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Former Transgender Center case manager sues WashU, alleging retaliation after whistleblower report

SARA STRASSBERG
STAFF WRITER

Former WashU employee Jamie Reed sued the University on Nov. 3, alleging unlawful retaliation and harassment that forced her to resign after she publicly accused its transgender clinic of providing substandard care to minors and committing insurance fraud.

Reed, a former case manager at the now-defunct Washington University Pediatric Transgender Center at St. Louis Children's Hospital, filed the whistleblower lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. It includes three counts of retaliation under federal and Missouri whistleblower laws and one count of failure to provide required COBRA health insurance continuation notices.

She is seeking reinstatement or front pay as well as back pay, damages, statutory penalties, and attorneys' fees, and she has requested a jury trial. Both Associate Vice Chancellor for University Communications Kedra Tolson and Reed's attorney Michael Martinich-Sauter of James Otis Law Group did not respond to a request for comment by publication time. The allegations have not yet been tested in court.

The transgender center opened in 2017 through WashU's medical school, with one arm serving adults and the other, located at St. Louis Children's Hospital, serving patients under the age of 18. Today, the clinic only provides mental health support and education to minors due to the Missouri SAFE Act, which banned gender-affirming medical care for minors.

The center no longer operates as a single physical clinic and instead refers to a collection of specialists in endocrinology and psychology who provide "health care for transgender and non-binary people in a welcoming, affirming environment," according to its website.

Reed worked at the center from July 2018 until November 2022, when she transferred to the Division of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology. In February 2023, she submitted a sworn affidavit to then Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey and published an op-ed in The Free Press detailing what she called "morally and medically appalling" treatment at the clinic.

In the affidavit, she alleges that children were being routinely prescribed puberty blockers or hormone therapy without "appropriate or accurate" mental health assessments.

She said the center's providers "regularly refer minors for gender transition surgery," despite the University's public statements.

She also said the center started more than 600 children on medical transition between 2020 and 2022, mostly paid for by private insurance, and that, to her understanding, it also billed state and federal publicly funded insurance programs. Reed claims she personally witnessed staff report that doctors were entering incorrect treatment codes to get unnecessary procedures covered, and that staff were dismissed upon voicing discomfort with how they were told to code those bills.

Her allegations prompted a multi-agency investigation that became the catalyst for the Missouri SAFE Act. Separately, the results of an internal WashU review overseen by an independent committee were released in April 2023, which concluded that Reed's allegations were "unsubstantiated," though it also announced stricter policies on parental consent and surgical practices.

After the state ban passed, the clinic stopped providing transition treatments for minors in fall 2023. In July 2024, it officially ceased operations altogether.

The lawsuit goes further, alleging the center's physicians used inaccurate diagnosis codes to make treatment appear medically necessary so insurers, including Medicaid, would cover it. It acknowledges that Reed was never personally directed to submit a false claim.

According to the suit, Reed raised concerns internally for years before going to the attorney general. Her 2020-21 performance review fell below "Achieves Expectations" because of her "communication style," which she says meant copying the center's directors on emails about patient care. A verbal warning was issued in February 2022, which also delayed her ability to leave the center for nine months under University transfer policy. At a late-summer 2022 staff retreat, she and a colleague were told to "get on board or get out," according to the suit.

It also describes an incident in which a center physician allegedly blocked the doorway of a small office and shouted at Reed for more than ten minutes until she agreed not to file an adverse-event report about a patient who needed emergency surgical repair after bleeding.

After colleagues learned she was the whistleblower in February 2023, the suit says, her new department turned hostile. It alleges coworkers hung transgender pride flags and a banner of testimonials that ended at her cubicle, excluded her from vacation-coverage emails, and refused to cover her shifts. It also says she was removed from an OutMed event in November 2023 and that a campus barista refused to serve her. Faculty members, the suit adds, publicly attacked her credibility, calling her an "intake coordinator with no specialized training."

Reed resigned on April 1, 2024, citing a "very difficult and hostile work environment." She alleges the University then cut off her work computer access, ended her health coverage early, and denied her access to her alumni email address. She says she has since been unable to find work in her field and has been working as a lifeguard.

To prevail on her federal claim, Reed must meet a demanding standard: The Eighth Circuit, as the complaint itself notes, requires that retaliation be motivated "solely" by protected activity. WashU will likely contest that, as well as whether the alleged conduct meets the legal threshold for constructive discharge, which occurs when an employer deliberately creates working conditions so objectively intolerable that a reasonable person would feel compelled to quit. Reed filed more than two years after her resignation, so timeliness may also be an issue.

How students have navigated disability housing accommodations

FLANNERY POON
STAFF WRITER

Some WashU students have faced challenges while attempting to receive housing accommodations through Disability Resources, this past fall. This has come in the form of long wait times and miscommunication due to the high number of applications that are submitted over the summer and early in the school year.

When applying for housing, junior transfer student Ava Russell required a single to accommodate her disability. Yet in the summer before transferring for her sophomore year, she learned she'd been placed in one of the two doubles in a building full of singles.

"Disability [Resources] was basically like, 'Sorry, we can't do anything.' And I was like, 'Well, I have this disability. You can't bump someone out that doesn't have that?' And they were like, 'No, sorry, you're too late.' Even though the reason I didn't apply on time was because I got bad information in the first place," Russell said.

This slow response time was also an issue for another WashU student who requested anonymity due to privacy concerns. He said that he requested a single room on July 7, and Disability Resources denied his housing accommodation on Aug. 28, 10 days after he had already moved into a double room. He immediately applied for reconsideration and reached out to senior administrators in WashU's Division of Student Success who reached out to Disability Resources on his behalf.

"I don't think such a process would even need attention from the senior administrations because if it really involves them, then there's something really wrong [with the process]," he said.

With the help of these administrators, he moved into a new room on Sept. 21. His accommodation was approved by Disability Resources after his move on Sept. 23.

Russell said it took about a month and a half to get her disability approved, but she was told by the Office of Residential Life that nothing could be changed about her living situation until a spot opened up. Russell said when a room opened up on her floor, she reached out to the Residential Life again. She says if she hadn't been proactive about the situation, she would not have been able to change rooms.

"By the time he was moving out, [Residential Life] didn't even tell me there was a spot," Russell said. "I ended up reaching out to Disability Resources [and saying] 'This room is open on this floor where I can move in, can you please approve me so I can move in within the next 24 hours? And that's what ended up happening."

Chris Stone, director of Disability Resources, explained that when students submit a request to Disability Resources, they get an automated message that says the office will aim to get back to them in 10 to 15 business days. However, when such a large number of requests come in at the same time, the processing time slows down.

The anonymous student also said he experienced difficulties in meeting Disability Resources documentation requirements. He visited the Student Health Center, but was told that physicians can only advocate for preexisting conditions and cannot make any new diagnoses.

"There is one thing I would like to reflect from this process: Insufficient documentation doesn't mean the disability does not exist," he said.

He said the entire process made him feel dismissed and as if WashU didn't care about him.

"I actually started ... thinking of whether coming to this university is the right choice because I just simply don't even have the basic conditions of being able to sleep," he said.

According to Stone, the process of getting accommodations through Disability Resources is not meant to be restrictive. The office's purpose is simply to support students when they can determine that there is a disabling condition.

"I'm not challenging that you have a condition, but I'm generally needing that third-party information to verify and show us how it's been evaluated to reach the level of being disabling," Stone said.

While students are waiting, Stone encourages them to seek out other resources like Health Services or utilize the room change requests through the WashU Housing Portal.

"The best advice is don't just wait. Don't think the accommodation in and of itself is the only thing that's going to be supportive of you. Be looking into those other resources too, and what can you do to support yourself in the interim until that can be done," Stone said.

