

# THE AUGUSTINIAN

*"Tolle Lege"*

Issue 2

November 19, 2020

St. Augustine High School

## Schedule Changes Come to Saints



By Manny Butler ('22)  
EDITOR

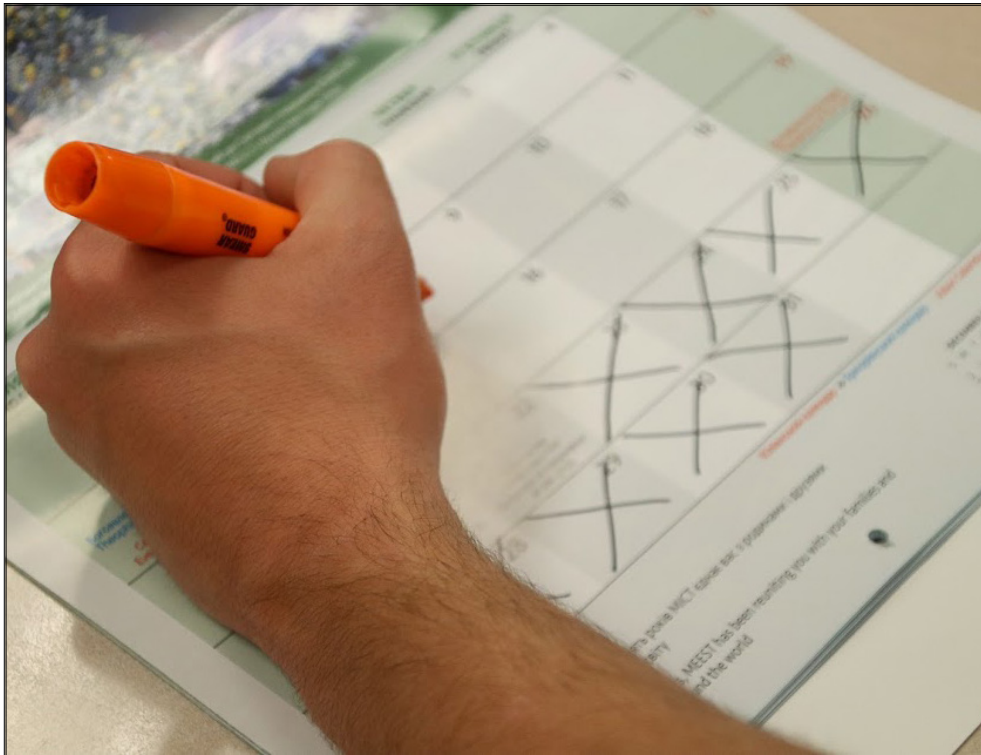
Saints has had to make many schedule changes in order to accommodate all the students during the coronavirus pandemic. Instead of having six classes every day, there are only three. The school is entirely online most Mondays. Mass is celebrated twice per week: once for the freshmen and sophomores and once for the juniors and seniors. Perhaps most obvious is the cohort system which all students have experienced.

There are more changes on the horizon, including changes to finals, Christmas break, Intersession, and most imminently, to Thanksgiving week.

On the week of Thanksgiving, the two days we have school will be online, following the block schedule both days instead of the typical Monday schedule with all six classes in a day.

In place of the Day of Service that usually happens the Monday after Thanksgiving, there will be a Professional Growth Day for the staff, and the students will get the day off instead. This will also take place on the following Monday, so a six-day break will be followed by a three-day weekend, allowing students to relax before the final push towards finals and the end of the semester.

Ordinarily, during finals week, all students take their exams for the same classes at the same time: english and religion on one day, math and history on another day, and science and foreign language on the third, with each test taking an hour and a



COVID has brought many changes to the Saints schedule.

Joaquin Torre ('21)

half.

"Because of COVID restrictions, we couldn't do that this year," Mr. Hecht said.

Instead, students will take their blocks 1 and 2 finals the first day, blocks 3 and 4 the second day, and blocks 5 and 6 the third day. Additionally, the tests will be only an hour long so as to accommodate the classes that are split in half.

The most notable upcoming schedule change, however, is the cancellation of Intersession.

"Unfortunately, we had to make the very difficult decision to put it on hiatus,"

Mr. Hecht said. "It was sad to have to make that decision, because it's so endearing for us and we feel for the students, we understand how inviting and exciting Intersession is, so it was heartbreaking for all the administrators."

The decision to cancel Intersession was necessary due to COVID restrictions which started to snowball and cause a "logistical nightmare," as Mr. Hecht put it. One important reason was that many places where seniors normally would take internships were unable to do so this year because of restrictions, causing what Mr. Hecht called

a "slow erosion" of places where seniors would be able to go. Many workplaces were online only and those that weren't were unable to bring Saintsmen on for a month, so many seniors would have nowhere to go.

Many other Intersession classes were simply unable to comply with COVID restrictions, such as cooking class.

"Can we put 50 kids together with food? No, that's prohibited," Mr. Hecht said. "We started to realize that we were looking at half the student population having nowhere to go for Intersession."

He also added that speech classes, which usually have 20-25 students per class, would have to be split into cohorts, adding more students to the total. And with regard to the Intersession Expo? "There's no way we could host that under the current restrictions," Hecht said.

So what will take the place of Intersession? Although Mr. Hecht joked that Christmas break would be extended to March, Christmas break will actually be extended by one week, beginning after final exams on December 17 and ending on January 11. The second semester will then begin three weeks earlier than normal, giving teachers the ability to fill in gaps from the first semester and move at a slightly slower pace in the second semester.

As for speech class, English teachers will be teaching speech in the first three weeks of the new semester. "It's important to have on their transcript, so we need to get that instruction in," said Mr. Hecht.

The schedule changes disrupt the usual way of life at Saints, but it's all for the safety of the Saints community.

## San Diego Unified Redesigns Education



By Graeme Morland-Tellez ('21)  
EDITOR

In a year dominated by social eruptions and the coronavirus pandemic, change has manifested itself in various forms far and wide. A recent change at the local level is underway within the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) as they have pledged to combat both COVID-19 and social inequity in one fell swoop.

Despite San Diego returning to the dreaded purple tier, the SDUSD has announced a bold plan to counter the deadly virus and, ultimately, begin a safe return to normal school practices. The new plan involves two distinct phases. Phase 1—currently underway—allows students with the greatest need to return to campus according to an appointment-based system; these involve only elementary school students who must meet with teachers or face learning obstacles at home. However, the real change comes with Phase 2 as it promises a greater return to campus, new safety practices, and a massive new testing plan.

