

Phillips Exeter Academy
Exeter, New Hampshire

The Exonian

The oldest continuously running preparatory school newspaper in America



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A CAPELLA

Read about the a capella assembly held on May 7, 3.

FOTW

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MET GALA

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Aurora Borealis Illuminates the Exeter Night Sky

By SAM ALTMAN, AUSTIN DESISTO, JINMIN LEE, and FORREST ZENG

On the night of May 10, the Academy community enjoyed a rare appearance of the Aurora Borealis, more commonly known as the Northern Lights.

Exonians could be seen across campus gazing at the colorful spectacle, which turned the night sky into a dim green and purple hue. The aurora, caused by high-energy particles from the sun interacting with the atmosphere, typically occurs only in northern parts of the earth.

Due to a large solar storm on the surface of the sun nearly 17 times

wider than Earth, the aurora appeared far more south than it typically does, drawing awe from viewers across the United States. Solar activity on the surface of the sun follows a period of around a decade, and Exonians were just in time to catch the special phenomenon.

Although the aurora was initially difficult to see with the naked eye, it was clearly visible through cameras. "We saw some shades in the sky, and it was very clear through my camera," upper Masaki Muneyoshi said. "It wasn't as conspicuous as in other parts of the nation, but it was still pretty cool."

"We decided to go down to Swasey park-way with the dorm to

avoid the light pollution concentrated near town and to go to a calmer place where we could enjoy the nature of it all. The lights weren't completely visible, but you could see occasional streaks in the sky. The camera was really what brought out the vivid blues and purples and greens," upper Jacques Leleux said.

"It was an incredible, transcendental experience," said lower Andrew Gould. "I saw it in front of Cilley Hall and in front of the Academy building. Though I couldn't see it at first with my naked eye, I could see it on camera. I was lucky Cilley Hall had a hide-and-seek in the Academy Building

AURORA, 3.

Austin DeSisto / The Exonian

Student Council In Talks of Dress Code Reform

By JACK CASSIDY, ADELLE PITTS and FORREST ZENG

At the weekly Student Council meeting on the evening of May 7, Dean of Students Russell Weatherspoon presented a draft proposal of a new dress code to assembly members and answered questions about the draft.

Although the presentation was only a draft that will undergo further changes in the future, it is the latest update in a year long initiative by faculty and students alike to address the apparent incongruence with the dress code in the E-book and practice. The current dress code outlined in the E-book requires a "dress

shirt, sweater, turtleneck, [or] dress," yet it seems to have become a relic of pre-Covid Exeter. The new draft presented by Weatherspoon reinforces the central elements of the current dress code, eliminates athletic wear including sweatpants, hoodies, and shorts, and sets out clear guidelines for hemlines and top straps. The draft also included an enforcement system, by which teachers are obligated to report dress code violations through a form, instead of sending students back to their dorms.

"This new draft was motivated by several factors," Student Council Policy Committee co-head

DRESS CODE, 2.

New York Times Music Critic Jon Caramanica Talks Pop Culture, Journalism, and Social Media

By ALLEGRA LAL, JINMIN LEE and LILY RAMPE

On Friday, May 10, *The Exonian's* Strickler Speaker Jon Caramanica, a music critic for the New York Times, sat on the stage after his assembly, surrounded by curious students. While sipping his Taylor Swift-themed Gold Rush latte from the cafe Flamingos during the subsequent Q&A in the Elting Room, he answered questions from the students. "The thing about Taylor is that she understood the mechanism of fame before she was famous," Caramanica answered when asked about what Swift was like in real life.

"I wrote a profile of

Taylor in 2009, and to this day, that opening scene in that profile is one of the most revealing things that I've ever seen following an artist around. I mean, she was 19 and already had the entire system down," Caramanica continued. "And that's not to say it's insincere—but it's a sincere expression of this big machine. If Taylor were sitting right here, through the eye contact that she would give, you and me, you'd be like, she only cares about this right now. But she does that at mass scale too. Most people can't do either, but some people can do one and some people do the other. Very, very, very, very, very few people can do both. She's one of the only people I've ever spent time

with who can do both."

Swift is just one of the several famous musicians Caramanica had interviewed throughout his accomplished career as a reporter, podcaster, and music critic.

Caramanica is a music critic for *The New York Times* with a specialty in pop and hip hop. Since graduating from Harvard University in 1997, he has written for *Rolling Stone*, *Vibe*, *XXL*, and *The New York Times*, where he joined the staff in 2010. In addition to writing at the Times, Caramanica also runs his own podcast, "Popcast," and writes for the *Critical Shopper* column on clothing stores in New York City. He has covered everything from the early years of Swift's

fame to the rise of Olivia Rodrigo and, most recently, the rap battle between Drake and Kendrick Lamar. He is also currently in the process of writing a book on Kanye West, or Ye.

Since he was young, Caramanica has always had a passion for music. "I found that I was listening to music a lot more closely than my friends," he recalled. "I didn't really understand that this was a job and didn't know anyone who did this type of work. As I got older and started writing for the high school, and then college paper, I was like, 'Okay, I can do some version of this.' I was able to write for some websites

CARAMANICA, 4.

An Instagram Account Redefines Exeter's College Culture

ERIN HAN and JANIBEK SUBKHANBERDIN

This year, the class of 2024 has seen an unprecedented level of transparency from seniors regarding college decisions, most evidently through the Instagram account @pea24decisions, which has now seen 192 members of the senior class sharing their plans for study after Exeter. This is in stark contrast to previous years, when Exonians were known for secrecy surrounding acceptances, especially in the Early Decision phases, and the college admissions process was rarely spoken about among classmates.

As every academic year enters its final stretch in the months spanning March and early April, a bitter-sweet blend of nostalgia and excitement for the next steps in their lives is palpa-

ble among the seniors of the graduating class. The emotional stress that this combination can bring is only intensified as Regular college admissions decisions roll in throughout the first weeks of the spring term.

"I think for our year, we were very hyper-aware of it," said senior class representative Corrine Blaise, referring to the class of 2024's general attitude towards college acceptances and decisions. "I feel like, in previous years it's been like, 'Oh, if this person got in, that means that because this person didn't get it.' Rather than it being a, 'We're all in this process together. We're all going through it as one.'"

There was a consensus on the presence of this tension amongst many seniors, both from this year's graduating class, and previous years. "In the past,

and even today, the culture around college decisions can definitely be characterized as secretive, which I think is both fueled by and adds fuel to Exeter's competitive atmosphere," said senior Ariana Thornton.

Class of 2023 alumna Lara Muyombe recalled how decisions were received during this same time last year. "Most of the class was extremely private surrounding college decisions, which is absolutely perfectly normal, but there was a lack of connection and celebration that I noticed, outside of close friend circles. There was not that much togetherness, and perhaps it's because we were all very burnt out, but I found it interesting that not many people were very open about where they ended up committing."

College wall pages at Exeter have undergone no-

table evolution between this and last year's accounts. For instance, last year, with little to no voluntary posts submitted to an official college wall account, an anonymous user launched a notorious "sniped" account (@peacollegesniped23), where seniors' "digital footprints" that revealed their next steps in their academic journey, were compiled into collage-like posts. Blaise spoke about how this was felt as a last straw for the class of 2024, a breaking point for the tension that had already been built up over the years. "I think our grade has been different with this college account because last year it was a sniped account and it was a, 'listen, if you guys aren't going to say it, we're going to find it.' I just think we were just kind of like,

COLLEGE, 2.



Courtesy of @pea24decisions

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Read about how an Instagram account changed college culture at Exeter, 1-2.

» **JON CARAMANICA**
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College Culture Cont.



“Okay, this is enough,” said Blaise.

To keep this pattern from repeating, Blaise and the other class representatives reached out to the 2024 decisions account, which had shown signs of taking another “sniping” approach. “We reached out to the account that did it, and asked if we could work towards a positive experience for everybody just because college is something that is very, very stressful and just want to take off that pressure a little bit.”

She continued, “Especially with the changes that have been going on and just the way that the people before us always acted, I think that our year has tried really hard to make it a positive space, but it’s still a very taboo subject. People don’t really know how to go without asking people. People aren’t really comfortable. College itself is a very competitive thing. We are a very competitive school and it just always feels like we’re kind of in competition for one

another, but I think our grade is kind of working towards making it more nuanced because something to be proud of.”

The @pea24decisions Instagram account has separated itself from past college pages in its explicit aim to build upon this idea of making college decisions “something to be proud of” and break down the toxicity surrounding college decision culture at the Academy. The administrators of this account explained that since the beginning, the goal has been to celebrate the class of 2024 and their unique experience at Exeter. Senior Nhan Phan went into detail on the special circumstances around his class’s time at Exeter: “It’s also worth noting the fact that the class of ‘24 has been a very special class. We came in during our first year of Covid, we’ve went through all kinds of things in our class. We’ve seen it all. We’ve seen everything from on campus protests to, to mental health issues in our campus, a year long of covid, and also

just watching America kind of just fall apart in some ways. It’s a special class. And I feel like a lot of us, we recognize that and we want to celebrate the rest of our time here.”

In order to have more connection to the seniors, the admins specified that they placed a focus on collaborating with senior reps to achieve a more “formal” account. The use of baby photos also carries an important message. “By creating posts that share a baby photo of the student and their intended major, if applicable, the page has become a space of the past and future.” The admins described the account and its formatting as such: “As a college preparatory school, it is unsurprising that the college process at the Academy is a competitive and stressful one. Our hope in creating this account was to remove the pressure and comparison that students may feel toward college decisions.” They continued, “The format of the account allows for us to be respectful

of where one will further their studies next year. The presence of the baby photo allows for us to remember all that we have accomplished and have to be proud of. The inclusion of the intended major allows us to celebrate each graduating senior for their passions. Our team wanted to commemorate this milestone through official posts.”

Phan dove deeper into the idea of formality, explaining, “Well, bear in mind, this page actually started out as sort of a page where we were all spying on each other’s bios. And it was fun. Everyone is proud of themselves to an extent, right? Everyone is proud of themselves to the point that they’ll change the names in their bio, but really don’t really have an outlet to compile everyone all at once. So what the senior reps did, and I appreciate them a lot for this, is that they formalized it. They made it something that was hip.”

Phan continued, “Some people took charge in the beginning to post...and really, it snowballed. Also, it’s not a lot that is revealed—I feel like they kept it simple. It was a name, the college in question, their major. And it was a page about college decisions. It’s because it’s not deep. The purpose of the page originally was not to change college culture at Exeter. [It was like,] ‘this is where, if they want to, seniors can post a baby photo and be proud of their college choices and where they want to go.’ They were proactive about that. I think it just made a lot of ideas more comfortable. By placing the emphasis on college, but not changing college culture, we let the college culture create itself.”

Student opinions on that shift to a more “formal” and encouraging culture have generally been positive. Senior Nicholas Lin remarked, “At least for the college decisions page, I think it’s a great place to spread positivity and I don’t think it brings any negativity or stress for others.”

Phan shared a similar opinion: “Initially, this page resem-

bled past college commitment pages for graduating classes of the Academy. However, our collaboration with the senior class representatives has allowed us to create a page of celebration, community, and pride.”

Senior representative Corrinne Blaise summarized the page’s change. “I think it has made it more a safer topic because once you see that person post, it feels like I can talk to them about it. And I think it just made everyone more comfortable. This page is definitely pretty different, not only the fact that it’s voluntary compared to last year’s, but also the baby pictures.”

Muyombwe also noticed the difference between this year’s page and that of the class of 23’s, explaining that few people engaged with the original platform for decisions, and how @peacollegesnip23 ended up creating a vastly different environment. “There was a page that basically found out where you were going to school and posted it along with a random collection of photos without you asking, so that definitely could have contributed to most people wanting to keep their own privacy.”

Upon reflecting on what her class could have done differently with their college decision page, Muyombwe stated, “We all could have engaged in the official page much more, and maybe that would have lessened tensions. Senior year is a time to celebrate and appreciate one another for the unforgettable years we’ve spent together, and maybe my class could’ve used a little more of that togetherness. Not that there definitely wasn’t a sense of togetherness, but that it may have been made more beautiful.”

The alumna saw that togetherness in this year’s seniors and their treatment of their account. With the idea of formalizing and emphasis on making decisions something to be proud of, Muyombwe contemplated, “That is honestly a very beautiful thing. It’s so small, but it’s so impactful. It

makes everyone feel like they are all together in this, and that the process can create some beautiful things, and that next year is a very exciting year to look forward to! I really love it.”

With the deliberate goal to change how we view college decisions in mind, the @pea24decisions account could have a large influence on the future. Phan declared, “I think that what we’ve done this year can continue on to other years. The class of ‘24 has been a class that challenged the status quo, and I feel like the legacy that we leave behind can include a really healthy college culture for years to come. The class of 2025 also experienced glimpses of what we’ve experienced. We returned to Covid briefly for about a month during what would be their prep year, then came back to Covid conditions for about a month or two. So they can easily appreciate that perhaps all of our times here are special. It doesn’t take a pandemic to make your time at Exeter special.”