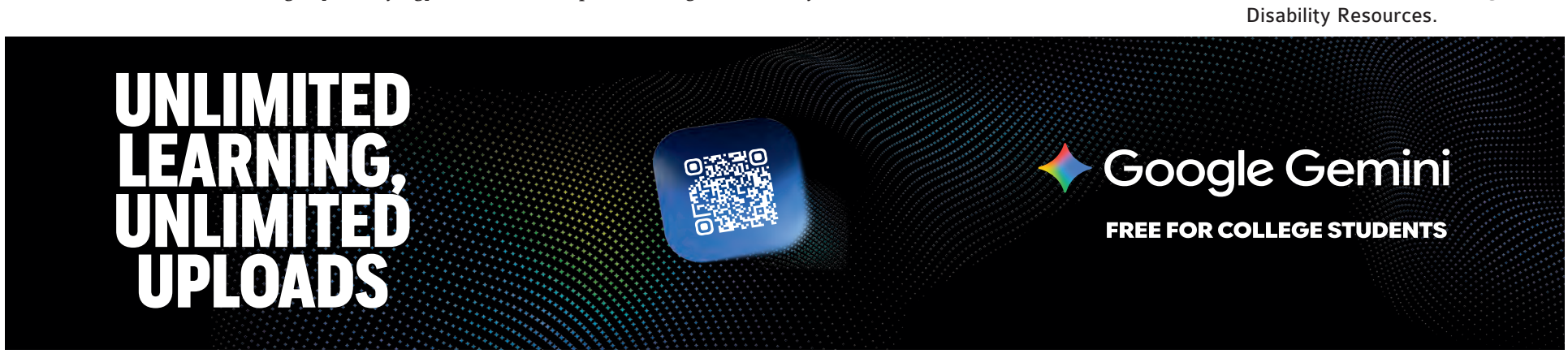
Russell said she understands that Disability Resources is working as fast as they can.

"The responses are as timely as they can be. I think Disability Resources have a stigma for never being fast," Russell said. "But the thing that from both schools I've noticed is you really have to keep checking in and sort of push, push, push, or otherwise your request will kind of go unnoticed."



ALYSSA WANG | CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Students face delays in getting their accomodations through Disability Resources.



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PLEASE RECYCLE

Predatory flyers posted in Women's Building and DUC

ELLA MESHOULAM
NEWS EDITOR

On Wednesday, Oct. 21, an unidentified individual posted flyers throughout the Ann W. Olin Women's Building and the Danforth University Center. The flyers read, "I'm Sig, 45. I own a couple of businesses. I'm looking to meet an adult woman (18+) for a dating arrangement. … I provide financial support and pay for all outings."

This is not the first time that non-WashU individuals have targeted young women on the WashU campus. Last November, a man was charged on 14 felony counts after filming women in the John M. Olin Library bathrooms.

Angela Coonce, chief of the WashU Police Department (WUPD), stated that the police department is currently investigating the matter and advised students not to contact the individual. Additionally, she encouraged students to notify WUPD if they found any similar flyers.

"For safety reasons, we also advise community members not to contact this individual or anyone they do not know who is offering similar arrangements," Coonce wrote in an email to Student Life. "The safety and security of our campus community is always our top priority."

Senior Natalie Dingman, the president of the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity (APO), explained that she found a flyer posted on bulletin boards outside of the APO suite located on the third floor of the Women's Building as well as multiple on the second floor. When she entered the suite at 4 p.m., the flyer wasn't posted; two hours later, an APO member noticed the flyer on their billboard. She expressed that it made her and many of the other members uncomfortable.

"There was a feeling of it being not only inappropriate, but it also just made us feel uncomfortable that somebody was … basically enlisting a sugar baby on our campus," Dingman said.

Following the discovery, she made sure to take down the other flyers posted throughout the building. That same evening, she informed APO's faculty advisor, Adam Brok, coordinator for service and immersive experiences, about the flyers. He told her that he would follow up on the incident through the proper channels. When she followed up with him two weeks later, he was unable to share any further updates.

Dingman said that this event lost her trust that the campus is a protected place. She was upset that it seemed there were no active precautions or measures that could be taken to protect the community.

"That trust felt violated in the sense of like somebody who was obviously not a part of the campus community was able to come onto campus, come into our building that was specifically for social and club activities, and post what I would consider to be a predatory listing," Dingman said. "You would like to think that when these things happen, the campus has systems in place to kind of reinstate that trust."

Although WUPD has access to building entrance information through card swipe data and campus cameras, she thought it may be harder to track down the individual during the day when the campus is busier and swipe access is not needed to enter University buildings.

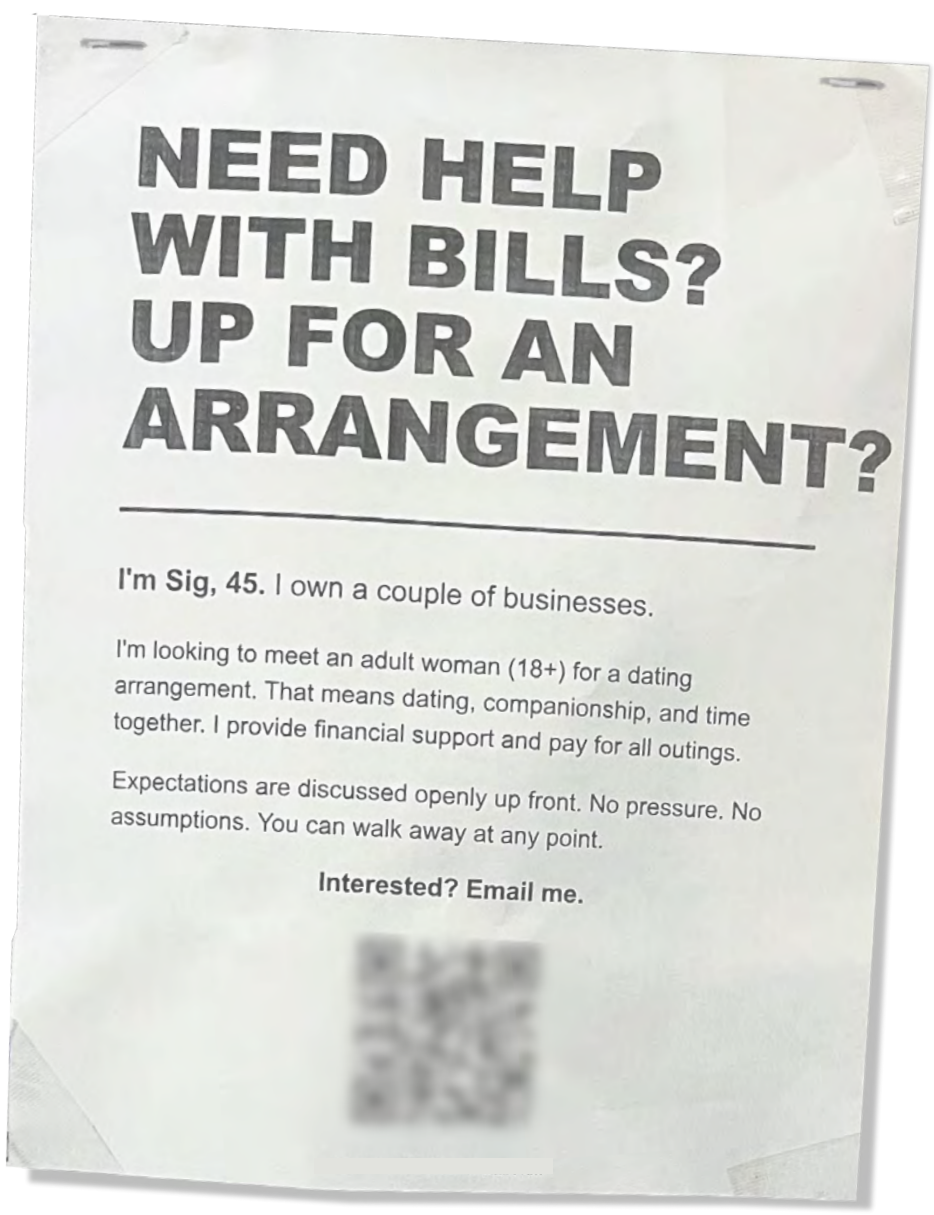
She does not see these events as being WashU-specific, though, but rather a broader trend of the ways in which young women are often targeted. She highlighted that the individual's choice to place the posters on a college campus rather than another public location was yet another example of younger women being targeted.

"So I don't think it's necessarily anything specific about WashU or WashU's campus, or about our security or lack thereof?" Dingman said. "I think it's more of just a fact, an unfortunate fact of being a young woman in this world."

Moving forward, Dingman expressed hope that the individual would be found and that the University could find ways to assure students of their commitment to creating a safe campus community.