In the upcoming Phase 2, schools will transition from allowing only appointment-based sessions to returning to actual in-person learning for most students, a practice that has been absent since last March. Elementary school students (grades 1-5) will attend school in alternating morning and afternoon

sessions for four days a week. Middle and high school students will only be allowed to return to school for two days a week.

As students begin returning to in-person learning during phase 2, schools are making a valiant effort to ensure that they will be returning to environments marked by new safety practices. Whether it be installing plexiglass barriers around desks or applying mandatory practices like mask-wearing and social distancing, schools are promising not just a much-needed return to in-person learning, but a return to safety.

Perhaps the most ambitious part of Phase 2 will be the district's implementation of a new mass testing plan which aims at testing all 100,000 students and 15,000 staff members in the county.

"The ability to regularly test our students and our employees who are coming onto campus is such an important factor in our ability to open and stay open," said Richard Barrera, a district board member.

Although SDUSD's bold plan to combat COVID-19 hints at a return to traditional practices, they are simultaneously trying to enact change to counter the current social pandemic of inequity and discrimination, and, as a result, are straying far away from more traditional educational practices.

After analyzing data from the schools in San Diego Unified, the district concluded that the current educational model dispro-



San Diego Unified School District has announced major changes.

KPBS

portionately affects those of non-White and non-Asian descent, with a higher percentage of these students receiving failing grades. In addition to reforming the modern educational system, the district is also aiming to rework their curriculum to include classes on ethnic studies.

In an effort to become more socially equitable, SDUSD is preparing to implement significant changes to many traditional school

practices. Perhaps the most notable change will involve doing away with the normal grading system which was used by virtually every school and applying a new system called "standards-based grading," which revolves around a "mastery of standards." To justify this extensive reworking of the entire academic system, they point to the social disparities within the traditional academic ap-

SEE SD UNIFIED, pg. 4



# America Votes, Democracy Lives



**By Kyle Wesseln ('21)**  
STAFF WRITER

The year 2020, which has already made its mark in the history books, just added another page to its notorious chapter. A record twenty-two million registered Californian voters mailed in ballots or journeyed to the polls in order to vote for a multitude of propositions, local officials, state assemblies, and national representatives.

Over 150 million Americans and counting have voted to elect the former vice president and senator Joe Biden as the president-elect, and former California senator Kamala Harris as second-in-command. As always, the election was a monumental occasion, and this event served as yet another major change in the midst of the tempest that is COVID-19.

According to the New York Times, 10.5 million Californians had cast their votes before November 3, equivalent to around 75 percent of the 2016 election turnout. Echoing the theme in California, 100 million Americans voted before election day. Even though mail-in ballots were prominent this year, COVID-19 and other factors didn't block the resolve of the American people, as the country celebrated a day of democracy and the best attributes of the nation, lining up among their communities, friends, and family to participate in the American dream. According to ABC eyewitness news, the average wait time at polls around the country varied from fifteen minutes to three hours.

California's representatives continued to produce a drastic blue majority, with forty-five confirmed Democratic represen-



Over 161 million Americans voted in the election.

The Press-Enterprise

tatives as opposed to a Republican seven, with one race still too close to call. Elected representatives include the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, and some local names, such as Scott Peters and Sara Jacobs.

There was election action at the local level as well, as Democrat Todd Gloria won the race for San Diego mayor, taking over from Kevin Faulconer, who had served as mayor since 2014. Gloria is only the third Democrat to take the San Diego office since 1971.

Following the theme of the record-breaking elections, the California state ballot measures contained some of the most controversial propositions in recent election history. According to the official California election results, around sixteen million Golden State residents voted on twelve propositions, ranging from voter restoration, app-based driving, and Affirmative Action. Notable affirmed propositions include Proposition 17, which restores voting rights after a prisoner has served their sentence, Proposition 22, which allows app-based transportation and delivery companies to hire workers as independent contractors, and Proposition 14, which allocates 5.5 billion dollars towards stem cell and medical research. Proposition 16, a measure that would institute Affirmative

Action, received a prominent “no” from over nine million California voters. Cash bail laws remained unchanged, as Proposition 25, which would have replaced cash bail with risk assessments, was defeated by California voters.

Of course, all eyes were on the race for the presidency. The level of coverage matched the intensity of the race, but even with every single live update and alert, nothing monumental occurred on November 3. The election was predicted to last at least through the night, and by the next morning, the race was narrowed down to a few key battleground states.

Michigan kept the nation on its toes, while Pennsylvania saw the needle move to the blue side later in the count. The counters in Nevada were practically asleep, and after almost five hours without a change in the numbers, Americans started to compare the Nevadan poll workers to the sloth from Zootopia.

After watching the votes tick up one by one for five days, the American people finally got a decision on November 7. The Associated Press called the race at 8:25 PST, naming Joe Biden as the president-elect of the United States of America. Washington D.C. erupted and thousands crowded the streets in celebration rather than protest.

A majority of Americans started their Saturday nights early, spraying champagne and cheering as if their team had just won the Super Bowl. In reality, their team did win. The United States has shown to the world once again that as divided as the people might be and as oppressive as COVID-19 has been, the spirit of democracy still radiates as it did 245 years ago.

# Vaccines Emerging Victorious



**By Nicholas Sajor ('21)**  
STAFF WRITER

As America continues to cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, a bright spot on the horizon has been the promise of a vaccine. Throughout the uncertainty of this past year, both politicians and scientists have been optimistic about the arrival and potential salvation which such a vaccine might bring. Due to the urgency related to ever-growing cases, a variety of measures have been enacted by large medical companies and world governments to ensure a safe, speedy, and effective COVID vaccine will be produced.

To produce a vaccine, several large, primarily American companies have stepped up in a race to create the treatment. They have been receiving help internationally from scientists and governments in the interests of global safety. China released the novel coronavirus's genome sequence in early January, and this genetic code has been the basis for almost all research into an inoculation.

In America, the federal government has launched Operation Warp Speed, aimed at a quick discovery and mass production of a vaccine. This series of programs, primarily overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services, provides funds and expedited services for vaccine development programs. With the help of these plans, several companies have already produced preliminary vaccines which are being tested in large populations. Normally, such a development would take years, but world health administrations have understood the seriousness of the pandemic and are taking appropriately expedited steps to produce a treatment.

To do the actual work of vaccine development, governments, especially ours in America, have incentivized private companies to create and test treatments. Currently, four companies are on Stage 3 clinical trials of vaccines, and two of them have recently produced extremely promis-



Pfizer's vaccine proved to be about 90% effective in curing COVID.