Blaise offered a similar perspective, reflecting, “I think this is a big step in just making it less a taboo subject, making it more outward and known. And I’m hoping that it’s also going to make it known that you don’t need to go to one place.”

She continued, “You can see that you don’t need to have this one goal to be a good person and to be a strong student, et cetera. I think it’s just going to help people realize that it’s not a one size fits all college. And the way that we think about it is truly, it really, it’s never been that deep, with lack of a better word. You should be proud of where you’re going, regardless of the acceptance rate, regardless of its ranking. It is somewhere that you decide is the place for you. It’s somewhere that you’re able to spend the next four years of your life. That’s something that everyone should have, that everyone should be proud of. And I think that having the account show it is making people be like, ‘Okay, it’ll all be okay.’”

Dress Code Cont.

Dylan Richardson said. “At its core, it looks bad to have a rule in the E Book that is not enforced.”

The dress code initiative has been primarily driven by a faculty committee headed by Weatherspoon. Richardson described, “The committee met for fifty minutes every week for a few weeks, deliberating at each of the early morning meetings about the content of the code. The committee was made up of eight faculty members and one student.” A co-head of the Student Council Policy Committee was present at each meeting to present student concerns and opinions.

A handful of members in attendance questioned the essential premise of the new draft. Weatherspoon denied that the dress had any connection to student performance in class, instead underscoring the role that dress played in the connection between teachers and students. “When you are in a classroom, you are there not only with your fellow peers, but also the teacher,” Weatherspoon said at the presentation. “That is centrally what this dress code is about.”

Richardson understood the new draft as an attempt to return to more formal attire. “The committee would

like to return the academy to a ‘more formal’ attire,” he said.

Weatherspoon explicitly noted in his discussion that the dress code was not intended to return to a certain formal style of dress, but instead a dress code directed towards providing an academic environment.

Some students agreed with Weatherspoon’s sentiment. Lower Jinmin Lee agreed that a dress code should be enforced, but emphasized making sure that both students and faculty agreed on the standard before anything is passed. “I think it will reduce the pressure that students feel choosing their clothes and also reduce the pressure that they feel in terms of a class basis and socioeconomic status, as some may feel as though the clothes they wear reflect the amount of money they have, which I don’t think is a good thing. I don’t want students to be stressed by that.”

Lower Samuel Altman commented, “I believe that when you dress nicely, you expect yourself to act better. We have lost a sort of authentic responsibility that comes from wearing nice clothes.”

However, Richardson, along with the large majority of the Student Council

believe that the student body should have a voice in what they’re allowed to wear under the premise of a student-centered experience. “The Policy Committee agrees with the stance of the proposal regarding language and imagery on clothing,” Richardson said. “We also agree that it is not good to have unenforced rules written in the E book.”

“Where we differ most visibly is the content of the attire featured in the dress code proposal,” Richardson continued. “The understanding of the Policy Committee co-heads based on what we have seen at various Student Council meetings, is that students are broadly against the banning of t-shirts, hoodies, tops with straps, and the showing of midriff. This is not to say, of course, that there are not students of all opinions on this issue, but based on who we have heard from so far, this is what we are hearing.”

“When Dean Weatherspoon spoke at the Student Council, students raised their hands about pretty much every bullet point,” Student Council Vice President Anna Holtz described. “Every single student had something they didn’t like about it in all different areas.”

A regular point of discussion during Weatherspoon’s presentation at Student Council was the topic of straps for students’ tops. The draft stated that there would be “[no] strapless tops or tops with straps less than two inches wide,” referring to the shoulder straps worn with upper body tops.

Weatherspoon explained that the requirement stems from a general faculty opposition to so-called “spaghetti straps.” He acknowledged that “nobody is going to pull out a ruler during class. It’s simply apparent what is two inches and not.”

Additionally, there were concerns over the possibility of students having to change their entire wardrobe for the dress code, a matter that presents financial concerns as well. Weatherspoon noted that all students have to change their wardrobe regardless of dress code, such as buying coats for winter. He also noted the financial aid the school already offers for clothing, and mentioned the possibility of selling dress code compliant wear at the bookstore.

The draft dress code will now head to further discussion with faculty and the student council Policy

Committee co-heads, at which point it will become a proposal. It will then require a majority in a faculty vote to pass.

“We are going to try and get involved before that happens, and create an alternative option to present to faculty,” said Holtz.

“Students should have representation and influence when it comes to the creation of a new dress code,” Richardson concluded. “The Policy Committee will not stop working to ensure that students feel comfortable with whatever ends up happening with this initiative in the future.”



A Cappella Groups Perform at Assembly

By SAM ALTMAN, LOGAN LIU and HENRYWISE

On Tuesday, May 7, Exeter's a cappella groups performed during assembly, leaving students in awe about how the efforts each group makes, and how those efforts played out on the stage. Four groups performed: Ké Kontan, PEADS, Exeteras, and Sans Hommes. Some of their songs notably included the "Work Song," "Bridge Over Troubled Water," and "I'm Just Ken."

Instructor in Music and Interim Director of Choirs Jerome Walker commented on his role in preparing for the assembly. "I asked the groups to let me know what songs they would be performing and then I picked the order and other logistical things, but they mostly do it all themselves, including the attire and small details."

Many students of different singing groups on campus performed at the assembly. Senior Chris Serrao, a member of Ké Kontan, commented on his song. "We sang an adaptation of 'Work Song' by Hozier which we got from the Ohio State University a cappella group. We've been practicing it over the past couple of months, meeting once a week. I think what I really appreciate about a cappella is the collaborative nature of it, and it's something I want to do going into college as well."

Upper Rishi Gurudevan, cohead of the Exeteras, discussed his group's preparation, saying, "We decided we would do 'I'm Just Ken' last term because of how much it's become a staple of pop culture. However, it ended up containing a particularly difficult set of harmonies that

we spent a lot of time trying to perfect. Other groups prepared multiple songs this term, but we focused almost completely on this one this term because we really wanted the assembly to be good."

Gurudevan continued, "When Evan came out of the audience and started singing the first solo and everyone started cheering, it was a practically euphoric feeling for us. It was incredible to present what we've been working on for a whole term and to see an amazing reaction from everyone in the crowd."

"I think the Exeteras kind of stole the show with their phenomenal rendition of 'I'm Just Ken,'" Upper Jacques Leleux commented. "Their passion for a cappella and getting everyone interested in it was really on display when Evan Dierbirg jumped on stage in his Ryan Gosling routine."

Senior Alex Rosen echoed this sentiment: "I really liked the a cappella assembly as a whole, but I thought that the 'I'm Just Ken' song at the end especially was new and exciting."

Leleux continued, "I also really enjoyed the pitch-perfect routine from Sans Hommes. I thought it was very creative to bring pop culture into their performance."

Prep Jade Yoo agreed, "My favorite part was the mashup that the all-female group did — I loved their choreography."

Upper and Ké Kontan cohead Roy Liu, commented on his experience with the audience, "I'm always appreciative of how people react to our performances. You know, assembly is a required appointment, and I'm sure most people have stuff

that they need to do, but I'm glad that people make it and that they appreciate the work we put in."

"I personally enjoyed the assembly a lot, and it was nice to be able to just relax, be an audience member, and enjoy what all of the groups have been performing for so long," prep Allen Klingel reflected.

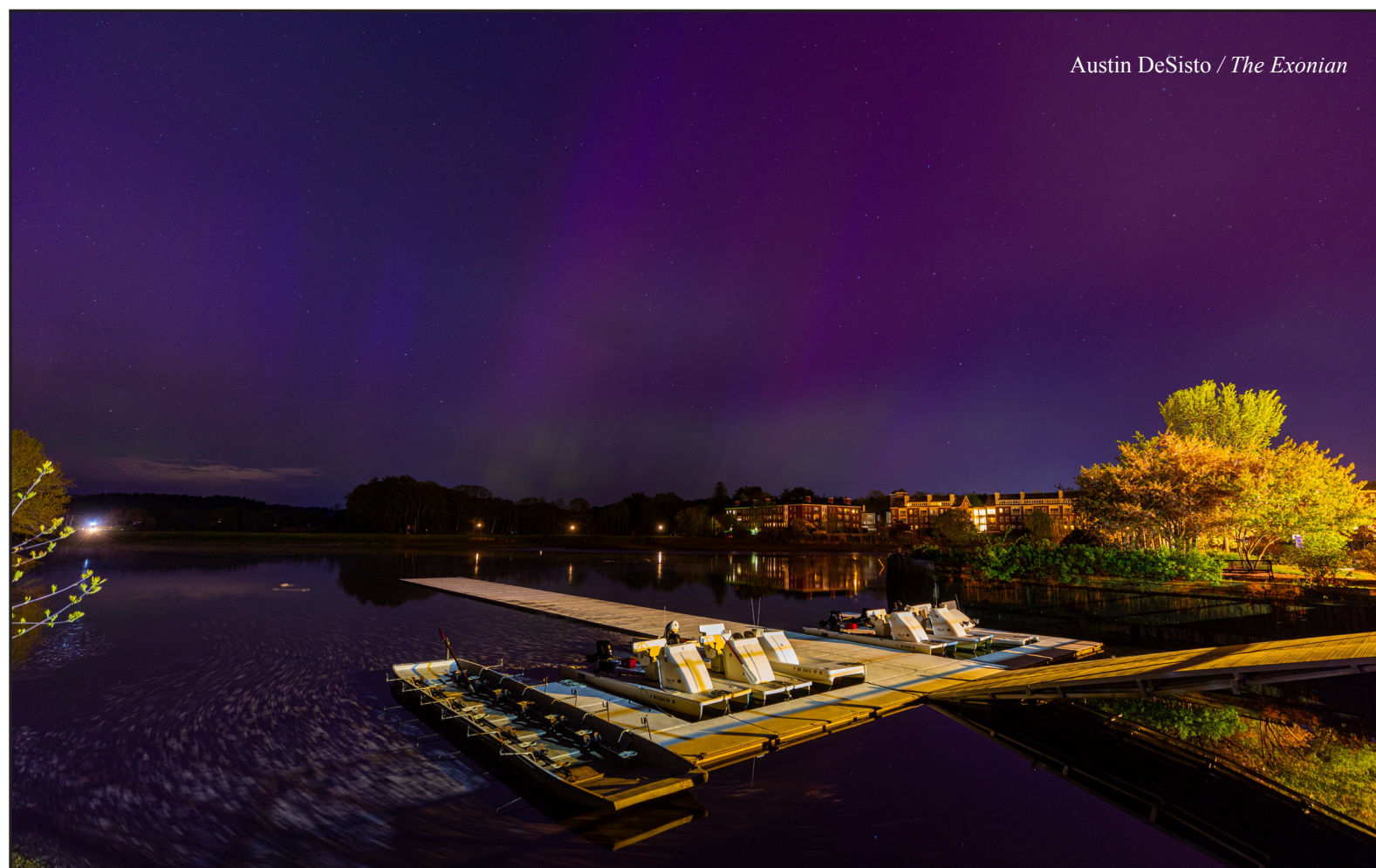
Most of the songs performed by students wavered from the more traditional a cappella songs. "I think the acapella assembly isn't really meant to show off musical skill as much as it's meant to simply be fun," commented upper Max Mantel. "I think it's meant to be more of a personal moment with the school, and well-known songs help facilitate that better. Perhaps in a different space, we would try to do something that's more musically renowned and nuanced, not that these weren't at all, but the main point was to put on a good show."

Walker reflected, "There are a lot of opportunities for faculty-curated music to be put on display, whether that's music done by students, artists that we bring to campus, or something else, and all of that is great. But I also think what is equally worthy of our attention is work that students do themselves. I think it gives those students in the a cappella groups an opportunity to show off what they're spending so much of their own time and energy on."

"The showcase, in many ways, feels like it's the pinnacle of what a cappella groups do in a year," Walker concluded, "I know they had a lot of fun, and I hope it was just as interesting for those watching their peers put themselves out there."



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Aurora Cont.

that night. I think it's important to witness these jaw-dropping events because they break the monotony of life and allow us to appreciate the world's beauty."

Prep Hugo Shinn, who was also at the Cilley Hall manhunt on Friday night, agreed: "It was truly magical as it was my first time seeing such an extraordinary event. I took a picture in the academy building with my friends. It was a mesmerizing experience; when I had seen pictures of the aurora before, I had always wanted to see it myself."

Senior Luca Shakoori concurred, saying, "The moment felt exhilarating: in my astronomy class, Mr. Blackwell took us outside with special glasses and explained why the northern lights happened. Although it was faintly visible to the naked eye, it was great seeing it through the camera's long exposure."

Leleux concluded, "When I first heard whispers about the Northern Lights, I thought: 'I mean, Aurora Borealis. At this time of year, at this time of day, in this part of the country. Wow, that's something special.' I think it's special to be in a place like New Hampshire where we have all sorts of forms of nature; we have variable weather, coastline, mountains, and now two unique astrological events in one year. It's truly wonderful to be at a school where so many exciting events are happening, and I'm grateful to be here."



