

## Peanuts, Cracker Jacks and a Mascot: A Nats Hopper Holiday

BY LUCY NEWMAN

Baseball fans filed slowly into Nats Park in anticipation of the Nats' midday faceoff against the Atlanta Braves on Thursday, April 23. As the game went on, however, the soaring (albeit rather scarce) Nats home-run balls failed to captivate the crowd; instead, spectators' eyes were affixed to the towering Hopper mascot proudly presiding over section 104. That afternoon, the crowd bore witness to a scene far more interesting than that produced by any regular-season MLB game: an off-site GDS Hopper Holiday.

While the event has typically been a surprise since its inception in 2011, this year marked a change from more common on-campus proceedings, prompting administrators to reveal its existence two weeks in advance and plan an early departure from the game.

"Community time, some bonding, a little break from the grind of whatever it is we're doing, a chance to be together [and] doing something different and fun," Assistant Principal for School Life Quinn Killy said to the *Bit*, outlining the main objectives of a break from their regular schedules. "I think that's the main point of it."

Often preceded by shortened class periods or a half-day of classes, Hopper Holiday usually consists of a school-wide recreational activity starting around lunchtime. Past Hopper Holidays have featured an ice-skating rink in the high school garage and bubble soccer on the GDS field, as well as the occasional off-campus celebration, including a trip to a trampoline park in 2024.

"Typically, [students] come back from winter break, and I reach out to the principal and to Russell [Shaw], and say, 'Hey, do we want to do one this year? What do we think?'" Killy said. "We like to have it pretty much planned before we leave for spring break."

Last year, GDS didn't organize a Hopper Holiday. Killy said there aren't strict criteria for whether Hopper Holiday takes place in a given year. But, because Hopper Holiday festivities did not take place last year, Killy said he was more inclined to organize a Hopper Holiday this year.

On April 9, the high school office sent an email to the high school community announcing the Hopper Holiday plans and asking that parents RSVP digitally on their kids' behalf by April 17. In order to reach the high school before 3:15 p.m., buses headed back to school at 2 p.m., about an hour after they'd first arrived at Nats Park. If parents gave permission for students to self-dismiss in the RSVP form, they were allowed to stay longer; otherwise, students had to leave after approximately four innings. Anyone with athletic or theater obligations, such as daily practices and rehearsals, was required to depart on the bus.

Sophomore Ella Maas, who had a lacrosse game immediately following the baseball game, had to head back to GDS before the end of the Nats game, boarding a bus at 2 p.m. "We had to leave pretty quickly, which meant I wasn't really there for a lot of the game," she said. "For people who didn't have athletics afterwards, I thought it was a really nice idea."



Students watch the Washington Nationals play against the Atlanta Braves. Photo by Sam Gross '27.

This year marks GDS' second Hopper Holiday appearance at a Nats game; the first was in 2018. According to Killy, planning a trip to a baseball game has twice over proved itself to be—per Killy's description—a "nightmare." He said one challenge the school faced was finding a game that took place in the middle of the school day, citing the timing difficulties as the reason GDS hadn't attended a Nats game in so long.

Finances, however, were not an issue for this year's Hopper Holiday: According to Killy, an alum donated all the tickets to Thursday's game. Killy declined to give the name of the alum who paid for the tickets.

In the case of the 2018 Hopper Holiday, the school kept the specifics

of the trip a secret until the day before. Now, Killy said, "If we're going off campus, we typically have to announce it [earlier]." In the original email detailing Hopper Holiday's proceedings, the school explained that the early announcement and RSVP forms were necessary so the school could ensure they had enough lunches and game tickets to accommodate every student who wished to attend the game.

Because this year's buses could not accommodate all the students who planned to attend, upperclassmen took the Metro to the game. The school purchased Metro cards for each upperclassman who attended the game. In addition to meal and ticket purchases, Killy said the logistics of

Metro transportation obligated the school to announce Hopper Holiday even earlier.

"I'm glad they told us in advance," freshman Maya Rand said, "cause then we had time to prepare, get our schoolwork in order, get outfits [and] get our Nats swag."

Senior Jaden Carnegie, however, had a different take: "I kind of like the surprise of Hopper Holiday," Carnegie said. "That's the good part."

"I think if we're going somewhere off campus, it's probably good if they release it [early]," senior Lulu Tirado said, "just because you couldn't plan for it outfit-wise and everything like that. But I think that there's also, especially if it's on campus, a little bit of fun [in] keeping it a surprise."

## Victoria Jueds Named Next Head of School

BY SAM GROSS, ANNABELLE GARLAND, LUCY NEWMAN AND ALIANA CROMER

On Jan. 20, Board of Trustees Chair Donald Saelinger announced that Victoria Jueds will be the sixth head of school in GDS history. She will succeed Russell Shaw and assume the role on July 1, 2026.

After Head of School Russell Shaw announced in March that he would retire after the 2025-2026 school year, the Board of Trustees formed a search committee that selected four finalists for the head of school position. During her visit to the school,

Jueds spoke about her work at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, which included increasing accessibility and addressing students' mental health.

Jueds will be the fourth woman head of school. Gladys Stern was the last woman to be head of school; she retired in 1996.

From 2021 to 2025, Jueds served as the director of schools at Lab, an equivalent position to head of school at GDS. Lab runs from nursery to 12th grade and has a student population of over 2,000 students.

In an interview with the *Bit*, Jueds said her first priority as

head of school will be to get to know the community. "You all know the school so much better than I do, so I'm going to be looking to you to tell me and show me a lot of what I need to learn in order to be helpful," Jueds said.

Jueds added that she hopes to sit in on classes, attend practices and watch rehearsals to grow a stronger understanding of the school. "I'll be listening for those insights and deeper truths about how the community functions," Jueds said.

Each of the four head of school candidates visited GDS in September and October. Each candidate met with students,

faculty and parents over the course of their two-day visit.

Jueds said she found out that she got the role of head of school in late November. She said search committee co-chairs Donald Saelinger and Otey Smith shared the news with her on a Zoom call. During the nearly two months before the search committee announced their decision, Jueds said she sporadically spoke with Saelinger and Smith about how to approach the transition and worked with the two co-chairs to write the announcement email.

The head of school search page on GDS' website originally

said the search committee would recommend a candidate to the Board by early November. In a Dec. 18 email to the GDS community, Saelinger and Smith said the announcement would come several weeks later than originally planned. "The additional time reflects our commitment to completing the final stages of the process with care and diligence," they wrote.

In an interview with the *Bit*, Saelinger said the search committee spent the final stages of

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# FEATURES

## A Look into GDS Robotics

BY LUCY NEWMAN AND ISABELLA TAMAYO

On any given spring afternoon, walk onto the GDS high school field. There's a good chance you'll encounter an eager sports team blissfully setting aside a few much-needed homework hours to run drills, scrimmage or shoot. Let the temperature drop a few degrees, and you may find yourself in a crowded gym with the women's basketball squad. All year—if you drive out to the suburbs, that is—you can see runners giving up sizable chunks of their Saturdays to cheer for one another amid the frigid cold or blistering heat.

Extracurriculars take commitment. Any athlete can tell you that. Yet some forms of teamwork and dedication never step foot in the arena. Rather, a tiny, automated tube mechanism—not much longer than a paper towel roll—is the culmination of weeks of untouched lunches, abandoned plans and aimless troubleshooting.

All spring, Hopper Robotics team members spend numerous hours over the weekend programming and controlling a robot to shoot its own kind of ball—one that doesn't swish. But, they say, the just-as-audible clinks and clangs, along with the camaraderie they build along the way, best even the rowdiest buzzer-beaters.

**“I think the best thing for these kids is getting a real hands-on experience with engineering”** Bachiochi said.

The 2026 For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics season marks the seventh for Matthew Bachiochi, who founded the team in 2020 (though the majority of its inaugural year was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic). In an interview with the *Bit*, Bachiochi explained that a passion for computer engineering as a child had led him to major in computer science. “I was always a little bit of a tinkerer,” he said. “I liked to take things apart when I was a kid and put them back together, kind of see how they worked.”

By establishing an extracurricular pathway for students interested in robotics, Bachiochi aimed to cultivate an affinity for the same kind of playful experimentation that compelled him in his youth. “I think the best thing for these kids is getting a real hands-on experience with engineering, and this program offers that in ways that they wouldn't get inside the classrooms,” he said.