ABC News

ing candidates. Pfizer has created a vaccine which their trials have shown to be 90% effective, while Moderna has produced one with 94% efficiency. Both these vaccines were created with mRNA, a long existing technology which is being used for the first time in vaccinations, but has produced the promising effects seen in the two vaccines. Both options would be extremely beneficial, but they would also require different infrastructure for distribution. The Pfizer vaccine has to be kept at -75 degrees Celsius, well below commonplace storage temperatures, and only lasts in storage for five days. Moderna's vaccine, however, can be stored at the common vaccine temperature of -20 degrees C, and lasts for a month in cold storage. Both companies will soon be applying for a FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), which will expedite the oversight and distribution of the new products, once the FDA has deemed them to be safe.

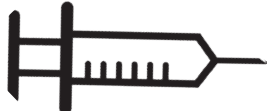
However, all this work has not been without setbacks, as trials have been put on hold around the world due to complications. The trials of at least two large companies have been placed on hold due to unexpected illnesses in patients. One of them include AstraZeneca, a British pharmaceutical company working with the University of Oxford that had a mysterious illness occur to one of their patients during phase three trials on September 6. While they were back up and actively working towards the vaccine a week after regulators in other countries approved it, the United States did not allow trials to resume until October 23. Regulators are performing at their best to ensure that the vaccine will

come quickly and safely.

After a vaccine is created, however, its distribution to millions of Americans and billions around the world will be an issue of great importance. Under Warp Speed, America has made significant investments in the production infrastructure needed to mass produce and distribute a vaccine to as many people as possible. With this, though, comes the debate over who gets the vaccine first. The current plan is to give it to the elderly and essential workers first, so that those most likely to get infected will have protection. Next, the elderly and people with preexisting conditions will be inoculated, as they are more likely to become seriously ill or die from COVID than anyone else in the general population. Finally, once these core groups have been vaccinated, the vaccine will be made available to everyone else. Currently, however, the rates at which the general public will be inoculated are unclear. Also unclear is who of the general public will be vaccinated first, but money, strength of distribution, and public willingness to be vaccinated will definitely be factors which affect how quickly America and the world can become immune to COVID.

At this point, however, politics come into play sometimes hampering the objectivity needed to conduct such a large-scale scientific project. In America, many politicians have exaggerated the timeline for a vaccine, projecting that it would be available months before scientists can actually have it ready for distribution. This is a dangerous approach, for vaccines work best when the public trusts the process.

The importance of vaccines and the work being done to produce them cannot be overstated, but everyone must remember to be patient, and, above all, to place their trust in science as we await this saving remedy.





# Saints Clubs Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome



The Academic League has resumed practices despite a delayed season. Angel Perez ('21)

 **By Joseph Selfani ('21)**  
EDITOR

The current global plague cannot stop our beloved Saints clubs and organizations from producing quality work and providing a fantastic experience for students. Many clubs made creative adjustments to continue their events, fundraise for charity, and deliver fun for all Saintsmen.

A club worth spotlighting is the Saints Airsoft Club, run by Eveylt Yeruuldelger. The S.A.C. is a new organization hosting airsoft events every Sunday in Alpine by the Modern Airsoft company, who sponsors the club and runs their games for a good deal. As a special treat, Modern Airsoft also gives Saintsmen a \$20 in-store credit at their Oceanside location. Just show a Saints ID or wear Saints apparel. It is an exciting frenzy

of men with camouflage, masks, and tactical goggles firing plastic BBs from bunkers and wooden huts. To get a piece of the action, check out their meetings in room 220 at lunch on Thursdays. Their Instagram (@saints\_airsoft\_club) is also vibrant with pictures of their Sunday airsofting.

In need of service hours? The Key Club never ceases to provide opportunities for students to serve their greater San Diego community. In a recent service event, the organization participated in a citywide Charity Miles competition, where students downloaded an app that tracked their steps and corporate donors gave \$0.25 per mile walked to any charity of the participant’s choosing. Saints ranked number two for the most miles out of fourteen schools, with 1,122.5 miles (\$280 raised for UNICEF) and junior Josh Pajimola leading the

## THE AUGUSTINIAN

Angel Perez  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Graeme Morland-Tellez  
MANAGING EDITOR

Mr. Vladimir Bachynsky  
MODERATOR

Manny Butler  
EDITOR

Kai da Luz  
EDITOR

Joseph Selfani  
EDITOR

Joaquin Torre  
CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER

pack with 312 miles. In addition to Charity Miles, the Key Club held a similar Free Rice competition benefitting the World Food Programme, where answering a trivia question will donate the cash equivalent of five grains of rice to an underdeveloped nation. To learn more about future charity events and other ways to serve in San Diego, come to room 319 on Wednesdays at lunch.

In partnership with the Key Club, the eSports Club ran three charity tournaments and is currently running its fourth. The first charity tournament was a 3v3 Counter-Strike: Global Offensive tournament with over 50 participants, mostly from Saints, and a couple of students from Mater Dei and Sweetwater High School. It raised \$310 for the Pediatric Trauma Program, which is sponsored by the Key Club. Most of the donations to the tournament came from live streams on Twitch. The second tournament involved Valorant, which had 176 students from all over the country playing in the competition, with \$244 raised from the live streams alone and \$744 total going to the Lebanese Red Cross. The third tournament was a Minecraft Bedwars tournament, and despite players from around the country playing, a freshman team from Saints came out victorious. The current tournament is a 5v5 Counter-Strike Global Offensive that is on-going and live on the official Saints eS-

ports Twitch, with all proceeds supporting the orphanage. Check them out at [twitch.tv/sahsesports](https://twitch.tv/sahsesports).

Academic clubs are still working to provide the learning experience that students crave. Mock Trial plans to occur virtually during February, and the Mock Trial team has been preparing since September for their day in online court. They will present their case in front of trained California judges who will listen to both sides and make a decision during the trial. In addition, lawyer coaches are available to lead the Saints team in the right direction and teach them all about the law code. It is a high-level case of burglary involving the theft of classified information from a state official, and the defendant is a conspiracy theorist accused of “aiding and abetting” the burglary.

The Academic League team will also move online, playing against other high schools in San Diego. It is a trivia-like competition with Freshman, JV, and Varsity teams going head-to-head against other academically-driven participants over subjects ranging from science to music to contemporary politics and even sports and pop culture. The Academic League will be participating in a virtual quiz-bowl competition in December and hopes to participate in

SEE CLUBS, pg. 6

# Taking the Longest Rest in Music

 **By Liam Haskett ('22)**  
STAFF WRITER

In the months following the COVID outbreak, everyone had to change and adjust to the new inconveniences wrought by the pandemic. It is no different for the Saints band, which sadly was unable to play their instruments since March 13, 2020.