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Jon Caramanica Cont.

that were then translated into some magazines. By the time I was looking for work, I was like, 'I'll try this, and who knows, maybe it'll work, or maybe in a year I'll go back and finish my grad school degree.' Yet, here we are 20 years later, so I guess I'm not going to finish my grad school degree."

At the Q&A, Caramanica also discussed the impact his upbringing had on his critiques. "I grew up in Brooklyn in the eighties and the nineties. The two things that were meaningful to me when I was young were pop music on the radio, like Madonna and rap music. The first cassettes I ever bought were Run-D.M.C. cassettes, Slick Rick, and Big Daddy Kane. That's what formed the foundation for my understanding of music and how things worked. I think pop music is often essentially based on the same stuff that I was raised on. I wasn't raised in guitar-based music. And the

people who were writing at Rolling Stone and Spin all these places in the nineties, they thought that was the most important thing."

As someone who has been in the industry for more than 15 years, Caramanica shared with students at the assembly how he witnessed a gradual shift in how the pop culture scenery has become more volatile, with the discourse changing week-to-week unpredictably. Though Caramanica sometimes feels the pressure to input his opinion fast enough, he also takes pride in the fact his unique opinion will not be swayed by others who have published commentary quicker than him.

"[Other commentary] doesn't affect my opinion, but it does help me to understand," he said. "It's partially music, and it's partially designed to generate conversation. As a critic, I'd be really not doing my job right if I ignored the conversation part. And if I only listen to the music now, my opinion on if the

music is good or bad or an improvement or less good than the prior thing, that's never gonna change."

"Hearing how it's being absorbed and discussed in real time makes me think harder about what the overall project is and what it's designed to do," Caramanica continued, "but it doesn't change whether I like it or not. I don't have the only valid opinion. I have an informed opinion. I have a historically informed opinion, a thought-through opinion, but I don't have the only opinion. I live in a world where everybody has an opinion and a Twitter account where they can share that opinion. I would be silly to ignore that. That's the climate of conversation right now."

Caramanica's knowledge of the music industry greatly resonated with the students' interests and opinions. This is largely due to Caramanica's large knowledge base on different genres and areas of pop culture, ranging from underground French

rock bands, to the loop of Gen-Z's beloved pop lore, including Sabrina Carpenter's "that's that me espresso" lyric.

"Although I am less well-informed than he is," recalled Senior Luca Shakkori, "I resonated with his comments about TikTok and TikTok culture as a whole, and how modern content relies heavily on music."

Lower Andrew Gould also noted Caramanica's shared philosophy on how to approach controversial music, saying, "I liked how Caramanica navigated through discussing some of the more contentious topics, such as his views on the Drake v. Kendrick battle and his views on Kanye West. He did a good job articulating how we as the listeners had to spend time understanding how or why we personally resonated or disliked songs from controversial artists."

Many students also found his speaking style and presentation engaging. Lower Jonny Citravesse recalled: "It was definitely one of my favorite assemblies. He did a great job getting the crowd involved. He was naturally charis-

matic and I thought he did a really good job with the questions. I was sitting on the edge of my seat the whole time."

"I think it was the journalist in him blending into his speech," added Spence. "I appreciated how he opened it up for questions; I found it a lot more active, and I want to see other speakers do that too in the future."

While answering students' questions, Caramanica's wide span of knowledge on music, and use of teenage slang echoed the students', making his talk incredibly engaging and entertaining. "I thought he had a really good way with the audience, especially when speaking with teenagers about something they love. He made it interesting and gave serious, honest, and articulated answers. I think he is very passionate about his job and does it well," lower Lexie Sebastian added.

"I think it was the journalist in him blending into his speech," reflected prep Aaron Spence. "I appreciated how he opened it up for questions; I found it a lot more active, and I want to see other speakers do

that too in the future."

Prep Max Lisuandi concurred: "I found the speech especially interesting because it was entertaining. He did a good job tailoring his jokes and pointing to a high school audience."

Many students also mentioned how Caramanica's talk showed them a deeper and more fascinating side of journalism they never thought of before, "I never thought I would really be able to hear about these exciting professions firsthand, and hearing from diverse careers can be inspirational," said Citravesse.

"What's most inspiring is his ability to level everything," noted upper Zoe Curtis. He has this amazing intellect and this depth in his background with the music industry but he presents it all to you as if you know it already and so none of it feels preachy or patronizing. He approaches these things in a way that feels very accessible—he welcomes you into the fold of the music industry and this literary intelligence that he's such a fan of. That's one of the best things about him and his journalism."



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Summer Morrill, 5.

» **STUDENT PLAYS**
Read about Exonians' plays
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Goel this spring, 5-6.

» **FOCUS GROUPS**
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Faculty of the Week: Summer Morrill

By ANGELA HE, ISHAAN SINGH, and HENRY WISE

Summer Morrill is the Dorm Head of Soule Hall, a teacher in the Biology department, an advisor of the Women in Stem Club, and an advisor of the Biology Club here at Exeter. Morrill is particularly invested in the topic of genetics, and many students adore her teaching style and her attitude all together as a teacher. Whether you are in Soule Hall, or walking around the science building, you're bound to see Morrill somewhere.

When Morrill was asked about how she came about her journey to Exeter, she stated, "I was a student here. I knew about the school and knew how great the environment was in terms of being able to teach interesting and challenging classes. It's really great being back here and getting to see it from a different perspective."

On the topic of how she came about her love for biology, Morrill added, "When I was a student here, I took genetics and that was the first time that I ever felt like biology was my thing. I felt like you could use it to solve really interesting problems and it was a great intersection of math and science and getting to see all of the predictions that you can make."

Morrill also spoke about some of her favorite activities outside of the classroom. She said, "I am a big reader so whenever I'm not grading, or reading the textbook, or

doing homework myself, I am reading a book for fun. I love getting to go downtown. We have a really great bookstore downtown, Water Street Bookstore, so I spend a lot of time there. I like going for walks and spending time with family."

As a teacher, Morrill has worked with many students who adore her many amazing traits. One of those students is upper Diego Shetreet.

"She is always super upbeat and passionate about what she teaches, and is very approachable," Shetreet commented.

"She's a great dorm fac and is very nice and friendly," senior Thomas Roper, a member of Soule Hall, added. "Just having conversations in the common room when on duty has been fun."

One aspect that makes Morrill an amazing Exeter faculty member is the kindness and enthusiasm she brings to each class she teaches, and to anywhere else on campus. This is exemplified by some of her previous students, such as upper Advika Verma, who had Morrill as a teacher, and has known her since fall term of this year.

"I loved her calm, relaxing demeanor. She has been one of my favorite teachers on campus and I think that her passion for genetics translates in the work and assignments we are giving. It is very refreshing to have a teacher that is as invested in the material as we are and challenges us to look at the material in different

ways," Verma said.

"I think my favorite moments in biology are when someone asks just a totally random question and we can go down a rabbit hole and research it together. Biology is such a huge field that, someone asks about how an angler fish survives deep in the water and you get to investigate that together. And I feel like it always keeps me interested in learning," Morrill said.

Morrill's enthusiasm about each subject, but also her calm, friendly attitude, is what draws so many students towards her as a teacher. She is able to fuel their passions for anything they are interested in, and help them direct their focus to what they really want to pursue.

"Dr. Morrill never simply hands me a solution on a silver platter, she will always guide me through the process and allow me to ponder it. Her teaching definitely fueled my passion for genetics, and because of her, I now know where I want to direct my future career," Shetreet said.

"I have learned a lot of problem-solving skills and critical thinking skills that I apply in other facets of my life from her classes. I loved learning about genetics in-depth and having a teacher that always encouraged learning of all kinds," Verma added.

Morrill also stated that her insight into her student's lives is one aspect that makes her job unique.

She said, "I get to not just get to know my students as



Courtesy of the Exeter Communications Department

biologists, but I get to know them as dancers, singers, and robotics [team members]. Just getting to know students as a whole person rather than just as a scientist. Getting to meet amazing people every day, every year, and then having people eventually come back

and visit after they graduate, that's really special."

For years, Morrill has been a guide to students all around campus, whether in Soule Hall, in her classroom, in the biology club, or in women in STEM, and she will continue to do so in the

future. She always brings her bright, friendly energy with her anywhere she goes, and students will forever appreciate the passion she brings to the classroom every day, eager to help students learn about what they are passionate about.

Fabulous Spring Term Plays Premiere In Goel



Courtesy of the Exeter Communications Department



By ERIN HAN, ELLEN JIN, and FORREST ZENG

In recent weeks, the Academy's Goel Center for Theater and Dance hosted the debuts of multiple plays.

On May 4, the center hosted the first showings of *Something in the Water*, a staged reading of a musical co-written by Noah Barnes and Academy instructor Jerome Walker, followed by the first of three showings of *Men on Boats*, directed by Academy instructor Rob Richards.

Something in the Water is set in a small town called Lake Town inhabited by The Locals. When city dwellers, or Lakers, descend upon Lake Town for vacation, three locals—Andy, Marina, and Nicky, form a plan to scare off the Lakers by creating a fake monster. However, things take a turn for the worse, when the Locals realize something might be hiding in Lake Town beyond anyone's control. The May 4 performance was a staged reading, along with music composed by co-writer Jerome Walker. The three Goel Center performances mark the play's world premiere.

Theater Department Teaching Intern Elizabeth Calandra commented on the show's first performance on May 4. "I was so happy with how many people attended our first show, and everyone seemed to really enjoy the performance. So I'm hoping that energy extends to our second weekend of shows."

Upper and cast member Arianna Bocchino agreed. "Our first show went super well, because the audience gave everyone a lot of energy, which allowed for us to connect with each other on stage in new ways."

Senior and technical director Sean Walker said, "It was surreal, performing it for the first time. That was the first time we had ever run the entire thing, and I was personally very nervous."

Upper and cast member Evan Dierberg touched on the circumstances that come with the staged reading. "It's been fun because we don't have to go off script at any time. We always have the script for backup because it's a staged reading. So we just get to make a lot of choices and we always have that to lean on."

The play's novelty certainly kept cast members on their toes. J. Walker described the timeline of writing, which moved forward concurrently with the rehearsal process. "We were rehearsing what we had as we were writing it, and so we began with the first few big numbers and then [moved onto] some of the smaller solo pieces. Each week there would just be a little bit of new material—a couple of new songs or something new for our cast to read and to try out."

S. Walker said, "The multiple drafts created some interesting logistical problems. For example, the page numbers would get shifted whenever there was a new addition, so if I had a

note on page 30, it wouldn't be on the same page the next week."

J. Walker emphasized the adaptability that came with the tight time frame. "We didn't have the final version of the performance until April 22, which means that for our first show, which was on May 4, we had only two weeks of practice for that version."

Additionally, since the play was still developing, actors played a role in the growth of their characters. Lower Olivia Pierre said, "Prepping for the show involved a lot of analysis, specifically because *Something in the Water* is a workshop. We had multiple sessions where the entire cast got together and discussed the script, and we talked a lot about how we viewed characters and their actions."

She continued, "It was a very unique experience to hear the input of the entire cast in a more formal setting, and it was cool to see how our input had an impact on certain scenes and lines in the show."

The student input allowed for a bigger connection to the audience. Dierberg described the humor in the show. "It's kind of corny, but it's just exploring humor through physicality. There's a lot of Gen Z humor in it. There were a few students in attendance and they said they really liked it."

J. Walker noted the enthusiastic audience during the first performance.

Spring Plays Cont.



Courtesy of the Exeter Communications Department



“Anytime there is a reaction from the audience, that feels like a big payoff. Obviously, if there is a particularly funny joke and the audience laughs at it, it’s a special moment,” he said. “But reactions can also arise from the opposite. Normally, when something serious happens, the audience goes quiet. But sometimes, the audience is engaged, and they might ooh or react to what is happening. That’s what happened in our second scene, when two of the characters have a big fight, and there was some hubbub and snapping in the audience. That’s always special as well.”

Building on the achievements of the first performance, the actors strive for perfection. Bocchino mentioned an aspect that the cast members could continue to aim for in the coming performances. “One thing we discussed in our following rehearsals that we’d like to improve is keeping up the fast pace of the dialogue throughout the show.”

Pierre described the success of the first show and anticipation for future performances. “It was awesome to see how everything came together so quickly, and everyone in the audience was very supportive. We had a nice opening night, and I’m excited to do it again next weekend.”

The play’s next showings are on Saturday, May 18, and Sunday, May 19 in the Goel Center Mainstage.

A week after *Something in the Water’s* first showing, the center debuted *Men on Boats* in three consecutive performances from May 10 to May 12. The play is described as a “true(ish) history of an 1869 expedition to chart the course of the Colorado River, performed by a cast of non-male actors who infuse America’s historic myths of male conquest with a sly blast of satire,” according to the Goel Center’s website.

Rehearsals took place daily, between 2:35 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. at the Center. “It’s [been] pretty rigorous,

I’d say,” said senior Ariana Thornton. “But [producing] a good show makes everything worth it.”

