

The GW Hatchet

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ARI GOLUB | PHOTOGRAPHER

GW Pi Kappa Alpha leaders haven't spoken about the chapter's suspension, but experts said members may have dissolved to avoid disciplinary action.

Pi Kappa Alpha quiet on details of campus suspension

LIZZIE MINTZ
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Greek life experts said Pi Kappa Alpha's decision to dissolve, which resulted in a suspension last week, was likely a way to avoid disciplinary action.

Justin Buck, the executive vice president and CEO of Pi Kappa Alpha, notified the GW chapter president Tuesday that the fraternity had been kicked off campus. Colette Coleman, the assistant dean of students, said the fraternity's headquarters notified officials earlier this month that GW's chapter "voluntarily" relinquished its charter, but she and IFC leaders declined to say why the chapter dissolved.

"Effective immediately, the GW Delta Alpha chapter will no longer be eligible to receive benefits associated with being a registered GW student organization and cannot participate in recruitment practices," she

said in an email.

Coleman said Division of Student Affairs staff and former chapter leaders are "in talks" with Pi Kappa Alpha headquarters about "next steps" for individual chapter members. She declined to say whether the University was involved in the chapter's decision to dissolve.

She said the University has offered former members "resources and support," like relocating students to other on-campus housing for the semester.

"We support the decision that the Delta Alpha's student leadership made in consultation with their headquarters," she said.

Megan Nelson, the senior director of marketing and communications for Pi Kappa Alpha's international chapter, said last week that the organization placed GW's chapter on suspension after the chapter surrendered its charter. Nelson declined to com-

ment further.

Robbie Santamorena, the former president of GW Pi Kappa Alpha, declined to comment. Henry Auslin, the chapter president who was slated to take over this spring, also declined to comment.

Interfraternity Council President Seamus Cullen did not return requests for comment, and eight Pi Kappa Alpha members listed on its 2019 e-board did not return requests for comment.

The fraternity was investigated in October 2016, shortly before coming off social probation for a "previous violation," and shut down for a month for posing health and safety risks to new members.

Todd Shelton, the chief communication chair for the North American Interfraternity Conference, declined to comment, deferring an interview request to the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity because the decision to suspend the

chapter was "internal." He said "lots of options" exist for students participating in GW's IFC recruitment — which will run from Jan. 27 to Feb. 8 — who are looking for "a positive fraternal experience."

Greek life experts and IFC advisers said fraternities typically relinquish their charters when the chapter is facing disciplinary action for violating student safety or no longer wants to comply with its headquarters' regulations.

Pi Kappa Alpha's chapter at Southern Methodist University was suspended in 2018 after the school conducted an investigation into hazing, like requiring new members to eat onions and eggs. The organization's headquarters suspended the University of Massachusetts Amherst chapter in 2018 after the chapter was indicted over alleged hazing.

See **FRATERNITIES** Page 4

Students launch group for LGBTQ students of color to find community

LIA DEGROOT
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

A group of students is banding together to build a community for LGBTQ students of color through a new student organization.

Espie, a junior who requested to go by their nickname because they have not come out to their family, said they founded the Queer and Trans People of Color Association late last semester to provide a space for LGBTQ students of color to connect with one another and conduct community service around D.C. They said the group allows members to embrace their racial and sexual identities, which Espie said was difficult to find in other LGBTQ student organizations.

"It just didn't feel like I could really be me," Espie said. "I felt like I was only pieces of me and that I had to put on a different version of myself for every different other organization I was a part of."

Espie, the student organization's events manager, said the group held a finals "de-stress" night last month to help members get to know one another. The group has recruited about 19 members so far through word of mouth, fliers and Instagram, they said.

Moving forward, they said group members are planning to host events, like trivia and movie nights focused on the history of LGBTQ people of color. Members also hope to partner with student organizations like Allied in Pride and GW Balance to plan future activities like a dance night.

They said QTPOCA has allowed them to form meaningful friendships, something they struggled with since coming to the District from New Mexico.

"I've never had a family like this before, especially in terms of friends," Espie said. "And this community, specifically as a queer people of

color community, is all about support because we need to have one another's backs when it feels like there's so few of us. Even if there isn't, when there's so few spaces for us to exist with one another."

Khala Antoine, a junior and QTPOCA's vice president, said she joined the student organization because she didn't feel like she had a space to express all facets of her identity.

"I just felt like this space was very much important and very needed, especially because I didn't have this type of space growing up," Antoine said.

She said Center for Student Engagement staff asked the group to revise its presentation when it applied to become a new student organization last semester. Antoine said QTPOCA leaders added more photos of the queer and transgender students of color community to the presentation, and the CSE approved the organization the second time leaders presented at the beginning of December.

She added that the group plans to hold two major events each academic year, including an LGBTQ prom, and participate in community service around the District with the D.C. Center for the LGBT Community.

Antoine added that she wants the group to provide a space for LGBTQ students of color to discuss the racism and homophobia within the community because some other queer spaces do not focus on the intersectionality of the two issues.

"In the black community, we do in general deal with a lot of homophobia," she said. "And being in the queer community, we also deal with a lot of racism as well. So either way, it's like we deal with some type of struggle."

GWHATCHET.COM

H to learn about what QTPOCA has planned for the semester

Officials, faculty disagree about impact of enrollment cuts on debt

CARLY NEILSON
REPORTER

Officials say planned cuts to enrollment will not generate any new debt, but faculty senators aren't convinced.

A 2015 report by the Faculty Senate's finance committee found the University's debt at the time — totaling \$1.66 billion — could limit GW's growth and hamper any efforts to improve GW's reputation. But officials said major planned changes to the University's enrollment — including the decrease in total enrollment and increase in the ratio of STEM majors — will not grow the University's nearly \$2 billion of debt.

Executive Vice President and Chief Financial

Officer Mark Diaz said the University currently owes \$1.9 billion in debt as of June 30, 2019. Diaz said the University has paid \$344 million in interest on the debt from fiscal years 2015 to 2019.

"The University has always managed its debt portfolio in a comprehensive and strategic manner, with particular focus on managing risk and cost of capital, which support the liquidity needs of the institution," he said in an email.

Diaz said the University's planned enrollment cut will not change the size of GW's debt.

University President Thomas LeBlanc kicked off the planning process for GW's next strategic plan last semester after announc-

ing the STEM increase last spring and the enrollment cut over the summer. Last semester, faculty raised concerns about administrators' lack of transparency during the planning process and about potential effects on the University's finances.

Six enrollment models presented by the provost's office in October projected revenue losses of \$8 million to \$36.2 million per year and losses in underrepresented minority enrollment from 2 to 7 percent. LeBlanc said at a Faculty Senate meeting that those models were preliminary, adding that officials do not intend to compromise "an inch" on diversity gains.

See **OFFICIALS** Page 3



FILE PHOTO BY ARI GOLUB | PHOTOGRAPHER

University President Thomas LeBlanc said at a Faculty Senate meeting that admissions staff are responding to nationwide declines in high school graduates by decreasing overall enrollment.

Enrollment cut tied to national drop in high school graduates: officials

ILENA PENG
CONTRIBUTING NEWS EDITOR

Officials' decision to cut undergraduate enrollment over the next four years comes amid a predicted nationwide decline in the number of high school graduates seeking college degrees.

Between the 2012-13 and 2024-25 academic years, the regions from which GW draws the most students — New England and the mid-Atlantic states — will face declines in high school graduates seeking college degrees, according to a December Faculty Senate presentation. Officials are responding to the demographic decrease with their plan to cut undergraduate enrollment by 20 percent and to enroll more students from regions that

are growing, like the South and Southwest.

"Right now, where you're seeing those declines that have already taken place, that is a major source of students at GW," University President Thomas LeBlanc said at the senate meeting. "So it's something that we're already facing as a headwind in admissions."

New England states are predicted to experience a 9 percent decline in high school graduates — nearly 15,800 students, according to the presentation. The number of high school graduates in the "middle states" including New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland, are expected to decrease 1 percent, or by roughly 5,600 students.

Students from New York, New Jersey and Virginia

represent the largest populations among GW's 10,615 undergraduates, according to institutional data. More than 1,000 students from each state are enrolled at GW.

LeBlanc said the enrollment cut is the "proper balance" between improving the student experience and responding to the dip in the number of high school graduates.