Fortunately, the break from rigorous practice and constant performances has allowed them to grow not only as a band but also as individuals. Like some other classes at Saints, the band meets twice a week in the zero blocks and attends Zoom classes every Monday. Since the band is not allowed to play their instruments in the same room, they had to improvise. Instead of playing new music, they devote half their week to rhythm exercises, where students clap along to the notes of their part of the music. This practice allows the band to maintain the feel of the music as they continue to prepare for eventual concerts, while also staying safe.

The band also works on music theory, such as studying chorales, which are simplified versions of complex songs. They use basic chorales to understand the music better, as well as learn their roles in the band.

The musicians are also building their understanding of musical tone and the volume at which they are supposed to play the music. These basic rhythm practices will eventually be expanded to cover entire songs, making it much easier to learn the difficult music that the band will



The Saints band is hoping to return to normal in the near future. Joaquin Torre ('21)

be playing come concert time.

The other half of their time is dedicated to the spiritual side of music. One example of this is Music Diaries. The members are asked to listen to certain pieces of music, and then write on the thoughts provoked by the sounds. It brings an entirely new view of music to the band and also reveals the uniqueness between members.

“It’s crazy how drastically the stu-

dents’ opinions differ from each other,” says Ms. Au, the music teacher and band director at Saints. “Their descriptions go so in-depth, and change so much, even though they listened to the same music.”

The Music Diaries allow each student to dive into their thoughts, and let go of some of the more trivial things in life to focus on themselves and the song. Ms. Au has also been teaching the students “Chair

Yoga,” an exercise used to keep them in shape for their future performances. The musicians do a multitude of stretches and yoga positions, all while remaining seated, to improve on their form for performances. They are instructed to focus on their breathing and different ways they can control it to improve and refine their lungs, which are highly important for nearly all musical instruments.

The mental aspect of music is also addressed during the class’s Zoom session every Monday, during which the class holds a group discussion about their week.

“They’re basically just therapy sessions,” junior band member Ben Grondona said. “We all talk about where we’re at mentally and how we can prepare for the upcoming week.”

These Monday “therapy sessions” have bonded the Saints band members and will keep them prepared for the time when they would eventually perform. The band joyously practiced for the first time in eight months on Saturday, November 14. Ms. Au and her merry musicians are looking forward to a strong return.

The band has begun practicing Christmas music on their own time, preparing for their big Christmas concert on December 12, which will be hosted on the football field outside the theater. Despite the band’s extensive break from playing as a group, they are all confident in a strong debut.





# Ask An Expert: Mr. Wehbe, Poker Genius



**By Jerome Santiago ('21)**  
STAFF WRITER

In this Ask an Expert column, we have decided to interview Mr. Wehbe, a first-year teacher at Saints. Mr. Wehbe is the teacher of the AP Statistics class as well as other math classes. I have asked Mr. Wehbe a few questions regarding a hobby of his, which is playing strategy-based games.

**Q:** What is your favorite strategy-based game?

**Wehbe:** I know that there is sometimes a vice associated with this game, but to be honest, poker is my number one strategy game just because it combines all the elements of probability, dominant strategies, and Nash equilibrium, which are all a part of game theory. In simple terms, if everyone is playing their best strategy, game theory is the intersection of all of those strategies. I enjoy poker because it has a huge basis in probability and statistics, which I spent a lot of time mastering in college. I love how statistics and math play a huge role in strategy-based games like poker.

**Q:** Besides poker, what are some other strategy-based games you play?

**Wehbe:** Aside from poker, I play Catan, which is another awesome game of chance. Another game that I'll use is Among Us because I know it is a game that is super popular right now. I play the game with my friends, and a lot of people don't realize that there is game theory and probability involved. Think about it. If you play with two impostors, each impostor is valued at 50% each. A crewmate is only valued at 12.5% each, which means there is a huge tradeoff in the value of a crewmate life and an impostor life. So, if you are suspicious of someone and there is a good reason to be suspicious, then don't hesitate to vote them off early in the game. Trust me, I have a huge win rate in the game. Vote



Mr. Wehbe enjoys playing strategy-based games.

Joaquin Torre ('21)

early and often. My friends and I are super competitive, but they never catch me when I'm the impostor.

**Q:** Who taught you how to play poker and what inspired you to learn more about it?

**Wehbe:** I had a job between my junior and senior year at a finance company, and people in finance are very high-risk, high-reward people. My boss actually introduced me to poker. He would invite me into his room to play "heads up" poker, which is one versus one, and we would just play and chat about stuff for an hour during our lunch break. He would teach me small things he learned because he really enjoyed playing the game as well. We started doing it just for fun, but later on, he showed me how to apply different properties of math and statistics to the game. Basically, I learned poker from an old boss, as funny as that may be.

**Q:** How did you develop your skills in strategy-based games?

**Wehbe:** Once I started to learn how to play poker, I wanted to learn how to play poker well. Whenever I play a game now, I want to learn how to play the game well and see if there are any small edges I can grab in a game. Starting with poker and now with every other game, I want to learn the best way to play and the best strategies to use. After that, I start to tweak things to see what works and what doesn't.

**Q:** Would you like to share a story about your favorite memory related to poker?

**Wehbe:** I won a tournament at the Bellagio, which was super cool. Even though it wasn't the most amount of money I've won playing a poker tournament, the Vegas and the Bellagio are iconic landmarks that people fly to from all over the world to go to. So winning a poker tournament at the Bellagio, where there were lots of other really good players, was just a really good feeling. The money is a nice side effect of

SEE WEHBE, pg. 5

► **SD UNIFIED**  
*Continued from Page 1*

proach and denounce its concrete nature.


Students will no longer be academically penalized for failing to turn in assignments on time, as that will be addressed in a new "citizenship" grading system that has no relation to the academic grading system. In order to inspire the idea that mistakes can be fixed, students are now given multiple chances to fix their mistakes on assignments and improve their academic grades. If a student is caught cheating, schools are expected to address the situation restoratively rather than punitively. Yet, a student can face punitive measures if they fail to report a cheater. These are just a few examples of the new academic structure which certainly signify serious change.

Despite having the best intentions in mind, the aforementioned changes are as harmful as they are ineffective. The fact that the district is abandoning traditional methods of academic grading for a new measure of mastery is completely bogus. If the traditional approach to learning does not simultaneously weave in a mastery of subject matter, then that is a problem within the school, not a flaw in the system as a whole. Just as no two schools are alike, no two teachers are the same, and, by the same token, no two students are the same. To try and hold everyone under the same umbrella is a true beacon of inequity.