“When it comes to STEM extracurriculars, specifically at GDS, there's a lot of great math and science tutoring,” senior and long-time robotics team member Quinn Shields said. “If you're interested in engineering and STEM at GDS, this is the place that you can do it consistently.”

In January, FIRST launched the 2026 challenge, titled “Rebuilt,” in which robots must shoot yellow balls into a special type of basket and can climb rungs of a ladder to accumulate

additional points.

Before assuming his current role at GDS as the high school innovation and computer science teacher in 2018, Bachiochi occupied a similar position at the Buckley School in New York City, where he stumbled upon Neal Bascomb's *The New Cool*, a detailed depiction of the Dos Pueblos High School robotics team's unlikely triumph at the 2009 FIRST Robotics Championship. In the book, Bascomb emphasizes the group's defiance of the notion that competitive glory (and, as is often the case in a high school environment, its resulting popularity) could only be achieved through athletic pursuits.

“I read [The New Cool] at my previous job, and it was always something I would've loved to have done, but I wasn't working with the high school age group,” Bachiochi said. “So when I came here, it was in the back of my mind, two years in, [to] kind of start this, and parents approached me about potentially starting a team my first year. That was something I jumped at the opportunity to do going into my second year.”

Inventor Dean Kamen—who built many types of machines, including the Segway Personal Transporter, a self-balancing electric scooter—founded FIRST in 1989. Kamen said at the time that he wanted to “compete for the hearts and minds of kids with the excitement of the Super Bowl.” Now, having served over four million children and spanning 114 countries, the non-profit aims to promote collaboration and spark creativity through three distinct engineering programs—the FIRST LEGO League, the FIRST Tech Challenge and the FIRST Robotics Competition.

Each year, the FIRST Robotics Competition introduces a challenge, supplying teams with a kit of parts and a set of criteria upon which to base their robot models. Beyond competition guidelines, however, much of the delegatio is left up to the students

themselves.

“I think independence is the key,” Chris Coogen, the innovation and computer science department chair, said. Along with Bachiochi, Coogen and substitute teacher

Chris Light work closely with the Hopper Robotics team to develop and program their robot. “During the competition, it's a series of designing, working, innovating and redesigning under pressure,” Coogen said. “And kind of handling that working as a team together, leaning on each other.”

For Bachiochi, scoring higher in tournaments has served as an indicator of the team's growth. Hopper Robotics only competed once in 2020 before being forced to go on lockdown for the rest of the season. “But just getting a robot onto the field your rookie year is considered a win, because we didn't know anything,” he said with a laugh.

“Our third year was the first time we got selected to be in somebody's alliance for that tournament, which was kind of a big deal for us,” Bachiochi said. An alliance is a three-school coalition that forms after the preliminary rounds of a tournament and works together throughout the competition. “The fourth year, we actually were one of the captains, so we did the selecting for the first time. In our fifth year, we [qualified for] our regional championship for the first time, which was very exciting.”

Last year, Hopper Robotics won its first banner, becoming a district event winner at the regional competition in Pasadena, Maryland. While the victory was gratifying, the coaches explained, the skills that students learned along the way meant more: “Their hustle, their ability to design and build quickly, to work together to have a robot that does all of the things both going into the event and as we come out of an event, is a win

that is not quite as visible as a banner hanging,” Bachiochi said.

The Hopper Robotics builders pour considerable time and effort into practice sessions in order to fully equip the robot for the numerous obstacles it must traverse. Freshman Max Hoffman explained that the 29 club members usually meet during lunch on Monday to lay out plans for the expectedly busy week that awaits them.

Even so, these weekly lunches do not usually offer enough time to pack in all the refinement the robot requires. In their free time, participants pay frequent visits to the Innovation Lab and contribute to the robot's success in any way they can, but “there's really nothing regimented,” Shields said. “It's whatever we happen to be doing that day. There's always something that needs to be done.”

“The nice thing for us is we can actually work on the robot between the weeks,” Bachiochi said, gesturing to the robot, which stood, somewhat presumptuously, right at the entrance to the Innovation Lab. “Our robot from last week looked a little bit different from our robot this week.”

Many experienced builders graduated last year, greatly changing the composition of the team. “This year, a lot of younger people designed and built it all,” Hoffman said.

Rather than being nervous about the team's lack of experience, however, Coogen is excited to watch the students improve as they move through high school. “They will have two to three more years to really grow,” he said. “And I get to see that growth. So if they had a really successful season now, that's going to be nothing but up as they get better at all the skills that they've learned this season.” In March, the Hopper Robotics' alliance, which also included Mills E. Godwin High School and Douglas S. Freeman High School, placed third overall in the FCH

(FIRST Chesapeake) District Glen Allen VA Event.

Most of all, the squad is happy to have fostered a home for students who want to explore the practical applications of STEM skills outside school. “What first led me to join the robotics team was FOMO,” Hoffman said. “The environment of the Innovation Lab itself is just great. I love Matthew, and then there's two Chrises. They're great. And just the type of kids that go there [the Innovation Lab], and the GDS community there, it's pretty good.”

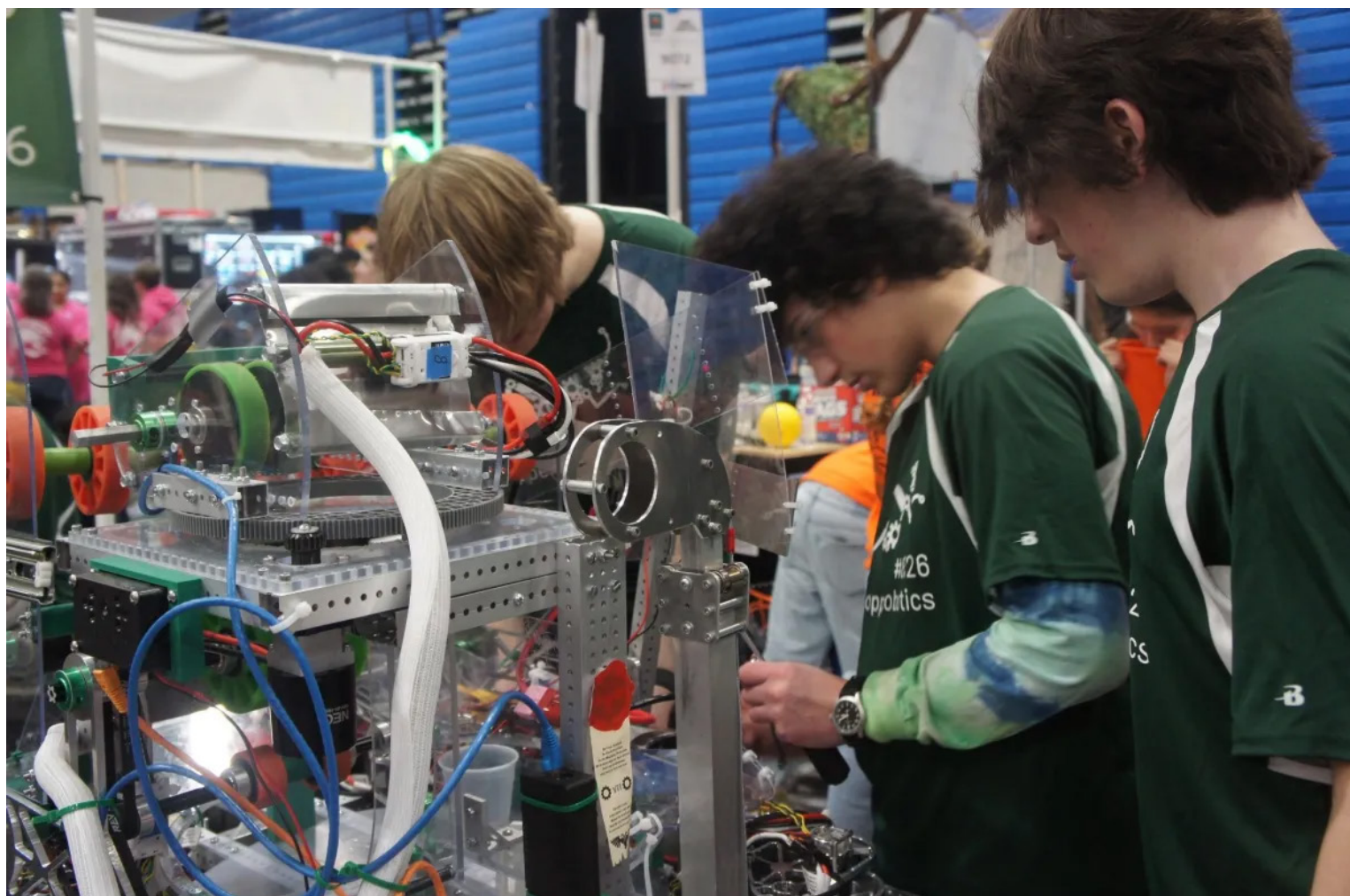
“The more they start to understand and work together, there's camaraderie, and there's friendship in it,” Coogen said animatedly. “There's a like-minded desire to build. There's a lot of laughter. There's a lot of friendships being made. There's a lot of giving ideas to each other. I think the special times are even, like, the bus ride to the competition. It's wonderful to see the community really laughing.”