He added that officials are expanding "efforts" to draw high school graduates from southwestern states like Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and New Mexico — the region of the United States projected to experience the largest increase in graduates, by about 17 percent, according to the presentation.

See **DECREASE** Page 3



FILE PHOTO BY SOPHIA YOUNG | PHOTOGRAPHER

Mark Diaz, the executive vice president and chief financial officer, said GW's planned enrollment cut next year will not affect its roughly \$2 billion debt.

News

January 27, 2020 • Page 2

CRIME LOG

UNLAWFUL ENTRY OF MOTOR VEHICLE

MVC Campus Property (Outside Building)
Unknown – Unknown
Closed Case
The GW Police Department received a tip that a male student gained access to a parked Vern Express on the Mount Vernon Campus. Officers responded to the area and found everything to be in order.
Referred to the Division of Student Affairs

THEFT I/FROM BUILDING

Corcoran Hall
Unknown – Unknown
Open Case
A male student reported his computer as stolen after he left it unattended for a day and a half in Corcoran Hall.
Case open

THEFT I/FROM MOTOR VEHICLE, UNLAWFUL ENTRY OF A MOTOR VEHICLE

Public Property on Campus (600 Block of 23rd Street)
1/15/2020 – 9:30 a.m.
Open Case
A male staff member reported his computer and books were stolen from his vehicle. There were no signs of a forced break-in.
Case open

MURDER 1

Off Campus
1/14/2020 – 6:30 p.m.
Closed Case
GWPD responded to a Metropolitan Police Department report of stabbing on Virginia avenue. Two men began arguing, and one man attempted to stab the other. The victim fled the scene, but the subject caught up to him and stabbed him. GWPD officers who arrived on scene determined that neither party was affiliated with the University.
Subject arrested

PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS

Townhouse Row (600 Block of 23rd Street)
1/16/2020 – 4:11 p.m.
Closed Case
GWPD officers responded to a report of a man unaffiliated with the University sitting and drinking on the rear steps of a townhouse. Officers made contact with the man and issued a bar notice.
Subject barred

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT: HIT AND RUN

Public Property on Campus (500 Block of 19th Street)
1/18/2020 – 4:29 a.m.
Closed Case
GWPD responded to a report of a hit and run outside of Madison Hall. GWPD observed damage on an unattended vehicle's bumper and trunk and damage to a male driver's car on another street.
Referred to the Division of Student Affairs

THEFT I/FROM BUILDING

CVS Store (The Shops at 2000 Penn)
Unknown – Unknown
Closed Case
GWPD officers responded to a report of CVS shopping cart found at Potomac House trash room. Officers returned the cart to CVS. The manager confirmed that the cart belonged to the store.
No suspects or witnesses

—Compiled by Kateryna Stepanenko

SNAPSHOT

ARIELLE BADER | SENIOR PHOTO EDITOR



The GW Vibes perform at the 2020 ICCA Mid-Atlantic Quarterfinal in Lisner Auditorium Saturday.

DSS director oversaw surge in department enrollment in 16-year tenure

MAKENA ROBERTS
CONTRIBUTING NEWS EDITOR

Disability Support Services enrollment jumped by thousands of students under the office's outgoing director.

Susan McMenamín – who worked in the Disability Support Services office for 16 years, most recently as the director – said she is leaving GW at the end of the month to “explore new opportunities and undertake new challenges.” Higher education experts said the next director should reach out to registered students and research McMenamín's work over the past decade and change to adapt to the growing department.

“When I think back about my experience here on campus, I reflect on the thousands of students who I know were helped to find their potential during my tenure,” McMenamín said in an email. “The variety of services we were able to provide enabled each individual student to find their own success with their academic pursuits.”

McMenamin said her time at GW has been “both professionally and personally rewarding.” She added that she will most miss the “sense of professional fulfillment” in knowing she helped so many students take the steps necessary to step into their professional study and careers.

Enrollment in the DSS office jumped nearly 40 percent under McMenamín, increasing by 1,500 students between 2017 and 2018.

The University will begin a nationwide search for a replacement director Feb. 1, and Alisa Major, the DSS associate director, will serve as interim director until the University fills the position permanently.

Caroline Laguerre-Brown, the vice provost for diversity, equity and community engagement, said the



Officials said they will launch a nationwide search Feb. 1 to replace outgoing DSS director Susan McMenamín.

University is finalizing selections for the search committee, which includes members from the student body, faculty and staff.

“We are grateful for the many contributions that Susan has made to GW and wish her well in her retirement,” she said. “Through this transition, we will continue to provide DSS services to the GW community.”

Higher education experts said candidates for the open position should exhibit strong knowledge of accommodations needed for students with disabilities and a proven track record in working with learning challenges.

Shelly Chandler, the provost of Beacon College in Leesburg, Fla., said anyone filling a disability service position needs to uphold a strong understanding of “brain-based learning” – learning styles that change as students mature cognitively.

“If the interim employee

is dedicated, knowledgeable, personable, kind and patient but does not have the knowledge to do the job, students will be greatly impacted, she said.”

She said filling a departmental position could take anywhere from six to eight weeks. Any candidates considered for a disability service position must provide credentials of subject area expertise with terminal degrees, or the highest degree awarded to a student, Chandler said.

“This person should have a proven track record of being successful with students with disabilities and have a very strong knowledge of the various accommodations needed in higher education,” he said.

Luci Masredjian, the director of disability services and student support at Occidental College, said supporting students who are experiencing any medical or personal challenges is a top priority for a new director. In the event

of a vacancy, an official who oversees areas of student life would need to step into the interim position.

“If I were looking to fill the position of a disability services director or coordinator, I would look for someone who truly loves this work,” Masredjian in an email. “Working with students with various learning differences, chronic illness and psychological disorders is a labor of love, so the right person for the job must have a passion for the work, and for the student population.”

Masredjian added that the director should hold comprehensive knowledge about the Americans with Disability Act along with intentions to better the community of students with disabilities.

“I know that any time we look to fill a necessary position, we look first and foremost for the capacity for compassion, integrity and flexibility,” Masredjian said.



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Library campaign shares students' stories about course material affordability on social media

YANKUN ZHAO
REPORTER

GW Libraries staff are encouraging professors to adopt and use more affordable course materials through a new campaign.

Gelman Library staff launched a "Postcard Campaign" at the start of this semester to offer students the chance to create cards detailing their struggles with affording textbooks and other course items by showing other items they could have purchased, like food, with the money spent on course materials. Gelman officials said the postcards will raise awareness about textbook affordability and open educational resources, which are free to access and use.

Geneva Henry, the dean of Libraries and Academic Innovation, said staff is asking students to complete postcards at the beginning of the semester about what sacrifices they have made to afford course materials and how the money could have been spent. Staff is promoting the campaign at Gelman and outside the Marvin Center, she said.

"The GW Libraries and Academic Innovation are committed to increasing affordability for students at GW," Henry said in an email.

Some of the students in the campaign wrote on their postcards that more affordable textbooks would help them save money, work fewer hours at their jobs and allow them to allocate more money toward food.

Henry said students are also including in the postcards requests for their professors to transition to cheaper course materials, like less expensive textbooks, and to stop assigning expensive access codes for materials.

The library's Twitter account has been using the hashtag #TextbookBroke to spread the campaign to members of the GW community.

She said GW Libraries' Open Educational Resources



Geneva Henry, the dean of Libraries and Academic Innovation, said students will write on the postcards about the sacrifices they have made to afford course materials.

and Top Textbooks team, which acquires up to five copies of books required by certain high enrollment classes for students to use for free, is "coordinating with GW" and national representatives from non-profit organizations focused on course material affordability to assist students in advocating for cheaper course materials.

"We believe that student communication with their instructors about the impact of high textbook prices, paired with professional assistance in finding lower cost alternatives, including using open educational resources, will motivate many faculty members to reconsider expensive textbooks and access codes and adopt more affordable course materials," Henry said. She said the postcards will

be presented to faculty at the end of the semester along with resources facilitating the transition to cheaper course materials to "support them in switching to open educational

"The postcard campaign is especially innovative in grounding the advocacy with student voices. I look forward to hearing about the results."

JIMMY GHAPHERY

ASSOCIATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN, VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

resources."

Paige Valego, a freshman majoring in dance, said she participated in the campaign after she was approached by Gelman staff and asked if she paid too much for textbooks.