This new methodology inspires a poor work ethic and inadequately prepares students for college and, ultimately, the future. If one fails to pay their electricity bill on time, they will lose electricity, not citizenship points. If one fails a final in college, they will not get the opportunity to revise their mistakes and fix their grade, but instead, they will likely fail the class. If one cheats in college, they will be expelled without the chance to "restore" anything. I not only worry about the state and integrity of modern education, but also for the students who must suffer at the hand of this experiment which is destined to fail.

Even though there is evident racial and social disparity rampant in America and throughout many of her systems, the attempts of SDUSD are not only ineffective in solving a dire issue, but brutally harmful to students and education across the county.

# A Class Divided Stands



**By Kai da Luz ('21)**  
EDITOR

Politics, Religion, Money. These are the three horsemen of the conversational apocalypse. These are considered to be the three topics that shouldn't be discussed. Many see them as explosive, highly divisive, and inherently argumentative. They believe the three always tend towards an "I'm right! You're wrong!" conclusion, an end that leaves everyone involved bitter. They tell themselves to keep quiet, look down at their feet, and talk about the weather. Did you know that it is going to be mostly sunny this weekend?

According to a 2019 study by the Pew Research Center, Americans are the most apprehensive when discussing the ongoings of our political system. Only 52% of Americans feel at least somewhat comfortable covering politics in general conversations. On the other hand, 69% of Americans feel confident talking about sports, 90% feel comfortable with movies and television, and an overwhelming 95% decided that they feel at home with weather-based conversations.

In the aftermath of an election, tensions are running high and blood has begun to boil. Numerous Americans are dying to talk about the results with anyone, anyone at all. The societal etiquette of keeping politics out of everyday conversation is on the brink of collapse and yet, an AP United States Government and Politics class of 29 comes to school everyday and leaves with all of their arms and legs.

Towards the beginning of the school year, all of the students took a political com-



Mr. da Luz is excited to have such a passionate group of seniors.

Joaquin Torre ('21)

pass quiz. The class results were then displayed via a scatter plot. There were students on the far left, far right, and everywhere else in between. If the political spectrum was a canvas, the class painted an authentic Picasso. It is safe to say that many people in AP Government disagree on a myriad of political issues.

As a student in AP Government, I can attest that politics fuel the conversation in class as well as in our cohort. Sometimes whatever discussion we begin in class simply picks right back up during the cohort. Other days, someone will bring up an entirely new discussion which breathes more life into the cohort conversation.

Our conversations at cohorts and outside the classroom, however, are not filled with malice or spite. We begin our everyday political banter as friends and leave as friends. This reality made me wonder whether or not we should continue to refrain from these comments and discussions in our informal interactions.

"Although we boast a variety of differing views, we give our input, respect each other's opinions, and carry on," senior Shea Briere said.

The majority of the students in the class agree that politics and similar topics should not be forced into the conversation, however, they shouldn't be purposefully ignored either.

"We have a lot of students coming from different places in life and they naturally have different views. It's a good thing," se-

nior Alexander Kotnik said.

The truth is, it is totally reasonable to want to talk about politics and religion and similar topics. During a time such as that surrounding the election, pretending we are clueless and instead talking about the rain seems odd. One of the greatest civil liberties in our nation is freedom of speech. There should be, however, some level of etiquette in these conversations.

"You shouldn't aggressively wave your flag in the faces of others, but you shouldn't hide it either," Kotnik said.

These forbidden three shouldn't be so vehemently forbidden. Sure, they can be divisive and difficult, but they are also fascinating and complex. The key is that we continue to listen, truly listen, and appreciate one's input as long as they are respectful as well.

Our third president, Thomas Jefferson, said it best. "I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend."

I welcome conversations about contested topics, because I get a glimpse into other's perspectives and learn from their differing input. As a country, we need to realize that these conversations are bound to happen and that, when they do, we must converse respectfully and responsibly. It is imperative that we do not sweep these discussions under a rug in the classroom or our everyday lives, because denying them is the same as turning a blind eye to our present. I don't know about you, but I am tired of being a weatherman.



# Cruising into Cohorts

*Cohorts are what you make them. The administration gives the students the opportunity to succeed.*

 **By Kai da Luz ('21)**  
EDITOR

Isn't it every student's dream to have class outside? With our present social distancing restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this has become a reality for every student at St. Augustine High School. The start of in-person instruction gave birth to the cohort system. Being one of the only schools in San Diego offering an in-person education, the cohort system is both necessary and unique. Larger classes have been broken up into cohorts in order to uphold the six-foot spacing requirement. Over the last two weeks, *The Augustinian* polled 80 students on campus across the four classes about their cohort experience.

The majority of large classes were broken into two cohorts, with the exception of classes like freshman football (PE block 6), which was broken up into six cohorts. Cohorts take place around campus in areas such as Tolle Lege Patio, Vasey Patio, Keane Plaza, and the roof of the gym.

The students polled have an average of three cohorts in total, and many have more than one per day. When students of each class were asked about their productivity during a cohort on a scale from 1-10, the mean for the school was a 4.7. The freshman class averaged the highest with a 6.4 productivity, followed by the seniors with 4.4, the juniors with 3.9, and the sophomores with 3.6. A few students added that they had been more productive in their cohorts at the beginning of the year. Similarly, many Saintsmen noted that they work harder in cohorts in blocks 1/2 or 3/4. However, with the end of the day fast approaching, their 5/6 cohorts are dominated by a lack of motivation and an excitement for the final bell.

Others remarked that their productivity depended on whether the teacher as-



Many students have their cohort time in Keane Plaza. Joaquin Torre ('21)

signed work for them to complete by the end of the cohort. 69.4% of students polled reported that they typically received additional cohort work in a school day. The senior class led the "yes" votes in this category, and many juniors remarked that they are assigned too much additional cohort work.

"Some teachers need to lessen the cohort workload," junior Benedetto Grondona said. He added that assigning more work than is possible to complete during the period defeats the purpose of the cohort.

On the other hand, some Saintsmen in the other camp feel that their time is wasted during cohorts. They have trouble staying focused without deadlines and find themselves being less productive than is desirable. Many students remarked that cohorts make the school day drag on.

"It would be helpful for me if my teachers mandated that some of the night's

homework be completed in cohorts," junior Anthony Alvarez said.

As to the nature of the cohort system, 44.7% of students said that cohorts most closely resembled study periods, while another 44.7% remarked that they were akin to off periods. Only 10.5% of those polled described their cohort experience as an extension of the classroom. The students that described the cohorts as a study period had a higher comparative approval rating of cohorts than the students that described them as off periods or extensions of the classroom.

When asked about their overall attitudes towards cohorts, a resounding 85.3% of Saintsmen said that they enjoyed them.

"I really like cohorts because you get time to do extra homework as well as to talk with your friends, social interactions that I believe are crucial during our global pandemic," senior Firas Halabo said.