It isn't just the little moments, though; just as Bachiochi intended, members of Hopper Robotics are learning skills that will aid them well past their high school years. Although Shields is not sure exactly what career he wants to pursue yet, he said that Hopper Robotics has taught him a crucial skill: teamwork.

Sophomore Randy Zhu agreed. “I probably won't do anything directly with robotics, but I'll do things related [to robotics]. As long as you're trying to do anything STEM-related, Robotics Club is extremely helpful because it covers many areas.”

And Hoffman said his work on the 3D mockup of the robot has led him to consider studying architecture or engineering when he's older.

After seven years, Hopper Robotics is starting to win more than ever. And who knows? One day, Bachiochi and his team may go on to win the FIRST Robotics World Championship—like a scene right out of *The New Cool*.



Hopper Robotics builders work on this year's robot. Photo by Brendon Chu '28.

# FEATURES

## Victoria Jueds Named Next Head of School

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the process finalizing a contract with Jueds, conducting reference checks and structuring the announcement email.

“We wanted to make sure that we gave proper time to all of those steps and that we were able to announce in a way where we could maximize community engagement and enthusiasm instead of announcing just prior to winter break, when everyone was scattering to the winds,” Saelinger said.

Saelinger said making the announcement after winter break allowed the community to be fully present to hear the news and ask questions.

“It made me and a couple of my colleagues really nervous, especially my colleagues that also have kids at the school,” lower/middle school PE teacher and GDS parent Marquis Bell

said about the delayed announcement. “I didn’t know if we were opening up the whole process again, if we’d found the right candidate, if we didn’t know if we saw the things that we wanted or not.”

Freshman Eliana Elias said she was surprised to receive the head of school announcement. “I kind of forgot about it because we’ve been waiting for so long,” she said.

“It wasn’t really clear what was happening, why it was being moved back,” junior Izzy Choudhary said. “I wish it were a bit more of a transparent process.”

High school jazz teacher Brad Linde said the delay concerned him because it may have meant that the Board could not reach a decision. “I thought that [the announcement] would be much faster,” Linde said. “That was the only thing that was shocking to me.”

Director of Student Community Programming Bobby Asher said he thinks Jueds will be a both effective and engaging leader. “There’s a degree of gravitas that I want leadership to have, but I also want them to be able to let their hair down and have a laugh, and I feel like she checks both of those boxes,” Asher said.

Asher was a member of the faculty search committee. The committee met with all four candidates during their respective school visits and comprised faculty from the lower, middle and high school divisions.

“[Jueds] has just a great way of engaging and building relationships with people,” Saelinger said. “She has this really rare combination of intellectual rigor and empathy and decisiveness, and I think she will build trust very, very easily with different members of the community.”

Bell said his daughter,

fourth-grader Lola Bell, asked Jueds a question during her meeting with fourth-grade students. “The very next morning, [Jueds] was out in front of the lower/middle school, greeting every student,” Bell said. “She stopped Lola and talked about the question that she asked. We sat there for five minutes and had a really engaging, really good conversation.

“I think Tori [Jueds] is going to continue the inward-facing work that Russell [Shaw] did,” Bell continued. “The way she engaged, the way she loved, the way she poured into kids, you could just see where her feet want to be.”

Senior Andrew Bennett said that of the four candidates, Jueds reminded him the most of Shaw. “I thought she was just very kind and warm. She especially felt like someone I could get to know and talk to, [like] she would walk around the school and know my name,” Bennett said.

Jueds said she hopes to support student autonomy as head of school. “One of the things that really impressed me about GDS from the beginning is the independence, the thoughtfulness [and] the maturity of the student body,” she said. “You’ll find me really welcoming all manifestations of that independence.”

Senior Sarah Sakr said she was impressed by Jueds’ transparency during her high school assembly. “I really liked that in front of the school, she talked about integrity and how she felt that she could make the right decision, even if it felt unpopular,” Sakr said.

“I was very encouraged by her deep experience across different educational settings and her enthusiasm for GDS and for its history, its community and what GDS represents,” GDS parent Amy Pollick

said. “She said she lived by integrity, humor and empathy, and I think those words also describe Russell [Shaw] very well.”

During the State of the School Address on Jan. 27, 2025, Shaw unveiled GDS’ strategic vision, which focuses on achieving educational excellence, supporting faculty and adopting innovative financial practices. Jueds said the strategic plan will guide her transition into the head of school position.

“That’s a huge guidepost for me, to see all of the output of all of the conversation that I’m sure went into that process and defining those particular goals and initiatives,” Jueds said. “I did engage in that same process at both Westtown and Labs, so that’s why it means a lot to me.”

High school history teacher Kim Nguyen, who was a member of the faculty search committee, said he appreciated Jueds’ commitment to learning from the GDS community. “That’s something that Russell [Shaw] does, so I think she’s starting off on the right track,” Nguyen said.

“The key to succeeding here is understanding the community and having some sort of canonic information,” Linde said.

“I hope Tori [Jueds] continues the same cute traditions that Russell [Shaw] does,” freshman Maya Rand said. Rand said one tradition of Shaw’s that she enjoys is his annual Christmas Assembly performance of “The GDS Christmas Blues,” an original song about each year’s events at GDS. “I hope she keeps the whimsicalness of Russell at GDS,” Rand said.

*Gavin Solomon contributed reporting.*



Victoria Jueds addresses high school students on Oct. 9. Photo by Molly Kaplan '29.

## Assistant Principal Khalid Bashir to Leave GDS

BY ARIELLE STOPAK

In a Dec. 18 email to the GDS community, Head of School Russell Shaw announced that Assistant Principal for Academics Khalid Bashir will depart GDS at the end of June.

Bashir has accepted a position as principal of grades 11 & 12 at John Burroughs School in St. Louis and will begin in July.

In an interview with the *Bit*, Bashir said that the main difference between his role at GDS and his position at John Burroughs School is that he will no longer be responsible for student schedules.

“It was just a great opportunity,” Bashir said about his new position. “Working in schools is all about finding a place where you feel like you could have impact and a mission-aligned institution. And I think I found that, both at GDS and the school that I will be serving in the fall.”

Throughout his decade at GDS, Bashir has worked as an English teacher, an 11th-grade dean and now as assistant principal for academics. In Shaw’s email, he said the search for Bashir’s

successor would begin after winter break.

As assistant principal for academics, Bashir focuses on student support, academic policies and scheduling. “My current role and my new role function at the intersection of systems and people,” Bashir said.

Bashir said his experience as an administrator at GDS has taught him the importance of being involved in the community. “I think it’s really important that you position yourself among the people that you are positioned to lead,” Bashir said. “It means being in the Forum and picking up trash; it means going on the field trip when someone needs a sub.”

Junior Rhea Ganta said she was disappointed to learn about Bashir’s departure. “Ever since we got the announcement that Russell [Shaw] was leaving, along with Khalid [Bashir], it just made everything a bit more sad because so many of our long-term faculty members are leaving,” she said.

“I just was surprised because I imagined him continuing to do that role and moving up in the GDS ranks,” history teacher Emily Landau said. “He’s so associated with

GDS for me that I just was completely shocked,” she said. Landau started working at GDS in 2018, which was Bashir’s third year at the school.

In addition to his work as assistant principal for academics, Bashir currently teaches Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). In the class, students learn to conduct research and write surveys. At the end of each year, YPAR students present a proposal to administrators about how to improve GDS.

Senior Tessa Fergusson, who took YPAR last year, said she admired Bashir’s commitment to letting students figure things out on their own and only helping when absolutely necessary during their

end-of-year project. “In the long run, that really allowed me to thrive in that class,” she said.

“I’m proud of the relationships I’ve been able to create towards the work of supporting kids,” Bashir said. Bashir said he is also proud of the relationships he has helped to facilitate at GDS between families and faculty.