“During the first two weeks we read through the whole play, and did some work with getting into our characters,” specified senior Mav Murray. “Mr. Richards had these activities where we’d look at mirrors and put on masks, and sort of experiment with the idea of transforming into something else. Then, we slowly but surely got through the play and blocked out scenes.” They continued, “The last two weeks have mostly been dedicated to full run-throughs, and that’s ‘cause it’s really just a complicated play. Mechanistically, there’s a lot of props to worry about. There’s a lot of stuff that you have to do to maneuver the boats, and there’s just a lot to worry about, so a lot of the last two weeks has been focused on that.”

Though its impressive props and elaborate costumes merit praise, the play’s most remarkable feature is its explicit social commentary. The play’s director, Robert Richards described, “Early on in the casting section of the play, the playwright says that parts are not to be played by white cisgender men. Essentially, they should be played by people who identify as female. I found that interesting and important. The playwright is expressing a creative social commentary.”

Thornton agreed, “What I like about it is that it’s an all female cast playing all male characters. So there’s a bit of satire, some comedy, and some social commentary involved.”

Prep Jillian Cheng described the experience of portraying a male character. “I love the show because it gives all the actors a chance to step out of our comfort zone. We’re not used to being super masculine or carrying boats left and right or rushing rapids. But the show lets us imagine what it might’ve been like.”

Murray further described the play’s jab at gender norms. “It’s silly and maybe trite, but it’s fun and it’s just a really cool idea. Cross-dressing gender is really fun and just interesting and brings a new thing for you to become not embarrassed about doing. I remember Mr. Richards talking about it when I was a lower. He was so excited two years ahead of us doing it. It’s just a great script. I really love it.”

The play centers around a dangerous adventure through the Colorado River. “They’re going down through rapids and waterfalls, and they have no idea what’s ahead. It’s slightly ludicrous, but also a wonderful metaphor,” Richards said.

Both shows captivated audiences with passionate student performances, refreshing musical numbers, and elaborate props, reminding audiences of the beauty of theater’s complexity. “There are so many things [that are at play] when you’re writing musical theater — when you’re writing for any sort of theater,” offered J. Walker. “You can really think that it makes sense in your head and come up with all these ideas and jokes and the things that you think are gonna be funny and resonant and that you think that people will love, but you don’t know for sure until you actually see it done and hear how people react.”

Richards echoed this idea. “You have to sit with a play for a while and reread it and reread it, ‘cause you really do have to get to know it. You want to avoid seeing other images or productions of it, so that the images in your own imagination can come to you as you read it and visualize it, ‘cause a play is meant to be, as we say, brought to life.” He expanded, “Ultimately all those words on the page become the voices of characters, and the characters have to come to life. And so [a show really] is kind of a living thing.”

Exonian Students Host Focus Groups On Mental Health

By CARLY CANSECO, WILLIAM INOUE, and JANIBEK SUBKHANBERDIN

In the past week, a student-led focus group discussed student mental health and available support systems.

Five student-led groups were organized: two for current upperclassmen, two for lowerclassmen, and two more in racial and ethnic affinity. The last group was run for day students.

Director of Institutional Research Kari Hart, who organized the event, shared the goals of the program. “In Spring 2023, the Academy participated in the High Achieving Schools Survey (HASS) to assess dimensions of student well-being and aspects of personal and community life that can be targeted to improve student well-being.”

She elaborated, “The focus groups were motivated by the results of the HASS, which were shared with the community earlier this year. They aimed to understand better how campus adults can best care for and support students. The results can potentially inform programming and other action steps that enhance trust, transparency, and communication between students and campus adults.”

Hart continued, “While these are the first focus groups I have coordinated since I began at the Academy, I believe that the Academy has used focus groups for program assessment in the past.”

On campus, students view mental health in numerous ways. Upper Bea Prairie stated, “In my experience, conversations about anxiety and depression are somewhat normalized. Other mental health issues are less socially acceptable.” However, opposing opinions were also shared. Some people saw that there was an active stigma against talking about or sharing mental issues.

An anonymous community member said, “Some stigma is internal, and I know firsthand it is very hard to admit you need help, especially when you’re very self-sufficient at Exeter because Exeter is a bit of a competitive environment.”

They continued, “It’s easy to feel that people are all facing the same situation, but others are facing it better and are struggling less. It often seems that everyone has their life better put together, and admitting you need help is admitting defeat.”

Despite this, many students perceive the administration’s treatment of mental health as adequate. Although several feel the school could be doing more, the intention and access to resources exist. Prairie explained, “While they don’t always get it quite right, admin seems to be genuinely trying to support students. Dean Griffith, CAPS, and the ASAP program are signs of effort being put into helping struggling students.”

Upper Aymeric Dauge-Roth reflected a similar sentiment. “I think the administration provides the necessary framework for students who need help with their mental health and would find it helpful to talk to a licensed therapist to do so.”

Students also recognized that the Academy is limited in the support it can provide. Dauge-Roth noted, “The administration advertises that students’ well-being is the school’s priority, but some limitations to this come with the administration facing pressure to be the number one boarding school in the country.”

Upper Aveen Burney noted similar ideas. “They know it’s a pressing matter. But there’s only so much you can do, and I think they’re handling it to the best of their abilities. There’s room for improvement, but they do an adequate job. CAPS is CAPS, and they can’t reduce homework, and they can’t reduce the stress of college and external factors.”

Senior Chris Serrao remarked that it is still a challenge for many students to make the most of the resources provided by the school. Whether because of the previously described stigmas surrounding mental health or the confusion surrounding the CAPS program, for Serrao, “revamping the entirety of the CAPS program, and making sure that students know it’s available as a resource could be one thing to improve student quality of life.” That uncertainty around resources has been communicated by enough students on campus that Serrao believes most would support some system reform.

From a different perspective, an anonymous student voiced their opinions on the school’s handling of mental health resources. “Honestly, it feels that student mental health isn’t totally regarded by the administration. While they are trying, student input and mental health are often disregarded.”

They continued, “There are a lot of things that could improve student mental health that admin overlooks, such as listening to what students have to say about teachers and allowing for students to take time for their mental health without falling behind and then struggling even more in their classes.”

Other students also had ideas for the administration to improve the current state of mental health on campus. Serrao explained that working on the general quality of life would greatly benefit students. “For instance, improving the food at the dining hall. I feel like that’s a very good measure because if I can’t go to Elm and have a balanced meal, there are days that I can go, and I’ll struggle to have a balanced meal with veggies and fruits on my plate, right? And if I’m not eating correctly, how will I feel alright for my class and be able to focus?”

Dauge-Roth proposed a change that would also improve that day-to-day life. “I would assign less homework. For students with no free blocks or classes that don’t use reserve, the new schedule’s homework load is impossible to manage. This leads to students getting less sleep and sacrificing their extracurriculars, essential social opportunities that improve their mental health. Not to mention that if a student’s grades start going down due to their inability to keep up with the masses of homework or their sacrificing sleep, this will not help their mental health.”

The anonymous student

built on the idea of reducing the rigor of the academy, believing that allowing students to take time off would be very beneficial. They also acknowledged that few students could take advantage of this for fear of missing classes and the idea of a “snowball effect.”

The theme of reforming the block system of the schedule also came up for many students. Burney detailed, “Allowing the new person more time of just pure freedom for students to do what they want instead of having scheduled blocks where you think you’re going to have free time, but then at the end you either have a meeting that’s scheduled in, especially I realize as an upperclassman, there are so many meetings for so many things that sometimes we don’t need to meet all that much about.”

“Giving students everything blocked out during the day and so much homework kind of prevents them from being able to take time for themselves and relax,” Serrao said.

As a final improvement idea, Serrao suggested bringing back out-of-town trips to Boston or Walmart, which would help people escape the feeling of being trapped in the Exeter bubble.

Many schools continued to express their opinions regarding how well they think teachers deal with, teach, and recognize mental health. An anonymous student said, “It depends on which teacher you talk to. While some teachers are completely supportive and understanding if you are trying to focus on your mental health, others are more critical, to the point of it being unfair to students. While Exeter is supposed to be a challenging environment, there is a breaking point where it feels like one is not learning through constructive criticism. Still, rather than being blatantly criticized by the teacher.”

Other students find that the opposite is true. Serrao stated, “I think there are some immensely supportive teachers. I found the dorm environment and some of the faculty in the dorm to be incredibly supportive. One example is Mr. Richards. I’ve gone to about challenges in my life or things I’m struggling with, and he’s always there to provide a comforting hand. He continued, “your advisor is also a very good source of support.”

Burney would also find the situation with teachers to be similar. “Most of them do okay. From my experience, all my teachers are good; they see and hear and listen to you.”

Most students believe that the school makes adequate efforts to support student’s mental health. However, a few think that the admin has a lot of room for growth. Many students praise their teachers for their support, especially noting their advisors. Several students have shown understanding for the administrative perspective - the school cannot take away stress regarding college and take away homework. Overall, Exonians believe that admin has made sufficient progress in supporting students—which, in an extremely competitive environment such as Exeter, is a difficult feat.

MATTER Magazine Spotlight: Exonians' STEM Research This Year Pt. 1

MIT PRIMES Program

By **ROBIN DAO '26**,
KAITLYNN FARKAS '26,
SARAH HUANG '25,
SANGWOO KIM '26,
AARTI RAJU '27

MIT PRIMES is a free, year-long program designed to nurture and challenge aspiring mathematicians. Hosted by the Mathematics department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), it presents an opportunity for high-school students looking to explore “unsolved problems in mathematics, computer science, and computational biology,” as stated by the program’s site.

Admission to MIT PRIMES is rigorous and highly selective, consisting of a personal statement and a general and advanced problem set of around 5 or 6 problems each. Computer science applicants must solve a computer science problem set in addition to the general math problem set.

Once accepted, students follow four phases. In the first phase, the students’ assigned mentors recommend reading to expose them to potential future research projects. Towards the end of the first phase, the students submit a five-page report detailing an area they are interested in exploring. The mentors review these reports and invite the students with the

clearest dedication and progress to complete their research. From there, the students undergo an active research process under the guidance of their mentors. Their work culminates both as a presentation at the fall term PRIMES conference in October and in a paper eligible to be sent to professional research journals for publication. Here at Exeter, there are a number of students who have attended this program in the past years.

Many Exonians shared why they decided to participate in the MIT PRIMES program. For example, Andrew Carratu '25 has been interested in mathematics and computer science research since a young age. Carratu has been a part of this program for the past two years, researching math and computer science. He said, “I want to have a future in something stem-related as a career. [MIT PRIMES] is a really nice program to just get into research before college.”

Another Exeter student, Shiqiao Zhang '25, also described that he had been interested in math research for a while, adding that MIT PRIMES is “one of the most prestigious programs in the United States for high school mathematical research.”

Davido Zhang '25 expressed similar reasons — the prestige of the program and his continued interest in respective subjects — for applying: “On one hand, I knew the program because of uppers and seniors who did the program. I was already interested in math: I competed in math olympiads, so I was already in the community... [MIT PRIMES] is the best program to do math research for free, so it’s just one of the options that I had and I decided to give it a shot because it’s pretty hard to get it,” D. Zhang said.

With regard to the program’s timeline, Carratu shared, “The first meeting is in March, and the goal is to choose the idea for the project by the time the summer starts.”

He continued, stating that there aren’t any meetings over the summer, so “you have to pick up pace with the research upon returning in September. The midterm report (which summarizes what topics you have read papers about and what problem your group will try to tackle) is due [at the] end of June, we were expected to have conducted experiments by the conference in late October, and to finish the final report by December 31st.”

Although it may sound daunting, Carratu ad-

ed, “It feels like a lot of time when you hear it’s a year-long project, but in reality, it’s not as much because you only meet from March until May and September until December. Almost all of the research, 5-10 hours a week, happens outside these meetings, however.”

Although MIT PRIMES gave participants an unparalleled opportunity to conduct math and computer science research outside of school, it also came with many challenges. For D. Zhang, the commute was a big hassle. “Traveling from Exeter to MIT is an hour and twenty minutes if you drive. You could also take the Amtrak. I had to switch between them... [And] I would waste the entire afternoon going there,” he explained.

In addition, the demanding academic rigor of MIT PRIMES was challenging for many. Carratu shared that “trying to understand all the papers that [one was] reading each week” was particularly challenging.

Nonetheless, students were able to adapt and overcome these difficulties. “It can be helpful to call your partner to work through what you’re trying to solve for that week,” Carratu said.

For others like S. Zhang, “maintaining a

detailed research journal where I write down my thoughts and record partial results” was helpful. “This helps me quantify the effort I put into my research project and gives myself a more objective reflection of the progress that I am making,” S. Zhang said.

During the MIT PRIMES program, students’ routines varied depending on their mentor. S. Zhang, who attended the program twice, explained: “My mentors last year were from UCI (University of California, Irvine), and we met online via Zoom each week at a time that worked for all of us. My mentor this year is from MIT, and I take the Amtrak train to MIT on either Wednesday or Friday each week to meet him.”