"Some sort of reassurance to the student body that … we should be able to walk around our campus and not feel like we're going to get preyed on by creepy old men," Dingman said. "I think that's a pretty basic ask."

Both Brok and Zachary Littrell, the assistant director for sorority and fraternity life, were contacted for comment as advisors of many of the groups within the Women's Building. Neither responded.



ELIZABETH STUMP | SENIOR STAFF WRITER

The flyers solicited young adult women to email the author for a dating relationship.



KEVIN KAN



SCENE

When men really are the problem: Cast n' Crew spooks with 'Dracula: A Feminist Revenge Fantasy, Really'

MIMI WOOD
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Featuring badass women, cowboy hats, and men in distress, the Cast n' Crew performance of "Dracula: A Feminist Revenge Fantasy, Really" sold out three shows last weekend at the Village Black Box theater. With this bloody and heartfelt play, Cast n' Crew dazzles audiences once again with their completely student-run shows.

In this adaptation, playwright Kate Hamill centers the sidelined women of the original classic. "Dracula: A Feminist Revenge Fantasy, Really" focuses on the friendship among three women: a genderbent Dr. Van Helsing (Mina Farrow Prater), a no-nonsense and know-it-all vampire hunter; Lucy Westerna (Evelyn Halbach), a vivacious, soon-to-be-wed woman trapped in Victorian norms; and Mina Harker (Amelia Kaye), a settled lady and wife who needs to break away from her upbringing when chaos erupts.

On opening night, Nov. 5, the Village Black Box teemed with cellophane doors, daunting wooden flats, crew members with headsets, and cast members braiding hair while drawing on bite marks for a 7:30 p.m. show, all of which stemmed from Google Sheets filled out in August.

As students returned from summer break, senior Ally Wilmot, the show's director, spent her first weeks back envisioning and casting the play. A member of Cast n' Crew since her first year, this play marks her seventh show with the club. Previously, she worked in the costume department, helped stage manage, and even acted onstage herself.

"It's super cool to be on the other side of every role I've ever had," Wilmot said. "Having these other roles gives me a perspective into each corner of the process."

Cast n' Crew, which had a 34-person team for this show, worked for weeks on end in various classrooms to rehearse. Because they have to share the Black Box with other student theater groups, Cast n' Crew wrangled with set design, prop making, and acting outside of the theater, mostly in Seigle Hall. Technical Director and first-year PhD student Teija Suhas helped in organizing the numerous production teams by coordinating budgets, building sets, and fitting an 8-by-8 wooden background through a 7-foot-wide Village door.

"Whenever you watch a production, you can tell that everyone on and off stage had a lot of fun making it," Suhas said.

In this play, Dracula (Esteban Castaneda), the titular villain, remains a vampire. Yet his role shifts and serves to critique possessive, toxic masculinity and the power of men in both the 18th century and today.

"The acting is amazing," Suhas said. "There's misogyny; these are the sweetest men alive saying the most vile things."

These productions offer a peer-to-peer, neutral environment where actors and techies become one: Everyone builds the sets, and actors collaborate to pick apart these characters. From workshops exploring their Halloween costumes, comfort foods, and backstories before the play's events, Cast n' Crew sits with these stories. First-year Evelyn Halbach as Lucy Westerna dramatically turns from a damsel to a sadistic vampire sister-wife.

"I love to play a villain … and get to embody that creepy physicality," Halbach said. "I want to provide the audience with a sense of uncanny valley."

From karaoke nights to a murder mystery party, the camaraderie Cast n' Crew cultivated showed on stage. After spending hours together preparing, the club celebrated opening night with a group dinner at Raising Cane's. Though the characters split divisively between vampires and hunters, the students themselves built a tight-knit community through their shared love for theater.

"The amount of connection we have with each other as a cast is really great," Halbach said. "I feel like I've found my people with Cast n' Crew."

Moving into their winter cabaret and spring musical "Alice By Heart," Cast n' Crew will welcome a new set of WashU performers mixed with fresh and returning faces. As the cast transitions away from Victorian wives and vampiric parasites to snowy showcases, "Dracula's" success and the friendships forged will linger through the Village and Seigle hallways.

"It's a pleasure to work with people who are so talented and willing to lean into the weird," Wilmot said of the cast.







CHARLOTTE BALLA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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WashU Dance Theatre's 'right now.' shows us how to live in the present









PHOTOS COURTESY OF KELLY PRATT KRIEDRICH

LAUREN CIUDAD
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The fall Washington University Dance Theatre (WUDT) production "right now." teaches the audience what it is to live and move in the moment. Under the artistic direction of David Marchant and choreographed by new Performing Arts Department (PAD) faculty member Liz Stillerman Anderson, MFA student Liz Lloyd, alumna Renée Austin, guest choreographer Shura Baryshnikov, and Lecturer in Dance Elinor Harrison, the pieces were all put together in collaboration with their dancers.

"Play it Again," the second piece in the program, featured four dancers, moving and improvising to music playing from a record player on stage. A dancer approached and lifted the needle onto the record, and then the performance really commenced. The show's unique lighting consisted of a little box of light that dancers slid and spun in and out freely. Junior Sydney Michelle Campusano, one of the four dancers featured in the piece, only began her dance journey at age 16 through her school's winter guard. Now a more experienced dancer after two pieces with WUDT, she shared one of the most special parts of adding dance to her busy school schedule.

"You're just doing what feels right for you and moving, and that's what creates a beautiful piece because everybody has their own 'right now,'" she said.

For Campusano, dance is an integral part of her academic and personal development.

"It's like an academic release," she said about including dance in a rigorous academic schedule, adding that it "really kept me balanced."

Campusano partly attributed the show's success to Harrison, who, besides choreographing a piece for WUDT, is also a faculty affiliate in the Philosophy-Neuroscience-Psychology (PNP) department and studies dance and the brain. Harrison's piece, "I got it from my Mother," defies the challenges of the residency model the department uses, in which each choreographer has about a week to fully put each dance together. With such a short time to assemble the choreography, the dancers "collaboratively generate movement with their choreographers," Harrison said.

The dance was inspired by the music selection Harrison discovered, filled with quirky sounds, bells, and rhythms. Harrison came into rehearsals with general structures that allowed dancers to latch onto them really efficiently, creating a story about motherhood, lineage, and being a woman.

"I want it to be a big girl power dance by the end … a piece about women supporting women, and that bond and how we all hold each other up," Harrison said.

The last piece, "A Dance For Eleven," featured a large group of dancers working off what felt natural to their bodies, according to Campusano. Under the direction of Baryshnikov, the dancers expanded on their own improvisational movement and responded to those around them. Campusano raved about the experience of working with Baryshnikov.

"To her, none of us are experts or beginners," Campusano said. "Everyone's just a dancer right now, and you need to dance!"

The unique experiences of these dancers are exactly what excites Harrison about working on WUDT. For many years, she has seen her students graduate and explore different careers. Harrison is positive that the foundation they receive as dancers allows them to trust themselves and listen to themselves, which is imperative for every line of work. She embraces and admires the individuality of the dancers in WUDT, as well as the paths they forge for themselves.

"Our pieces only become richer because of people's varied experiences. We don't have cookie-cutter dancers here because everyone is coming from such varied places, and that is such a beautiful thing," she said.

If not just a love letter to its dancers, the entire program is certainly an ode to the craft and what it can teach us about living in the moment, which Harrison hopes the audience will find on stage.

"We hope that you can see something of yourself in all of the dancing on stage, no matter where you're coming from," Harrison said.

WashU Sam Fox School

MDes for HCI and Emerging Technology

Lunch & Learn

Wednesday, December 2

12:00 p.m. –1:00 p.m.
Kuehner Court, Weil Hall

Curious about where a Master of Design can take you? Join Assistant Professors Luiz Ludwig and Bei Hu for an inspiring look at MDes research in action—plus a free lunch.

RSVP

MDes

FORUM

About our processes

FORUM EDITORIAL STAFF

As the editors of Forum, Student Life's opinion section, we thought it would be beneficial for us to explain who we are, what we do, and how our processes work. Broadly speaking, Forum strives to publish a wide range of opinions that reflect the intellectual diversity of the WashU community. From takes on campus news to pop culture to local elections, we hope to be a space where opinions in the WashU community are argued in clear and ethically spirited ways. Articles published in the Forum section in no way represent official stances of Student Life.