“When he talks about what he does and why he does it, I’ve seen him tear up so many times and get a little choked up talking about what it all means to him,” Director of Student Community Programming Bobby Asher said. “He wears his heart on his sleeve, and he’s not ashamed to let his eyes water up a little bit when he talks about the things

that he cares about.”

Landau said she hopes Bashir’s replacement will echo his guiding ethos. “I would hope to see someone with grace and gratitude, who is efficient and good and capable but also human.”

Bashir said he encourages his successor to be curious. “It’s so much more important to find the answer to why than it is the what,” Bashir said. “There’re always gonna be problems; there’re always gonna be conflicts and challenges and people that are upset or people that are hurting. And if you are only worried about what’s wrong, then you will really miss why it matters.”



Illustration by Brooke Hughes '27.

# FEATURES

## Students Rethink Military Service in Wake of New Trump Policies

BY MOLLY KURTZER-ELLENBOGEN AND SABINE HLETKO WOOD

Senior Madeleine Genia never considered enlisting in the military until she received an email last year from the U.S. Naval Academy inviting her to apply to their 2025 Summer Seminar, a weeklong program meant to introduce rising high school seniors to the Naval Academy.

Genia was accepted into the program, and her experience—5:15 a.m. wake-ups, rigorous physical exercises, classes and bonding with peers—led her to apply to the Naval Academy.

“I loved the structure of everything [at Summer Seminar],” Genia said, citing family-style meals as an example. “I just loved that everyone was pushing each other to work towards being better. It wasn’t just being better, but being better for everyone’s sake.”

While there, Genia said much of the focus was on physical training and exercise, as well as a secret mental component she said she can’t disclose, for fear of “spoiling it.”

During Sea Trials, a full day of intense challenges meant to test strength and endurance, she participated in both individual and team-based exercises. “There was this beach, and we had to link arms and all do sit-ups and pushups and hold a plank and do all this physical stuff as the waves are crashing over us on the shoreline,” she said. “And if one person can’t do the sit-up with everyone else, then no one can do it.”

Senior Marc Liebowitz also attended the Navy’s Summer Seminar and applied to the Naval Academy last summer. Liebowitz had wanted to join the Marines since he was a little kid, but because the Marines do not have their own service academy, prospective officers must enroll in the Naval Academy.

This winter, Liebowitz withdrew his application to the Naval Academy. Initially, when interviewed by the *Bit*, he said, “Due to some current political tensions, I decided to withdraw my application, number one due to really questioning what I would be fighting for.” But in a subsequent interview, he said he changed his point of view on military service after some more reflection. “You’re not serving the commander-in-chief; you’re serving the people,” he said.

**“If I’m told to bomb a village full of innocent civilians, then I’ll take the court martial, I’ll take the dishonorable discharge, I’ll take 12 years in the brig or whatever it is,” Liebowitz said.**

Liebowitz said his thinking began to shift when he learned of the U.S. strikes on boats allegedly carrying drugs in international waters. Liebowitz thought the soldiers who carried out the strikes should have refused the orders, and said when he

joined the military, he would try to uphold the Constitution to the best of his ability, even if it meant defying the orders of the commander-in-chief.

“I’m prepared to not just accept orders, but if they go against basic moral standing, like if I’m told to bomb a village full of innocent civilians, then I’ll take the court martial, I’ll take the dishonorable discharge, I’ll take 12 years in the brig or whatever it is, because that’s just not the person I am,” he said. “That’s not how I want to be representing the Armed Forces of the United States.”

Liebowitz plans to join the Naval ROTC program (NROTC). ROTC is a program that allows college students to train as military officers while completing a traditional college degree, while service academies are fully immersive, military-structured federal institutions. Both service academies and ROTC require students to serve as an officer in the military after graduation.

“I just found that the route of NROTC might be a little easier than trying to apply to the [Naval] Academy,” he said. The Naval Academy’s application process requires a nomination, generally from a member of Congress (though five nominations per year can come from the vice president); an SAT or ACT score; essays; a fitness assessment and an interview. ROTC applications also require standardized test scores, interviews and a fitness assessment but do not require a Congressional nomination.

Liebowitz also said NROTC would allow him to study any major he chooses, which would impact the role he is assigned to in the military after he graduates. While the Naval Academy allows students to choose their own major, it requires that 65 percent of graduates choose majors relating to science, technology, engineering or mathematics, and the types of majors offered are limited. Liebowitz said he wants to major in business administration.

Liebowitz said he has not decided what specifically he wants to do in the Marines but that he’s considering a combat position. “Obviously combat is a scary thing, and, you know, you don’t want to die, but it’s less about the combat and more about the commitment to my country and the things that I can do for the people back home if I were to take that route.”

Genia also recently withdrew her application from the Naval Academy because of fears about the current administration’s attitude towards the armed forces of the military. She said she was already hesitant about military service going into the Summer Seminar after the Academy removed almost 400 books relating to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) last April following orders from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s office. The following month, the Pentagon ordered all military leaders to remove and review any books containing “divisive concepts and gender ideology” from their libraries. The order flagged books with terms including “affirmative action,” “discrimination,” “diversity,” “gender identity” and “white privilege” for removal, among others. A list of



Illustration by Sophia Ingersoll '28.

381 books removed from the Naval Academy’s library includes Maya Angelou’s “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,” “The hate u give” by Angie Thomas and a book called “Memorializing the Holocaust” by Janet Jacobs.

However, Genia said her fears about censorship and a lack of diversity were “put to bed” during a class discussion at Summer Seminar. “One of the teachers for one of the class previews that I went to addressed that [the removal of books] head on, and he actually invited us to have a discussion about what we thought about it.”

Genia said her teacher told her he didn’t expect the removal of books to impact the academics at the school, and that the change to the curriculum “didn’t change the heart of the Naval academy.”

As Genia progressed through the application process, though, she said her concerns intensified. “A lot of what was going on with it being very clear that women and diversity were not welcome in the military,” Genia said. “That was a huge shocking point for me.”

In October, Hegseth announced new fitness standards for the military, which he said could end up excluding women.

For Genia, the “final straw” came shortly after she returned from a vacation in Colombia over winter break. On Jan. 3, U.S. forces captured the Venezuelan president, Nicolas Maduro, and his wife in an early morning raid in Caracas.

After seeing the news, Genia said she was worried about being asked to carry out illegal orders if she were to join the Navy. “I can pledge allegiance to the Constitution, I can uphold the Constitution,” she said, “but I can’t obey the orders of the commander-in-chief of the chain of command if those orders break the Constitution.”

In November, Democratic Senator Mark Kelly, a retired Navy captain, posted a video with five other members of Congress urging those serving in the military to refuse illegal orders from the Trump administration. In response, the Pentagon announced it was taking steps to downgrade Kelly’s military retirement rank, but a federal judge blocked the order.

Genia said she has “no

problem” with the idea that members of the military should follow all legal and constitutional orders. “I think that that’s just inherent to the military, and that was something I was ready to sign up for,” she said. “But when the lines start to blur,” Genia said, “that’s where I have to question if it’s something that I am okay with doing.”

According to Director of College Counseling Emily Livelli, each grade typically has one or two students who apply to service academies and between one and three who consider ROTC.

While Livelli cannot recall any students ever actually attending a service academy since she came to GDS in 2011, she said the number of students interested in joining the military has been fairly consistent during her tenure.

“Most people who get to that point, who are thinking about committing to a life of military service, think beyond the current administration, and it typically is not the type of thing that influences their decision,” she said. “Military career is longer than an administration.”

Sophomore Jack Gresens, who is currently in the Civil Air Patrol—a group of civilian volunteers who sometimes assist the U.S. Air Force in emergency missions—said he hopes to join the Air Force ROTC in college before joining the Air National Guard.

“I want to be a pilot, and [ROTC] is one of the ways I can fund my education and also get into the career field,” Gresens said. “It also allows me to serve my country.” In addition to offering scholarships, ROTC programs give students monthly stipends. Gresens wants to become a pilot for Delta, which requires at least 1500 flight hours, so he said the training and funding offered by the Air Force ROTC are “a huge benefit.”

But Gresens said he is concerned about new policies in the armed forces he views as discriminatory, such as a new rule enacted in December which will phase out permanent waivers that allow soldiers with certain medical conditions to avoid shaving. All men in the armed forces, barring special circumstances, are required to be clean-shaven. The Army said in a

statement that men who were unable to comply with this standard within a certain timeframe—which it did not specify—could be kicked out of the military. A condition that qualifies for one such medical waiver is razor bumps, which disproportionately affect Black men.