Students only needed to meet with their mentor for one hour per week, but D. Zhang noted that it could be difficult to balance other extracurriculars on top of MIT PRIMES. “I’m lucky because I did crew my prep year and only later joined squash, so I didn’t have to deal with doing both sports and the MIT PRIMES program.”

Upon reflection, students had greatly memorable experiences during this program. D. Zhang and Carratu shared that

their favorite moments were undoubtedly the October Conference, also known as the Joint Mathematics Meetings (JMM) conference in Boston. During this event, they had the incredible opportunity to present their projects alongside highly accomplished researchers and many other talented RSI students.

Meanwhile, Alan Bu '24 shared his fondest memory, which occurred on a September afternoon halfway between Grill and Phillips Hall. Here, he experienced the magic of finally connecting the ideas and concepts he had been exploring since March. It was a moment of realization as he pieced together his research, marking a significant part of his academic progress.

Throughout the challenges the students faced, the MIT PRIMES program was an enjoyable and engaging experience for many. It was a way for students passionate about research to use the exposure to advanced ideas to grow, especially with the “guidance of experienced mentors,” according to S. Zhang. Most importantly, it was a solidifying factor for many hoping to pursue a career in the fields covered by MIT PRIMES, allowing them to get a taste of what’s to come.

BIO 490: Collaborative Research

By **ELLE COHEN '26**,
NATALIE JEBRAILI '25,
and **ANSHI MEHRA '26**

BIO490 is an upper-level science research course that runs in the fall, open to uppers and seniors interested in chemistry and biology at Exeter. The course teaches students processes of scientific investigation through a team-based approach, where students collaborate to work on a cumulative research project, which they present at the end of the term. In past years, students have learned research methods, such as statistical analyses and project design, while working with the Wisconsin Fast Plant as a model organism for student-designed research projects.

Students chose to take the course for a number of reasons. For example, senior Eloise Benchley described that the class is great for active learners, such as herself, through the hands-on lab experiments students conducted.

Eloise Benchley '24 also noted that the class was also helpful with the technicalities of lab write-up: “I learned a lot about scientific language, and being very careful with how to phrase things,” Bench-

ley said. She hadn’t taken many biology classes, as she had been focused on chemistry and physics, but she thoroughly enjoyed the rigor of BIO490.

Another student, Charlie Gao '24, reflected that he chose BIO490 because he wanted to better understand how scientific research is carried out: “I wanted to get that experience when it comes to conducting scientific research methods on certain labs and projects.”

As a part of the course, Gao and his classmates conducted an experiment on plants: “We watered plants using different chemicals [such as] zinc, and we saw the effect of these four different chemicals.” Gao comments that his class chose this experiment because they believed the experiment could “generate good data.”

The course also taught students a variety of statistical analysis methods, such as the student’s t-test and the chi-squared test. When asked what he learned in the course, he responded that his key takeaways involved understanding how to collect and interpret data: “I think the most important thing was using uncertainty and statistical analysis on lab data.”

Similarly, Benchley

recounted how the first half of the term discussed the scientific method, research ethics, and using statistics in scientific research. Benchley reflected, “It was definitely a bit stagnant, but it taught us the tools that we used in our final project that occupied the second half of the term” and referred to the first half of the class as “a mini stats course and a mini bioethics course.”

For the second half of the class, Benchley continued to describe how the class of eight was divided into two research groups. They used Wisconsin Fast Plants and first spent time brainstorming and researching. Then they ordered materials for their experiment.

“My group decided to look at how different divalent ions affected plant health, using chlorophyll concentration as a proxy for the health” Benchley said. Her group used spectrophotometers, and although it was a complex experiment, “it was definitely really fun to have so much freedom.”

One difference between the experiment in this course and experiments in other courses was that this one was long-term. Benchley noted that during the second half of the term, “There were definitely some



Courtesy of Vantage Circle

team dynamic issues... an uneven distribution of work, and some difficulty with scheduling.” She explained, “With research like this where you need consistency, the schedule controls you, not the other way around.” Benchley acted as a leader for her group, but reflects that next time even smaller groups would be more feasible.

Altogether, Gao enjoyed taking data and analyzing the experiment’s result as a scientist would. In Gao’s experience, the team had

to consider methods of “decreasing uncertainty” in their results.

Looking back on the course, Gao commented that his favorite part of the project was “reorienting the experiment towards what we wanted” and practicing “problem-solving.” Gao took pride in creating a “good final product” and acknowledged that “scientific research is extremely difficult.”

Overall, students of the course recommended it to younger students interested in science. For

example, Gao shared that it was “a strong course if you want to have an introduction to scientific research,” but adds that the course is “pretty difficult.”

Similarly, Benchley recommended younger students to take it if they are looking for creative liberty. “I would just warn younger students about the fact that this class is very end-heavy, so you need to be ready for lots of work around the time of college applications and finals,” Benchley concluded.

BIO 670: Biology Research

By DANIEL CHEN '27, ELLA FANG '27, AHMED HAMAD '27, AARON SPENCE '27, and ANDREW YANG '27

Every spring term at Exeter, Exonians who share a passion for biology may apply to take the BIO670 course, titled “Biology Research.” This course allows students to explore various topics in biology by researching fruit flies, aiming to develop new techniques to be used in Dr. Seung Kim’s lab at Stanford University.

This course is almost entirely student-led and students learn material through hands-on experiments. BIO670 has been one of the most successful advanced biology courses in the Exeter science curriculum, with slight modifications to its course content every year.

Instructor in Science Anne Rankin described the course: “[The students] are following a protocol, which is a crossing program for multiple generations of fruit flies, and then some characterizations of the novel type of fruit fly that they’re making,” Rankin said.

“Then that thing that they’re making is actually a tool for another researcher,” Rankin continued. “It goes into a repository of all these different kinds of fruit

flies called the Bloomington Stock Center. Then, all those types of fruit flies are listed for researchers and they can order and buy the particular tool they need to carry out the experiment that they’re doing.”

Instructor in Science Townley Chisholm added, “We teach the elegant logic of crossing protocols that use chromosomes with dominant markers to trace the inheritance of P element transposons we want to place in novel locations in stable stocks of flies.”

Chisholm continued to describe how students were taught to “identify with inverse PCR exactly where our P elements landed in the fly genome and how to dissect and take images under UV light to show where and when those P elements (and their nearby genes) are being expressed,” Chisholm said.

In terms of how the course has changed over the years, Chisholm shared, “Every year or two, Dr. Kim’s lab suggests a new variation of the course. We used CRISPR to swap one driver for another for the last 2 years.

“This year we had a really fun crossing program that uses female flies with 2 fused X chromosomes and a Y, and, yes, they are still female even with that Y. How it will change in the future is completely unpredictable,”

Chisholm commented.

Current and past students of the course shared fond experiences in the course. Jenna Wang '24 shared: “BIO670 is a really unique course to the school because it allows us to implement research techniques and learn about them and do actual research that’s used in the real world instead of learning about things.”

For Sylvia Langer '24, “the small class size of six to seven also appealed to me,” Langer said. “I really liked having a class of two teachers and six students per class because I think it brought really interesting discussions and it was way more intimate and way more community-driven, which I really appreciated.”

Advika Verma '25 shared what the class is currently working on: “A lot of what we’re doing right now is taking care of the flies and setting up new crosses for each generation. It’s a lot of fly maintenance. We learned a lot about the *Drosophila* [fruit fly] genome. We’re learning about how many chromosomes they have, what genes there are, what chromosomes, and how we can manipulate that for the purpose of this class.”

Verma continued to describe, “Something that was really interesting to me was the whole research aspect of it and more hands-on lab

work that we worked on in the winter.”

Another anecdote was shared by Stella Song '25, who remarked on the course’s unpredictable nature. “My favorite moment so far is when I found my H male fly,” Song said.

“It is very rare due to the low chances of the genetic events that need to occur to produce this fly and I couldn’t find any for a few weeks,” Song continued. “As much as I loved finally finding one, the waiting period is perhaps more important for me because it reflects the uncertainty and adventurous nature of research that you cannot get from classroom learning.”

Similar to the students of this course, Rankin reflected on her experience teaching BIO670. She described, “The thing that is really fun to me about BIO670 is that though Mr. Chisholm and I know a lot of what’s going on. It’s really fun to figure things out with students. It’s really fun to recognize when the students either ask a question or they make an observation that uncovers something that I don’t understand. Kids do ask questions that you don’t know the answer to, but it doesn’t happen quite as often.”

Rankin continued, “In BIO670, you’re getting kids who love biology and who’ve learned a lot of bi-

ology, so often when they ask you a question it’s like, ‘Ooh, yeah, I really need to figure that out.’ And I just love that moment of learning side by side with a student.”

“We’re all in the room doing this stuff together, but each student is responsible for their own sets of crosses. I think there’s something to be proud of in this class. Later in the term, they’ll learn how to dissect fruit fly larvae and take photographs of them and then also learn the molecular biology they need to characterize what they’ve created,” Rankin added.

During the course, students and teachers have also faced challenges that helped them hone their collaboration skills and broaden their knowledge. “I think it’s definitely been very difficult to go from a traditional harvest science class to one that’s more lab-oriented... It’s [also] a smaller class, it’s six people compared to your traditional twelve, so I think for me personally, there’s been more pressure to step up and participate,” Verma said.

Additionally, “This class is a giant time commitment,” Verma continued, “A lot of times we meet during E [format] so there’s universal free time after, and a lot of us will stay for 20 to 30 minutes to look at our flies. We’ve had to come in on weekends, Friday nights, in the evenings, or Monday nights sometimes to clean bottles or check on our flies.”

Verma described another challenging aspect of the course as a student “generally never having learned anything about fruit flies before to kind of just getting right into it on the first day.”

Moreover, Stella Song '25 commented on the difficult lab techniques involved in this course. “For me, the foremost challenge so far is to maintain vigorous generations of flies so that I have ample offspring to sort through to increase my chances of finding flies with desired phenotypes. Gaining more practice on *Drosophila* research has helped me improve my lab techniques,” Song shared.

Potjer added another challenge of the course, namely “dissecting really small, fruit flies.” Potjer detailed how the dissection process “was an extremely difficult task and it took four weeks or so just to successfully dissect some flies. It was an extreme challenge, and at the beginning, I never thought that I would be able to successfully do that.”

Chisholm also commented on the students’ progress and perseverance throughout this course. “We are all learning together and making mistakes together and doing things over together to get them right. The course has a very strong team spirit that derives from spending lots of time together sorting flies, cleaning bottles, working through DNA extraction protocols, and taking fluorescent images of glowing fly larvae. We never know what we are going to find or figure out.”

Almost all current and prior students recommend future Exonians to tackle this course. For Verma, BIO670 was her favorite class here at Exeter.

Potjer agreed, sharing: “This is an extremely unique class and one of the opportunities that’s very unique to Exeter. And so I think it’s a really special learning experience and it’s a really fun opportunity to work with teachers in a very small environment and really contribute to something actively.”

Adding on to the uniqueness of this experience, Langer said, “I think one of the great things about coming to Exeter is being able to experience such intimate class settings. I think the fact that we’re able to also work with such an accomplished and distinguished lab and produce real data is something that’s really unique.”

“There are so many lessons and moments of collaboration that you would not normally get in a classroom setting,” Song agreed.

Verma provided insights on pre-recommendations for taking this course. “I think if you’re especially passionate about lab work and you are excited to go in and learn new things and do something new that you’ve never really done before, it’s really exciting. It does require a lot of discipline and perseverance to get over the initial humps.”

Rankin shared that BIO670 is not the course for every student. “You can be an amazing science student and think that’s not the experience I want right now. And there’s no problem with that. But for some kids it’s a really fun experience,” Rankin said.

Nevertheless, both students and instructors of the course agreed that BIO670 was able to provide students with valuable research and laboratory knowledge to pursue their future studies.



**SUNDAY 7 P.M.
EPAC FORUM
PUBLISHED ON
THURSDAYS**

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» GPA SCALE

Read lower Sam Altman's criticism of the Exeter GPA scale, 9.

» AURORA BOREALIS

Read senior Austin DeSisto's experience with the aurora, 10.

» MET GALA

Read lower Sophie Zhu's opinion on the recent Met Gala, 10.

Exeter Without Complaint

By FORREST ZENG '26

What is the biggest problem our school faces? No, it's not a lack of sleep, dining hall food, nor too much homework. No, as big as these problems are, the greatest problem our school faces is with that very question itself—what is wrong with our school?

I'll be more specific—the problem isn't with that critical question, but how we ask that critical question, "what is wrong with our school?" The problem at Exeter isn't about finding problems with Exeter, but how we do it. It's the difference between intuition and rationality. There's a difference between criticizing and complaining. And complaining is a problem.

Don't take this personally, but the chances are that you are already complaining about this article. Even if it's not explicit, you are feeling a subconscious affront upon your ego, a tingly sense which certainly tells you "Who does this guy think he is?" The part of your brain that commands stress, the amygdala, is starting to rev up like a lawn mower, ready to fight.