"Cohorts allow me to get homework done and better manage my schedule," sophomore Calvin Shaw said.

The freshman, sophomore, and junior classes all boasted 90% approval ratings for cohorts, while the senior class barely scraped 60%. Many seniors remarked that this feeling was wrought by the fact that they had already lost so much of their year to COVID, and that cohorts added to this evaporated time.

"I feel like cohorts unfortunately waste our all-too-limited time this year," senior Diego Rivera said.

A few Saintsmen acknowledged that cohorts interrupt the flow of education in the classroom, making the retention of instruction all the more difficult.

"For more complicated subjects like history, it is harder for me to make connections due to the fact that I spend less time in the classroom," freshman Jet Himmelberg said.

Although the vast majority of Saintsmen decidedly enjoy their cohort experience, many students expressed that some things could be changed. The overwhelming consensus of the student body when asked how cohorts could be improved was moving them indoors. Saintsmen concluded that the fickle weather and the openness of an outdoor environment are not conducive to studying. The majority of gripes came from students serving their cohorts on the roof of the gym. Many students fondly reminisce about the day we had cohorts in the gym.

Other students had a more holistic approach to the situation. "I really don't think there is a way to improve cohorts. It leaves it up to the student to make the most of it," senior Noah Muñoz said.

Overall, students who reported a higher productivity rating enjoyed their cohort experience decidedly more so.

# Saintsmen Create Hallways of Horror

 **By Luca DiMarino ('24)**  
Staff Writer

In the age of COVID, it seems impossible to imagine large Halloween celebrations. Nonetheless, our school community decided to bring some Halloween flair to campus while still maintaining social distancing guidelines. This year saw the introduction of Hallway Wars, a competition in which class moderators and students decorated a designated floor in Villanova Hall and Mendel Hall.

The freshmen, led by Mrs. Palafox, created a hallway that was a combination of a haunted house and a butcher shop on the third floor of Villanova Hall. Mrs. Palafox, frustrated with the results of earlier class competitions, decided to give it her all. Her intention was for Saintsmen to experience intense gore and fear the deeper they walked down the hallway. With each step, the atmosphere became darker and more treacherous. The hallway featured spiderwebs, a curtain with bloody handprints, and a caged crow at the entrance warning visitors to turn back.

The sophomore class chose to go with an Among Us theme on the second floor of Mendel Hall, cutting out several paper crewmates and attaching them to large sheets of black paper painted like the game's distinctive space background. Additionally, transparent pink sheets were fitted around the lights, bathing the hallway in pink as though there was an "emergency" on board and someone urgently needed to fix it. The whole environment transported the passersby into the eerie world of the popular video game.

The juniors created a truly ghoulish experience on the first floor of Mendel Hall. They made the surrounding walls look like a haunted house with bloody writing giving



The sophomores' hallway was located on the second floor of Mendel Hall. Courtesy of ASB

students chills. Watching ominously over unsuspecting students, dementor-like ghosts with frightening clown faces hung from the ceiling. In addition, caution tape warned students to beware of the malicious sight.

The seniors, led by Mr. Lamerato, created a filthy hallway bathed in red light and infested with rats on the second floor of Villanova Hall. There were little rats hanging all over the ceiling and dolls dressed in the freshman class shirts, beanies, and rat masks trapped in spiderwebs along the walls. The crown jewel, however, was a massive animatronic rat wearing a beanie positioned outside Mr. Lamerato's classroom, which would jump out at passersby.

Mr. Lamerato blew many away with his

unique and creative design. He also incorporated some humor by making rats, a running joke with his senior classes, the theme of his hallway.

"The thing about rats is that they're scary, and something about the freshmen rats is that they're equally as scary," Mr. Lamerato said.

Mr. Lamerato's approach to the hallway decorations was humorous and tongue-in-cheek. Mr. Lamerato was also very grateful to the senior class for their help in setting up the hallway.

The spirit of the Hallway Wars was so infectious that teachers could not help joining in the fun. Mr. Alcoser was responsible for giving those who entered the library a fright. Hiding behind closets and props, he freak-

ishly jump-scared many of the unsuspecting wanderers who entered.

In the end, the competition came down to an intense runoff between the freshman and senior classes. A Google Form was sent out via Canvas for students to vote in their first block. After all the votes were tallied, the underdogs prevailed and the freshman class emerged victorious.

"The freshmen finally won something," Mrs. Palafox said.

Mr. Lamerato graciously lost, rightly pointing out that the competition was mostly for the fun of it.

Hallway Wars was the perfect celebration of Halloween as a school community. Although it was labeled a competition, in the end, it was all about having fun, getting creative, and showing spirit. Let's give it up for the student body for creating some absolutely terrifying, yet enjoyable, halls.

► **WEHBE**  
*Continued from Page 4*

poker, but the thing that I really enjoyed was beating other people. I love the competitive nature of it.

**Q:** Do you have any tips you'd like to share regarding any strategy-based games?  
**Wehbe:** Go online and study the basic dominant strategy. Some strategy games are very simple, such as tic-tac-toe, and some are as complex as chess. The classic game theory example to study is the Prisoner's Dilemma. Read about the Prisoner Dilemma and its dynamics and think about how it applies to real life and to games because this type of stuff also applies to economics.



# Teach-In Takes on Justice and Equality



The Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice began at Saints on Oct. 19. Mrs. Yoakum By Aidan Rickwa ('22) STAFF WRITER

From October 19 to October 25, the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice occurred at Saints and was led by 45 students and a number of faculty members. It was a conference for social justice through the perspective of the Catholic faith.

Normally done in person, the conference could not occur as planned due to COVID. It consisted of both pre-recorded videos and Zoom meetings. Everyone involved worked for hours to make sure the teach-in was a success and that everyone who attended learned a lot and truly had a life-changing experience.

The topics that were discussed were all about social justice, especially through a re-

same in the eyes of God,” one student in an anonymous survey said.

This was one of the main points of the program, teaching that we are all the same in God’s eyes and that we should overcome the barriers separating races and religions. These barriers were not made by God, but by humans, and it is up to us to overcome them. The same student also references unity, one of the Augustinian values. However, that unity is not meant to remain only at Saints, but should be extended to all people as they are all our sisters and brothers.

Another important topic was immigration, which has been an especially large problem both in the United States and abroad. Immigration before COVID was immense and there were thousands, if not millions, of people coming in every year from other countries. Some of these people were refugees, while others were simply trying to attain a better life. Discussing immigration in the present day was a topic for the teach-in which led to some interesting perspectives and discussions.

Additional topics included human trafficking and environmental issues. Both of these issues are less mainstream in today’s media when compared to immigration and racism, but they are still present and important to discuss.