Genia also became concerned about the removal of policies promoting diversity in the Armed Forces. She said if she had already been attending the Naval Academy, she could have justified staying and eventually serving, but she couldn’t in good faith apply to the Academy now given the military’s recent actions.

After talking to her family and her Blue and Gold officer—a Naval Academy liaison who guides applicants through the admissions process—Genia withdrew her application.

“I remember I was drafting the text to my Blue and Gold Officer, who had been nothing but supportive and amazing, and I was just totally bawling my eyes out, but I knew that it was better to make the decision now than to make it later, because if I were to make it later I would be taking up a spot for someone who would choose to go,” she said.

Genia said that after withdrawing her application, she spoke to her roommate from Summer Seminar, who was also considering withdrawing. “When I finally told her that I withdrew my application, she was so thrilled,” Genia said. That’s because while her roommate had wanted to go to the Naval Academy her entire life, the current political climate and anti-diversity efforts in the military had also caused her to reconsider. “I can’t be somewhere that doesn’t want me,” the roommate told Genia on a phone call.

“When I finally told my parents, ‘I think I have to withdraw my application,’ I was sitting at my kitchen counter just sobbing,” Genia said.

Despite his concerns, Liebowitz said he is still committed to serving his country. “I think the overall mission of the country that I currently reside in, the United States, has remained largely the same,” Liebowitz said. “I think that a few isolated instances or bad leadership doesn’t necessarily disqualify being part of something bigger than myself.”

# FEATURES

## The Story of a Walkout: D.C. Students Unite to Protest ICE

BY JACOB BLANE AND  
ANNABELLE GARLAND

“Oh, my God.” These were the words of one high school student who walked behind us as we made our way into the Tenleytown–AU Metro Station. Her exclamation came after hundreds of Jackson-Reed students poured into the subway from the opposite entrance.

On Friday, Feb. 27, students from 15 schools across D.C. held a walkout to protest the Trump administration and the recent violence by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE). Alongside hundreds of other students, we took the Red Line to the Farragut North Metro Station before walking to the Lincoln Memorial, where we spoke to protesters, Park Police and onlookers.

Jackson-Reed junior Nati Pinilla began organizing the walkout in January. We had the chance to speak to Pinilla at Farragut North, where she was directing crowds to the exit through her megaphone.

“We’re the students in our nation’s capital,” Pinilla shouted over the noise of the protesters. “We have direct witness to see what’s happening in Congress and in our government. Even though we’re not a state, we still have a voice, and I want to prove that.”

The atmosphere was electric as students emerged from Farragut North station and quickly began to chant, “Fuck ICE!” But when students became the most enthusiastic—when their shouts became the loudest, and their cheers the most unified—was when an onlooker raised their fist in support or a car honked in approval.

On our walk to the Lincoln Memorial, a woman in her car simply stopped in the middle of the street for over a minute to shout her support, even though she had a green light; a man on the side of the sidewalk stopped to high five every student who passed by. These small moments of solidarity caused uproars among the crowd.

A few blocks away from the Washington Monument, three men stood across the street from the crowd of students. Two donned MAGA hats, while one was dressed in what appeared to

be an American-flag wrestler suit with a Lucha Libre mask.

The counter-protestors’ jeers and chants could not be heard over the roar of the students, but many high-schoolers noticed the men and began booing. One student crossed the street and approached one of the men, and the two began shouting back and forth. At one point, the student swatted at the man with her sign—the only violent moment we saw during the protest.

The protest officially began at 3 p.m. As students arrived, organizers from each school—each wearing a neon pink shirt—stood at the top of the Lincoln Memorial’s steps and led call-and-response chants. In one such chant, a student organizer asked, “Who do we hate?” The protesters screamed back, “Trump!” Other chants condemned ICE’s violence and called for the release of the Epstein files.

### A Show of Unity

Lucia Kumar had a personal reason to attend the walkout. One of just three Maret eighth-graders to protest, she said she wanted to go because she has “a lot of family that’s been taken [by ICE].” Kumar declined to share which members of her family ICE had taken.

Kumar said her mom works for an organization called Voto Latino, which provides resources and information to prospective Latino voters.

“There’s a lot of bad stuff going on right now, and people really need to speak out,” Kumar said. “If the youth is coming out and talking about it, then maybe the adults will finally understand.”

We spoke to GDS sophomore Asher Baer about 30 minutes into the protest. Baer said he could hardly believe how many students showed up. “It’s a great show of unity for basically everybody in the District to be out here for one cause,” he

said. “You hope that the people over at Capitol Hill are at least paying attention to what’s happening on their doorstep. This is about as close as we can get; if they can’t take this messaging, then there’s really no hope for them.”

That unity didn’t only apply to teenagers.

While parents sometimes bring their children to protests, it’s not



Students walk from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial. Photos by Chloe Sachs '28

often that a young child will beg their parents to go to one. But on Friday, we met Alice Deal Middle School sixth-grader Amelia Finch, who brought her mom, Lori Finch, to the walkout.

Amelia said she became concerned about ICE “when all this bad stuff started to happen and Trump got into office.”

“She’s very passionate about ICE and how terrible it is,” Lori said of her daughter. “This was important for her because she wanted to experience a rally.”

Amelia had wanted to go to the protest so badly, Lori said, that she decided to miss school.

But the walkout held special significance for both Amelia and Lori: It was the first time either of them had attended a protest.

### The School Response

GDS junior Eva Vinik said she felt a personal responsibility to attend the walkout. “As someone who has that ability to go to school without the fear of being kidnapped, I think that it’s only right that I stand up for those who don’t have that privilege,” she said.

On Tuesday, Feb. 24, High School Principal Chris Levy sent an email to all high school students and parents about the walkout.

“Whether our students participate or not, we respect their choice,” Levy wrote. Levy encouraged parents to develop safety plans with their children if their children decided to attend the protest and said that classes would run as normal, leaving students responsible for making up any missed work.

Vinik said she was unsurprised that the school did not punish students who participated in the walkout. “If you look at GDS’ mission statement, it’s their responsibility to create a space where students are free to stand up for what they believe in,” Vinik said. “It’s one thing to learn about these issues in classes, but what GDS really prepares you for so well is the strength and freedom and also courage to apply what you’ve learned in the real world.”

“What’s happening in this country right now, especially in terms of immigration,” protest co-organizer and GDS junior Willa Wible said, “has just gotten completely out of

hand.” Wible spoke about the killings of U.S. citizens Renee Good and Alex Pretti as examples of ICE’s violence.

“We have to show that students actually do care, and because we’re in this location, that gives us all the more reason to show up in one of the most iconic places you could perform a protest in the United States,” Wible said.

Protest co-organizer and GDS junior Alicia Kim said the student organizers from School Without Walls, juniors Nadia Kallmer and Yeselyn Iraheta, applied for a protest permit from the National Park Service. During the protest, Park Ranger Natalie Suding told us one permit ranger—a park professional responsible for managing permits for events on public land—attended the walkout to ensure the protection of students’ First Amendment rights.

According to Kim, administrators at St. John’s College High School (SJC) threatened to suspend students who took part in the walkout. On Feb. 19, the SJC walkout Instagram page—@fightisnotoveryet\_sjc—posted an image with the text, “The administration is actively trying to stop SJC students from participating in this walkout.”

SJC student organizer and account manager Tessa Majchrzak did not respond to a request for comment.

Prince William County Public Schools recently suspended 323 students for skipping school to attend an ICE rally. Suspensions like these have become more common in recent months: On Feb. 18, the Mustang Public School district in Oklahoma gave 122 students in-school suspensions after they participated in an ICE walkout.

### Two Sides to the Same Coin

Inside the Memorial, we met two men from central Florida—Richard Feinberg and Julio Perez. They told us they flew in for Saturday’s March 4 Democracy rally and were on a walk from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial when they saw protesters marching along the Reflecting Pool.

“I think the message is awesome,” Feinberg said to us. “What he [Trump] is doing is unconstitutional and illegal, and obviously you children have more spine than the Republicans in our Congress.”

Feinberg said that despite his own interest in politics, he struggles to get his children—who are in their 30s and 40s—involved.

“I just think it’s apathy,” Feinberg said about people who refuse to care about politics. “It’s a generation or generations that have grown up with a lot given to them, and they take what they have for granted. They don’t realize that freedom ain’t free.”

Feinberg will turn 70 this year. He said he became passionate about politics and started protesting towards the end of the Vietnam War, which ended when he was 18 or 19 years old.