Complaining is a form of social currency. How many times have you started a conversation with, "I'm so tired?" Don't deny it, but there is a subtle, perverted sense of superiority when someone tells you, "I only got seven hours of sleep," and you get to respond with, "I only got five." It stems from our ability to form social groups around one common thing—whether it be positive or negative. We can form social groups, huge ones, surrounding a fetishized version of pain.

That's the problem. People are in the habit of complaining. It makes you feel good because you don't have to bear agency for anything. It's an immature form of justice. There's a difference, though, between complaining and criticizing. When you complain, you shift the burden away from yourself. When you criticize, you shift the burden onto yourself to fix it.

Take this example. This fall, the school administration announced a new pilot schedule for the Spring term. As with all new changes at this school, everybody hated

it. You could not find a single person that acknowledged it might be a good idea. The cantankerous moans of the student body filled dorms and classrooms, grumbling about the "awkward" ten minute passing period they had not yet even experienced.

When spring term came around, people still complained about their schedules—but after that got old, people began to concede that the schedule was indeed growing on them. This is an example of complaining. Complaining is finding problems that annoy you. And it's easy, rewarding, and keeps you in the loop.

On the other end of the spectrum, actually criticizing something is difficult. When you criticize a government, you aren't complaining about it. You're setting out to find systematic issues that are a lot more than just annoying. And Exeter is built on constructive criticism—take Exonians Against Sexual Assault (EASA), inspired by the criticism of past Exonians who found genuine problems with our school's approach to sexual violence. Or the massive

(albeit imperfect) reforms our school has made towards mental health. That kind of difficult "problem seeking" is worth it. Complaining is just a form of immature justice.

It even infiltrates how you do academically. There's a stark difference between stating: "I have to do this," and "I get to do this." For example, I have a peer in my Latin class who excels at the language. Every time he learns something new in class, instead of complaining, he's visibly excited. Whenever he has to translate a difficult passage, he is incredibly obsessed. Instead of pushing away short-term agency by subconsciously resisting learning, he is already in the habit of leaning into learning. That's exactly how he has conditioned his brain to translate Latin fluently—simply because his subconscious mind doesn't find it annoying to do so.

Mind this—there's a difference between something that is difficult and something that is annoying. Difficulty is objective. Annoyance is subjective—and it comes from how you perceive the world,

and your habit of complaining.

Nothing is too small or big to complain about at Exeter. You can complain about something as small as a homework assignment, or as big as our schedule. If your instinct is to be annoyed by everything, then, I apologize, you will be annoyed by everything. Complaining will infiltrate your attitude towards everything. You cannot isolate complaining for only one part of your life, and not also begin complaining about something else.

So how do we solve this problem? The problem is systematic, in fact. The jello which suspends our individual consciousnesses is stress. Complaining is therefore the natural way that Exonians go about making friends. I can only advise you, the reader, this.

Fake it until you make it. As Malcolm Gladwell outlines in his book "Blink," physical expression and emotion are intertwined. If you feel sad, you will frown. If you feel happy, you will smile. But the reverse is also true. If you crease your brows, you will begin to feel angry.

So that means that, if you pretend to be annoyed, by verbally and physically complaining to your friends, eventually, you will actually be annoyed. You can twist that, though. Pay attention to your reactions, and change them slowly.

Eventually, over days and months, you will develop a new mental habit, one that is enthusiastic about learning—purely through changing your physical expression! And conveniently, once you are enthusiastic, you can begin to criticize the school on a rational, more essential level.

Then, when you find something wrong with the school, evaluate your opinion critically. Read books, advocate, organize, and do what all Exonians do best—make great changes in the world. But complaining will get you nothing.

In this article, I criticized complaining. But maybe I was complaining about complaining, and I just didn't realize it. The truth is clear, though. Complaining, as fun as it is, isn't very helpful. Tend towards criticism, less towards complaint.

Guidelines for the Publication of Opinions Pieces in *The Exonian*

To clarify our standards for Op-Ed, the board has outlined a brief list of expectations. Ideally, a quality op-ed will . . .

- ❖ Be factually correct, clearly citing credible sources. Writers will be required to provide a list of cited sources to editors during the editing process.
- ❖ Be in some way relevant to issues or events at Exeter or with the intention of prompting conversations on campus.
- ❖ Present an argument that is original, mature, and in good faith, challenging predominant narratives or providing a new angle for said narratives on campus.
- ❖ Exclude any hate speech, which *The Exonian*, in conjunction with the Academy's E-Book, defines as irrational, uninformed, derogatory, and oppressive language directed toward or harmful to specific communities or individuals.
 - Debatable cases will be discussed by editor(s) and adviser(s) with the writer(s) to be removed or reframed.
- ❖ Be well written, with a clearly stated thesis, logical line of thought and no extraneous content.
- ❖ Undergo revisions cooperatively and in a timely manner by the direction of editors and advisers.
- ❖ Not be used as a means of self-promotion or the promotion of corporations, violence, crime, conspiracy theories, oppression, or injustice.

GPA Scale

By SAMUEL ALTMAN '26

It's safe to say that the culture surrounding GPA at Exeter is not exactly healthy. For many, a single test grade can cap the letter grade in a class at one rung lower than they wanted, subtracting a whole precious 0.2 points from their GPA. While seemingly insignificant, this loss may be devastating under grade inflation and constantly increasing competition. For this, part of the blame lies in the large disparities in the difficulty of courses at the same level, but the lack of a weighted GPA also takes part.

Firstly, though this point is reiterated quite frequently, it is nevertheless true that our completely un-standardized grading system is a major problem with Exeter. One's actual grade potential from term to term fluctuates massively due to the large swings in difficulty of teachers, while one's expectations for themselves remain fixed, if not increase, throughout the years. It can therefore feel like the whole world is against you if you happen to have a particularly difficult term. It is one thing for

different teachers to have different teaching styles or ways of explaining, but it is a whole other matter when some tests ask what is essentially just a question from the textbook while others present a whole new situation that draws from multiple concepts at once. Not every teacher will be the same, but there should be a general standard as to what level of questioning is appropriate for students in a certain course. If there is one now, it's certainly not being enforced.

Secondly, Exeter should consider a weighted GPA. In truth, it is hard to even describe, for example, how much more difficult the Math 400s are than the Math 100s. And yet, depending on several factors, a new student in the same grade might find themselves taking either of these options. Of course, most know this to a certain extent, and so colleges factor in your course rigor, and the Academy even considers it when awarding things like Early Cum Laude (although it's hard to be certain that their evaluations would be accurate).

Nevertheless, our culture still suffers, and it's

because even if a given student does know that their course rigor will be taken into account (and many don't), no matter how much they try to convince themselves, their GPA is still a number on a paper, and when people ask about it, they're not going to have time to justify themselves. That is, most people at the very least act as if the only thing that matters is getting the A. Thus, students in higher-leveled courses face an immense amount of pressure to achieve near-perfection while others who have opted for easier routes coast as if it were the same challenge. As most of us are extremely prone to comparison, mental health problems often arise.

Often, as a result of this, very high-achieving students will intentionally take classes they know are easier because they are so afraid of not reaching that absolute perfection. We should be encouraging our students to truly challenge themselves and ensure that they don't have to pick between intellectual curiosity and taking an easier route for the same material result. At Exeter, most will choose the latter. Of course, there's

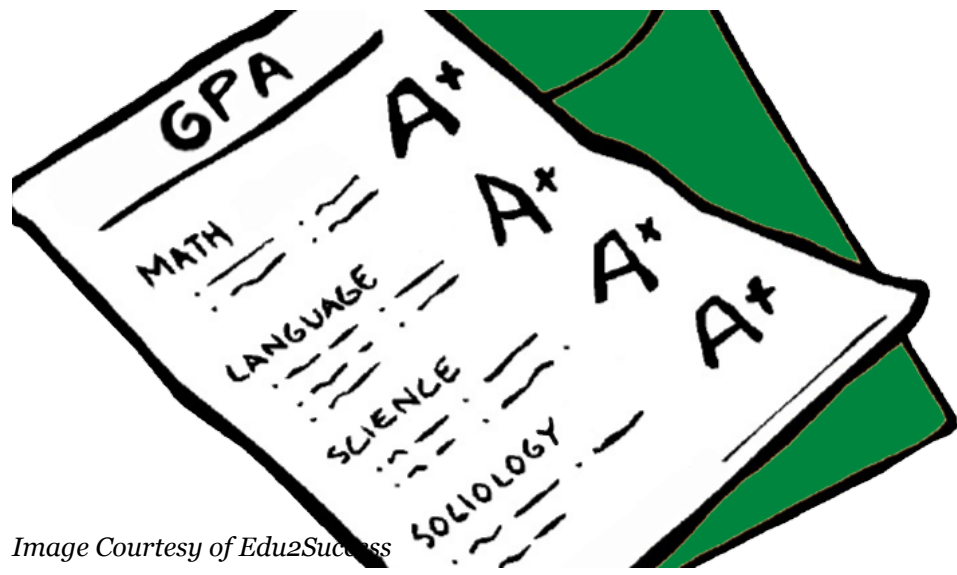


Image Courtesy of Edu2Success

nothing wrong with taking easier courses if you've used your prudence and decided that's what's best for you, but there should be a tangible difference in GPA to reflect that.

One might offer in response, as I mentioned earlier, that this already happens to a certain extent because our courses are numbered and difficulty is reflected in that. However, there is no good reason to leave it up to the outside observer to judge how much more difficult one schedule is than the other when we can determine that ourselves. Further, even if this were true, whether we like it or not,

students will still always compare the number of their GPA itself, as that is what is easy and available, and so it should reflect the rigor of their classes.

You could also say that, because most of us are competitive, a weighted GPA would lead to almost everyone attempting to take the hardest courses, which would be even worse for our mental health. However, we have to reconsider what the purpose of a grading system is in the first place: to show distinction among the students and to keep everyone accountable for their academics. Those who pursue the objection in this paragraph might

also say, by the same logic, that we should get rid of grades altogether, because they cause people to be more concerned about academics, and thus be more mentally strained. But of course, that's ridiculous. As a school, it's our duty to have a grading system that accurately reflects the achievement of each student as objectively as possible. Fixing the two issues I have touched on in this essay would help to diversify grades, reduce grade inflation, more accurately distinguish hard workers, decrease unfair comparison, and thus improve our grade culture as a whole.

The Aurora wasn't Even the Coolest Part

Austin DeSisto / *The Exonian*



By AUSTIN DESISTO '24

As the sun began to set, I sat on the quad in front of our library playing with friends and observing the sparse clouds glow with an incredible orange bloom. The moon, only a small crescent, began to appear above a large tree. It was cold, but a nice Friday evening after a long week of classes and projects. Throughout the day I posted to Instagram and Twitter, sharing the hope that we, in Exeter, New Hampshire, would see the aurora borealis tonight. Only a few friends took interest as I showed them photos from across Europe. Some took interest in the science and asked how and when we could see them.

I attempted to get a photo on campus of our historic academy building, which has connections back hundreds of years to the school's inception in 1781, a few months ago when we had aurora potential. Alas I came up empty, but poised ready for the next opportunity.

Initially I packed up my Canon R5 and 16-35 mm lens and drove about 10 minutes north to Newmarket, a town with less light pollution and a boat ramp that led to a wide open marsh looking north. My best chances were to look north and Newmarket was a prime spot. It turns out that I was not the only one with the idea. Shortly after I arrived, another car pulled in and parked; getting out the occupants pulled out their phones and gazed upwards and around them in awe. In the following 30 minutes, more cars arrived, my phone was blowing up with texts from friends on campus and around the northeast. A police officer even pulled in and fearing he might tell us to leave, I started to think of alternate locations. I don't know the rules behind being on boat launches at 10 pm on a Friday, but as he approached he said, "This is so cool isn't it! I'm going to get my phone, this

is rad."

Not long after, the International Space Station, with seven members on board, began to rise from the southeast into the red aurora that loomed in that part of the sky. The crescent moon I observed earlier was nearly set, but still visible above the tree line. I pointed up and announced to the crowd around me, "Look it's the ISS! That white dot!"

"No way!" Multiple people responded. Shifting to get a better composition without cars, I captured two photos of the bright ISS as it passed overhead. Through all of it, I took a moment to wave and take in the reality of what I was witnessing. Seven people on a small white light traveling through an unimaginably colorful sky were visible from this small boat launch in New Hampshire. The aurora brought a dozen or so people to this area. How they decided to come here or even how they found out I have no idea, but somehow the color in the night sky landed us at this spot at this time and gave me a similar outlook on humanity that I found during the eclipse.

Upon seeing some friends' photos from campus, I remembered my attempt a few months ago to capture our academy building, which holds the assembly hall and a variety of subjects, with the aurora. Quickly, I raced back to campus, knowing this show would last a while, but unsure to what extreme. Parking on an empty street, I hurriedly grabbed my tripod and camera and ran down the sidewalk to center the building in the frame. The lights were incredibly bright compared to the sky, so I took three exposures at varying lengths to capture the building, sky, and surroundings in great detail. What shocked me most was the rapid changing of the pink, green, and purples hues between each photo.