"I paid \$400 for my books last semester when instead I

could have had more than \$13 a day for food," she said.

She said the campaign is "a good idea," adding that officials could do more to promote student involvement in it.

"A lot of people don't stop until someone says, 'Hey, can you do this?' when you're on your way in and out somewhere," she said. "I feel like they need a more effective campaign strategy."

Academic libraries experts said the trend of universities adopting open educational resources and participating in library consortia, which share materials at a reduced cost to each individual library, are on the rise, and the postcard campaign adds a personal element to the affordability issue.

Adriene Lim, the dean of libraries at the University of

Maryland, said Gelman staff's efforts to help students with course material costs are "impressive," adding that the library serves as a model for others to follow suit.

"They demonstrate yet again the valuable impact a university library system can achieve within its campus community – in this case, by enhancing student success and college affordability," Lim said in an email.

Jimmy Ghaphery, the associate university librarian for scholarly communications and publishing at Virginia Commonwealth University, said students can take a more proactive role in confronting the costs of course materials by becoming directly involved in projects like the postcard campaign.

"The postcard campaign is especially innovative in grounding the advocacy with student voices," he said. "I look forward to hearing about the results."

He said that while the financial side of the issue for students is serious and needs to be tackled, the emphasis on students' success in class needs to be included in the discussion as well. He said studies have shown that more expensive textbooks have adversely affected students' performance in their classes.

"The goal is not for students to have more or less money but for students to succeed," Ghaphery said.

Anne Osterman, the director of the Virtual Library of Virginia, said libraries are increasingly becoming more of a resource and a gathering place for students and faculty to work toward common goals like course material affordability.

"They are hubs for connecting, and I think that has become a really natural fit to then help affordability for students in a variety of ways," she said. "They have become leaders in open textbooks and open course content work because of those ways they can bring people together and centralize resources for campuses."

Decrease in high school graduates driven by 2008 financial crisis: experts

From Page 1

LeBlanc said the University will also admit 100 to 125 more transfer students each year to smooth out any significant drops in class sizes from year to year.

The enrollment cut is projected to result in an annual loss of revenue ranging from \$8 million to \$36.2 million a year and reduce underrepresented minority enrollment from 2 to 7 percent relative to the baseline, according to models presented in October by the Office of the Provost.

LeBlanc said at the senate meeting that officials will make "a commitment to not give an inch on our diversity gains." He said in October that officials expect a tuition revenue drop of about \$16 million a year.

"None of the models were a proposal for what we should do next year, because admissions changes over time have to be somewhat gradual," LeBlanc said about the provost office's modeling information. "Otherwise, your yield models fall apart, you lose your accuracy and you're taking enormous risks in actually achieving your goals."

Enrollment experts say the decrease in high school graduates seeking college degrees is driven by declining birth rates in the years after the 2008 financial crisis, which created financial instability in young households.

Brett Morris, the associate vice president for enrollment management at the University of North Georgia, said institutions should start planning for the decline in high school

graduates immediately to avoid having the lull in applicants turn into a "campus crisis."

"Universities should begin to husband resources in reserves and avoid significant financial commitments that may increase debt load," Morris said in an email. "While it is hopeful to identify programs and markets for expansion, achieving this kind of change, in a climate of furious competition will be exceedingly difficult."

Paul Marthers, the vice provost for enrollment management at Emory University, said universities are not yet in the "deepest part of the decline" in high school graduate numbers, referencing research that predicts a 15 percent decline over the next decade.

He said drops in international enrollment nationwide – in part prompted by geopo-

litical tensions between the U.S. and countries that contribute a large number of international students like China – mean colleges cannot substitute declining domestic applications with international ones. GW's international enrollment in 2018 dipped for the first time in nine years.

Marthers said strategies for boosting enrollment are "everywhere," from recruiting in new areas of the country to increasing financial aid and adjusting tuition policies. GW recently eliminated fixed tuition for the incoming Class of 2024 to allow administrators more flexibility in allocating money to the GW community's "evolving needs."

"I think colleges and universities that are in those challenged spaces are wrestling with this from a lot of angles,"

he said.

Daniel Villanueva, the associate vice president for enrollment management at the University of Houston-Downtown, said universities will need to increase transfer and graduate student enrollment to compensate for declining undergraduate interest. He added that enrollment management may have to shift from focusing on growth to incorporating "downsizing management" – how and where to make budget cuts and shrink departments.

"More and more institutions are experiencing enrollment declines and they're not ready and/or prepared to manage downsizing," Villanueva said in an email. "Institutions will have to incorporate projections and modeling within their decision-making process more and more."

Officials may need to increase number of adjuncts, adjust size of enrollment cut to avoid adverse impact on budget: faculty

From Page 1

Diaz added that the size of GW's debt has not affected faculty hires and the number of construction projects on campus – two concerns raised by the Faculty Senate five years ago – as a consequence of the University's debt structure. Rather than make continual payments on the principal amount of debt, officials must make lump sum payments on GW's loans once they mature, he said.

Diaz said the University continues to issue bonds to refinance its debt at a lower interest rate to invest in campus projects and to realize new revenue sources, like the real estate development project that resulted in Residences on the Avenue.

"The last bond issuance was part of GW's overall financial strategy to monetize incremental investment real estate cash flow, invest in projects that are important to the University and refinance debt with extended maturities and lower cost of capital, saving money over time," he said.

Members of the senate's fiscal planning and budgeting committee said the enrollment changes will likely result in

larger budget deficits, but they added that officials can correct their course by adjusting the plan over four years to minimize its financial impact.

Donald Parsons, a professor of economics who penned the debt report five years ago, said he does not see how the University will cover the enrollment plan's costs without increasing debt because GW's budget does not include enough funding to absorb the costs of the plan, which officials have not yet finalized.

"They are still struggling with what the plan is so they can't cost it out yet, then how much of it has to come out of debt?" he said. "I dare say it's most of it. There is not a lot of money there to spend."

Parsons said that given the projected deficits caused by the enrollment decrease, the only way to make the move budget neutral is to hire more adjunct faculty, who generally receive lower pay than full-time professors. Officials previously hired lots of adjunct faculty while growing enrollment under former University President Stephen Trachtenberg to

improve GW's financial situation, he said.

"Assuming they don't find it hard to fire tenured faculty, I believe the only space to adjust is in adjuncts, who are cheap," Parsons said.

Parsons said he is concerned about how officials plan to keep debt in check with the increasing proportion of STEM students, whose education is more costly than non-STEM students.

"A fall in operating margins that lasted more than one or two years would likely produce a downgrade from Moody's. I trust that GW would formulate plans to avoid that contingency."

ANTHONY YEZER

PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, FACULTY SENATOR

He said many STEM majors receive scholarships that push them to commit to GW, which costs the University tuition revenue.

"At the same time they want STEM to increase, but we have horrible trouble attracting STEM students because we are not a STEM university," Parsons said.

Anthony Yezer, a professor of economics and a member of the committee, said GW's debt

has almost doubled in the past decade to its present level of nearly \$2 billion. Some faculty members believe that administrators' previous fiscal and academic planning has been "substandard" because GW's academic standing has not improved under the increasing debt, he said.

"It is not clear to me that GW's academic reputation or status has benefited from this substantial increase in debt," Yezer said in an email.

Yezer said he is not as concerned about the potential need to borrow \$64 million, which LeBlanc said is the projected cost of the enrollment changes over four years, but he is concerned about the University's debt coverage ratio, which measures the University's net operating income over the portion of income that goes toward servicing debt – paying off either the debt itself or interest on debt.

Yezer said administrators will have to take steps to ensure the University has a significant financial margin available to pay back creditors.

He said the most recent rating GW received from Moody's

Investor Service in 2018 mentioned that the University had a more than 10 percent operating cash flow margin, adding that the rating agency deemed GW "stable" in terms of its financial outlook.

"A fall in operating margins that lasted more than one or two years would likely produce a downgrade from Moody's," Yezer said. "I trust that GW would formulate plans to avoid that contingency."

A downgrade in ratings from a credit agency would mean GW's cost of borrowing money would increase.

He added that officials will have opportunities to minimize GW's losses throughout the plan's four years of cuts by changing the size of each successive class enrolled, which provides officials with a "major source of flexibility."