Religion was the main influence on the discussion, but all ideas were welcome. All of the issues were thoroughly considered, especially in breakout rooms, and split into even smaller groups. The main goal of the teach-in was to gain new perspectives on issues and learn more about social justice and how we can do our part as Catholics.

Everyone involved worked very hard to achieve a fruitful experience. According to the students and faculty members, it was very successful and everyone seemed to gain a greater understanding of the issues that

plague our world today.

At the end of the teach-in, a survey was given to the student participants. “I learned that I actually have the power to make change and not just stand and watch, there are plenty of people of all ages around the world that share my ideas, and if they don’t, they want to converse and understand each other,” one student said. “There is a lot of work to do in the world, but there is also a lot of hope.”

Perfectly encapsulating the spirit of the teach-in, this student discussed how they truly understand their role in influencing change around the world. Although there are many issues in the world, there is hope that our generation can grow and enact change in the world.

## CLUBS

Continued from Page 3

the regular season during the spring. To play Jeopardy on steroids, go to room 316 on Wednesdays at lunch or talk to Mr. Jezewak.

Another club worthy of mention is Science Olympiad, which is a competitive club that concerns itself with all things science, including biology, psychology, chemistry, and engineering. The major Science Olympiad event occurs in March and is hosted by the University of San Diego. If building cars that automatically brake without using any electronics, creating a model version of DNA, or making a musical instrument out of PVC pipes sounds interesting, stop by room 210 on Fridays and see Mr. Freestone to sign up.

Clubs are a great way to meet people who share the same interests as you and to express passion about whatever appeals to you. There is always a place for every Saintsman to be themselves and share whatever hobbies or interests they enjoy. To learn more about other clubs, information can be found at sahs.org/campus-life/clubs.

## Chaplain's Corner

By Fr. Max Villeneuve, O.S.A. COLUMNIST

I want every Saintsman reading this to stop and reflect on this one thing: you, yes, YOU, matter. Opening and running a school during a pandemic is not easy. New schedules, procedures, rules, and directions (although I like not having log-jammed staircases) can make it feel quite topsy-turvy.

I want to thank our faculty and staff for the tremendous sacrifices they make in serving the Saints community. As we prepare for Thanksgiving, I invite you Saintsman to consider sending a thank you note to your teachers and coaches. Each of them signed up for this year knowing that they were taking a risk, so why did they do it? Again, because of YOU.

Your life matters, your education matters, and your future matters. The world is starting to lose sight of this important fact. Especially as the public officials again talk about locking down, I want you to know that there are many adults in this world who are advocating on your behalf, and many of them are right here at Saints. The initial lockdown was justified as the world was facing an unknown enemy, and we needed to buy ourselves time to learn the best practices and make the changes necessary to protect the most vulnerable.

But I also want to point out, and I am now preaching this publicly in our parishes, that in locking down for extended amounts of time, we create another category of vulnerable individuals: our young people. Your hopes, your dreams, your lives, and your futures matter too! God cares for and loves each and every one of you. As your chaplain, my ministry is to be an advocate and a pastor on your behalf.

Our faculty and staff have worked tirelessly for months through long days, hours, and meetings on your behalf. Yes, we are tired. Yes, it is hard. But yes—it is worth it. Because YOU matter, and we will not stop working and fighting for YOU.

## Revolutionizing Retreat Leadership

By Angel Perez ('21) EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Having successfully completed a COVID-adapted freshman retreat in September, Campus Ministry has announced a total revamp of the Big Brother and sophomore retreat leadership programs for juniors and seniors. With a new emphasis on developing practical leadership skills for a group of students dedicated to leading both retreats, the retreat leadership program will include taking leadership assessments to learn about strengths and weaknesses, using leadership concepts and theories such as servant leadership, and practicing authentic leadership as well as emotional intelligence.

“The intention of this program is to provide a space for students who are passionate about leading but might not yet have the experience,” Mrs. Yoakum said. Along with Augustinian Volunteer Carolyn Dreyer and the retreat executive team, which includes seniors Alex Alcalay, Angel Perez, Eamon Goodnough, Kyle Wesseln, Graeme Morland-Tellez, and Joseph Soro. Mrs. Yoakum has spent time preparing for the various units and conducting interviews of the over 40 juniors who applied. The 26 selected program participants will spend office hours each Thursday learning more about themselves and their ability to lead.

Mrs. Yoakum’s passion for leadership development is also obvious in her current work towards her master’s degree in Organizational Leadership at Point Loma Nazarene University.

“One of my favorite parts of leading retreats is working with the student retreat leaders,” Mrs. Yoakum said. “I love seeing them grow in their confidence as they lead their peers.”

The senior organizers, all of whom have participated in the Big Brother program for two years, have been hard at



Juniors and seniors successfully led the freshman retreat in September. Joaquin Torre ('21)

work on planning jam-packed meetings from which the juniors can grow. “As a member of the executive leadership team, I have the opportunity to help juniors develop their leadership skills,” Alex Alcalay said. “Every meeting revolves around a different topic, and I can’t wait to lead the discussion on servant leadership.”

By combining the previously independent freshman and sophomore retreat leadership programs, Campus Ministry hopes to spend more time focusing on strengthening leadership skills that can be applied to all retreats.

“Our retreats happen so close to one another, and I have noticed that I am not always able to spend as much time with the student leaders as I wish that I could,” Mrs. Yoakum said. “I am hoping that

these changes will allow us more time to grow as leaders and as a team.”

The ability to develop strong and hard-working leaders in order to continue growing as a program is essential to the framework of the retreat leadership program. Having overcome a wide range of obstacles in the freshman retreat, Campus Ministry is well-prepared for any potential bumps in the road. By equipping each student with the ability to mentor others through a deeper understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, an increased sense of interconnectedness between classes as well as applicable lessons in leadership and team building are the fruits of this phenomenally reinvented program.



# Wherever School Is This Fall, We're Here for You

## We Reverse Math Learning Loss

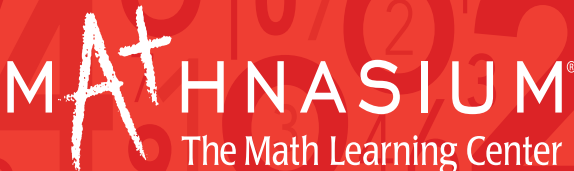
No matter what school looks like for your child, Mathnasium's got their back — and yours. Our Kickstart Program is built to reverse the widespread math learning loss students of all grade levels experienced due to the pandemic. With live, face-to-face instruction online and in our centers, we'll catch them up and keep their math skills strong for this year and beyond. You've got a lot on your plate right now. With Mathnasium, you and your child can take on the school year with confidence.