However, as I sat taking photos, a man approached me from down the sidewalk on my right.

We made eye contact, surprisingly not awkwardly, and he remove his earbuds presenting my with a puzzled look on his face. "Getting a good shot, I see," he said.

"Yeah! The sky is just so colorful," I responded.

"Huh? [pause] Oh my god. I didn't even notice."

For the next 10-15 seconds, we both gazed at the dancing pink and purple, mouths open and eyes peeled. He began to ask questions about why it was happening and why we could see it in Exeter. Our conversation only lasted a few minutes, but he told me that he just came back from a retirement party for a dear friend of a local business. "This night has been so special and what a way to cap it off. Thanks for the chat, I'm glad I looked up," he said before we parted ways.

This interaction left me with profound joy and gratitude. We live in an era where news spreads quicker than ever before and anyone can take a photo in seconds with the device in their pocket. I spend much of my time communicating science topics and other activities through photos and words on the internet, but talking with a stranger on the side of the road at 10:30 pm is the purest form of education and inspiration.

My feed has been flooded with photos of aurora from all across the world for days now, just as the sky was flooded with color Friday night. As the sun rose the following morning while I peacefully slept the late night off, the curtains closed on the magical night and all that reminds are thousands of images and even more memories from a historic astronomical event. In just over a month, humanity has witnessed two spectacular wonders of our solar system. Hopefully you have been inspired, learned more about the rock we live on, and will forever be grateful for our magnetic field.



Image Courtesy of @austin.desisto on Instagram

Floral Reverie: Thoughts on the Met Gala

By SOPHIE ZHU '27

The 2024 Met Gala fell on May 6, 2024, and was hosted by Vogue's Editor-in-Chief Anna Wintour and celebrity co-chairs Zendaya, Bad Bunny, Jennifer Lopez, and Chris Hemsworth. The dress code "The Garden of Time" was chosen to complement The Costume Institute's exhibition titled "Sleep-

ion mirrors the period's zeitgeist, and any thematic choice, however abstract or detached it may seem, carries with it connotations of societal dynamics. Fashion cannot be divorced from the broader context from which it was constructed. Nor can a garment be separated from its embedded narratives in its reawakening.

Of course, many at-

Ariana Grande's look, which epitomized whim and enchantment, with a custom Loewe mother-of-pearl bustier dress that cascaded layered silk chiffon. Thematically, it was not my favorite, but I have always been partial to the ethereal and fantastical, and the crystalline butterflies fluttering around her eyes added to the allure.



Image Courtesy of The Hollywood Report

ing Beauties: Reawakening Fashion."

The exhibition featured approximately 250 items from the museum's permanent collection spanning four centuries of fashion houses, such as Christian Dior, Hubert de Givenchy, and Maison Schiaparelli. Like the titular Disney princess, fashion experiences dormancy before being rejuvenated. Garments too fragile to be worn or hung will be brought back to life with projections that appear as objects in three-dimensional space.

"The Garden of Time" takes inspiration from a 1962 short story by J.G. Ballard. It paints a hilltop villa inhabited by Count Axel and his wife, who watch as a shapeless rabble encroaches upon their serene garden. They are kept afar and rerouted to their starting line each time the count shears a flower, but the garden is depleted. Their civilized existence of books and music ends with cutting the final flower, a metaphor for the delicate balance between creation and decay. Quite fitting for the exhibition's theme. Yet, it is difficult to ignore the overt irony of the story's theme.

But at its core, the gala consistently occupies a unique position of privilege and exclusivity and is inextricably braided with discussions of class inequality. Most evidently, once an individual has secured a coveted invite, they must still pay a \$75,000 ticket fee to attend the event. In addition, fash-

tendees lack a general interest in the evening's theming, and their presence is due to their fame, relevance, or affiliations with fashion houses. These are undeniably great accomplishments in themselves, but the focus here is fashion. The disconnect between the gala's thematic aspirations and the many unenthusiastic attendees does not diminish its significance as a platform for social commentary. Thus, the Met is merely a platform for artistic expression within the fashion industry.

"Florals? For Spring? Groundbreaking."

Disregarding any dystopian Hunger Games-like Capitol overtones I got from the entire event, there were many outfits I liked.

It's clear where Elle Fanning, sculptural and frosted like a frozen "time flower," gained the inspiration for her dress. Crystal flowers bloom from her shoulders, an elegant twist on the gala's theme of fragility and life.

Lana Del Rey wore a custom Alexander McQueen fit-and-flare dress with embroidered vines snaking up from the floor to her thorny headpiece. I was hoping for motifs of rebirth and decay on the carpet, and with the studio lights backlighting her hair through the tulle, she looks like a deer in the headlights or a surreal apparition, haunting and otherworldly.

Aesthetically, I liked

I also enjoyed Tyla's Balmain sand sculpture—very on theme—Zendaya's first dress, and Alia Bhatt's look.

Perhaps my favorite was Mona Patel's gown, with an array of kinetic flower petals encircling her arms, fluttering in slow motion, and a scalloped train. The look was custom couture by Iris Van Herpen with kinetic motion artist Casey Curran. Stylist Law Roach brought the gown to an Indian embroidery house, combining tech, traditional couture, and culture. She looks serene.

I expected botanical overload. The romantic Yves Saint Laurent Spring 1999 dress definitely came to mind first, as did the Studio Ghibli-esque Uncovered butterfly terrarium dresses. Maybe Dior Summer 2017 flower crowns and Guo Pei Fall 2019 and Spring 2018. Florals are markers of Spring. Perhaps a little cliché and overused, but that doesn't mean they don't resonate. But this interpretation seems surface level for a fashion event with such an interpretable theme. And I cannot count how many attendees simply neglected the theme altogether. They are given an entire short story to reference. We are the horde, and we can only ogle at their opulence. The Met Gala is escapist, which you can argue is out-of-touch with the current climate. It's so removed from everyday life that it feels surreal.



Image Courtesy of The Independent

Humor

» **APEXETER**

Test your Exeter knowledge. Can you get a 5?, 12.

» **EXONIAN EDITOR**

Read about a day in the life of an *Exonian* editor, 12.

The Crossword Corner

By **FREDDIE CHANG**
and **SHAWNA JIANG**

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13		
14						15					16					
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20						21					22					
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63								64					65			
66								67					68			
69								70					71			

ACROSS

- 1 - questions
- 5 - sneaky ccs
- 9 - me too
- 14 - St A's makes a good iced _____
- 15 - New Haven university
- 16 - you can make this in dhall
- 17 - pottery oven
- 18 - urgent request
- 19 - energized
- 20 - ESSO event this Sunday
- 23 - anna's sister
- 24 - therapist's org
- 25 - burger kings
- 28 - compounds that have the same molecular for-

- mula but are structurally different
- 31 - kissing on the street, for example
- 34 - WWII conference site
- 36 - not young
- 37 - _____ les jours
- 38 - key American value/belief
- 42 - best dorm
- 43 - derivative of sin
- 44 - buy one at d^2
- 45 - spoken song
- 46 - _____
- 49 - snake sound
- 50 - like an ocean but not really
- 51 - you have this in the

- bathroom
- 53 - disney movie with dogs and spaghetti
- 61 - you can take these if you fill out an orah pass
- 62 - Blakeslee's favorite katy perry song
- 63 - currency exchange fee
- 64 - calculator brand
- 65 - Taj Mahal city
- 66 - "C-_____!"
- 67 - lots of students here
- 68 - mental health services
- 69 - London gallery

- DOWN**
- 1 - nantucket airports (plural)
 - 2 - like a boat
 - 3 - veggie
 - 4 - "_____ you've been gone" (audition song from pitch perfect 1)
 - 5 - go around
 - 6 - Peruvian port
 - 7 - h2o just add water girl
 - 8 - doc _____s
 - 9 - use these to mail letters
 - 10 - _____ loompa
 - 11 - this month's celebrated heritage
 - 12 - MSEC
 - 13 - ITDS
 - 21 - Homer classic
 - 22 - 6 feet is 2 _____

- 25 - over-whelmingly
- 26 - jojo siwa song
- 27 - something exonians lack
- 29 - plural of moose
- 30 - Will Ferrell christmas movie
- 31 - the tortured _____ department (new taylor swift album)
- 32 - tear _____
- 33 - fire remnants
- 35 - (1+2)(8)-44+90/3
- 37 - dorm event usually held in spring
- 39 - like a sea but not really
- 40 - big angry crowd
- 41 - carrot or tree or flower

- or something
- 46 - justification
- 47 - D flat
- 48 - '80s-'90s Olds models
- 50 - country with capital Damascus
- 52 - mac n cheese brand
- 53 - 2021 pixar film set in italy
- 54 - ABAS
- 55 - _____ Ar-naz of "I Love Lucy"
- 56 - vampire count nick-name
- 57 - roman robe
- 58 - spanish water
- 59 - toothpaste flavor
- 60 - bowl from Ohana

AP Number Label
(from Student Pack)

AP Calculus Exeter

By SAM ALTMAN '26, JINMIN LEE '26, JOSEPH KIM '26, FORREST ZENG '26

Welcome to the AP Calculus Exeter exam. Place your AP Number Label in the top left slot, and your AP Exam Label on the bottom left slot.

Indicate your answers to the exam questions with a no. 2 pencil, attempt all questions, and remember, don't cheat.

Disclaimer: This test is in no way associated with Collegeboard's Advanced Placement Program. It is entirely satirical.

1. An Exonian wants to travel from Phillips Hall to the gym, which is 900 feet away. Fred parked his bicycle in Phelps Science Center, which is 400 feet away from Phillips Hall and 1000 feet away from the gym. Fred's walking pace is 5 feet per second. How fast must the Exonian ride his bicycle for the stop to be worth the time?
2. Sixty tired Exonians are off to Grill five minutes before an 8 am class on the third floor of the science building. Each student takes on average, 15 seconds to purchase a Grill cookie. How long should it take before all 100 grill cookies are depleted? Will they make it to class in time? How much will the Grill cookies rejuvenate these sleep-deprived Exonians in Chemistry class?

3. Exeter's teachers often have a hard time grading Harkness discussions. So, they often consult a reliable website to help with their grading. This website has a Harvard-engineered software program called the Random Number Generator Function. Given this totally realistic method of entering a Harkness grade, determine the probability that all 10 students attain a 4 or higher.

4. The number of girls Sam Altman has ever talked to is determined by the following expression: Determine this value.

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(1 + \frac{1}{n}\right)^n - e$$

5. There is a function representing an average Exonian's willpower over the term. Let t be in days and $M(t)$ represent mental health and drive. Find how many minutes it will take for an Exonian to cut willpower by half.

$$M(t) = 100(0.001)^t$$

Let's be honest though: if you don't think about it too hard, it's already hit the x-axis.

6. Find the number of good dorms on campus which can be represented by the following expression:

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} \frac{\sin(x)}{x}$$

(Hint: it's Peabody)

7. Studying often feels challenging because we don't immediately see progress. Think of studying as walking laps around your dorm. Let's say the perimeter of Peabody Hall is 50 meters. Sam sprints 30 laps around Peabody and ends where he begins, right in front of the main entrance. He does this in 10 minutes.

a.) What was his average speed in kilometers per hour?

b.) But average speed only represents effort. Average velocity, on the other hand, represents actual progress. What was his average velocity in kilometers per hour?

AP Exam Label
(from Section I Booklet)

Answer boxes and exam label boxes courtesy of CollegeBoard
Barcode courtesy of Cognex
Equations courtesy of CodeCogs Equation Editor



OP-ED in Wonderland: The Daily Schedule of an Exonian Editor

By ZOE CURTIS '25'

5:30 AM - Rise and Shine (or Stumble)

My day begins with a rude awakening before the sun has even considered rising. Rising out of bed like Dracula, I

glect the snooze button ("snoozing" is a privilege endowed only to staff writers), then stumble into the Dutch House

kitchen for a life-saving cup of coffee.

6:00 AM - Breakfast of Champions (?)

Breakfast is a luxury reserved for those with time on their hands. Grab a granola bar, or some almonds, or, more conveniently, oxygen, on the go (while thinking about that ONE writer on deadline) and hope it staves off hunger until lunchtime.

7:00 AM - Morning Meeting Madness

Gather with the sleep-deprived

staff— my own anxious thoughts— for a crucial strategy session. Peruse articles, review headlines, and attempt to exude authority while nursing my eighth cup of coffee.

8:00 AM - Classroom Capers

Juggle actual academic responsibilities amidst the chaos. Make some half-hearted Harkness points, take notes in English class that double as Op-Ed fodder, and discreetly edit articles during chemistry (sorry, periodic table).

12:00 PM - Lunch Break-ish

Scarf down a sandwich while reviewing rough drafts and responding to urgent emails. The

art of multitasking reaches new heights.