Officials plan to admit 2,250 full-time freshmen, excluding transfers, in next year's class, LeBlanc said at a senate meeting in December. That figure represents an 11.7 percent cut in enrollment from the University's baseline of 2,550 students per class, according to provost office's models.

"There is lots of opportunity for mid-course correction to avoid such a large number," Yezer said.

First provost for Vern academics prioritizes community building in first six months

ALEC RICH
STAFF WRITER

The inaugural associate provost for the Mount Vernon academic experience has aimed to connect with students on the campus since taking the position six months ago.

Elizabeth Chacko, who assumed the new position responsible for academics and social engagement on the Vern July 1, said she has planned social events like holiday celebrations to improve community among Vern residents and to attract students from the Foggy Bottom Campus in her first few months on the job. Chacko, who also oversees special programs like the University Honors Program, said her planned events are part of a larger effort to improve student life on the campus.

Chacko said she has worked to enhance the Vern's five living and learning communities, groups of students who live in the same area to learn about a specific topic like sustainability and global connections, since taking the associate provost position. She said she meets with LLC students on a "regular basis" and has formed an advisory committee of student LLC and honors program representatives to improve the programs.

"They can collectively help me fine-tune the LLCs through suggestions, and also by identifying and planning events that would appeal to their student bodies," Chacko said in an email. "The events and tours geared toward the new LLCs, in particular, were planned and executed through my office."

Chacko took over the leadership post after Rachelle Heller, the former Vern associate provost, stepped down in 2016 to work as a professor in the computer science

department.

She added that she has worked with both faculty and students to "identify areas where they would like to see change," through student feedback surveys and focus groups. She said the groups and surveys reported that the programs are currently functioning well, but "there is always room for improvement."

Chacko said she has focused her efforts on community building for Vern residents, which has led to events like a Diwali party that took place in the fall, guest speakers in students' "areas of interest" and guided tours to sites in both Virginia and D.C., including one to "off-the-grid" buildings in Arlington. Chacko said the campus held a Lunar New Year celebration on Jan. 25, and future events will include a symposium on the link between Jewish history and human rights.

"Next year, we plan to partner with Judaic Studies and offer a mini symposium on human rights and Jewish history on the Vern that we hope will attract students and faculty from the Vern as well as Foggy Bottom," Chacko said.

Chacko has served in various positions at GW throughout the last two decades, including as the director of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Scholars in Globalization program and most recently as the CCAS associate dean for undergraduate studies.

Chacko also had a hand in selecting new honors program director Bethany Cobb Kung after the previous director, Maria Frawley, stepped down at the end of 2018.

Gordon Mantler, the executive director of the University Writing Program, which is housed on the Vern, said in the short time Chacko has been in her new position she has already made an impact on the



FILE PHOTO BY DONNA ARMSTRONG | SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER Elizabeth Chacko, the provost for the Mount Vernon Campus' academics, said she has focused on building a sense of community on the campus in her first six months in the position.

faculty community on the Vern by fostering closer ties with residents.

"I've always liked the Vern, but she has certainly added an even greater sense of fun and community," Mantler said in an email. "Maybe I would have met my faculty and administrative colleagues there anyhow, as the new executive director of the University Writing Program, but she has made it a priority to build closer ties."

Phillip Troutman, an assistant professor of writing and history, said Chacko has been a "physical presence" on the Vern since becoming associate provost by

visiting faculty offices, mentoring postdoctoral fellows and fostering "cross-generational and cross-disciplinary development" between newer and senior faculty members.

"She has provided faculty and staff on the Vern with opportunities to get together, meet each other, have some conversation outside of getting our jobs done," he said.

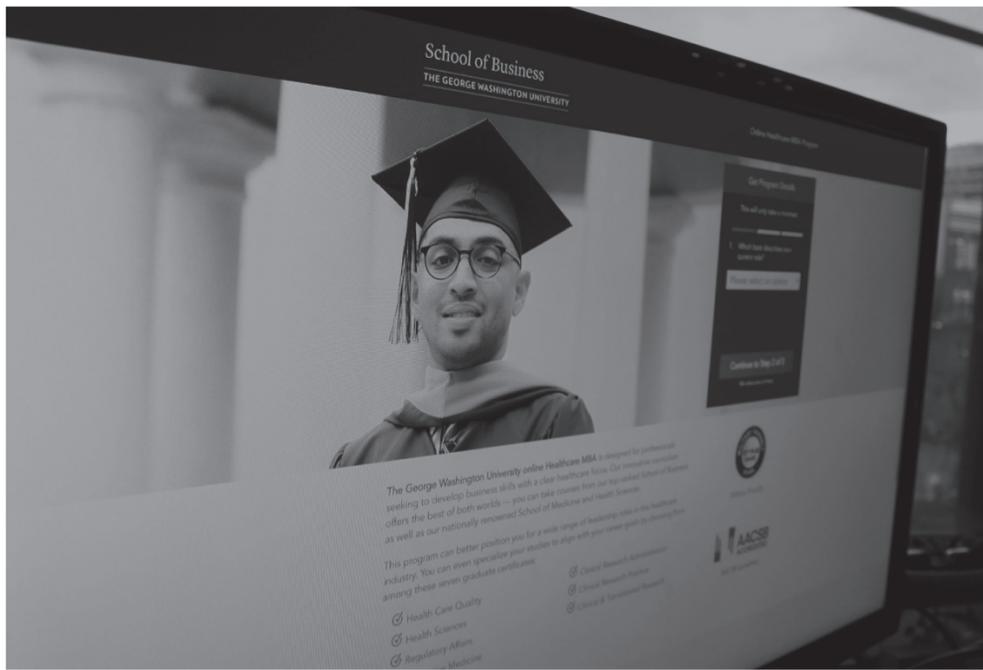
He said Chacko hosted a "fantastic meet-up" in Post Hall earlier this academic year, where he was able to meet people from the honors program that he had not met before.

Troutman said there will "always be structural obstacles" to

the two campuses given time constraints in commuting between Foggy Bottom and the Vern, but Chacko's leadership has brought a positive force to the campus and its faculty.

"I see in her someone who understands the importance of the writing curriculum at GW," he said. "The fact that she now happens to be serving on the Vern, where the entire UWP faculty is housed and teaches, may just be a happy coincidence, but I think it's a very good thing that the provost's office has someone with whom UWP faculty have such close contact."

Online master's in business administration, graduate engineering programs among best in country



IAN SAVILLE | PHOTOGRAPHER

GW's online MBA and graduate engineering programs placed No. 22 and No. 15 in the country.

ALEC RICH &
JARED GANS
STAFF WRITERS

Two of GW's online graduate programs were ranked among the best in the country by U.S. News and World Report earlier this month.

The national media company that publishes college rankings annually placed the online graduate engineering program in the School of Engineering and Applied Science at No. 15 and the online master's in business program in the School of Business at No. 22 nationally. Officials said the ranking is a result of faculty directly engaging with and listening to students to provide them with the academic support they need.

SEAS Dean John Lach said the replication of the school's perfor-

mance in an online environment is a "testament" to the programs' design, faculty and support staff.

"The engineering school's online programs reflect the aspects for which our on-campus programs are known: academic quality, technical depth with societal breadth and the personal attention we provide to students," he said in an email.

Lach said he is confident the programs' reputations will continue to improve in the future.

The rankings are based on nine separate categories factored into a final score. The engineering program received high marks in the student engagement category, placing 10th, and faculty rank and training, placing 11th.

Shahram Sarkani, the director of online programs in SEAS, said engineering school officials are

"responsive" to students' wishes to help them succeed, explaining the higher ranking.

"We give them one point of contact, and through that contact, we take care of them from the time they apply until the time they graduate," he said in an email.

Sarkani said the online engineering programs all use similar approaches to in-person courses. Administrators hold online office hours daily so students can interact with faculty to promote student success, he said.

"As our program continues to grow, we hope that success will lead to a rise in the rankings," Sarkani said.

Liesl Riddle, the associate dean for graduate programs in the business school, said the high rankings will help raise awareness of online programs and encourage faculty

to develop "innovative" new online courses.

She said the rankings reflect some of the major successes in their programs overall, including "deep" student engagement, the "quality of the online classroom environment" and an emphasis on experiential learning.

The online MBA program ranked strongest in student engagement, at 26th overall out of 335 programs.

