goodbye. I often don’t know when’s the right time to let go. I wouldn’t give up my time at *The Duke* for anything; the newsroom has been a home for four years, it really pains me to just walk away, leaving it all behind. But for once I know — it’s time for me to go.



KATIA FAROUN / FEATURES EDITOR

The Duke helped transform Griffin’s mild interest in photography to something intrinsically tied to his career and future.

WEEK’S EVENTS

Earth Day Mass
Thursday, April 22 @ 6 p.m.

Join Duquesne ministry on College Hall lawn for a unique experience of prayer.

Spring Cheer Event
Friday, April 23 @ 9 a.m.

Come show your gratitude for Duquesne faculty and staff by writing thank you cards! Available at Duquesne Union Room 119.

UPCOMING RELEASES

The Rise & Fall Of Loverboy
Sir Sly
Friday, April 23

Los Angeles-based indie-alternative rock band Sir Sly releases their new studio album through Interscope Records, while also announcing their North American tour with lovelytheband set for this fall.

Together Together
Friday, April 23

A drama/comedy about a couple going through the motions of love, adulthood and parenting.

CAPRI’S KIND WORDS

Wisdom

So much can change within a year. We know this, we see it happen all the time.

Do you realize that each and every day, a part of you outgrows itself and is replaced with something new?

Sometimes it’s uncomfortable to transition from what we know to what comes next: There’s a level of uncertainty we can’t ignore. But that can’t hold us back from pursuing our dreams, our desires, our next desination.

It’s difficult to imagine at times, but it’s hopeful to think of the possibilities, the potential, the prideful heart you will carry one day — that you can carry today.

This part of the semester may be difficult, though I swear to you: Your efforts do not go unnoticed.

Thanks for the memories: A Duke farewell from Kelsey Burtner

KELSEY BURTNER
layout editor

I never really imagined myself being part of a newspaper staff. I've always loved to write, but I had never written anything even remotely close to a newspaper article. A news staff just never seemed like a place where I would belong. I had contemplated joining my high school paper but decided against it due to my own fear of inadequacy, and it hadn't even crossed my mind to join *The Duke* as a journalist. However, I did decide to put my artistic abilities to use and so my freshman year I signed up to be one of the comic artists.

Every other week, I remember creating random comics on my old, outdated digital drawing pad and sending them in, being so proud when the issue was printed. I would send photos and clippings home to my parents every time I was featured, and for a while that was more than enough for me.

My sophomore year got very hectic and I unfortunately had to step away from my bi-weekly doodles to focus on schoolwork and my study abroad adventures, but when I returned for the fall of my junior year, I found myself applying for layout editor after meeting current managing and news editor Colleen Hammond. I was working backstage as a crew member and makeup artist for a Red Masquers production and she mentioned the job opportunity to me, telling me that she thought I would be a great fit given my major.

Honestly, I didn't expect much to come of it considering I had no previous involvement as a staff writer and nobody really knew who I was, but I sent in my application anyway. I even stayed up late creating my own resume template just to show that I had experience in working with and creating unique layouts, so I was

thrilled when I received an email asking me to come in for an interview. Just one day later, I found out the job was mine.

As the layout editor, I have had the privilege of being a part of such an incredibly talented and supportive team of people all while getting to use my experiences as a digital media arts major to create advertisements and make the classified page my own. On occasion, I have even been able to continue my work as a comic artist which makes the whole experience feel complete.

In my time here, I also overcame my fears and wrote a few articles and staff editorials. I will be forever proud of the pieces I have written for *The Duke*, no matter how few and far between they may be, and I am so glad that I was given the opportunity to prove myself and grow as a journalist.

I remember the first time I saw my name published, and not just as a comic artist. Seeing the layout editor title under my name gave me enough happiness to keep me smiling all day. I still have a copy of the first article I wrote for *The Duke* in 2020. It's tucked neatly into my bookshelf back home and I still read it over every once in a while just to be sappy and sentimental.

Being a part of *The Duke* has given me a newfound love of journalism, an appreciation for the advertisements in newspapers and a deep-seeded frustration with Adobe InDesign, but I wouldn't have it any other way. Honestly the newsroom has become like a second home to me, and my fellow editors have become like my family. I will miss this place and everyone here terribly, but I will take with me all of the wonderful memories of the late nights and the laughter as I move on to whatever the future wants to throw my way next. So long and farewell, *Duquesne Duke*. Thank you for everything.



KELSEY BURTNER | LAYOUT EDITOR

Kelsey will miss yelling "paper sent" at the end of every night, drawing comics and playing very intense games of hangman with the editors.

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