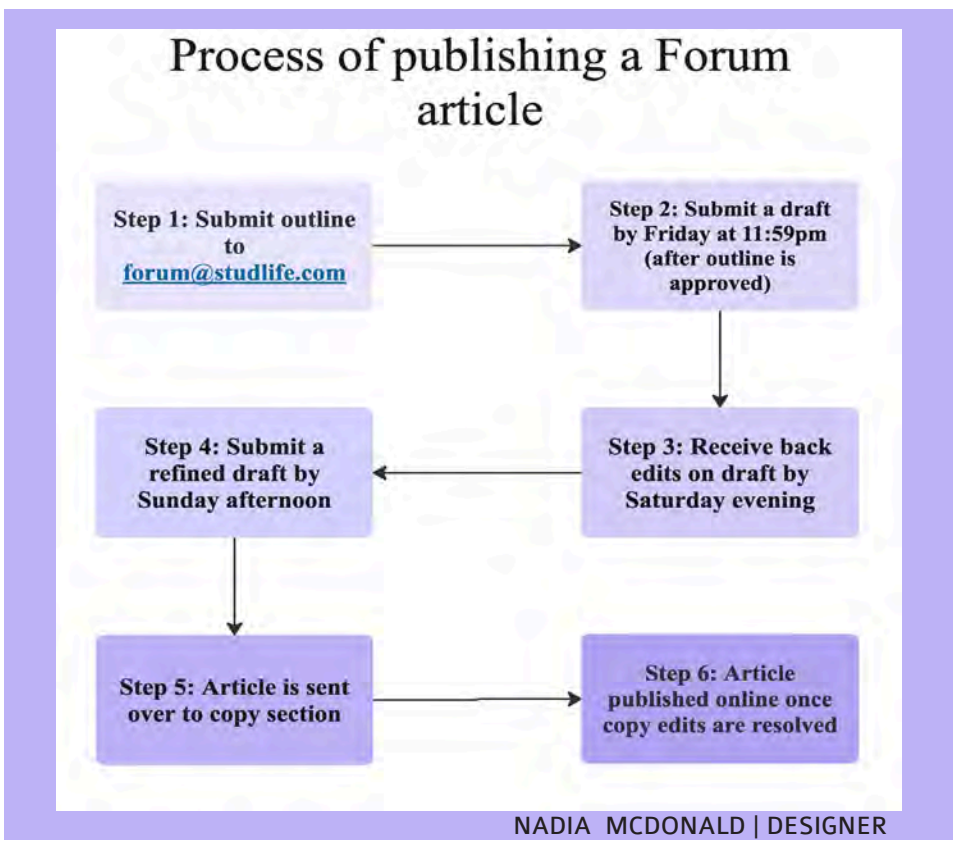
The Forum section features opinion articles written by the Forum section editors, staff, and contributing writers, as well as opinion submissions by members of the WashU community. Our section meetings are at 7 p.m. on Mondays in the Student Life office, which is located on the third floor of the Danforth University Center. Anyone is welcome to attend these meetings to work through article ideas, help others with their arguments, speak with our editors, or just listen to the group discussion.

If you are on campus and are thinking of submitting an opinion, consider stopping by in person — working out ideas and drafts is always easier when we meet writers face-to-face. To get a general idea of an opinion piece's structure, read a few recent pieces on our website before you begin drafting. Sometimes we can transform essays from class into op-eds, but be mindful that these often have fundamentally different purposes and structures. We often work through exercises at our meetings that can help if you feel uncertain about how to approach writing a piece.

Our editorial team does line and structural edits in the form of comments and suggestions for all content to be published in Forum. This includes, but is not limited to, grammatical corrections, wording adjustments, ideas on structural flow ideas, and potential counterarguments. Articles may require multiple rounds of edits before publication to ensure that they are in line with Student Life standards in terms of article structure, accessibility, and quality.

We accept submissions that have clear arguments, pertain to the WashU community, and are written by people connected to the University in some way. Writers should determine whether Student Life is the appropriate platform for their argument. Some of the opinions we publish are popular, and some are not. We believe that disagreements are opportunities for growth and greater mutual understanding. That being said, we do not accept opinion submissions that we judge to cause genuine harm or are premised on unquestionably inflammatory standpoints. We have absolute discretion over what may or may not be published.

The "Understanding our content" section of the Student Life website further explains the opinion submission process. If you have any questions about our processes, please feel free to email us at forum@studlife.com or attend one of our meetings.



NADIA MCDONALD | DESIGNER

CAPTION CONTEST

11/12 WINNERS



DALE SON | STAFF ILLUSTRATOR

First Place:
The photos my friends take of my when I ask for a "professional headshot"
- Sean Henry, Current WashU Student

Second Place:
Taking photos of your short friends can be tricky.
- Jason Merkel, Casual StudLife Reader

Third Place:
My LinkedIn photo if I get one more rejection I swear.
Leo Penny, Current WashU Student

Caption this!
Enter this week's contest

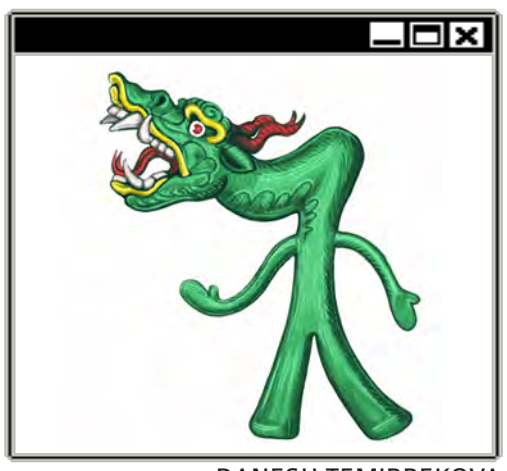


ALIANA THOMPSON | STAFF ILLUSTRATOR

Scan the QR code to enter your submission by noon on 11/17.

PUZZLE Mania

Ethical AI



DANESH TEMIRBEKOVA | STAFF ILLUSTRATOR

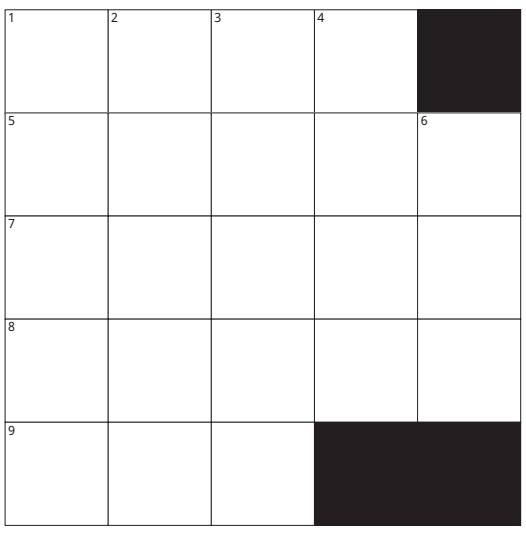
Gumby with dragon head.

- Shelby Schroder, WashU Faculty/Staff

The Hedgehog — Vinisha Tripathi

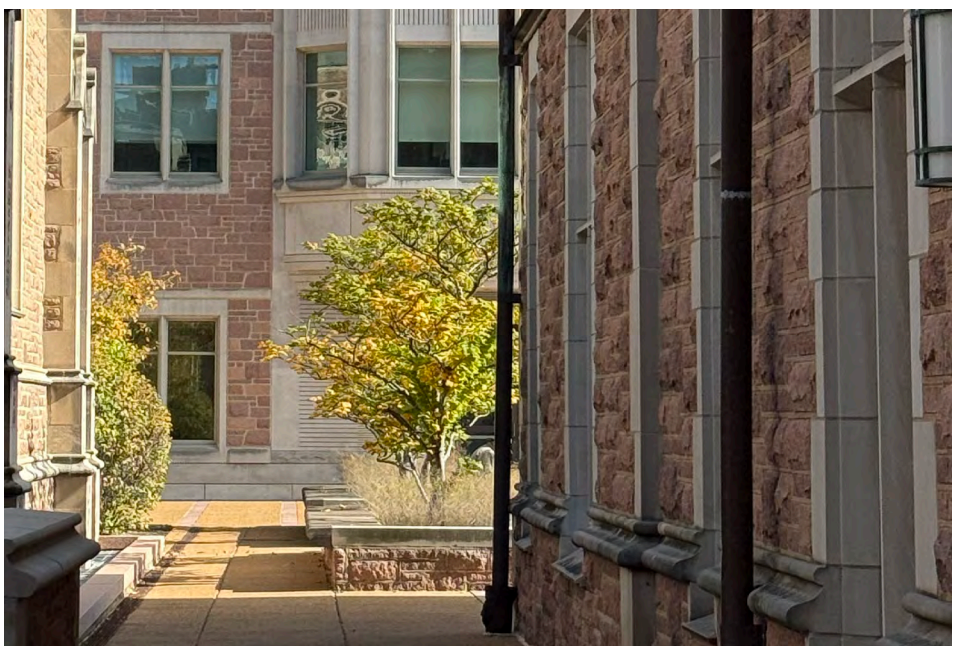
ACROSS
1 Drove over the limit
5 Largest members of the dolphin family
7 Nary a soul
8 Narrow water passage
9 Tech for making "movie magic"

DOWN
1 Hedgehog enemy of Eggman
2 Fork's pointy part
3 Common gut bacteria
4 Great ___
6 Song list



Where in WashU?