A first-generation American, Perez said he began going to rallies after he heard Trump speak at the 2016 Republican National Convention. “The way that he spoke just made the hair on the back of my neck stand up,” Perez said. “I’d heard of this fascist guy in Germany talking the same way, and that’s what made me get involved.”

Down by the base of the Memorial, one student’s sign read, “The Holocaust started with mass deportation.”

Since 2016, Perez said he’s “been watching America just decline and decline and decline.” Perez said the topics he cares most about—women’s rights, affirmative action and diversity, equity and inclusion—aren’t getting enough attention.

“A lot of people tell me to be careful because of ICE,” Perez said. But he refuses to stop. “I believe in these rights; I believe in this—in what I’ve seen. I hate to see it go away.”

Although Feinberg and Perez continue to attend protests, Feinberg said his generation can only do so much. “Our time is kind of done,” he told us. “It’s y’all’s country, and you need to fight for it.”

To the left of the protesters at the Lincoln Memorial stood members of the Armed Forces—men and women who fight for the country in a far more literal sense. They were holding a promotion ceremony for one of their fellow soldiers, and the spectators huddled together in front of an American flag and a U.S. Navy flag to share in the special moment. But it was sometimes difficult to hear the words of the speaking colonel, who had to raise his voice over the nearby shouts of the protesters.



Protestors can hear chants loud and clear through the megaphone. Hundreds of students respond in unison: “ICE out!”

# OPINIONS

## Calculator Theft Poses a Threat to Our Community

BY BROOKE HUGHES

If you regularly check your email, you may have heard my story before. In the fall of my sophomore year, I arrived at school at 7:15 a.m. and decided to charge my calculator in the designated charging port in the high school library. I knew that the port was infamous for thievery, but my name was written on the back of my calculator, and I trusted my peers. Plus, the building felt empty, and there were no other calculators charging.

What were the chances that mine would be stolen? My question was soon answered when, 30 minutes later, I went to check on my calculator, and it was gone. Soon after the theft, I sent an all-school email pleading for my calculator back, but the email was soon lost in the mass of similar notes in the student body's inboxes.

Though increasingly common, students meet calculator theft at GDS with widespread indifference—indifference that contributes to a culture of distrust in the community.

At the beginning of students' freshman year, GDS provides each high school student with a TI-84 calculator. Students are expected to use these calculators for the next four years. For some students, the

four years are cut short the moment their calculator is left unattended in the library.

High school librarian Rhona Campbell has been working at the high school for eight years and noticed the rise in calculator theft after the pandemic. The calculator charging port used to be located in the math office. To increase accessibility for students, the math department decided to move the ports to the library. It wasn't until final exams in 2021—when the chargers were moved to the library—that Campbell's attention turned to the spot.

"A whole bunch of kids had put their calculators in the mass charger, and it came time for the test," Campbell said. "There were three kids who came back to get their calculators, and their calculators had been taken by someone else. We were running around trying to figure out ways to help these kids get a calculator that they could use on their exams. So at that point, we knew we had a problem."

Junior Isabella Yip noticed the same issue this year and chose to write about it for an assignment in her English 11 class. Two of her calculators had been stolen from the port, and Yip was fed up with the GDS community's apparent disregard for the issue. To collect data

for the assignment, Yip sent out a survey to a pool of random high school students. Twenty-six percent of the students who answered her survey said they had had their calculator stolen, and 78 percent said they avoided the ports altogether.

"While it's seemingly a really funny occurrence and a common joke, it's actually pretty detrimental to our community because we're supposed to be able to trust each other," Yip said.

Theft of calculators is so normalized at GDS that, last year, the library staff changed the sign next to the port from "Don't take someone else's calculator" to "Leave your calculator here at your own risk."

The normalization of calculator theft speaks volumes about the culture at GDS. By failing to take any clear steps towards a solution, like introducing clear punishments, the administration is allowing an environment of distrust to form among the student body.

Along with the negative effects on student culture, calculator theft also creates a financial burden for students—the cost of a TI-84 calculator is upwards of 100 dollars. "I didn't want to buy another 150-dollar calculator," Yip said, "and it was just really frustrating to have to go through that multiple times."

Junior Joey Hilzenrath's

calculator was also stolen earlier this school year. Hilzenrath put their calculator in the library to charge quickly before their physics test. "I leave that there for like maybe half an hour, thinking, 'Oh, it's half an hour, it'll be fine.' And then it's gone. So I send out an email, and I'm trying to be as nice as possible because people don't respond well to being accused of things," Hilzenrath said.

A few days later, a student returned the calculator to Hilzenrath's desk while they had their back turned in class. But the experience was still irritating for Hilzenrath, as it is for so many others. "I don't think this person's a bad person," Hilzenrath said. "But if I didn't get it back, I would definitely hold a grudge against whoever it was."

One possible solution to calculator theft is increasing the accessibility of individual chargers for students as an alternative to the unreliable spot. "I have been trying—I have been very vocal about this—to get the Hop Shop to sell chargers," Campbell said. "Those chargers don't cost that much. They're, I don't know, four, six bucks."

I like this option as part of the solution. However, the student body also needs to

change how seriously we approach this issue. In students' all-school emails about calculator theft, I often notice phrases like "It's okay if you had a test or quiz, just please give it back," or "I will buy you something from the Hop Shop or vending machines if you return it to me." In fact, I added these terms to my all-school email, hoping that my kind words would incentivize the thief to return my calculator—they did not. While these phrases may seem like the polite way to address your peers, understanding tones downplay the gravity of the situation and take the responsibility off the thieves' shoulders, making the issue seem even less serious.

GDS prides itself on being a place where you can leave your backpack lying in the Forum or computer charging at the tech desk without worry. Calculator theft puts that culture at risk.

I leave you with one final plea: If you are guilty of stealing a calculator, return it to the correct owner or the charging port. It is your responsibility to care for your own calculator. If you lose a calculator, deal with the repercussions yourself and buy a new one.

## The Case for Community Beyond the Classroom

BY SHIRA WENTHE

As I walked into the Black Box theater to watch the opening night of Fata Morgana's 2026 winter showcase, I was stunned. Unlike the jam-packed crowd I've seen at past performances, there were a handful of people in attendance, only four of them students. Seeing this reminded me of the recent sports games, club meetings and other school activities where I often see few students attending.

Sophomore Nikki Smallwood, who danced in Fata both semesters her freshman year,

also noticed the low turnout at this year's performances. Like at a sports game, a small crowd can make dancers feel less supported and not perform at their best. "A lot of it," Smallwood said about the performances, "is the dancers building off of the audience's energy. So I think it really is important for there to be a big, active audience every night."

Students should show up to events and support fellow students in various spaces, including performances like Fata. In recent years, I have seen event attendance dwindle. Since the 2023-2024 school year, my

freshman year, club participation has seemed more sparse, especially among underclassmen.

My friends and I often recall our freshman year and how we avidly put our names down for as many clubs as we could at the club fair. After signing up, we consistently attended meetings.

During my freshman orientation, upperclassmen encouraged us to sign up for as many clubs as possible. Those juniors and seniors made it feel like club participation was an essential part of GDS culture. Back then, my biggest problem

with clubs was deciding where to go if two clubs were meeting at once. Now, when I look into any club meeting, I rarely see underclassmen, and, if I do, it's the same few attending several meetings.

Freshman Rohan Le attends club meetings frequently, but he said that many freshmen do not. Le said he thinks underclassmen worry about their classmates perceiving them negatively, and he thinks his classmates are sometimes nervous to try new things. "It's kind of hard to convince some of my friends to go because they feel like it's kind of weird," he said.

Le said his classmates sometimes feel like they will be seen as "nerdy" if they attend clubs, especially political clubs like Student Voices or the Student Action Committees.

Freshman Marlowe Mulvihill, co-head of the Hoppers Rock club, said she is interested in going to other club meetings but often does not end up attending because of schedule conflicts. "I'll be doing work or meeting with a teacher," Mulvihill said.

During the day of deliberation this school year—a special programming day for political discourse—there were very few seniors in attendance. Upperclassmen attendance that day was a lot different from the community engagement I would have expected coming out of freshman orientation.

Upperclassmen model GDS' culture for underclassmen. If new students come

into the high school and are exposed to an anti-participatory attitude, they could be deterred from getting involved in the variety of activities that define our school.

Even if it takes some time away from your studies or friends, attending events outside the classroom will allow you to meet people who aren't in your grade or a person whom you wouldn't usually talk to. By simply chatting with them, you gain new perspectives on navigating high school, and you hear about interests and backgrounds you haven't encountered before.

Without community, we risk the things that make GDS unique, like each grade level avidly competing with each other on First Friday, student performances at Monday Meeting and sports team psyches before competitions. GDS could become a school solely characterized by rigorous academics and a unique founding rather than one where students truly thrive.

My hope is that the next time I see Fata perform, there will be cheering crowds of students in the audience every night. The next time I walk into a club meeting, I hope to see faces from all four grades. And I hope that younger grades will begin to attend meetings they are interested in without fear of judgment from their peers so that we continue to foster a school environment where people are invested in the community.

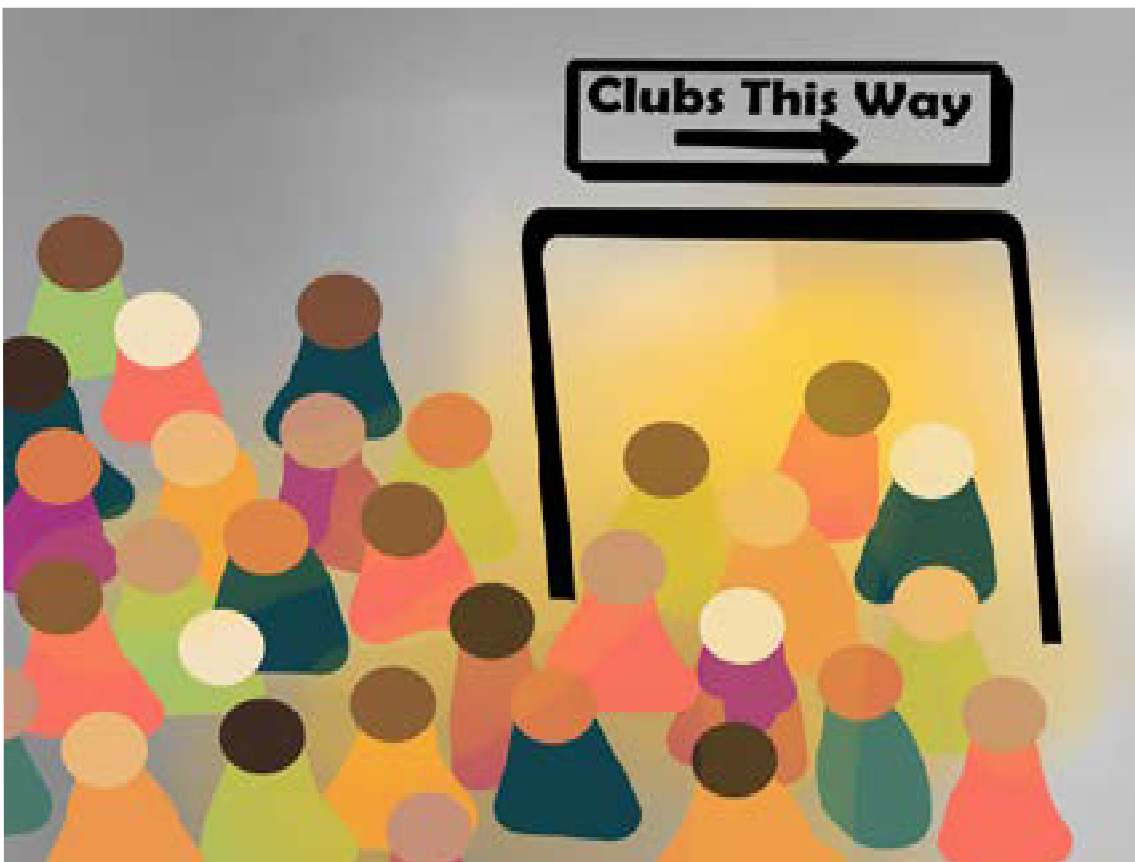


Illustration by Ariane Alfandari '29.

# SPORTS

## Men's Lacrosse Beats Maret in Senior Night Thriller

BY TERESA DEAN

The score was 5-5 in sudden-death overtime of the men's lacrosse team's senior night. Junior William Cromer passed the ball to junior Ashwin Pathiyal, who lost his defender as he sent the ball across the field to junior Ryan Granowitter.

Granowitter ran through two Maret defenders and ripped the ball to the bottom left corner of the goal. The Maret goalie dove to the ball, but it was too late. The GDS players immediately cleared the bench, and Granowitter and his teammates dove into a pile, cheering and throwing sticks in the air.

The men's varsity lacrosse team beat Maret on Tuesday, April 28. The

team, which went into the game with a record of 2-6, celebrated their three seniors, Benji Gold, Julian Lucas and Ben Kanter.

Gold faced off against a Maret player to open the game, and after a long battle for the ball, GDS gained possession in the first play.

Maret threw a long pass to a player in the midfield, but Cromer ran up behind the player and stole the ball to give GDS possession. Cromer scored a shot down the middle, and with 4:30 left in the first quarter, GDS took the lead 1-0. (Cromer and Granowitter are sports writers for the *Bit*.)

Maret started the second quarter with possession, and with 9:17 left in the second quarter, a Maret player

ran around the goal to score, tying the game 1-1.

Maret gained possession to start the second half, but junior Peter McManus recovered the ball. Junior Nathan Tureck passed the ball to junior Ahren Sidhu, who cut in for a quick goal, putting GDS up 2-1 with 11:16 on the clock.

Maret found a cutter for a short goal, tying the game. With 5:23 left in the quarter, Maret recovered a bounce ball for a goal, taking their first lead, 3-2.

Lucas recovered a loose ball and passed it across the field to Sidhu, who scored a quick goal to tie the game at 3 with 4:36 left in the quarter. The next play, junior Tristan Souchaud caused a

turnover and passed to Sidhu for Sidhu's third goal of the quarter.

"As soon as I got the ball, I just knew no one on the field could guard me," Sidhu said.

Gold won the faceoff after a timeout, and Granowitter scored a goal against tough defense to put GDS up 5-3 with 2:36 left in the quarter.

To start the fourth quarter, a Maret player scored while falling through contact to close the gap to 5-4. With 3:10 on the clock, Maret scored a long goal to tie the game.

"I was mad at myself," Kanter said of his reaction to the goal. "But [I] just [thought about] getting that goal out of my mind and just helping my team move forward."

Kanter saved two shots in the final two minutes, giving GDS possession. GDS players scrambled for one last goal but came up short, and the game moved into overtime.

Granowitter said Gold's final faceoff win, Pathiyal's assist and the rest of the team's hustle contributed to his game-winning shot. "I know that's a shot that I've practiced over and over," he said. "It really just shows that practice pays off." As Granowitter praised his teammates, GDS players interrupted the interview to pour water on Granowitter and celebrate with him.

Gold said he was too scared to watch Granowitter's game-winner and

began celebrating when he saw his teammates running across the field. "To come out this year and play the best lacrosse we've ever played feels really good," Gold said. "To do it with my brothers also feels really good."

"My first year [on the team], we had 12 kids," Kanter said. "Now we have a full team, and we're getting hype winning [Mid-Atlantic Athletic Conference] games in overtime. It doesn't get any better than that."

Lucas cited the team's energetic warmup for their performance in the game. Lucas said he did not take lacrosse very seriously when he began playing in eighth grade. "But I stuck with it, and these guys are super funny in practice and in school, and it's just a great group of people to be around," Lucas said.

Assistant coach Tom Oberdorfer said senior night may have been Lucas' best game of his career. "He just played really smart," Oberdorfer said.

Sidhu has played with the seniors since he was in seventh grade. "It's awesome to watch how they grew," he said. "They're fantastic players now and great leaders; I'm going to miss them next year, but their legacy won't be forgotten."



The men's lacrosse team celebrated their win on senior night. Photo by Sabine Hletko Wood '26.

# ARTS

## Theater Department Enlists Intimacy Coordinator for Musical

BY KAI PARK

Juniors Sean Keeley and Natalie Ogden stood onstage in undergarments after fellow cast members removed their outerwear. The undressing was part of the choreography for "Time Warp," one of the songs in *The Rocky Horror Show*, this year's spring musical.

Richard O'Brien's 1973 sci-fi musical, *Rocky Horror*, features heterosexual and queer sex scenes, which were uncommon in popular plays of the '70s. The theater department's production of the show ran from April 23 to April 26.