3:00 PM - Afternoon Rush

School ends, but the day is far from over. Dive into more meetings, tackle syntax and structure, and pacify stressed-out writers with Jedi-level diplomacy (or cut them to ribbons concerning appositives).

6:00 PM - Dinner Break (Briefly)

Grab a quick bite (preferably something that can be eaten with one hand) and dive back into the editing abyss.

8:00 PM - Deadline Drama

The crescendo of chaos. Proofread, format, and pray to the printing gods for

a smooth process. Wrestle with technology and writer egos until the final layout is ready for print.

2:00 AM - Night Owl Nonsense

Wrap up the day, 25 coffees in, by ensuring comments are resolved on the final document. Revel in a fleeting moment of victory before realizing that distribution day looms ahead.

5:00 AM - Sweet/Bitter Dreams

Collapse into bed, visions of headlines dancing in my head. Sleep, however brief, before the cycle begins anew.

Sports

» **COTW**
Read about this week's Captains of the Week: Leta Griffith and Will Lu, 14.

» **TENNIS**
Read about how boys' varsity tennis has been crushing their season, 13.

» **VOLLEYBALL**
Read about boys' varsity volleyball's exciting game against NMH, 14.

Big Red Varsity Tennis Dominates the Court

By V MURDAYA and LEON XIE

Big Red's boys' varsity tennis team is having one of the best seasons in the past decade, with their Varsity A team boasting a record of 8-2 and Varsity B team racking up an impressive 6-2 record.

When asked about both teams' outstanding performance, Varsity B coach Bob Lietz said, "The team this year is performing a very well; not only in this season but in comparison to other seasons. We have a very [strong] team with players that perform well in all [14] slots of the team, so we've had an excellent season and we just think that we will continue to do so."

Indeed, the combination of new talent and veteran players appear to be a deadly one for the team's opponents, as incoming players are able to receive guidance from those who've had high school careers spanning multiple years.

Prep Hugo Shinn at-

tested to the advantages of having players of all ages on the team. "It really feels like a family, everyone's super tight and there's a lot of upperclassmen to help guide us. It's really helpful to hit with them, [for] warmups and stuff, [and] they're really great at giving advice. They're super encouraging in your longer games, [and] they'll come and cheer you on."

Shinn continued, citing a specific example of a nail-biting epic of a match he'd played earlier in the season, "There was this one time where, at Loomis, I was playing the last game of the day, and there was the whole Loomis team on one side and the whole Exeter team on the other, and it went to a ten-point tie-breaker. It was super hype and stressful, but it was super fun though."

This year's community was a big point of satisfaction for many team members. Upper Steven Chen, a player on the varsity A team, said, "I think, as someone who's been on the varsity team for three

years now, this year is pretty unparalleled in terms of how we all see each other and the community we have, not only as a tennis team but also as friends who share the courts together."

Perhaps one of the secrets to the team's success lies in their practices and philosophy regarding warmups. David Liu, a prep on Varsity B, explained the coaches Ron Rodriguez and Bob Lietz's involvement in warmups: "One of the pre-match rituals is Coach Ron will usually give us a speech before the game, Coach Bob will also give us logistics the day before."

Speaking on the meticulous nature of their preparation just before matches, Chen said, "We start really close to the net, we just wanna work on our angles, our accuracy, our consistency. We work on our reflex volleys, just trying to cover every single part of our game that might be used in a match whether that be in singles or doubles."

The team's top-down, catch-all approach to getting ready to play when it counts has certainly proven effective, and as they head into the final stretch of the season, they haven't shown any signs of slowing their roll.

Coach Lietz discussed their hopes for the upcoming NEPSAC tournament: "In terms of how we'll perform, I think we have a legitimate chance to win the whole tournament," he said. "We will certainly be tested by a number of teams—Andover's particularly strong this year, and Groton's quite strong—but I think we will have a very good chance of winning the whole thing, if we continue to play like we have."

From the players' side, lower Neal Veerana captured the high spirits of the team while they gear up for their last match of the season, which will be against Andover, before NEPSAC: "I mean, our goals are to just win! Win everything. The big one for us is Andover. They beat us last time, and I think all of us

are looking forward to getting a little punch back at them. They beat us on our home turf, and hopefully, we can beat them on their home turf."

The girls' team has also had an impressive record, with the Varsity A team scoring seven wins out of nine matches and the Varsity B winning all five of theirs.

The regular pep talks from Coach Nancy Bulkley have become a pre-game ritual for the teams, which help to get the girls into a strong, collective mindset heading into the game. "I think one of the most important things that happens is the talk with Coach Nancy pre-game," prep Aarti Raju said. "It's important that as a team we approach the game with the same mindset. We get to have a little bit of a pep talk, a little bit of encouragement of what we need to do, and have us be in the right area."

Lower Mathilde Senter gave some insight into how the team practices. "The team prepares for

upcoming games by doing intensive drills, doubles practice with our respective partners, and also challenge matches to make sure everybody is where they should be on the ladder."

After a stunning win against Deerfield Academy in late April, prep Naomi Moskovich shared, "We felt fulfilled. We worked hard. We worked hard in practice every day and so it was a great victory because we did lose to them last year, so it was just fun feeling like winners and being winners."

"The team vibe is really good and friendly," upper Freddie Chang added. "We have a lot of team dinners, which has made us closer."

Thanks to incoming players who elevate the energy level on the court, upperclassmen with ample experience and tactical knowledge, as well as coaches always ready to lend a helping hand, the boys' and girls' varsity tennis teams have had an incredible season, with more to come in the future.

Big Red Season Records Since May 9, 2024

Baseball JV

Governors Academy: L 12-2
Northfield Mount Hermon: L 14-4

Baseball V

Pingree School: W 2-1
Andover: L 13-2

Crew Boys V/JV

N/A

Crew Girls V/JV

N/A

Cycling V

N/A

Golf V

N/A

Lacrosse Boys JV

Pingree School: W 11-1

Lacrosse Boys V

Proctor Academy: W 17-9
Northfield Mount Hermon: W 17-4

Lacrosse Girls JV

Thayer Academy: W 16-4

Lacrosse Girls V

Dexter School: W 9-8
Thayer Academy: W 17-6

Softball V

Governors Academy: L 12-11
St. Paul's School: L 12-2

Tennis Boys A V

Deerfield Academy: W 4-3

Tennis Boys B V

Kimball Union Academy: W 8-1

Tennis Boys JV

Cardigan Mountain School: W 6-1

Tennis Girls A V

Choate Rosemary Hall: W 6-3
Winsor School: L 7-2

Tennis Girls B V

N/A

Tennis Girls JV

N/A

Track Boys V/JV

N/A

Track Girls V/JV

N/A

Volleyball Boys JV

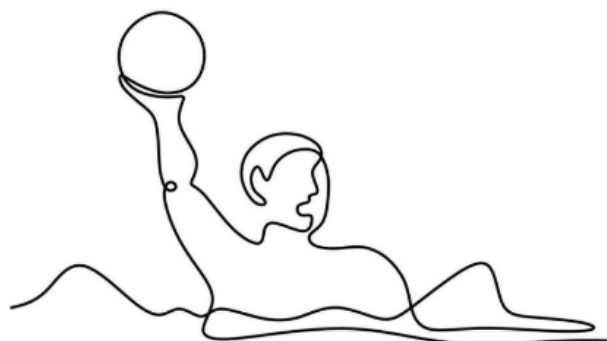
N/A

Volleyball Boys V

Andover: W 3-0

Water Polo - Girls V/JV

N/A



Boys Volleyball Triumphs Against NMH

By JINMIN LEE, V MURDAYA, AND LEON XIE

On Saturday, April 4, Exeter's boys varsity volleyball traveled to Northfield Mount Hermon School (NMH) and seized a quick victory with a score of 3-1, continuing this year's undefeated season. All throughout the season, the team spared no expense in training, undergoing rigorous practice to make sure their performances were strong ones. "One of the biggest things for

any volleyball team is serving and passing," prep Lake Zhou said. "So a lot of the time we worked on serving and passing, which is why we won the game yesterday. Our serving consistency allowed us to bring the ball to the center of the court more, giving us an advantage." "We also practiced forming quick strategies on our feet," explained lower Robin Dao. "We watched and studied recordings of good plays during practice and, during our game, tried hard to identify our op-

ponents' best hitters. We had also worked on quick transitions off blocks, which was integral to our victory." "However, we were worried and a little stressed when we ended up losing our third set to NMH," Dao continued. "Even though we were up 2-1, we knew that NMH was not a team we could lose to. We wanted to protect our undefeated title. So there was a bit of pressure." Zhou agreed, but he emphasized how the team was able to work well to bring stabili-

ty back to the game. "Our captain Nick Lin served well in the fourth set, which was the highlight of the game," Zhou said. "We kept the ball on their side and made sure to let them make the errors. This allowed us to assert ourselves in the game again." "Teddy Hosmer and Nick Lin really had some great serve aces," Dao said. "Devon Coole and Bodie Woods hit really well as well." "The current team environment and dynamic has also been

great," upper and outside hitter Bodie Woods said. "Everyone's morale is really high, and we are all getting along really well as a team." The team played NMH again four days later at home, besting them once more with an even more impressive 3-0 score. "The team is confident about our wins and successes," Dao said. "We're hopeful that our strength carries us forward toward an undefeated championship." The team has already beaten Andover

two times this season, and Woods believes that this upcoming match will be no different. "We've beaten Andover twice, so I think that we can do this one more time. Plus, it is a home game, so I think it will go pretty well." Since this interview, the team beat Andover in the NEPSAC championship with a score of 3-0. Finishing their season with a 8-0 record, the team is proud of their hard work and excited for next season.

COTW: Leta Griffith and William Lu

By ERIN HAN, MARVIN SHIM, and MEGHAN TATE ZEE

Around campus, you may have seen the cycling team pedaling by with iridescent sunglasses and neon vests. This team, recognizable from half a mile away, works tirelessly every day in an attempt to sweep each race's podium. Within the group, there are two members who keep the cyclists working hard and with high spirits: upper Leta Griffith and senior Will Lu, the team's captains. Surprisingly enough, both joined the team as preps with little experience in the sport. Griffith reflected, "I was inspired to take on the role of captain because of Ale Murat, who was the girls cycling captain my prep and lower years. She was such a positive and motivating presence on the team, and I knew that I wanted to hopefully carry on her supportive and fun-loving energy as a leader once she left." "Both captains came from being newbies in the sport to accomplished racers," head coach Don Mills said. "It's part of why they are such good cap-

tains." The "lead-by-example" attitude that both captains have taken on pushes team members to become the best athletes that they can be. Lu explained, "I think I really enjoy leading by example. I don't really like giving people directions and stuff like that because I don't think anybody likes unsolicited advice." He continued, emphasizing his belief that relentless directing is not a productive approach. "I also think that mastery of anything doesn't come in three years, so I honestly don't feel like an authority most of the time. I've always had the philosophy that if people want more guidance, they'll come to me for it. If people really want to go far, they'll ask for help. So, I try to be there, but I don't want to be an overwhelming kind of source." Lower Sebastian Sobeih described how deeply the captains' motivating voices are felt within the team. "I feel like they're really inspiring people just in general, in everything. The people that they are, how they

interact with the team, both as a teammate, school schoolmate, and also a leader." Sobeih added, "They're really, really good leaders in bringing the team together, and in pushing everybody really hard. There have been days of riding and racing where you're already seeing stars and then they tell you to push harder, and you do and get that last bit out, and that's really, a cream of the crop, best feeling." Lu added, explaining his emphasis on a team's bondeness in connection with their success, "I think that you can't really have a team without disciplined members and without competent members. I think that's my first priority, to become a competent athlete myself." "That kind of goes into what I told you earlier about why I like leading by example," Lu continued. "I try to become better every year. A lot of that's just through training on my own in the off-season and learning a lot about cycling and sports science, and just trying to become the best version myself, so that maybe peo-

ple can have me as an example." "I would describe Will as being the most into-cycling person I know," senior Alex Rosen said. "He's always eager to get some extra miles in after practice, he's happy to teach other people about how bikes work and is very knowledgeable." Similarly, Rosen said, "I would describe Leta as extremely hard-working. During our race a few weeks ago she started off with a very strong sprint to get some distance from everyone else and then ended up getting a minute and a half lead on the rest of the peloton. She's one of those people who really always tries her best." These separate qualities, in tandem with the two captains' shared emphasis on community, have fostered a team environment like no other. "My view of the team so far is that it is one of the best communities I've been a part of here at Exeter," Rosen said. "It's one of those teams with just really good chemistry. Every time we are on the bus we end up having a good time, whether that's playing headbands, playing pickleball after practice, or talking." Mills echoed, "They have both done a great job bringing the team together

as a unit." Whether on the race track or on a quick ride along the Academy's

paths, Lu and Griffith are always at hand, consistently leading the team onward.



The Exonian

We would like to acknowledge the Squamscott/Penacook peoples who were the first peoples of this land. We would like to honor their ancestors, descendants and future generations for caring for this area and allowing us to be here

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