Join tens of thousands of parents in transforming their children's math skills.  
**Call us today to schedule your free trial session.**

Mathnasium of Mission Gorge  
(619) 281-MATH (6284)  
10330 Friars Rd. #109  
San Diego, CA 92120

Mathnasium of Rancho SD West  
(619) 825-9780  
3733 Avocado Blvd.  
La Mesa, CA 91941

Mathnasium of N La Mesa  
(619) 464-MATH (6284)  
2828 Fletcher Pkwy.  
El Cajon, CA 92020





Creative Writing Corner: Satire Articles

Senior AP English Literature students experimented with satire for a recent writing assignment.

Gavin Newsom Creates New Thanksgiving Restrictions Due to COVID-19  
By Donovan Gadler

Due to recent increases in coronavirus cases, Governor Newsom has created new lockdown restrictions for the holiday season. The new restrictions state that Thanksgiving must take place over Zoom calls with one household per call, everyone is required to wear a mask the entire time, and people are only allowed to whisper for the duration of the call. By wearing masks the entire time, the chances that saliva flies out of one's mouth, through one's window, and miles away to a family member's house will be very low. Just to be extra safe, whispering will decrease the chances of virus particles leaving your mouth. After being asked where the restrictions will apply, Newsom said, "These new restrictions are applicable everywhere in California except for my personal winery, where I will host Thanksgiving with my entire family." In order to enforce the new restrictions, the government is requiring that the entire Zoom call is recorded and sent to the government for inspection. Anyone who does not comply will be subject to a \$10,000 fine.

High School Teen Finds No Time to Do Homework  
By Joseph Selfani

It goes without saying that teenagers in high school have absolutely no time to do homework because school is already too hard. Sources say that approximately 89.2% of high school teenagers are "burnt out" from all the work they receive at school. It is simply too much to ask for a couple hours of their day after school to dedicate to the pursuit of knowledge. "Listen, I have no time to finish this homework assigned a month ago, I'm just too busy." Senior Matt Jack said. "Now watch me hit this 360 no-scope." Reports show that Mr. Jack's Steam account displays that about 72 hours were spent in the past two weeks playing Call of Duty: War Zone. "It's my passion, and plus, school cannot stop me from doing the better things in life," Mr. Jack said as he browsed the latest posts on the popular social media platform, Instagram.

Scientists Weigh In on the Ample Amount of Sleep High-School Students Receive Nowadays  
By Matthew Cross

As the school year starts up again, students have been getting less and less sleep. But do not fear! Scientists just released a new



**According to Joseph Selfani, students are struggling to find time for school.** JSTORDaily study clearly showing that growing high school students do not need to follow the typical eight to ten hours of sleep per night rule. One scientist, who recently dropped out of Arizona State University because it was too hard, discussed the topic, stating, "High school students don't even need sleep, bro. Like, that's for the weak or whatever." Teachers have been celebrating after the findings earlier this month. Many of these teachers were already assigning students hours of homework, turning a blind eye to the other AP classes and extracurriculars in which students were involved, but they must have already known that students don't need their sleep. Call it teacher intuition. Students were typically getting about four to five hours of sleep per night, but this new discovery gives the possibility to make students do more homework, which is what they obviously want to do. Now, we can push students to only about one to two hours of sleep per night, and blame it on their time management if they ever get tired!

Supreme Court Rules Election to be Decided by a Coin Flip  
By Nicholas Sajor

In a stunning decision revealed Friday, the U.S. Supreme Court has unanimously ruled that the contentious 2020 presidential election will be decided by the literal flip of a coin. Citing the close nature of the votes, potential recounts, and the extended time since election day, the nation's highest court believed it would be best for the country just to get over the suspense and

pick a winner. Speaking for the majority, Chief Justice Roberts said, "It is abundantly clear that only a completely impartial action can decide this race, and there is nothing more fair than a coin flip." Following this announcement, the Democrats and Republicans immediately began fighting over the type of coin which would be used. Republicans wanted to use a Lincoln penny, while Democrats sought to make the coin a dime, depicting Franklin D. Roosevelt. Speaker Pelosi and Senator McConnell eventually negotiated that the coin would be a quarter, claiming that its depiction of George Washington would be most acceptable to the American people. They also both accepted the necessity of a coin flip as the only possible solution to the complexities of American democracy. The chosen 2020 quarter will be tossed in a special ceremony at the Capitol Building this Sunday by Oprah Winfrey, finally putting an end to this nightmare of an election.

Superhero Movies Dominate Oscar Nominees  
By Jakob Tatoy

As films once again shatter box office records, Academy president Clark Stark commented on this year's list of Oscar nominees, a list dominated by the superhero genre. "Record high production costs have been met with record high profits," said Stark, who noted that the industry is thriving from a formula he refers to as "The Super-Success." "I looked at the Oscar lineup this year and see films who have grossed almost ten times their budget, as

opposed to typical nominees that barely turn a profit. I believe that the industry is headed in a lucrative direction, and the Academy has reflected such views through their nominations." Stark also remarked that while smaller film festivals are filled with more artistic works, such a big stage as the Oscars requires a similarly large lineup. "Too often the nominees are populated by unrecognizable names, small-scale stories, and complex performances. In releasing this list, the Academy hopes to embrace change by setting a new standard for the selection of the most successful movies." At press time, none of the major studio heads could be reached for comment.

Freshmen Are Already the Kings of Campus After Their First Day  
By Eric Engelman

Once again, it is that time of year where the new kings of campus assume their thrones on the first day of high school. The incoming freshmen are greeted with respect and admiration from all the teachers and students as the school looks to them for leadership and guidance. The freshmen are viewed highly because of their big brains behind their prepubescent baby faces and infant voices as well as for their extreme athletic ability. The freshmen are quite lucky because they were also the big dogs on campus in their 8th grade year so it is only natural that they continue to carry out that role a second time. The seniors, on the other hand, aren't so lucky because they have been moving down the social ladder ever since the last day of their freshman year. Mr. Lamerato was quoted as saying, "I unfortunately have the displeasure of teaching the seniors...I mean rats. They lack any critical thinking skills and I never speak to a single one of them outside of class because they are the filth of this campus. Just the thought of them is making me sick right now." These words may seem harsh, but they are nothing compared to the "Senior Send-Off Week" that seniors have to endure. The week is filled with freshmen mercilessly tormenting seniors with things such as beanie tossing and never-ending push-ups just because the seniors are the lowest of the low and the freshmen are the mightiest students on campus. All hail the new freshmen!



The Turkey Trot: COVID Edition

By Hudson Daley ('22)