Can you recognize where this building is on campus?



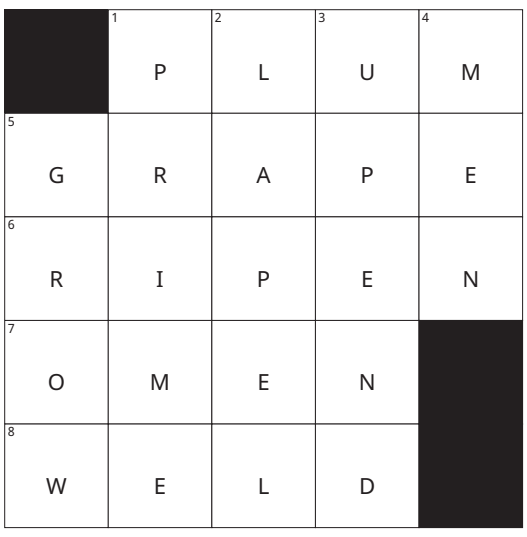
ELIZA STULMAN | SPORTS EDITOR

Last week's answer: Wilson Hall Courtyard

Purple Harvest — Vinisha Tripathi

ACROSS
1 Clue's Professor ___
5 Wine ingredient
6 Mature, as a fruit
7 Sign of the future
8 Fuse

DOWN
1 Logan Paul's drink brand
2 Jacket flap
3 Flip over
4 "Of Mice and ___"
5 Get taller



For future reference, we should set aside our political apathy and go vote

LEILANI BILLUPS
DION HINES
FORUM EDITOR
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This past midterm election was one that made history. There were several "first" titles distributed among race winners, such as Georgia electing the first Black female governor in U.S. history and Minnesota electing the first Indigenous senator.

While young voters helped Democrats win big across the country, only 11% of electorate voters were aged 18-29. In St. Louis County, 61% of registered voters showed up to the polls during midterms. Only 10% of those voters were aged 18-29. While this statistic could be attributed to the distribution of voters' ages, which is information that is not public online, it is alarming that voter turnout among our age group has dropped by roughly 16% since the 2022 midterm elections. Our political apathy does not serve us, but instead creates an environment where lawmakers can attempt to take advantage and deprive us of basic rights.

Voting is a way for you to advocate for yourself and others in your community. Missouri politicians have a tendency to not play fair, and this year's midterm ballot was a testament to that fact. Missouri voters had already chosen in 2024 to keep abortions protected under state law before Missouri Republicans proposed this cycle's Amendment 3. Missouri Secretary of State Denny Hoskins and other Republicans tried to enforce their red-leaning gerrymandered map, listed as Proposition A on the midterm ballot, three times. Exercising your right to vote is a powerful way to take a stance against politicians that refuse to listen to their constituents.

Oftentimes young people take a stance of apathy toward voting, declaring that "their vote means nothing," but people tend to underestimate the power of a single vote. It's not uncommon for a candidate to win an election by only a handful of votes. As it pertains to this year's midterm, in Mississippi's race for senator, Scott Colom (D) won by only 5,000 votes. A similarly close race is happening in Alaska. In North Carolina's 5th district, Chuck Hubbard (D) beat the incumbent Rep. Virginia Foxx (R) by less than 100 votes. In such slim races, your vote indeed carries significant weight.

Amendment 3 in Missouri is a recent example of one of these close calls in terms of legislation. We must reckon with the fact that every missed vote meant that another vote in favor of Amendment 3 was left uncontested. Even in temporary residency, the elected officials in charge of where we call home make decisions that can change the trajectory of our lives. And even if these issues don't seem to affect you currently, voting is not an individualistic practice — the collective good is what's at stake.

Aside from apathy or hesitance about our system, privilege can also be a stumbling block when it comes to voting. It is no secret that students at WashU can come from privileged backgrounds, with around 22% of students from the top 1%. This privilege can downplay the sense of urgency when it comes to voting. But this is where basic empathy comes into play. Though there may be some issues that don't affect you, those same issues affect thousands of other people in the state alone.

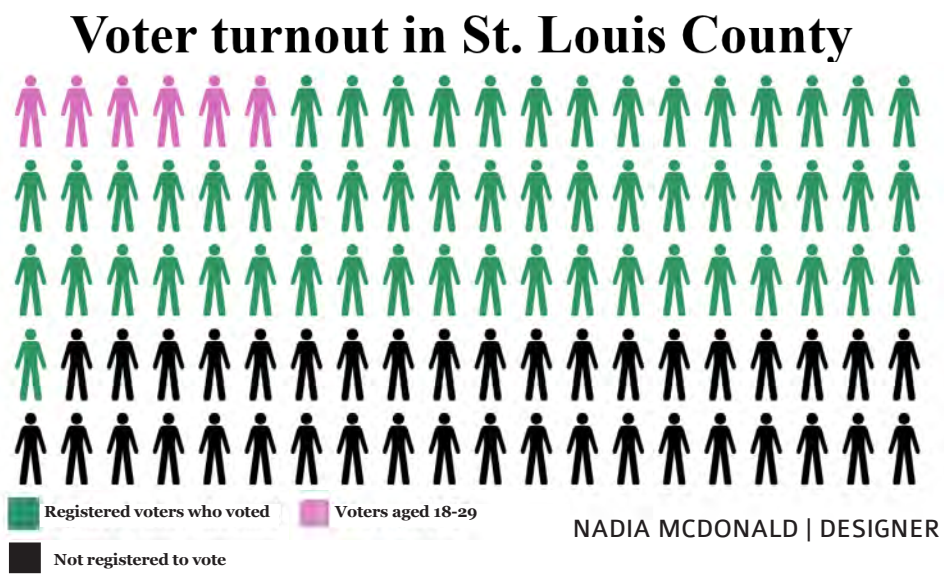
A study from the Center of Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University found that young people are more likely to be deterred by busy schedules and registration issues when it comes to voting. We understand that students at WashU have similar concerns, which is why we should take advantage of the resources on campus that are dedicated to making voting accessible for all eligible WashU students. The Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement and WashU Votes list numerous resources on their website for those that wish to vote in Missouri or absentee in another state. They also offer materials needed for mail-in ballots, such as an envelope and stamp, that you can pick up at Gephardt's office. These resources are here to alleviate the stress that often comes with the voting process, and it's best that we students accept that helping hand.

A common misconception is that you must vote on every issue in order for your ballot to be valid, but that's not the case. Leaving a ballot box blank, or undervoting, won't disqualify or cancel your vote. There are some situations where undervoting can affect ballot measure results, such as when certain measures require a specific percentage of total ballot votes cast. The fact of the matter is that you don't have to be educated on every issue on the ballot. Thorough education on political matters is the goal, but it's still important to exercise your right to vote as a way to reach that ultimate goal.

Our political system can make us feel hopeless and like there are no opportunities for true change within the system. But it is important to remember that a) dismissing the power of voting strips your ability to advocate for yourself and others in your community and b) political change is urgent for all of us. We cannot allow politicians to pass detrimental legislation without our say. We can begin to take control of our own political futures with our votes, so let's use them.