"The business school's online courses are custom-crafted internally by the same faculty that teach our classroom courses and are supported by a state-of-the-art instructional design team and in-house studio," Riddle said in an email.

She said the school's D.C. location allows officials to virtually "bring into the online classroom" industry leaders and policymakers who appear in face-to-face classroom settings.

Riddle said officials will work to expand the number of graduate certificates online and "further develop" services available to students, like online advising, career services and online networking happy hours.

Business school Dean Anuj Mehrotra said last spring that officials planned to add more graduate certificates online, increasing the total by at least a dozen in the fall. The business school currently offers 24 graduate certificates.

Ayman El Tarabishy, the program director of the online health-care MBA program and a teaching professor of management, said achieving desired rankings begins with setting a clear vision of what the members of a program want to accomplish and a strategy for accomplishing it.

El Tarabishy said the program has a three-part strategy for success: ensuring the program fits in the "portfolio" of the business school's offerings, offering the course over an effective and intuitive digital platform and verifying

that faculty and support staff associated with online programs are qualified to help students.

"The devil is in the details, and we thought of the details, and we had a plan for the details so when we came, we knew how to handle them," he said. "The system works because of this."

Online education experts said strong online education rankings are becoming increasingly useful as more students turn to online education in the 21st century.

Vickie Cook, the executive director of online, professional and engaged learning at the University of Illinois Springfield, said administrators must retain high standards in teaching and education online in addition to in-person learning so students receive the same quality education regardless of their location.

"Online programs should reflect the high level of commitment to teaching on campus and, conversely, on-campus instruction should reflect the high level of commitment an institution shows to teaching online," Cook said in an email.

Ray Schroeder, the director of the National Council for Online Education, said the high ranking is an effective "marketing tool" for attracting more students and faculty to join a program.

Schroeder said on-campus enrollment at universities nationally has declined for about the past decade, but online enrollment has consistently increased in that time period, signaling the need for academic institutions to cater more for students who cannot be part of an in-person classroom.

"If I were working for a corporation in Chicago or Los Angeles, I'm probably not going to fly out to GW to take classes every week," he said. "It just isn't going to work. But if a university can further your curriculum online, then I can become engaged as a student and, ultimately, as a proud alum of GW."

Fraternities often disband to avoid disciplinary action, debt: experts

From Page 1

Matthew Richardson, the director of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life at West Virginia University, said he cannot speak to why GW's chapter renounced its charter but said that chapters often dissolve when membership is low. He said a chapter may not have followed "directives" from the international organization and no longer wants to associate with the organization.

"Basically, in our work in the Greek world, when the chapter voluntarily surrenders their charter to the international organization, typically it's not the same as them being closed for disciplin-

ary reasons," Richardson said.

He said the umbrella organization generally waits until all former members have graduated before allowing a chapter to return to campus. But determining conduct or "due process" for members can be difficult because fraternities are private organizations that might not publicize internal disciplinary processes, Richardson said.

Richardson added that an organization or a school typically suspends a chapter if it poses disciplinary or student health and safety concerns or is in debt to the international organization. He said Pi Kappa Alpha's headquarters have been "very consistent in taking action" against chapters

that violate the organization's values during his time working in Greek life at different schools.

"That really should be applauded because a lot of times people aren't considering that, if they don't have a chapter there, they don't have membership income coming in — it's a loss of income," he said. "And that's why a lot of groups, you don't really see them go in, or if they are being dismissed from the campus for whatever reason, there's usually a lot of pushback. It's a business, and there's money involved."

Hunter Guarnera, the assistant director of student life and the IFC adviser at the University of Oklahoma, said chapters most often relinquish a charter if mem-

bership numbers are dwindling.

He added that chapters might surrender their charters if they disagree with any disciplinary action taken against them or if a chapter believes their actions did not warrant a sanction.

"Nationally, we have started to see groups relinquish their charter in an effort to operate independent of any overseeing or governing body," he said in an email. "This is not super common and generally is done in retaliation to sanctions or discipline from an (inter)national organization."

Guarnera said students interested in bringing a chapter back to campus must work closely with their school and a fraterni-

ty's headquarters.

Tau Kappa Epsilon returned to campus in January 2018 after shutting down in 2015. The chapter was temporarily suspended in 2014 after a marijuana arrest.

Guarnera said following a university's policy for chartering a chapter is "paramount" to successfully bringing a chapter back to campus.

"If a chapter has been suspended by the university for five years, for example, surrendering the charter and trying to reorganize two years later won't work from the university side," he said. "Additionally, if alumni, HQ and students aren't interested in the chapter coming back, the process likely won't get off the ground."

Elliott School institute to host conference on data, development Friday

ILENA PENG
CONTRIBUTING NEWS EDITOR

Economics and human rights experts will host a conference on data in economic development at the Elliott School of International Affairs Friday.

The conference, organized in part by GW's Digital Trade and Data Governance Hub and the Elliott School's Institute for International Economic Policy, features three panels on topics like the effect data can have on economic growth and how countries can use data responsibly to govern. Event organizers said the conference will provide a platform for experts to discuss approaches to using data to bolster growth while protecting individuals' privacy.

Susan Aaronson, the director of the Digital Trade and Data Governance Hub and a conference organizer, said data experts speaking at the conference will discuss how developing countries can use data to develop policies and track goals.

Aaronson said presenters at the conference will clear up misconceptions about how people can use data to improve the world – misconceptions like analogies comparing data to limited resources like oil.

"You hear these ridiculous expressions like 'Data is the new oil,' and it makes me want to scream," Aaronson said. "Data is many different things and I would say it can't be a resource that we're running out of, like oil."

She added that the conference will allow experts to discuss the growth of technology, like smart cities laden with sensors collecting information like building use and traffic patterns, and how that growth means private companies

now have access to information that only the city may previously have had.

"That makes me uncomfortable, but you need to have good governance rules to ensure that the public is protected when companies own that kind of data," she said.

The Center for Global Development, a think tank aimed at reducing global poverty and inequality, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, a Berlin-based foundation working to support human rights, also helped organize the conference. The event is co-sponsored by the Center for International Business Education and Research and the Internet Society.

Vivien Foster, a World Bank chief economist, will kick off the conference with a presentation, and Claire Melamed, the CEO of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, a United Nations initiative, will give a keynote address.

Aaronson said more than 150 people have registered for the conference online, adding that the conference has primarily been promoted through the host organizations' email lists.

Michael Pisa, a conference organizer and a policy fellow at the Center for Global Development, said the conference aims to bring together human rights and economic experts to seek a middle ground on using data as a tool for economic growth while safeguarding privacy. He said economic experts see data as an asset to evidence-based policymaking and tracking progress on economic goals, but human rights experts worry about the "liabilities" of using individuals' data.

"I hope moving forward we can help develop a better understanding of how to use data responsibly,



HATCHET FILE PHOTO
The "Data as a Development Issue" conference at the Elliott School of International Affairs will offer three panels on different economic development topics.

what the risks really are and what it means to use data responsibly," he said. "I don't think there is a consensus on that yet."

Pisa added that he began discussing the conference with Aaronson last spring.

Sebastian Duwe, a conference organizer and a program director for infrastructure and development at the Heinrich Böll Foundation North America, said new technology has a "tremendous impact" on economies worldwide even though

large and innovative tech companies tend to be concentrated in larger countries, like the U.S. and China.

"The digital economy is the future, for societies, for business, for governments," he said in an email. "We are witnessing how it affects all parts of life. It also poses many new challenges, which require new rules and frameworks."

He said conference organizers aim to connect digital policy experts with individuals working

closely with trade and development issues through the event. He added that he hopes the connections created at the conference will prompt continuing discussions about the best approaches for using and regulating data.

"We hope that people can make connections between these communities and that they leave the conference with new ideas on how to approach these complex issues – and of course with lots of new business cards," Duwe said.



HATCHET FILE PHOTO
Nursing school Dean Pamela Jeffries said the school's online master's of nursing science programs set themselves apart from other programs through their social media strategies.

Online graduate nursing program ranked among top 10 in nation

SHANNON MALLARD
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

The U.S. News and World Report ranked the School of Nursing's online master's of science in nursing program among the top 10 in the country in its annual rankings earlier this month.