On April 25, senior and stage manager Lina Colla emailed parents of kids in the show and told them that the department had partnered with Kristina Friedgen, a theater director with experience as an intimacy coordinator. According to the email, Friedgen helped cast members with "physical proximity, partner interactions, or any staged touch."

Acting teacher Maria Watson told the *Bit* that the theater department collectively decided to hire an intimacy coordinator for the show. Technical director Christian Sullivan, a friend of Friedgen's, connected Friedgen and Performing Arts Department Chair Christian Stallworth.

Friedgen told the *Bit* that she began working with the cast of *Rocky Horror* two weeks before

the show's opening. She gave a presentation on intimacy coordination to the cast, led a workshop on communication and helped choreograph scenes in which cast members came in close contact with each other. She said she choreographed "who was going to touch what" and "who was going to be responsible for what" for the scene in which servants removed Keeley's and Ogden's outer clothes. The two juniors played a newly engaged couple.

"Once you've been rehearsing for a long time," Keeley said, "nothing's really uncomfortable anymore."

Watson said the theater department hired an intimacy coordinator for the 2021 production of *Spring Awakening* and for at least two other productions within the last decade. Watson said she always teaches cast members how to properly act in intimate scenes, regardless of the presence of an intimacy coordinator.

"It's a lot about facilitating communication," Friedgen said about intimacy coordination, "and making sure that actors know that they are in control of their bodies and have the right to exercise consent."

According to Sullivan, dance and acting teacher Maria Watson and theater director János Szász chose to modify a scene at the top of the second act to make it less sexual. Due to licensing issues, they could not edit the script.

They did, however, alter stage directions.

Szász declined an interview for this story.

At the top of the second act, a mad scientist tricks Janet into having sex with him by disguising himself as Brad; he then does the same to Brad by disguising himself as Janet. In many productions of the show, the mad scientist visibly has sex with Janet and then Brad. Szász and Watson instead staged a scene in which Brad, Janet and the scientist read their lines of scripts and ensemble actors mimicked sexual motions in silhouette.

"Originally, there were condom props," sophomore Stella Kaplan, who was on the props crew, said, referring to the sex scene at the top of the second act. "Those were cut out because [Szász and Watson] changed that scene a lot to make it more appropriate," Kaplan said.

"My only concern with the show," science teacher Polly Martin, who watched the show, said, referring to the sex scene at the top of the second act, "is that there is a non-consensual aspect there."

Colla copied Assistant Head for Equity and Inclusion Marlo Thomas and High School Principal Chris Levy in her April 25 email. Colla said she copied the two administrators to show that school leadership supported the theater department's decision

to bring on Friedgen. According to Colla, Thomas and Levy were not directly involved in recruiting Friedgen.

According to Colla, Thomas suggested that the theater department recommend the show for students older than 14, advice the department accepted. Thomas asked that the figure in the show's poster have longer shorts. Performing arts assistant Abigail Lund said the department then lengthened the figure's shorts.

Colla's early September announcement of *Rocky Horror* as the spring musical came as a surprise to senior Ethan Farber because of the musical's sexual content. "[*Rocky Horror*] is not a show that's traditionally put on by high schools,"

Farber, who played the mad scientist in the show, said.

According to Colla, Szász wanted to put on *Rocky Horror* for the spring musical because he loved the musical's 1975 film adaptation, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

"A lot of our previous productions," Keeley said, "were from a mid 20th-century time period and projected an idealized '50s American lifestyle." Last year, the theater department put on *Bye-Bye Birdie*, which is set in 1958, for the spring musical. *Rocky Horror* is set in the '70s. "*Rocky Horror* is kind of taking that '50s American lifestyle and twisting it and making fun of it."



Juniors Sean Keeley and Natalie Ogden, as Brad Majors and Janet Weiss, respectively, sing in *Rocky Horror*. Photo by Kai Park '27.

# COMEDY

## Bit-Doms

BY ABBY FREEDMAN AND  
ANNABELLE GARLAND

Hacky 'sacking sweeps  
through the high school.  
*Get it in the MAC already!*



Prank day is here.  
*This school is too unserious. Thinking  
of transferring to Sidwell.*



Seniors compete for glory  
in Senior Assassin.  
*How many couples have  
broken up over this?*



High school wifi  
continues to leave students  
with inconsiste—  
*Hold on, let me try HopperGuest.*



Smell in Forum revived...  
*through students' choice in  
footwear. Keep your socks on!*

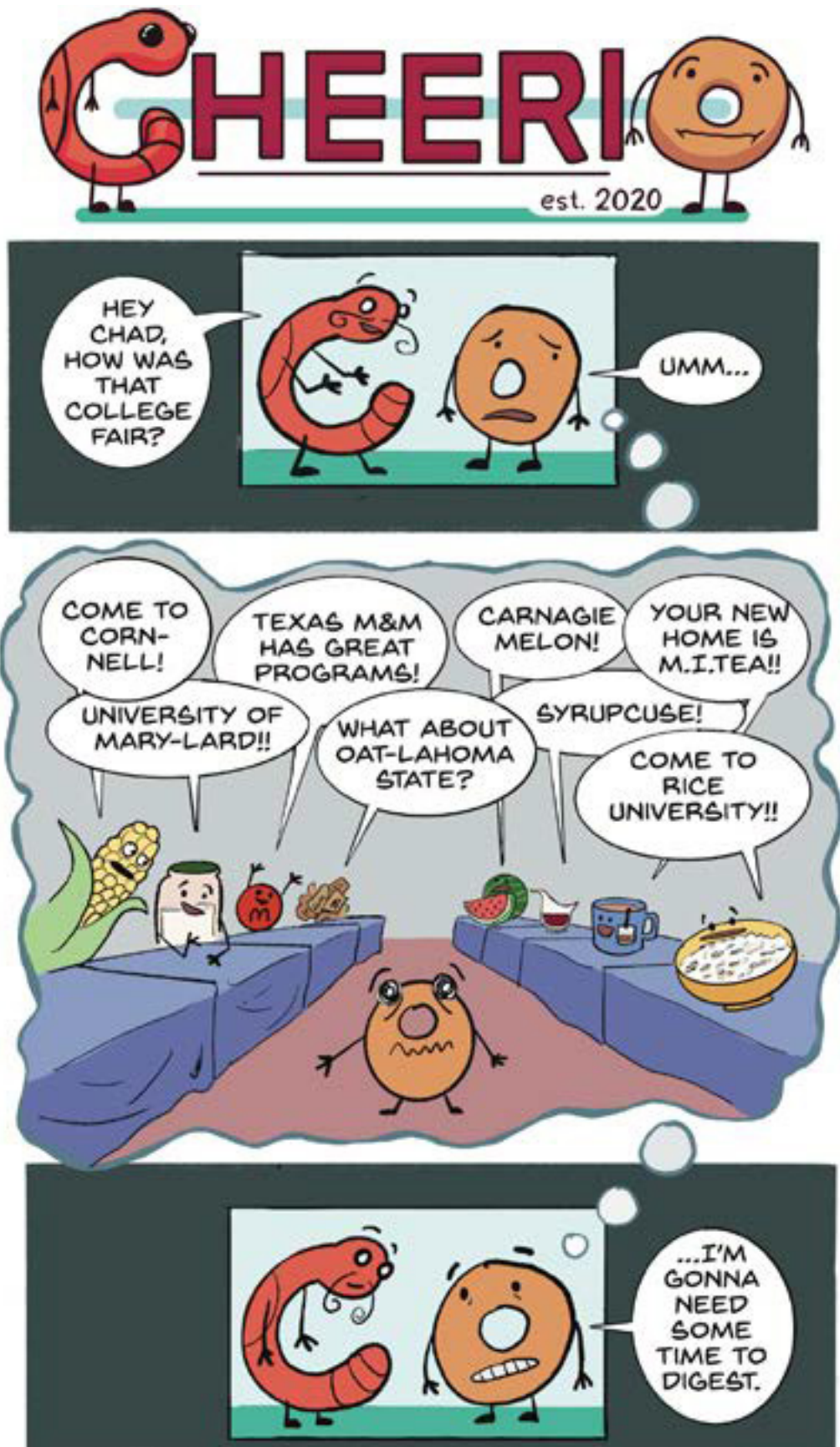


Russell enters his final  
two months at GDS.  
*We'll miss our Shaw-ty.*



## Chadwick's College Conundrum

BY ELLA SCHNEIDER



Julius Boxer-Cooper '22 created Chadwick the Cheerio.

# The Augur Bit

"A very auger bit will now be turned into your souls until your honesty is proved"

Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*

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