MAGGIE XU | STAFF ILLUSTRATOR



NADIA MCDONALD | DESIGNER

After midterms' 'blue wave,' trust community organizing, not our political system

DION HINES
MANAGING FORUM EDITOR

This year's midterm election was quite the victory for the Democratic party — Democrats regained control of both the House and the Senate. The election also made history, with several states electing numerous "firsts": Alabama's first openly transgender state lawmaker (Allison Montgomery), Arizona's first Indian American congressperson (Amish Shah), Nebraska's first Latina congressperson (Denise Powell), the nation's first Black female governor (Keisha Lance Bottoms), and the list goes on.

States that have historically leaned red, such as Texas, which hasn't had a Democrat governor in over 35 years, turned blue on election Tuesday. The internet has been flooded with memes celebrating the "blue wave," taking it as a sign that America's politics are swinging in a more progressive direction. It is understandable that people across the country are elated about a predominately blue Congress. For many Americans, the shift suggests a more stable economy, affordable healthcare, and a cease in attacks against marginalized identities. But, while there are factors in the midterm election to be celebrated, the blue wave should bolster faith in community organizing instead of our political system.

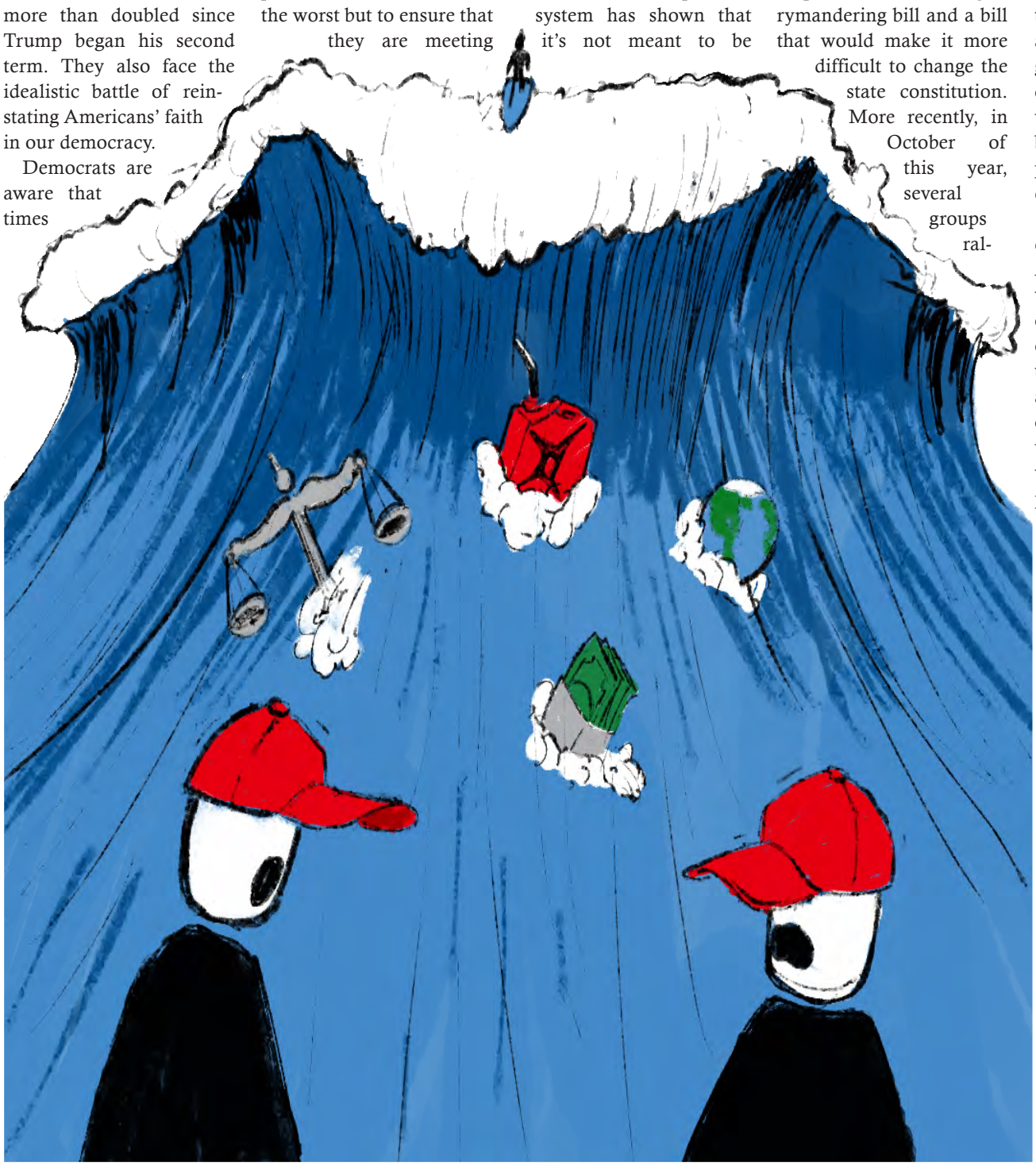
As Democratic Leader and presumptive House Speaker Rep. Hakeem Jeffries said, "This is a change election, and we understand as House Democrats we need to deliver dramatic change." Democrats indeed have a lot of work to do now they have regained control over Congress: The economy and cost of living campaigns were a driving force in getting a lot of Democrats elected, and they are now tasked with following through. Many Democrats ran on platforms against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) since the agency has deported close to 980,000 individuals, as estimated by the Migration Policy Institute; eight people have been killed by federal ICE agents; and the mortality rate of those within ICE detention facilities has more than doubled since Trump began his second term. They also face the idealistic battle of reinstating Americans' faith in our democracy.

Democrats are aware that times are urgent and that the stakes are high, which is why many of them built their campaigns on righting the Republican Party's wrongs. The issue with making such large promises that, simply put, they have a lot of room to let their constituents down. Money drives a lot of what happens in politics, which is why there have been several instances of Democratic politicians voting in favor of GOP-backed bills. We should remain skeptical of politicians, not to assume the worst but to ensure that they are meeting the high standards that should come with being a representative.

Even with there being politicians like Abdul El-Sayed of Michigan and Zohran Mamdani of New York, who are both declared Democratic Socialists and anti-Zionists that built their campaign off of more "radical" views such as universal healthcare, police reform, and divestment from Israel, our two-party system isn't meant to sustain their views. Our political system has shown that it's not meant to be easy for more progressive candidates to win or pass "radical" legislation if they even are elected. Which is why we should look more toward community organizing.

The year leading up to last week's midterm election has been marked with strong examples of mobilization in smaller communities. In September of 2025, hundreds of Missouri residents gathered and marched through the halls of the state Capitol in protest of a GOP gerrymandering bill and a bill that would make it more difficult to change the state constitution. More recently, in October of this year, several groups rallied in Columbia, Missouri against Amendment 3 and Proposition A. Organizers claimed that members of LiUNA Local 955, Abortion Action Missouri, Missouri Jobs with Justice Voter Action, and Show Up Missouri knocked on the doors of nearly 14,000 people. It was actions like these that contributed to the rejection of the two pieces of legislation. On both a local and national scale, this year's midterm election showed that Americans are fed up with their current officials and are willing to take tangible action to better this country. It showed that we have strength in numbers and that perhaps the people united will never be defeated.

I do hope to see the day of a non-capitalist America, of an America with free universal healthcare and free higher education, of an America that isn't influenced by a small group of unethically wealthy people. I also understand that these are very large ideas that could possibly never come to fruition. That doesn't mean that I believe we should abandon these goals and resort to building faith in America's two-party political system; I rather urge us to work smaller. To have conversations in the social groups that we frequent, whether they be at school, in religious communities, or in your neighborhood. To canvas for the legislation that you hope to see in your community. To host or attend teach-ins on legislation that touches the House floor. To look into groups like Action St. Louis and Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment (MORE). Now that we have seen the power that we have when we come together, let's tap into it.



HOLLE RITTER | STAFF ILLUSTRATOR

SPORTS

Caleb Durbin ’22 becomes first D-III alum to win a Gold Glove

ELIZA STULMAN
SPORTS EDITOR

Caleb Durbin ’22 made MLB history as the first Division III alum to win a Rawlings Gold Glove Award, on Nov. 1. This accolade honors the best defensive player at each position in both the National League (NL) and American League (AL), as determined by MLB coaches and managers, alongside sabermetrics community members. Nevertheless, Durbin still feels he has something to prove.