For the second year in a row, the nursing school's online master's of nursing science programs – which emphasize research and advanced nursing practice – have earned the No. 6 spot out of the 183 ranked schools based on metrics like student retention, affordability and rigor. Nursing experts said the school's ranking signals the high quality, affordability and academic rigor of its online master's program – all of which attract prospective students.

"All of our graduate programs are online, so we have a vested interest in ensuring that we are constantly striving to provide our students with the best teaching and learning environment," nursing school Dean Pamela Jeffries said in an email.

Jeffries said the school has hired a "talented" team of instructional designers and multimedia professionals to train faculty to design online coursework in an "innovative" way.

She said officials have focused on "branding and distinguishing" the school from its peer schools through social media platforms and the school's biannual magazine to highlight student and faculty achievements. Jeffries said the school has always attracted quality students in its 10 years of operation, but the school has more limited name recognition compared

to schools that have been around longer.

Among GW's peer schools, the University of Pittsburgh's online MSN program is ranked No. 26 and the University of Southern California falls into the No. 132-173 range, according to rankings.

"Peer recognition is an important factor in the rankings and so we've been deliberate in encouraging our faculty to have a much more active national presence by attending conferences, giving presentations and competing for national nursing awards," Jeffries said.

She added that achieving a specific ranking within the top 10 is difficult to "control" because the schools are often separated in the rankings by only a few points but said the school will continue to build upon its strengths regardless.

"While ranking in the top 10 is a wonderful accomplishment and something we're obviously very proud of achieving, the importance is not on the particular spot where we're ranked as much as it is on receiving national recognition for the quality of our programs, our faculty and our students," Jeffries said.

She added that the nursing school's high ranking will increase the number of qualified applicants interested in online graduate programs and raise the prestige of the program's graduates in the eyes of prospective employers.

"We hope it sends the message that GW should be your destination nursing school, whether you're a prospective student considering online graduate programs, a nurse faculty seeking a job or

an employer looking for your new hires," Jeffries said.

Nursing experts said highly ranked online graduate nursing programs attract large numbers of prospective students with high student retention rates, affordable tuition costs and an "interactive" classroom environment.

Graduate enrollment in the nursing school has increased from 281 students in 2010 – when the school first opened – to 591 students in 2019, according to institutional data.

Michelle Collins, the associate dean for academic affairs at Rush University College of Nursing, said an online MSN program's ranking signals both the quality of education the school provides and the "high caliber" of the program's graduates.

"It tells future employers of the quality of the graduate that comes from that program, so that's a benefit to society," Collins said. "A benefit to the school is, it helps us to hold that bar high."

Collins said nursing faculty must develop "innovative and inventive" methods – like hosting class discussions over video chat – of facilitating classroom discussion in addition to adhering to U.S. News and World Report metrics.

She said professors should be "creative" in how they choose to encourage student participation instead of assigning "boring" discussion methods, like responding to fellow student blog posts in online forums.

GWHATCHET.COM

H for experts' take on the nursing program's top 10 ranking

New lab to focus on evolutionary history of ancient fish

RACHEL ANNEX
REPORTER

A researcher will head a new laboratory dedicated to studying how animal anatomy and movements can reveal the evolutionary history of humans and other species.

Sandy Kawano, an assistant professor of biology and the leader of the lab in the School of Engineering and Applied Science, said in a University release that she will attempt to replicate the movements of ancient marine species to determine how their fish ancestors migrated from the ocean to land. Evolutionary biology experts said research performed in the laboratory will increase scientists' understanding of how animal locomotion evolved, which can help scientists predict how humans and other organisms will continue to adapt.

Kawano will use technology like 3D modeling, high-speed cameras and robots to "reverse-engineer" the movements of tetrapods – which are four-legged, semi-aquatic, semi-terrestrial animals, according to the release.

"Scientists often act as detectives for the past," she said in the release. "We're looking at clues and trying to reconstruct what happened a long time ago."

Kawano said scientists are still unsure of how exactly some marine species transitioned to living on land, but scientists can technologically reconstruct ancient species' evolutionary history to determine how modern animals will adapt to changing environments.

"The really exciting part of science is that the more new evidence we find, the more new questions we open up," Kawano said. "Even though we are working with these extinct animals that are really, really old, they're still bringing up new questions about what we can understand about and learn from our past."

Kawano could not be reached for comment.

Evolutionary biology experts said analyzing and comparing the evolutionary histories of animal species can indicate how species will adapt to trends like urbanization and climate change.

Matthew Ravosa, a professor of biology at the University of Notre Dame, said the advent of 3D modeling will allow researchers to investigate how animal skeletal and muscular structure has changed over time. He said examin-

ing the evolution of animal locomotion through a 3D lens will provide scientists with more specific and accurate insights into how animals evolved over the past several million years.

"You can control what's happening in the lab and hopefully model what's happening in the real world," Ravosa said. "You can make inferences about what actually happens in the wild and may be happening in the fossil record."

Fred Adler, a professor of biology and mathematics at the University of Utah, said comparing organisms' biological histories allows researchers to uncover evolutionary relationships between species, which can explain the Earth's current biodiversity. Adler said documenting the similarities and differences among species can provide scientists with a rough framework of how certain evolutionary adaptations have improved or hindered species' ability to survive.

"When people slow it down and look at it more carefully, it's all more complicated," Adler said. "It's precisely there where we might see these things that are either very well adapted in ways we didn't understand before or perhaps not perfectly adapted in ways we didn't understand before."

Adler said new technologies in the lab – like 3D computer modeling, high-speed digital cameras and robots – allow researchers to more easily analyze the progression of animal locomotion over time. He added that examining evolutionary patterns of animal movements in the past can signal how animals will adapt to the increasingly prevalent pressures of urbanization and climate change.

Katy Gonder, a professor of biology at Drexel University, said comparing the evolution of animal locomotion will allow scientists to understand how and when humans diverged from other species.

She said gaining insight into the history of species evolution can help scientists predict how humans and animals will adapt or not adapt in response to selective pressures – external forces that reduce an organism's likelihood of reproducing.

"By using the patterns of evolution, it's been possible to try to understand the process of evolution itself," Gonder said. "We use the past in order to predict the future because we have an understanding of what the underlying process is."



FILE PHOTO BY ARIELLE BADER | SENIOR PHOTO EDITOR
A new SEH lab is tracking the path of prehistoric fish from the ocean to land using technology like 3D modeling to "reverse-engineer" their movements.

SHOULD LAPTOPS BE ALLOWED IN CLASS?

Professors should prevent students from distracting others

It's the beginning of the semester, and most students are now familiar with the expectations for their classes. But one policy rightfully bothers some students – the laptop rule.

Shreeya Aranake
Writer

Regulating the way students choose to take notes, whether typing on a laptop or writing by hand, is a divided topic among professors and students. Some students argue that they should have the choice to take notes on their computers, while others say laptops are distracting to peers and that typing notes is too fast to process information. The latter case is fair and justified – students should not have the ability to distract their peers.

Many students prefer to take notes on their laptops instead of with a notebook and pen, and many other professors allow students to decide what technique works best for them. It is true that students should be able to decide how they learn best. We study and complete assignments mostly independently, so in some cases, we should have the freedom to decide how we want to write notes. But actually believing that students are only using laptops to write notes is like turning a blind eye to the distractions of social media and other websites. Professors should ban laptops in class because they are distracting and no more effective for note-taking than writing notes by hand.

Research has found mixed effects of using a laptop in class. Professors who do ban laptops reference research that shows taking notes on laptops is less effective than taking notes by hand. But other studies reveal that there is virtually no learning dif-



Cartoon by Tara Peckham

ference in taking notes by hand versus using a laptop.

While both studies show valid information about the use of laptops in class, all of the research is conducted under the presumption that laptops are solely used for note-taking. The decision to use a laptop is

"I have been in multiple classes where students have used laptops to switch tabs to social media, computer games and news articles."

not only about individual learning preferences but is also about how other students are affected. Watching a nearby student using a laptop affects not only the students who use them but also the students sitting around them.

I have been in multiple classes where students have used laptops to switch tabs to social media, computer games and news articles. The back-and-forth between taking notes and browsing Twitter on bright

computer screens nearby steals my attention away from the lecture I am supposed to be listening to, which is not fair to me. Students should not be able to distract others simply because they choose not to pay attention to the lecture.

There are some cases to be made for allowing laptops. Students with learning or physical disabilities should continue to have the option to use their laptops to take notes. But learning disabilities are not an issue for the majority of students, so they should not be given the same choice. For the hour and a half that students are in class, their attention should be on their professor and the material in question. Laptops are an intrusion to that attention for all of the students who surround them. Professors should not allow students to use technology in class to ensure that everyone is paying attention to the front of the classroom.

—Shreeya Aranake, a sophomore majoring in history, is an opinions writer.

Banning laptops patronizes students who can make their own choices

that conclusion. Education researchers speculate that students might not understand content when they are typing quickly, so it is harder for them to encode the necessary information. But the research should not override students' ability to make their own decisions about their learning. Some students may learn better writing notes, but what works best for the average student does not necessarily work best for everyone. Students should be responsible for their own learning techniques and use whatever method works the best for them.

Professors may also argue – and research agrees – that allowing laptops might allow students to scroll through social media or look through websites unrelated to class, which can distract peers. The concern is valid but one that is not impossible to ease. One researcher from Stanford University suggested that professors set aside certain rows in class that are laptop-free so students who want to write notes by hand are not distracted. Professors could also step in when students use their laptops for anything

"Students should be trusted to make their own decisions about how they use their laptops and whether it will help or hurt their learning."

other than taking notes, be it by issuing a verbal warning or by deducting points from participation grades. There are several ways to ensure students are using their laptops appropriately – professors do not need to ban them altogether.

By that same token, anyone who receives a lower class grade because they chose to spend time browsing Facebook in-

stead of taking notes should take full responsibility for that outcome. Students should be trusted to make their own decisions about how they use their laptops and whether it will help or hurt their learning.

Banning laptops is also problematic because it can single out students with disabilities. The University's Disability Support Services office approves accommodations for almost 2,000 students each semester, many of whom have an accommodation to take notes on laptops. The issue is not that these accommodations might not be honored by professors who ban laptops – the issue is that in a no-laptop class, students who have technology accommodations are easily identifiable because they are the only ones writing notes on a keyboard.

Even for students who do not have disability accommodations, using laptops may just be a simple learning preference that professors should respect. Not every student learns the same way, and classroom policies should account for that fact. The argument does not mean research about using laptops in class is invalid, nor does it mean students should have a pass to behave irresponsibly. What it does mean is that students' learning should not be micromanaged.

Students should have the final say in how they want to learn and make the most out of their classes. If students are expected to live by themselves, budget for themselves and navigate the world of jobs and internships by themselves, then surely something as simple as choosing how they take notes in class should be up to them.

—Andrew Sugrue, a sophomore majoring in political science, is a columnist.

Grade inflation contributes to a poor learning environment, but there are ways to address it

STAFF EDITORIAL

The semester is now underway, and students' main focus is back on grades. But each year, students need to worry less about earning As because it has become increasingly easy to merely receive it.

Grade inflation has been on the rise at top universities, and critics have said it devalues degrees. But the point of college is to learn, and grade inflation could certainly prevent students from learning. Receiving a poor grade is not necessarily bad because it can teach students which classes are not the right fit for them and give them an idea of what material they do not understand. But many students are obsessed with their grades, almost to an unhealthy point, because better grades mean a better chance of admission to top

graduate programs and landing a career. When grades are inflated at one school but not another, it can make students feel like they are getting an unfair disadvantage.

Still, students are not the ones inflating grades – professors are. Critics have blamed students for grade inflation, saying they come from a "coddled" generation that pressures professors to dish out A's to please their classes. But grade inflation does not help students or professors – it only contributes to a poor learning environment. Universities must combat grade inflation by ensuring professors have the tools to grade fairly and accurately.

Students around the country have all heard the claim that they are spoiled, receiving participation tro-

phies and grades they did not earn. But they are not at fault for either – students do not choose to receive participation trophies, and they cannot choose their grades. Grade inflation is a systemic problem caused by the actions of both professors and administrators who want their students to be sent off to the best graduate programs and into the best careers.

One way to curb grade inflation could be as simple as adjusting professor evaluations. At many universities, professors who receive accolades from students in their evaluations are more likely to receive tenure. Student evaluations also factor into whether a professor receives a pay raise among universities. As a result, professors are incentivized to give students grades they did not

entirely earn to ensure they receive high marks on evaluations. Students might feel good about the high marks in the short term, but they are actually suffering more because, in the end, they are learning less.

Students could fill out evaluations earlier in the semester to prevent professors from making a last-ditch effort to receive good reviews. Professors would not feel that their grading decisions directly impact their evaluations, and the reviews would help them adjust their teaching style throughout the semester to ensure students are learning.

The University should also acknowledge the strategies used to combat grade inflation that have not panned out at other schools. For instance, placing a cap on the number of

As, Bs and Cs – which officials discussed in 2010 – was tried out at Princeton University in 2014, but students were not satisfied with the change. In a similar vein, proposals to create a slide grading scale does not necessarily allow students to maximize their learning because professors are restricted in their grading. Professors need to use practical strategies that help them improve their teaching.

It is easy to say that student complaints lead to grade inflation. Students are hyper-focused on grades to stay competitive with their peers and earn admission to top colleges, but professors are ultimately the ones entering the final marks in Banner. The truth is that grade inflation is started by colleges themselves to remain

competitive and claim that they churn out students with top grades. Students should wonder if grade inflation is benefiting them or their university's reputation.

In reality, grade inflation does not help students or the universities that use it. There is no one clear path to end grade inflation, but deflating grades is necessary to protect the integrity of college as a learning environment and not just a credential factory. Combating grade inflation requires effort from professors, who can choose to end it by collectively changing how they grade, and by administrators. College officials can stop grade inflation by simply changing the way professors are evaluated and being transparent about grade distributions.

The GW Hatchet

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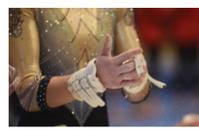
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GAMES OF THE WEEK



MEN'S BASKETBALL
vs. Davidson
Wednesday | 7 p.m.
Men's basketball looks for its second straight win.



GYMNASTICS
at the Pink meet
Friday | 7 p.m.
The Colonials will host West Virginia and William & Mary.

NUMBER CRUNCH

1

Men's basketball's scoring margin after defeating Saint Joseph's, up from the previous average of -7 and the first time it's been positive during conference play

Guard captures 'behind the scenes' look at women's basketball through vlog

ROHAN KANDESHWARATH
STAFF WRITER

While women's basketball took part in a student-athlete field day last May, sophomore guard Maddie Loder pulled out her camera and filmed her teammates, beginning the video with the phrase, "welcome back to my vlog."

She said the vlog, which she posts to her YouTube channel about once a month, is a way to give people a glimpse into the lives of her and her teammates. Loder said that she, along with redshirt freshman forward Mayowa Taiwo and sophomore center Kayla Mokwuah, document road trips, team retreats and workouts through the vlog.

"As I'm getting older, I wish I would have done it earlier so I would have had all this stuff compiled from high school," Loder said. "I feel like I'm forgetting more stuff from when I was in high school and now that I have this vlog, I want to keep all of my memories."

Over the past 11 months, Loder has published 10 videos. The videos showcase her teammates touring hotel rooms and eating meals together during road trips to Dayton, Massachusetts and Villanova, as well as preseason workouts and a two-part series on a team weekend retreat to a ropes course in Virginia.

In her workout videos, Loder has recorded the team running and training around the Mall with the monuments in the backdrop. When the team hit the weight room, Loder was prepared with her camera,

capturing the preseason strength training session.

In part one of the team's retreat, Loder filmed the squad playing kickball, starting a campfire and roasting marshmallows while reciting "scary stories" to one another. In the second installment, she showed bonding events like a hike through the forest and ziplining around the ropes course.

Loder said she prefers to film on the road because the team spends more time together, giving her "a lot more content" to capture. She takes a minimum of one hour to edit each video, Loder said.

"I like to do road trips more because we're out of our element and we're more with each other," Loder said. "In-home games we all have our different rooms, and when we go away there's a lot more stuff that we do."

Taiwo and Loder said they began watching women's basketball players at BYU and a woman's soccer player at Baylor on YouTube, which introduced them to student-athlete vlogging. But Loder said she wanted to use the vlog to log the lives of her and her teammates off the court.

"You see a lot more student-athlete vloggers popping up and that was the trend that at least I got on," Loder said. "I wouldn't say that I would show my side. They get to show what they do every day and I wanted to show what we do here, in D.C., at GW."

Loder added that she wants to expand her video ideas to include "get ready with me" episodes while



Sophomore guard Maddie Loder spends her time off the court filming vlogs about her team and posting them onto a YouTube channel. **ARIELLE BADER | SENIOR PHOTO EDITOR**

she prepares for a contest, but the team is often pressed for time before games.

"It's just that we're all so busy that nobody has free time," Loder said. "It's hard to do that type of stuff, so that's why it's really spontaneous."

Mokwuah said the vlogs have helped the team connect, especially for the four new additions who are still finding a place in the roster

this season. She added that the freshmen have been eager to talk in front of the camera, and the whole team signs off videos together.

"It started off as a joke, and now as more people started watching, it's been fun to do," Mokwuah said. "And I think a lot of people are excited about it on the team."

Taiwo said the videos can serve as a way for fans, students and prospective athletes to see behind

the curtain and get a taste of GW student-athletes through Loder and her teammates. But she added that the videos are more of a way for her and her teammates to document the "little memories" they can look back on in later years.

"If you're thinking of coming here and you watch that kind of video, it's so cool to show regular people what it looks like behind the scenes," Taiwo said.

Young roster leads men's basketball after injuries take out veteran players

EMILY MAISE
SPORTS EDITOR

After injuries sidelined three upperclassmen, men's basketball has looked to three freshmen to lead the squad in conference play.

Junior forward Javier Langanica, senior guard Justin Williams and senior forward Arnaldo Toro have missed significant time this season, leaving the Colonials (9-11, 3-4 A-10) to adapt to their absences. The team has swapped in three freshmen – forward Chase Paar, forward Jamison Battle and guard Jameer Nelson Jr. – to start in all seven Atlantic 10 contests so far.

"All the guys, in general, want to do a great job of just appreciating the work within our development, staying ready for the opportunity," head coach Jamion Christian said after the game against Saint Joseph's. "They're just growing every day with that and getting ready to attack their opportunity."

Toro has been in and out of the lineup since the beginning of the season. He was absent from the court for a four-game stretch from Nov. 22 to Dec. 1. He also missed three games in A-10 play against George Mason, Massachusetts and Saint Joseph's.

Langanica hasn't seen action since Dec. 21 against Harvard. With his hand in a cast, he is expected to "miss significant time with a hand injury," according to the men's basketball roster. The big man sealed GW's win over Boston University with a buzzer-beating put-back.

Williams, who served as a role player for the Colonials, sustained a concussion last month. He played two minutes against Harvard and Vermont, respectively, before he was relegated to the bench with the injury.

A young wave of players has emerged as the team's core. In A-10 play, Paar, Battle and Nelson Jr. have contributed 45.7 percent of the team's total offense in conference play.

Freshman guard Shawn Walker Jr. also emerged as a key piece in the Colonials' lineup, Christian said. In his six minutes of play against Saint Joseph's, he dished out five assists.

"He's been the best passer all year long and so we're just trying to find the time to get him on the floor," Christian said.

Standing in at 6-foot-6, Christian said Walker Jr. gives the squad another option at the point aside from redshirt senior guard Armel Potter, who has stepped into the main floor general role this season.

"Shawn gives us a bigger point guard who can kind of see over the top of the defense, who can really get the ball to these shooters," Christian said.

Potter, who logged nine minutes in his first two games of the season, has become a staple in the Colonials' lineup, averaging 31.2 minutes, 5.5 assists and 15 points per game. Christian said Potter was a "dynamic scorer" who could finish at the rim and facilitate scoring for his teammates.

Christian said the older players on the squad, like senior forward Luke Sasser, junior forward Ace Stallings and senior guard Adam Mitola, have fostered development in the younger players behind the scenes in practice.

"You don't have the growth from your younger players unless the upperclassmen are creating an environment where those guys can get better," Christian said.

He added that Paar has benefited from the guidance of Stallings and Sasser, who have spent time with the big man in practice.

Battle said the upperclassmen have served as experienced mentors and support systems for the young group. He added that the connections built between the two have allowed the freshmen to learn how to take on the college-level competition.

"Everyone tells us that they support us," Battle said. "They tell us what we need to do and how we can get better. And I think if you have that on a team, that's just going to help."

Battle and Nelson Jr. pointed to junior guard Maceo Jack as a mentor for the younger members of the team, offering encouragement and advice.

Nelson Jr. said Jack was like an "older brother" who helps him stay calm when he feels frustrated. He added that the relationships between younger and older players have allowed the team to hit its stride in A-10 play.

"We're starting to rise and as a team, so it instills some confidence and some momentum into our play," Nelson said.



Sophomore Katarina Marinkovikj swings during a competition last season. **FILE PHOTO BY ALEXANDER WELLING | ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR**

Women's tennis premieres fresh faces in start to spring slate

BELLE LONG
CONTRIBUTING SPORTS EDITOR

After a winter hiatus marked by several new additions, women's tennis is heading into its spring slate trying to prepare a young crop of players for action.

The Colonials wrapped up fall play in late October, but they have been busy during the offseason welcoming two new players, graduate student Jiaqing Mo and freshman Lara McNaughten. Freshman Sarah Bodewes said players need to focus on fostering strong connections as a small team to help push each other through the season.

"Jiaqing and Lara are great additions, and I think we've come together as a team very well, and it's been easy for us to adjust together," Bodewes said.

The additions will help minimize the loss of some of last season's leading players in 2019 graduates Maria Siopacha and Sara Grubac. The pair held a combined 26-15 singles record last year and served as part of the two winningest doubles pairs.

Now, the squad is leaning on young but experienced players to carry the team. Five of seven rostered players are underclassmen, while Mo and lone senior Melis Bayraktaroglu anchor the older group.

Mo played for Drury, a Division II program, during her undergraduate career, finishing last season with a 15-1 record in singles, including a 5-0 record in the conference. She earned her second consecutive nomination to the All-Great Lakes Valley Conference team in 2018.

Mo walked onto the team with one year of eligibility left. She said her previous three years of experience have made the adjustment to playing at GW minimal because she was already familiar with the structure and flow of the season.

"I've already been playing college tennis for four years, but I only competed for three years, which is why I have one year of eligibility to play here," Mo said. "So there's not much to adjust to because I'm already familiar with the rhythm."

Historically, doubles play has been a weak spot for the Colonials. While the squad held an above .500 record in singles last season, they posted a 30-31 performance

in the doubles category. Mo said she was recruited by Browning specifically for her doubles skills to bolster the team.

Bodewes said she and her teammates study, work out and grab lunch to spend time together as a small team.

Bodewes and freshman Luciana Kunkel represent another potential boost to the Colonial's doubles play. The duo formed GW's most successful doubles team during fall play with a 6-5 overall record.

Despite these efforts, the squad faced a setback in the opening match against William and Mary. The Tribe swept the Colonials 4-0. Mo and partner sophomore Alexandra Vesikallio lost their doubles match 6-1, and Bodewes did not compete in the dual match.

Browning said the squad has the physical ability and talent but still needs to build up mental toughness in the final points of a match. But she added that her team has time to reach its true potential.

"We're right there as far as the ability and the talent but we need to learn to be a little bit more mentally tough in those crucial moments," Browning said in an email. "We will get there."

Overall, GW posted a 22-24 overall singles record during fall play. The spring season stretches from Jan. 25 to April 22, when the Atlantic 10 tournament kicks off.

Vesikallio, who transferred into the program from Villanova this year, and Bodewes both had successful fall debuts with the Colonials, posting a combined 11-3 singles record overall. Browning said Vesikallio's addition has been "tremendous" for the team because she is familiar with the spring slate and can help the younger girls succeed during the long season.

Bodewes said the squad is focused on adjusting to the increased pressure of spring competition.

"Spring season is definitely more important than the fall, but they both matter," Bodewes said. "Having match after match, we just have to stay focused and keep the energy up and be positive throughout the season."

The squad continues its season Tuesday at 9 a.m. with a matchup against Morgan State.



Freshman guard Shawn Walker Jr. goes up for three in the Colonials' 85-69 win over Saint Joseph's Saturday. He dished five assists in his six minutes of action. **ZACH BRIEN | PHOTOGRAPHER**