Durbin’s 2026 season with the Boston Red Sox was just his second season both in the major leagues and as a full-time third baseman. He saved 13 runs and committed only 11 errors in 151 regular-season games. Recording six outs above average, he ranked in MLB’s 91st percentile and fielded 14 points above the AL average at third. Durbin achieved all this while playing with a partially dislocated pinky on his glove hand in the final three months of the season.

Before he was a Gold Glove-winning third baseman, Durbin was a three-time all-University Athletic Association shortstop for the Bears, then forwent his final year of NCAA eligibility to go pro. The Atlanta Braves organization selected Durbin in the 14th round of the 2021 draft. Over the next four years, he played for seven minor league teams, mostly at shortstop and second base, and eventually earned a spot on the Yankees’ 40-man roster as a second baseman. Durbin was then traded to the Milwaukee Brewers, where he made his MLB debut at third base and earned a spot on the 2025 MLB All-Rookie Team. Boston acquired Durbin in a six-player trade right before 2026 spring training.

“To be able to have moved to that position full time, starting only a year ago, and to win a Gold Glove at that position in the major leagues, means a little bit more to me just because I think a lot of people don’t see me as a natural third baseman,” Durbin said. “I just take pride in being able to be a good defender anywhere on the field.”

Of the 24 WashU alumni who have made it to MLB, Durbin is now the second to earn a Gold Glove. Dal Maxvill ’60 won the prestigious award at shortstop for the 1968 St. Louis Cardinals before NCAA D-III existed. With Ryan Loutos ’21 back in the minors on a contract with the Seattle Mariners’ rookie-level affiliate team, the Arizona Complex League Mariners, Durbin is currently the only WashU alumnus in the majors.

Durbin credits WashU Head Coach Pat Bloom with building a Bears baseball culture comparable to professional baseball organizations by focusing on “doing the little things right.”

“You should see our [WashU] practices; they’re very intense,” Durbin said. “They’re very detail-oriented, and that helped me a ton because I got to pro ball, and I was steps ahead of D-I guys and guys that have been in pro ball already.”

Few D-III baseball players have made it to the big leagues. According to MLB rosters and transactions, Durbin is just one of two 2026 MLB regulars who played for a D-III collegiate team.

“I just know how much work it took to go on from D-III to this level, and it’s always in the back of my head,” Durbin said. “I always have something to prove, and it’s kind of that chip on your shoulder that never goes away.”

That mentality kept him on the field after he partially dislocated his left pinky diving headfirst into first base on June 24. Durbin prefers to wear his glove with his ring finger and pinky in the glove’s pinky hole because it allows him greater control when fielding. After the injury, that became a problem: his pinky swelled and wouldn’t straighten. Durbin taped his fingers together and loosened his glove’s laces as much as possible so he could keep playing. He also cut a hole in his batting glove to fit his injured finger.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CALEB DURBIN
Caleb Durbin wins the Gold Glove at third base for the Boston Red Sox.

“The pain dissipated throughout the season, and in my head, I couldn’t miss time for a pinky injury,” Durbin said. “I would have felt like such a baby. So I just had to figure it out.”

After the season ended, Durbin learned he had also been playing with a chipped fifth metatarsal — the bone on the outer edge of the foot.

The injuries are just the latest adversity he’s faced. The 5’6” former shortstop from a D-III school, who had minimal third-base experience before turning pro, has spent his career defying labels. To Bloom, Durbin is proof that persistence can pay off.

“He hasn’t allowed setbacks, criticisms … to change his demeanor and his commitment to wanting to be as good as he can be,” Bloom said. “I think that he is a great example for not just Division III athletes, but for collegiate athletes in general, that says, you absolutely can do this. … You can, in fact, get an education from a world-class institution, and you can also work to try to achieve your childhood dreams.”

Athlete or not, Durbin advises WashU students to work for their dreams.

“The more work you put in, the more you’re gonna get out of it,” Durbin said. “I’m a Gold Glover now, but back then, in college, I wanted to be a Gold Glove D-III player and have a chance to play professionally and win a D-III World Series. Then I get drafted, and then I want to be a minor league Gold Glover, and so you’re always taking it in stride, trying to get the next best thing that’s in reach.”

No. 10 men’s and No. 7 women’s basketball place first and second in the Lopata and McWilliams Classics

SHREY KANJI
ASHER DARLING
STAFF WRITERS

The WashU No. 10 men’s and No. 7 women’s basketball teams opened their seasons at home this past weekend, with the men winning their fourth consecutive Lopata Classic, and the women finishing as runners-up in the McWilliams Classic. Both teams won their openers on Friday, Nov. 6, to advance to the championship games on Saturday, Nov. 7, in the Field House. In the Lopata Classic, the men’s team defeated No. 5 Gustavus Adolphus College (GAC) 77-76 in overtime. The women’s team fought hard but ultimately fell 58-56 to the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater in the McWilliams Classic championship.

No. 10 men’s basketball

In its season opener Friday, Nov. 6, WashU trailed Bethany Lutheran College 35-33 at halftime. In the second half, the Bears pulled away with a 14-0 run, cruising to a 90-69 win. Five Bears scored in double digits, including junior forward Anthony Przybilla, who had 14 points and eight rebounds.

In the tournament championship against GAC, WashU led the majority of the game but found itself trailing 59-52 with 4:37 left in regulation. The Bears clawed back to within 1 point multiple times, but GAC repeatedly knocked down free throws to maintain a 3-point lead with eight seconds left.

“We really thought that they were gonna foul,” senior guard Ryan Cohen said. “And then we saw their players go up to the refs and say, ‘Hey, we’re not gonna foul.’ So my eyes kind of lit up.”

On the ensuing Bears possession, sophomore guard Josh Kim drove into the paint and found senior guard Lucas Vogel on the wing for a game-tying attempt.

“I totally thought that shot was going in,” Cohen said. “But a million coaches will say this, and I’ve been unfortunately on the losing half of it: It’s never the first shot that beats you, it’s always the second one.”

Vogel’s shot didn’t drop. First-year guard Stryckland Whittley-Ligon grabbed a rebound and kicked it out to Cohen.

“It just came off like a normal shot,” Cohen said. “But looking back at it, it’s probably the number one shot of my career.”

Cohen buried a 3-pointer as the buzzer hit 0.0 to force overtime.

“I don’t want to say we got lucky, but things went our way in those last eight seconds,” Cohen said. “We like to say the basketball gods were on our side there.”

In overtime, Przybilla came up big for the Bears, hitting a 3-pointer and then slamming home a pass after a steal by Kim. This gave WashU a 4-point lead with two minutes left in overtime.

Przybilla was named the tournament’s MVP for the second straight year, while he and Kim were selected to the All-Tournament team.

In the final two minutes, GAC fought back, but the Bears held on despite a last-second dunk that cut the final margin to 1.

“[Przybilla] is just a beast,” Cohen said. “Nobody really views him as a shooter, but to hit that clutch 3 so late was absolutely incredible.”

WashU outrebounded its opponents 44-31 in the opener and 39-32 in the final, something the team emphasized in the offseason.

Cohen said the game would have been valuable to the Bears even if they had lost.

“We got the win, and we’re super happy we got the win,” he said. “That [was] just such an incredible test to start our season.”

The Bears return to the court at home Friday, Nov. 13, against Millikin University.



ERIC XIA | CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Senior forward George Gale faces off against Gustavus Adolphus College.



SOPHIE PINSKER | CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Junior guard Hope Drake passes the ball across the court.

No. 7 women’s basketball

The Bears opened the 25th annual McWilliams Classic with a dominant performance against Central College on Friday, Nov. 6, building off of a 37-9 second-quarter lead and cruising to a 65-39 win.

The win was a true team effort: Ten Bears scored, 11 grabbed a rebound, and WashU recorded 18 assists to Central’s four. First-year guard Marycait Mackie delivered a standout WashU debut with 11 points, five boards, and five assists. Senior guard Alyssa Hughes led the team with 13 points, and senior center Lexy Harris added 12 points and nine rebounds.

“Everyone has their own role on the team, and everyone’s doing a great job so far playing in that role,” Hughes said. “It was super cool that all of our hard work in the first three weeks of practice was able to show up in that Central game.”

The final on Saturday, Nov. 7, brought a tougher test against UW–Whitewater, who received votes in the national top-25 preseason poll. The matchup gave WashU the chance to avenge a 63-58 loss to Whitewater in last season’s opener.

Whitewater led for most of the contest, but WashU continued to fight and stay close. With the Bears trailing by six points late in the fourth quarter, Harris grabbed her own rebound and scored an and-one layup. She converted from the line to cut the deficit to three. After forcing a shot-clock violation, Hughes was able to hit a clutch 3-pointer to tie that game at 56-56 in the final minute. Whitewater answered with a layup with 18 seconds remaining, securing a 58-56 victory.

“We just had a few too many turnovers and gave up a few too many offensive rebounds,” Hughes said. “If we clean up some of those possessions and Whitewater has a few less, then the game definitely looks a bit different.”

Harris finished the tournament championship game with 15 points and 14 rebounds for her first double-double of the season. Hughes added 14 points, and both players made the All-Tournament team.

The Bears defeated Elmhurst University 70-62 on the road on Tuesday, Nov. 10, and will return home to face Millikin University in the Field House on Nov. 22 at 1 p.m.

No. 3 women's soccer's 1,071-day unbeaten streak ends at UChicago; men's season ends with a draw

AARON WILLIAMS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The last time the now No. 3 WashU women's soccer lost a game, the current seniors were first-years living on the South 40. The program's historic unbeaten streak ended on Saturday, Nov. 7, as No. 2 University of Chicago Maroons beat the Bears 2-1 to claim the University Athletic Association (UAA) title, snapping WashU's monumental 1,071-day unbeaten streak. The men's 2-2 draw earlier in the afternoon against the No. 9 University of Chicago Maroons didn't make the weekend any better for Bears fans, with the men's team being left out of the upcoming NCAA tournament.

No. 3 women's soccer

Before Saturday, Nov. 7, WashU women's soccer had not lost a game in 1,071 days. That streak came to an end at UChicago, as the Maroons dethroned the Bears 2-1 to secure the UAA title in the last game of the regular season. Saturday's feat marked the first time any of the first-years, sophomores, and juniors lost a game under Head Coach Jim Conlon.

The Bears came into Saturday's regular season finale needing a win for their fourth-straight UAA championship. The Maroons only needed a draw.

Not intimidated by the Bears' recent dominance, UChicago struck first in the 34th minute by sending a shot into the top left corner of WashU's net.

WashU's experienced attack didn't plan on trailing for long. The Maroons' lead lasted just 21 seconds, as junior forward Cami Colpitts chipped it over the UChicago goalkeeper to find the top of the net off an assist from sophomore midfielder Monica Morales-Martinez. This was Colpitts' ninth goal of the season.

The score would remain tied 1-1 entering the second half. Early in the half, a WashU foul inside the box gave UChicago a penalty kick, which was drilled to give the Maroons a 2-1 lead in the 51st minute.

WashU found itself in uncharted territory, trailing in the second half for the first time all season. Desperate to tie the game, the Bears' attack pushed for an equalizer the rest of the game, outshooting the Maroons 9-4 in the second half. However, the Bears couldn't capitalize, and the game ended in a 2-1 loss.

"We didn't play the game we were hoping to on Saturday, and it resulted in a loss," Conlon said. "I thought we did a really good job of reflecting Saturday on the field and on the bus ride home."

The 2-1 final score also broke a pattern that has been prevalent during the last week of the regular season for these teams year after year. WashU and UChicago have tied in each of their last six regular-season meetings, and UChicago hasn't beaten WashU since 2010.

"That was a moment we have not been accustomed to recently, and it was just a matter of how we were going to respond," Conlon said. "Losing is not fun, but I thought they responded well, and I think they've got their eyes wide open moving forward."

The Bears returned to practice the day following the game, looking for ways to respond after the unprecedented loss ahead of the NCAA tournament.

"Can you connect the next pass? Can you connect the shot? Can you make a save?" Conlon said. "You just go back to the basics and make it tangible. Make them succeed right away."

Although the WashU and UChicago rivalry has ended in ties during the regular season, the Bears historically have had the final word against UChicago in the NCAA tournament. WashU beat the Maroons 1-0 in the 2024 Elite Eight and 10-9 in an intense penalty shootout in the 2025 Final Four. Since both teams made the 2026 field, a third-straight tournament meeting is possible.

On Monday, Nov. 9, WashU received an NCAA Division III Tournament bid and will host rounds one and two at Francis Olympic Field for the fourth-straight year. The Bears will play the Belhaven University Blazers in the first round on Friday, Nov. 13, at 1 p.m. The winner of Belhaven and WashU will face the winner of Hope College and Simpson College the next day on Saturday, Nov. 14, at 6 p.m.

"You just don't know if you're ever going to be able to put your feet back on Francis, and we have that option now," Conlon said. "We know Bear Nation supported us quite well so far, and we're hoping that that's going to continue this weekend."



BEN GANZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Men's soccer

In the 2025 NCAA tournament, WashU ended UChicago's season in the second round, only a few weeks after defeating them to claim the 2025 UAA Championship title. This year, the reigning UAA champion Bears, who have struggled in conference play, had an outside shot at claiming a share of the title. To earn the UAA's automatic NCAA Tournament bid, the Bears had to defeat UChicago and hope other conference results over the weekend went their way.

The Bears' season was on the line, and it nearly slipped away before fans at Stagg Field found their seats. The WashU defense gave up a goal to the No. 9 Maroons inside the first minute and trailed 2-0 before the 20-minute mark.

With 24 seconds left in the first half, sophomore defender Wole Adeoye split the gap between two Maroon defenders and sent a shot into the top of the net to cut the UChicago lead to 2-1 and score his sixth goal of the season. Instead of heading into the locker room facing a two-goal deficit and the likely end of their title hopes, the Bears went into the break down only 2-1.

"My goal at the end of the first half gave us a lot of confidence," Adeoye said. "We were only down one goal with 45 minutes to play, so it completely changed the game."

The second half was vastly different. Both defenses settled in, and 40 minutes went by without a goal, as the Bears' time to find an equalizer ran short. The WashU attack showed more aggression, though, firing seven shots in the second half after being outshot 10-1 in the first half.

With the clock winding down to the final minutes, WashU was desperate to try and save its season with a goal.

The Bears' Hail Mary came late in the game. Adeoye was tripped by a UChicago defender in the box, and though a foul was not originally called, replay review rewarded the Bears with a penalty kick. With the game on the line and five minutes remaining, senior forward Ethan Wirtschafter stepped up to take the penalty. Wirtschafter drilled it into the bottom left corner, beating UChicago's keeper, who dove right, to tie the game at 2-2.

Though quiet in the second half, the Maroons quickly drove down the pitch to try and put the game away. UChicago nearly answered the Bears' equalizer right away. With about four minutes left, senior goalkeeper Cal L'Hommedieu made a sliding save to keep the game even and secure the comeback tie for the Bears. He finished with seven saves as the Maroons outshot the Bears 16-8.

WashU had come back from behind several times this season, but in a rivalry game and a chance to make the playoffs on the line, Saturday's comeback felt more special.

"We've been down before, but the circumstances have never been that high," Adeoye said. "You could feel the tension amongst the group, but I think we knew that if we played our game, we'd give ourselves a chance."

The draw left WashU in a five-way tie for second place in the conference, meaning the Bears need an at-large bid to make the NCAA Tournament. This year, 22 teams got at-large bids — teams that still had a strong regular season but did not win their conference's title for automatic qualification.

The NCAA selection show on Monday, Nov. 9, did not go the Bears' way. WashU was left out of the 64-team tournament field, ending their season a year after their first Sweet 16 run since 2007.

That made Saturday the final collegiate game for a senior class of 11 players.

"[The senior class], even last year as juniors, [are] super involved in the team. [They] kind of make the team what it is. I feel like I've learned not just how to be a leader more, but also how to be a better person through these guys," Adeoye said.

The Bears' 2026 season ended with a 10-3-4 record, though a strong fight against a highly ranked UChicago team ended their regular season on a positive note.

"If that is the way we go out, it's all right," Adeoye said. "Our last game, we put it all out there."



DORIAN ZHANG | CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER











