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Alianza's Día de los Muertos celebrates the sharing of food, dance, community

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Flags of every Latin American country and papel picado banners fluttered from the ceiling. An ofrenda stood at the left of the room, decorated with food, candles, flowers and photos of loved ones who have passed. Out on the balcony, students lined up for tacos, flowing back inside for tamales, pupusas and pan dulce. This was Alianza's annual Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, celebration, a long-standing tradition of the club.

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The ofrenda at Alianza's Dia de los Muertos at Willamette University, Salem, Oregon on Oct. 31, 2025.

Photo by SOFIE SZIGETI

Opinion: In defense of individualistic resistance

Maisy Clunies-Ross • Staff Writer

Last year, I wrote a piece arguing against the use of artificial intelligence and large language models. Foolishly, I believed generative artificial intelligence (AI) could be a flash in the pan. I assumed it would go the way of NFTs, rather than cement its place as a generation-defining technological advance. If everyone resisted, considered its detrimental impact on the environment and its potential for economic devastation, maybe we could get rid of AI. Clearly, we're past that point. AI is everywhere. AI-generated images dominate social media, while comments sections devolve into meaningless conversations between bots. Music streaming platforms are platforming AI artists. It's being used to create advertisements, and new AI capabilities are being added to many existing services. It's even expanding outside of the business world and into people's personal lives.

With generative AI becoming so pervasive, personal resistance may seem fruitless and even obstinate. But that doesn't diminish the value that can be found in fighting back.

Many people have decided opposing this new technology is likely to be ineffective and therefore meaningless. AI can make work more efficient through data analysis and taking over mundane tasks. Even for those who acknowledge the negative environmental impacts of AI, defiance seems pointless, considering the impact of an individual's ChatGPT usage feels negligible in comparison

to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation by governments and larger corporations. Additionally, abstaining from AI feels particularly foolish when considering the history of technological innovation and its accompanying opposition.

Technological advancements have always impacted the job market. During the industrial revolution, a group of workers called the Luddites destroyed the technology they believed was ruining their quality of life. After the invention of the automatic switchboard, switchboard operators, a majority female workforce, lost their jobs. While this loss negatively impacted these women for many years, eventually, new jobs were created.

One may argue that technology isn't the enemy in these situations. It isn't truly the technology that leads workers to lose their jobs; it's the profit-driven forces of the capitalist market. It could also be argued that these technologies are less harmful when government regulation catches up to innovation.

These points are reasonable. However, technology doesn't just impact the economic or political landscape. It impacts the way people communicate and connect with one another. And the current mode of artificial intelligence seems to be having detrimental effects on people's well-being and socialization.

Social media has already contributed to isolation and a grow-

ing mental health crisis. AI has only broadened this social separation. People are turning to AI for therapy, companionship and even romantic relationships. It may be cringe. In

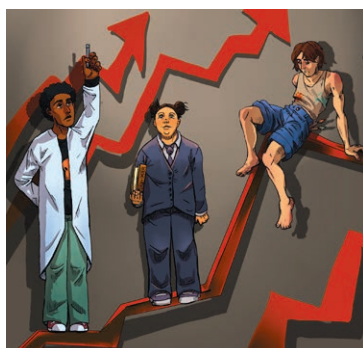
some cases, it may be rooted in many men's patriarchal desire to have a woman to control.

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Awaiting the sage's wisdom.
Art by DASHA ALLYN

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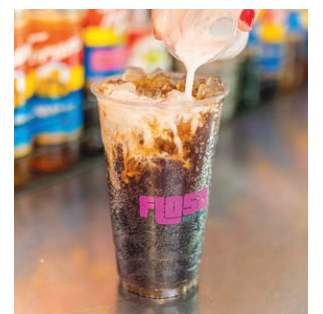
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Yet, more than anything, it feels like evidence of people's loneliness or vulnerability being taken advantage of. AI companies encourage people to be reliant on their services for their emotional well-being, but users have no way to hold these corporations accountable and may lose access to these services when they are put behind a paywall.

It feels like everything is for sale now. Advertising is everywhere, everything is a streaming service, and everyone wants your attention. Our attention and personal data are hot commodities. Now, with people divulging more of their personal lives to chat bots run by large corporations, our hopes, dreams and fears are a commodity, too.

Even before this rise in generative AI, there were people pushing back against the way our attention is bought and sold. Some people have rid themselves of the internet entire-

ly, but for most, the necessities of everyday life make an offline existence mere fantasy. However, there are still ways to limit our subservience to the digital world. Some are investing in dumb phones, while others are making a push to reinvest in physical media. It may require more initial effort to purchase a CD or DVD player, but it allows users greater distance from their phone and control over what they consume.

The movement toward rejection of digital media seems like a potential blueprint for those skeptical of AI. It's not realistic to expect AI to go away or for there to be a universal pushback. No one can control the opinions of everyone around them. But recognizing that AI appears to have a detrimental impact on one's quality of life, and thus abstaining from it, is a positive start.

This issue reminds me of a story by journalist Evan Ratcliff,

wherein he reckons with the evolving role of AI in society, grappling with its prevalence and abilities through the lens of a New York Times article from 1924. The article is titled "This Machine-Made World Conquers One More Rebel," and it covers a shopkeeper who finally got a telephone after years of resistance. The shopkeeper's unhappy with this choice; it goes against his personal philosophy, and he holds a distaste for all that the telephone represents. Nonetheless, "progress" marches forward.

Previously, I might have looked down on his resistance. I may have wondered why someone on the precipice of such innovation was so resistant to it. Now, I understand. I recognize that future generations may look at the resistance of those who oppose AI as foolish and futile. Many people view it that way, even today. It is, undoubtedly, a resistance to ease. To efficiency. To maximizing

productivity.

However, this is not a detraction from such defiance. It is the reason for it. There's no value in a life that's primary goal is efficiency. Be unproductive. Less successful, even. But retain your values, your humanity. Indulge not in slop but in that which delights you. Consume art that lacks machine-made sheen but brims with emotion. Seek comfort not in the arms of a machine but in the warm embrace of your fellow man.

Maybe someday, you too will succumb to the ongoing parade of technological advancement. Nonetheless, your opposition will have been worthwhile. One of the rebels against the telephone told the reporter, "I have no telephone, but I have peace." Even for those who cannot resist forever, that peace, momentary as it may be, is worth pursuing.

Willamette sees positive enrollment trends despite demographic cliff

Alexander Berry • Staff Writer

Last year, the Willamette administration prepared for the "demographic cliff," or a decline in first-year enrollment brought on by low, recession era birth rates. But now, in the 2025-26 academic year, despite the demographic cliff showing its effects, undergraduate enrollment is up.

Willamette's 2025 enrollment trends depict fewer first-year students, but expanded transfer and graduate school students. The fall 2025 census provided to The Collegian by Geoff Ball, the director of Institutional Research, listed the total number of full-time undergraduate students to be 1,715 with 368 first-years. In comparison, the fall 2024 census showed 1,637 full-time undergraduate students and 405 first-years. Across all Willamette colleges, the complete headcount for the fall 2025 census is 2,775 students.

William Mullen, the vice president for Enrollment Management, explained, "Though the new class of students is smaller, there is a large transfer amount." There are 68 undergraduate transfer students this year compared to 51 transfer students in fall of 2024.

New programs

The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges projects a 15% decline in college-aged students between 2025 and 2029, noting that smaller tuition-dependent institutions will experience the brunt of these declines. To combat demographic shifts, Willamette University has invested and launched additional graduate programs, among other strategies.

Willamette's Impact Report 2025 comments on the merger with PNCA during the pandemic and the recent launch of the School of Computing & Information Sciences (SCIS) as notable milestones. PNCA, according to the fall 2025 census, has 438 full-time undergraduate students, including 136 new students, a slight decrease from its 453 full-time undergraduate students last year. Willamette College of Law has 345 full-time students in fall of 2025 compared to 313 full-time students in fall of 2024. The recent launch of SCIS, established in May of 2023, has garnered 25 full-time and 15 part-time

graduate students.

Mullen, commenting on the acquisition of new schools, said that Willamette will continue to expand for students on both undergraduate and graduate levels. With the construction of the new Career Center on campus, the university's purpose is to create future pathways for students.

On a national level, however, the demographic cliff offers not only university problems but a potential economic burden. The Hechinger Report emphasized college closures, cutting admission positions and declining graduate programs as concerns to note, stating that more than a college per week announced its closing in 2024.

Changing pathways

Sue Corner, the dean of undergraduate admissions at Willamette, explained that the university makes resource-based decisions to combat demographic changes. Instead of cutting admissions roles to prepare for the cliff, the university created transfer admissions roles, Corner said.

Corner also explained that the biggest difference this year has been the change in the California schools' admission policies. "California is usually our biggest feeder state, bigger than Oregon, and this year, for the first time in my tenure at Willamette [20 years], we have had more students from Oregon."

The University of California system, as noted by both Corner and Mullen, has expanded in the past two years. The California system has changed to keep students in California, specifically through the University of California Plan 2030, which aims to increase the number of in-state undergraduate students.

In addition to the changes in the UC system, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) 2025 officially opened Oct. 1 under a new format this year. With the university monitoring the government shut-



Bearcats on the rise.
Art by ADDIE MARTIN

down, Corner highlighted, "If the shutdown extends, [the] processing of the FAFSA in a timely manner is questioned. This can impact financial aid packages for new students."

As a private institution, the main sources of revenue for Willamette are tuition and room and board. Previously, a botched FAFSA rollout at the federal level for the 2024-25 school year resulted in a 9% decline in submitted applications nationwide according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, resulting in students having to make rushed enrollment decisions.

Mullen emphasized the need Willamette has to consider developmental pathways that are accessible for all students who want to go to college. "When a student enrolls at a community college, there is a possibility for students to go into a Bearcat pathway." Willamette is currently in the works with Portland Community College to create an additional pathway for students, alongside an existing arrangement with Chemeketa Community College.

Willamette offers programs for prospective students such as Bear-

cat Day and Access to Excellence, a fly-in model program, to entice higher enrollment. Both Corner and Mullen agree that Bearcat Day grosses the highest number of students, though Access to Excellence has had fewer applicants.

Admissions staff also conduct recruitment trips that entail extensive travel, meeting with students one-on-one at schools and college fairs, conducting interviews, and offering workshops.

Looking ahead

The nationwide demographic decline in college-going students has impacted various circuits of the university. Mullen summarized, "Willamette has to think about the graduate degrees and make sure the degrees have good pathways but also meet the needs of traditional grad students. It is important for the school to develop and change the programs." The shift in the national narrative about the worth of a college degree, alongside changing economic policies, leaves the demographic cliff as an ongoing conversation.

Dance company choreographers to bring their cultures to the stage

Ethan Barker • Staff Writer



"16 Shots," an Afro hip-hop dance choreographed by Ezra Neely ('26), performed at Smith Auditorium in spring of 2025.

Photo courtesy of Quinn Carbery

On Nov. 20 and 21, Willamette Dance Company will present dances choreographed and performed by students. This event, which happens once a semester, has always been an opportunity for students to showcase their choreography and dance skills to the community. In recent years, students have increasingly infused cultural elements into performances by choreographing dances that are inspired by their

homes or family history, and this semester's event will be no exception.

One of the students who has been inspired to bring her culture to Dance Co. is club president Maggie Ramos ('26), who is choreographing a salsa-inspired piece that speaks to her Venezuelan roots, where she was born and raised.

"If you were to pull up to a specific side of town ... there would be a block party, and people would

just stop and dance salsa for hours. I'm trying to bring that into the stage," Ramos said.

Her piece aims to replicate the lively energy of those parties, while also mixing the traditions and meanings of salsa.

Another student choreographer, Ezra Neely ('26), is inspired by Carnival and Afropop dance and wants to bring that side of her culture to campus alongside the other dances. To her, Dance Co.'s increased representation is important not just for her but also for other students.

"[It's] nice to have my culture represented on the stage, and for other students of color to feel like they're being represented onstage too. Even if they don't want to perform, they can just enjoy that," Neely said.

In addition to making students feel seen and represented, Neely also said the Dance Co. can be a bridge that allows people to learn more about cultures besides their own.

"I think it's really important to make sure that a lot of different cultures are represented within Willamette because overall, there's a lack of culture that is represented on campus," Neely said. "Specifically with mine ... I try to mix and blend. I'm mixing from the Caribbean to Africa, so I'm mixing both of them together and adding hip hop because they all tie in really well. And when you see a

lot of Afro stuff now, it's a lot of influences from other things, too ... It is traditional, but it's also evolving."

For Ramos, ensuring that the culture is accurately represented is essential, and a little bit scary. Bringing a special part of her culture to the world on a larger scale is a heavy task and not one she takes lightly.

"If you asked me in my freshman or sophomore or even my junior year, I would not have expected to bring it here or feel comfortable, just because it has played such a big part in who I am," Ramos said. "Yes, [the dance is] gonna be fun, it's gonna be sexy, it's gonna be a little flashy and flirty, but that's not the reason I brought it. I made it because I want to represent something that I have been doing for so long, that represents who I am, and represents my people and my family."

The event and the dances performed showcase the traditions and stories of different cultures. It gives students a chance to share their backgrounds with a wider audience and lets attendees experience a variety of personal and cultural perspectives.

"These cultures and these nationalities, they also have something to say," Ramos said. "It might not be the Western way of showing storytelling or showing how meaning and a story is brought, but it still is a way of storytelling through dancing, and it should be respected."

Alianza's Día de los Muertos celebrates the sharing of food, dance, community

Maya Darski • Staff Writer

When students stepped through the Cat Cavern doors on Oct. 31 and walked down a path of golden marigold flowers, they were immediately greeted with an explosion of color.

Flags of every Latin American country and papel picado banners fluttered from the ceiling. An ofrenda stood at the left of the room, decorated with food, candles, flowers and photos of loved ones who have passed. Out on the balcony, students lined up for tacos, flowing back inside for tamales, pupusas and pan dulce. This was Alianza's annual Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, celebration, a long-standing tradition of the club.

Alianza co-President Valeria Perez ('25) shared how it is important for Willamette to have Día de los Muertos to "empower the Latino community," especially amid the current political climate. She reflected on how "educating people about any culture is a really big aspect of learning and growing as a community. When people don't know about a certain culture and their traditions, they may resort to assumptions and feel reluctant to participate."

This learning and growth is why Perez finds it important to share the culture, as she once did at 2024's Día de los Muertos celebration: a curious Willamette student asked her what the meaning behind the ofrenda was. As she shared cultural context with the student, she found that it was "a nice feeling to see someone learn something new."

Throughout the night of Oct. 31, there was food, activities and performances. Two members of the club, Dayanara Salvador ('28) and Alison Cazares ('28), were met with huge rounds of applause after singing "Amor Eterno," a song about eternal love that continues after death.

The next performance was by Danza Azteca Ohtil, a cultural group from Woodburn that teaches and shares ritual Aztec dances of indigenous Mexico. Afterwards, the audience was encouraged to stand up and compete in musical chairs as well as El Caballo Dorado line dancing facilitated by the executive team of the club.

For the Alianza members, this event takes extensive planning and dedication. Each executive member chose an aspect of the event to focus on, such as food, outreach or decoration. Members were then split into committees where they brainstormed ideas and techniques on how to best execute these tasks and bring the event to life.

The day before the celebration, some members gathered in the Cat Cavern to set up the flags, banners, balloons and the ofrenda. Willamette University Academy students also participated in helping decorate for the event and brought their families to the celebration in order to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Before enrolling as a Willamette student, Salvador had participated in Willamette Academy, so she has been attending Alianza's Día de los Muertos celebration since the



Guests enjoy live music and traditional dancers at Alianza's Día de los Muertos at Willamette University, Salem, Oregon on Oct. 31, 2025.

Photo by SOFIE SZIGETI

seventh grade.

Alianza's Día de los Muertos also extends beyond Willamette's campus to the greater Salem community and more. For the club, this means collaborating with and supporting local businesses. Salvador emphasized how it is a "good way to give back to the community and a great opportunity to get people's families to come. It's also a way to branch out and bond for Alianza members."

Alianza members Maria Alcantar ('28) and Lindsay Perez Esquivel ('28) both appreciated the outcome of the event. Alcantar found the

emcee presentation in particular to be well done this year. She remarked, "It was well translated in both English and Spanish. They did a great job explaining what each aspect of the decorations meant." Esquivel believes the significance of this event stems from how it is a collection of "decorations, stories, performances and food that allows for people to learn about the culture."

Día de los Muertos is Alianza's biggest ongoing event, so Perez believes the tradition will continue for a long time.

Four years after WU-PNCA merger, art community reflects on the Bearsloth option

Caelyn Ochs • Staff Writer



A Bearsloth magnum opus.
Art by BASIL ALLEN

The Devil's Advocate: Edition Four

Caelyn Ochs • Staff Writer



Art by BASIL ALLEN

Disclaimer: The Devil's Advocate is a satirical column that does not reflect the views or opinions of The Collegian.

I can't tell if my roommate is mad at me or not. HELP!
- Chronically Conflict Adverse

In this circumstance, I would just assume that they are mad at you, just to be safe. To rectify this situation, what you have to do is give them a reason to love you. Give them a wardrobe improvement. Put those scissors to good use and bless their wardrobe with your creative mind. You want their clothes holier than Jesus Christ himself.

Right now, in this hellish weather of Salem fall (the soggy layer, mind you), they might be inclined to wear their sweaters. But they have worn that sweater a million times, and it might provide too much warmth. Cut the sleeves off, or maybe even crop them. You also obviously want to cut all their pants into bootie shorts; people aren't going to the gym to then just show off nothing. Finally, if they wear skirts, turn their long flowy skirts into short skirts, the shorter the better.

The whole point is to show them by cutting their clothes that it

is OK to show some skin — really help them reach their hoe potential. Once they come home and see what you did, they will realize how hot you made them with this new upgrade and won't ever be mad at you again.

My biggest problem in life is that I always have dishes to do. The stack in the sink is perpetual despite my daily toiling away at it. How do I escape this hellscape?
- Drowning in dishwasher

When in doubt, always leave the work to your roommate. It's one fantastic solution that should work swimmingly, and your roommate should find no issues with this. If you come to the conclusion that this solution is lacking the flair you desire, we can up the ante. Make it a game. Hide the dishes around your shared living space. Whoever finds them first is then obligated to clean them. By doing this, the dishes will magically disappear. When you inevitably start to run out of hiding places, another excellent option that you could pursue is hiding the dishes under their covers, so they see them before bed. This will definitely help alleviate your dish dilemma, and if you play the game right, you will never have to wash a dish again.

Since Pacific Northwest College of Art's (PNCA) and Willamette University's merger in 2021, Willamette students have had the opportunity to explore an array of different classes offered at PNCA, along with their Salem classes. If they can make the trip, that is.

PNCA offers an array of art classes that aren't taught at Willamette, allowing students to explore their interests in various fields without being confined to one campus.

Professor and art department co-chair Alexandra Opie explained that the process of registering for classes at PNCA is very similar to signing up for classes at Willamette using SAGE, with the only difference being that instead of selecting Salem as the location, the student selects Portland. Students just have to plan their schedule, keeping in mind travel times and longer class periods held at PNCA.

Since it became an option, many have found that taking classes at PNCA can be difficult for students who don't have a car of their own. The Amtrak is an option if they can work the train arrival and departure times into their class schedule. Opie expressed concern with the cost of the journey by train, noting how it certainly builds up rather quickly with back-and-forth trips.

William Cooper ('26), a student at Willamette who has taken classes at PNCA, expressed that the train schedule does not align conveniently with PNCA class schedules.

Due to troubles with scheduling and transportation, some students have found the opportunity to take classes at PNCA inaccessible. One student, Ella Allen ('27), wanted to take a semester at PNCA to earn a minor in graphic design. Since the merger is still very new, she said

she could not find much support, and after speaking with many people, she decided to try to take a class at PNCA for a semester. This attempt did not work out due to the difficulty of travel and the time that it would require to [go to class in Portland].

Cooper is majoring in art, and being able to make the journey, took a ceramics class and a fabrication with wood and metal class at PNCA in the fall of 2024 and spring of 2025. Cooper managed to craft his schedule to have PNCA classes on days when he would not have Willamette classes. He found it important to spend time not just in class but outside of class to work on any projects for the studio classes offered in Portland.

To Cooper, the opportunity to experience classes at PNCA was worthwhile, and he hopes to get the chance to take another this upcoming spring semester. Some classes at PNCA are longer than the ones offered at Willamette and they allow for more discussion and critiques, where professors discuss completed projects. Cooper felt these discussions were beneficial, having more time to get a lot of feedback.

Going to PNCA classes allowed him to be immersed in new forms of art and with new individuals to learn from. Cooper shared that professors have different takes and opinions anywhere you go. The opportunity to take classes from two different departments expands the available knowledge, Cooper said. He added, "It is interesting to have a greater wealth of artists to [gain] feedback from."

Both Cooper and Opie have expressed a desire for a shuttle to help with this transportation issue for future students, although there are difficulties in obtaining a shuttle, especially if few students take PNCA classes.

Despite the struggles of scheduling and transportation, this program has expanded Willamette's art department substantially. As Opie expressed, "It's helping to make [our] program even more vibrant."



Keep up with your student government!



For Senate Meeting Minutes:

1. Scan QR Code
2. Click 'Menu' in upper right-hand corner
3. Click 'Documents'

Opinion: The top 5 thrift stores in Salem

Teresa Butzerin • Staff Writer



The perfect find!
Art by BASIL ALLEN

In 2023, as many as 150 billion pieces of new clothing were produced in the year, demonstrating a potential doubling of production since 2000. As the fast fashion industry continues to fuel overconsumption culture, it can feel like the individual buyer is helpless to stop it.

Consumers need not feel helpless, however: purchasing used clothing items — particularly at thrift stores — is a fun and affordable way

to stay fashionable without contributing to the production of new pieces. Thrifting is also a great way for college students to get off campus and explore the city, so I visited 12 locations to bring together a list of the top 5 thrift stores in Salem. They are ranked on the basis of relative prices, selection and quality of items, as well as proximity to campus.

1. Gracie's Closet

Gracie's Closet offers an impressive selection of curated vintage items at reasonable prices. From a section devoted to Carhartt workwear and a rack of embroidered cowboy boots sitting under rows of unique graphic tees, this shop has something for everyone. At a 20-minute stroll from campus, this thrift store is one of the closest second-hand options within walking distance. The on-trend emphasis of the store is balanced by the presence of the miscellaneous items and funky jewelry that make a thrift store charming. While other options will

offer slightly cheaper prices, the proximity to campus, fantastic selection and ambient music drifting through the store puts Gracie's Closet at the top of the list.

2. Blast Off Vintage

Blast Off Vintage is the most eclectic shop on this list, boasting racks of fur coats, a plethora of strange hats, and a pair of thigh-high cowboy boots. The unpredictability of this thrift store, accompanied by its fair prices, make it one of the best thrifting spots in Salem. The relatively small space the store occupies along with its plentiful wall decor and lingering smell of dust makes Blast Off Vintage perfect for a cozy fall thrifting trip. For music lovers, it offers a diverse selection of secondhand records and CDs, which can be found next to the gigantic heap of shoes in the corner. Be warned: the items are mostly organized by color rather than size, but the process of digging through an endless collection of chaps may just lead shoppers to find something special.

3. Goodwill Outlet (Portland Road)

Nothing beats the price of the bins, and for broke college students, this is one of the best thrifting options in Salem. If you want to momentarily escape the financial stresses of inflation by being able to buy a pair of lightly-used jeans for \$3, this is the place for you. While chances of finding something wearable at this thrift store are lower than other places, you

might just get lucky. You never know what you might find in the bins, so bring gloves and patience.

4. Goodwill Industries of the Columbia (Lancaster Drive)

While the prices of this Goodwill are a bit steeper than its counterpart a few minutes away, the chances of encountering unwashed socks here are much slimmer than at the bins. This spot easily had the largest used shoe selection in Salem and it was one of the few thrift stores organized by size rather than color. This is a great option for people who appreciate an organized store layout and want to shop on a low budget without encountering mystery items. While Goodwill lacks the charm of the small businesses higher on the list, it's always a solid option.

5. Dittos Wear

Dittos Wear was by far the most high-end thrift store I visited, with a few items exceeding \$50. That being said, the selection of pieces at this store was truly unmatched. From unique knit sweaters to sports jerseys and jeans of all styles, this store is a great option for anyone who is looking for fashionable vintage items at a discounted price. It offers a vast selection of dresses for special occasions and great jewelry options. Dittos Wear is relatively small but makes up for this by being the closest option to campus. For those who are willing to spend a little more to find something great, Dittos Wear is a great option.

Defensive powerhouse Dream Takemoto makes waves in the Northwest Conference, leads in digs

Leslie Gomez • Staff Writer

At just 5-foot-3, sophomore defensive specialist Dream Takemoto ('28) may not grab the eye by height, but she is already becoming a driving force for Willamette's volleyball team. On Nov. 8, the Bearcats clinched a playoff berth at No. 4 in conference. Takemoto led the Northwest Conference in total digs on the regular season, and on Nov. 10, she earned NWC Defensive Player of the Year and First-Team honors.

From Waipahu, where island breezes and community courts form the backdrop of daily life, Takemoto made the jump to Salem, Oregon, bringing with her the spirit of Hawaii. For Takemoto, this means humility, determination and an under-the-radar competitiveness.

As a defender/libero (DS/L) for the Bearcats, Takemoto's role is all about anticipation, quick feet and reading the game. This season, she has already earned plenty of recognition: on Nov. 3, she was named the Northwest Conference Defensive Student-Athlete of the week for the third time, highlighting her impact on the court and her effectiveness in a role that rarely makes headlines.

Takemoto first picked up the sport in elementary school and never put it down. "I started playing competitively around fourth or fifth grade. Then, in my senior year, I realized I really wanted to continue playing. I didn't want to stop. So I started reaching out to coaches, and that's how I found Willamette," she said.

In high school, Takemoto

focused on her skills as a defender. As a member of the varsity team, surrounded by experienced players, she learned the importance of having a solid community in volleyball. Takemoto immediately gravitated toward the family-like atmosphere of the Bearcat program. The transition from island life to Oregon was a big one, but the people made it easy, she said. "I have a really good support system with my teammates and my coach. We were able to have connections outside of volleyball. I've been able to become friends with other student athletes who I have other things in common with."

For many athletes from Hawaii, getting noticed by mainland colleges can be a challenge. "Unlike athletes on the mainland [who] are able to drive to tournaments, we have to fundraise and prep for the entire season," Takemoto said. "Maybe you would go on maybe two or three big trips." Her perseverance and determination is constantly being shown, through playing varsity in high school and continuously reaching out to coaches from the mainland with highlight reels.

The quiet power of a libero is often overlooked in highlight reels. Yet in Takemoto's case, the ability to read hitters, get teammates up for offense, and anchor the backcourt gives her an outsized role in the Bearcats' rhythm, a fact that shows up tangibly on the court.

What stands out the most about Takemoto isn't just her quick reads — it's the way she builds trust



Dream Takemoto celebrates a point at Willamette volleyball's spring tournament on April 5, 2025.
Photo by PATRICIA KREPEL

and togetherness among her teammates. For Takemoto, volleyball has always been about relationships. "I really love being able to connect with my teammates," she said.

The sense of connection pays off when the pressure is on, as seen on an Oct. 17 match against Whitworth — last year's conference champions — where the Bearcats stunned the Pirates 3-2. "Our team hasn't won against them in three seasons," she noted. "It was amazing to work together. It made it a really special

game for us."

Takemoto finds meaning in the moments between the points. The trust she has in her team directly reflects the trust she knows her team has in her. With that trust, there's no pressure to be the one making the points. "Even though I'm not always getting the kills or the blocks, I know I can do my job and defend."

The Bearcats will take on No. 1 ranked Whitworth in the conference semifinals in Spokane on Nov. 14.

Chrysler Pacifica van recall impedes ODP, Castaway plans

Ruby Hampton • Staff Writer



A Chrysler Pacifica van parked in the Enterprise Rent-A-Car lot at 2385 Mission St. SE, Salem, Oregon on Nov. 10, 2025.

Photo by PATRICIA KREPEL

It's not just the government shutdown that's been impacting Willamette's outdoor clubs this semester. This July, Willamette's fleet of rental vans, the 2022-2025 Chrysler Pacificas, were recalled nationwide due to improperly-sealed airbag seams, throwing a wrench in the plans of some student clubs.

The recall has affected various

clubs and athletic programs on campus, especially the Outdoor Program (ODP) and Castaway Club.

These vans, and other vehicles like trucks, can be rented by any student leader through the approval of Samantha Bruce with the Willamette Student Affairs office. Castaway WU rents a large number of vans from Enterprise, which uses Pacifica vans,

as most of their events are off-campus and outdoors. They average about two to four vehicles per event and get stuck with the sedans more often than not.

Eyan Hackney ('26), the founder and executive director of Castaway, was unable to get the desired vans the club requested for an annual BBQ from Enterprise because of the recall. Instead, they were given five six-seater sedans, which proved to be too small and forced the club to take multiple trips back and forth in order for everyone to participate. Beyond that, Hackney mentioned that the recall wasn't the first time the van rental system has caused troubles for the organization.

"To be honest with you, the entire system we have set up with Enterprise has some issues in and of itself, outside the recalling of vans," Hackney said. "For example, because we rent through Enterprise, their systems don't necessarily know how important our events are and things like that, so you'll show up sometimes and they won't even have the vehicle ready for you."

Now, replacement vans provided by Enterprise are seven- to eight-seater vehicles, which are slightly larger and have more storage space than the Pacificas.

Hackney mentioned that he enjoyed the larger replacement vans more than the standard Pacifica vans,

noting, "They aren't that much bigger, they're just more ... spacey."

Kira Grimes ('26), the head of the Outdoor Program, explained that the day before ODP leaders were supposed to pick up their reserved vans for a backpacking trip, Enterprise called and informed them that they did not have any seven-seater vehicles available.

"We had a backpack trip going out, two minivans reserved, and since they didn't have those, they said they could offer us three five-seater vans, which ended up working out fine because we happened to have three leaders scheduled for that trip, but we typically only have two leaders scheduled for trips." Had the trip been scheduled with only two, Grimes explained, ODP would have had to rearrange all of their plans.

Grimes also mentioned that Willamette student leaders often feel less comfortable driving the larger minivans. Enterprise suggested using 15-seater passenger vans, but vans that large are not covered under Willamette's insurance policy and are also not eligible to be driven by most student leaders because of a 22-and-older age limit.

"We've been lucky we have been able to scrape by," Grimes said. "Everyone's trying to do the best that they can, and everyone is trying to be flexible."

Bearcat soccer goals leader Claire Warthen talks leadership, filling the scoring vacuum

Virginia Vaughan • Staff Writer

Coming into 2025, Willamette women's soccer found itself in a bit of a scoring vacuum.

Last season, center forward Nina Krassner-Cybulski ('25) bagged a whopping 11 of the team's 20 total goals on the season, ranking in the top 3 in the Northwest Conference in multiple individual offensive categories. This year, the team has struggled to find an attacking authority adequate to fill Krassner-Cybulski's cleats. But the stats are more evenly divided across the board: despite the Bearcats' lack of Krassner-Cybulski, the team has managed to score nearly the same number of total goals this season as last year. Attempting to fill this vacuum is midfielder Claire Warthen ('27), who has proven herself to be a force of nature in her own right.

Warthen has been playing soccer since she could walk. Soccer is a major constant in her life, but this year she's stepped up as an offensive powerhouse in a way not normally seen from the "8" position, more classically understood as a box-to-box midfielder. She sits at five goals on the season as of Nov. 6, a stat that ranks her tied for No. 5 in the conference, and in total points she's ranked No. 8 with 10. These stats outpace not only the rest of her teammates but also her own goal total from last year — Warthen bagged only one goal on the season in 2024.

The gap left behind by Krassner-Cybulski and the other graduated senior players was an opportunity for Warthen to step up and be the person she looked up to. Now that Warthen is a junior, she has a dif-

ferent perspective on being a leader: "Freshman year, you don't know what you're doing. Sophomore year, there are two years of people ahead of you who are telling you what to do. This year, it's like you don't have someone telling you what to do, and you have to do it yourself."

When asked why this year has been more successful for her, Warthen explained, "You have to be the leader you always looked up to." This year, stepping into that leadership role on the soccer team has helped her become more confident. For Warthen, that confidence has aided her both in her leadership roles around campus as well as in her offensive efforts on the pitch.

Warthen is a Politics, Policy, Law, and Ethics (PPL) major and finds that a lot of her studies involve "learning how to interact with people and learning how to interact with the world around us, along with how to do so in an equitable and fair way." Interacting with her teammates and seeing who works well together on the field has emulated the aspect of PPL that involves understanding people and figuring out how they click.

For Warthen, the team aspect of soccer is one of her favorite parts of the game; she enjoys figuring out "all the team dynamics and team chemistry." Learning about why a certain formation works better with certain players has helped her become a better leader, she said.

In these ways, soccer has helped Warthen with soft skills that she has been able to apply to her life and major. For example, playing a



Claire Warthen ('27, left-front) hypes up her teammate during walkouts on Sept. 18, 2024.

Photo by KEENAN YOSHIZAWA

team sport has taught her to navigate everyday life by being as clear as possible with her communication. "In soccer, I don't always have time to tell you all the specific details, so you learn how to communicate concisely," she said.

She lives her life based on a piece of advice her father has always said: "Everyday is an opportunity for learning and growth." Warthen applies the motto to every test and conversation she has, good or bad. Through all the things she is involved in, from being on Willamette's wom-

en's soccer team to being a Resident Advisor and working at the Capitol, Warthen learns from these opportunities and applies them to her people skills, something that she credits soccer for helping her with.

Despite not adding any goals to pad her stats over the weekend of Nov. 8-9, Warthen continued to demonstrate her offensive prowess, adding two shots to round out her season total to a solid 36.

The squad rounded out the conference season at two wins, six losses and eight ties.

Floso, south Salem’s go-to sweet treat bev spot

William Weeks • Staff Writer

Perhaps you’ve seen their turquoise and hot pink truck in a Commercial Street parking lot. Maybe you’ve seen their bright beverages around campus. The fact of the matter is, Floso fever has struck Willamette to its core. Soon, the shop will shed its wheels and move into a new drive-through storefront where the truck originally parked at 2390 Commerical St. SE.

Offering dirty sodas, energy drinks and refreshers, Floso’s menu is extensive. For the more creative thirsters, they offer a make-your-own-drink option. With three kinds of cream, four purees, 28 regular syrups and 18 sugar-free syrups, flavorings are essentially endless. And don’t forget they have 14 different base sodas to choose from, including Floso’s own energy mix. Medium sodas and refreshers cost \$4.50 while energy drinks go for \$5.50. For large and small, just add or subtract a dollar, respectively.

Floso isn’t the first of its kind. The first dirty soda shop, Swig, opened in 2010 in St. George, Utah. Though the term “dirty” is usually used to describe alcohol, these drinks, which are heavily associated with the Church of Latter Day Saints, are only spiked with juice, syrups or flavor shots.

Whether through TikTok or “The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives,” the trend of fancy sodas caught on, making its way to Salem in Floso’s opening last year. Now, lines of cars gather in the parking lot for one purpose: a sweet treat. And as long as people fancy that sweet treat, business will be booming for this drink truck.

All photos taken at Floso on Oct. 27, 2025.



Abby Staniec ('26) handing a Peachy Pep out of the window of the truck.
Photo by PATRICIA KREPEL



Mid process of Floso worker [Abbey Staniec ('26)] topping off a Classic soda (Dr. Pepper with lime and coconut puree) with their vanilla creamer.
Photo by PATRICIA KREPEL



Three of Floso's most popular drinks: the Caramel Apple (fall special), Teddy (Floso Energy), and a Peachy Pep (soda).
Photo by PATRICIA KREPEL



Mid process of a worker [Abbey Staniec ('26)] making one of Floso's most popular energy drinks, the Sunrise (Floso Energy with pineapple, peach and mango puree).
Photo by PATRICIA KREPEL



The Floso Dirty Soda truck, currently located on 2651 Commercial St. SE while a drive-thru is built at the original location.
Photo by PATRICIA KREPEL

Early November Crossword

Crossword by EZRA NELSEN

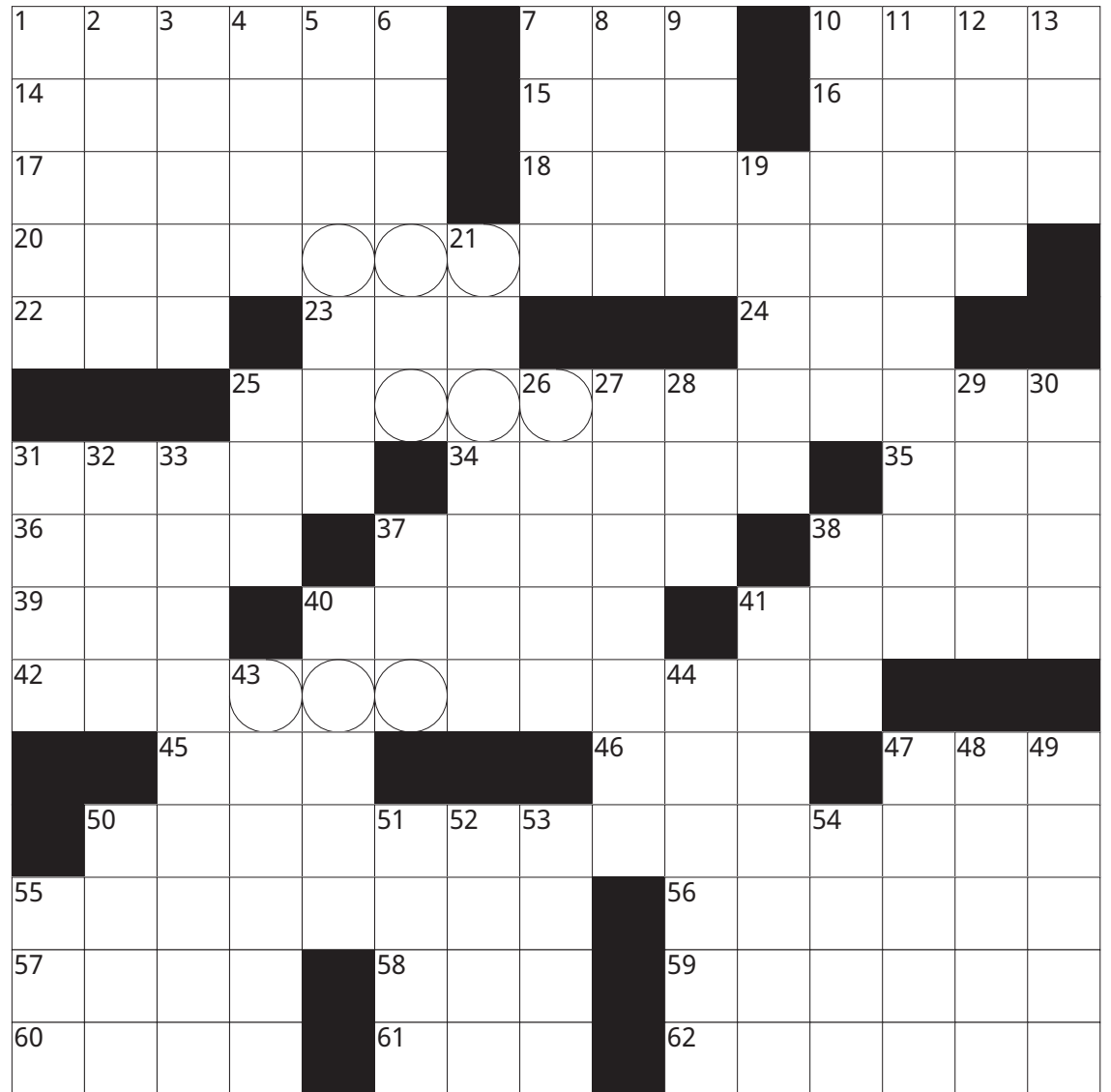
ACROSS

- 1 Backups
- 7 __ Paulo, Brazil
- 10 "Put __ on it!"
- 14 Start up again
- 15 RPG featured in "Stranger Things"
- 16 Measly
- 17 Famous Kendrick Lamar line
- 18 Instructions for a getaway driver
- 20 British wax museum
- 22 Fr. holy title
- 23 "__ , humbug!"
- 24 C, G, A, and T holder
- 25 "Abbey Road" opening track
- 31 Region directly north of London
- 34 Word that follows solar or judicial
- 35 Gymnast, Raisman
- 36 __ baby
- 37 Dealt with
- 38 Vase handle
- 39 Abu Dhabi is it's cap.
- 40 Oven setting
- 41 Sleepy Joe
- 42 "The Thing" weapon which MacReady uses
- 45 Barbie's boyfriend
- 46 TV control
- 47 Part in a play?
- 50 Compromised, and a hint for 20-across, 25-across, and 42-across
- 55 Teaching opposite
- 56 Once divided city
- 57 Additionally
- 58 Place
- 59 Skin care brand

- 60 "Lord of the Flies" characters
- 61 Off-roader
- 62 Shredder

DOWN

- 1 Strollers, in 31-across
- 2 Paul of "American Graffiti"
- 3 Tolerate
- 4 Singer Hendryx
- 5 Shouldered music player
- 6 Twitch broadcast
- 7 SoCal home of the Aztecs
- 8 Hill dwellers
- 9 Dedicated poems
- 10 Total
- 11 Help out
- 12 1998 Goo Goo Dolls hit
- 13 Lions, on scoreboards
- 19 Racket sport invented in Mexico
- 21 Hundred acre wood title
- 25 Corp. leader
- 26 Jaguar food
- 27 Bob Marley classic
- 28 H.S. proficiency test
- 29 Programming clause
- 30 "Saving Private __"
- 31 Sufficient, slangily
- 32 Make an impression?
- 33 Prohibition bar



Crossword puzzle solutions are posted on our website: www.willamettecollegian.com

- 37 Old PC monitor
- 38 Cause of inflation?
- 40 Country between Togo and Nigeria
- 41 Reckon
- 43 Subway systems
- 44 Burrowing marsupial
- 47 Austrian psychologist, Alfred
- 48 "Crazy" singer, Patsy
- 49 It's between Baritone and Alto
- 50 NBA star Anthony's nickname
- 51 Mangrove palm
- 52 Carpentry fastener
- 53 "Property Brothers" network
- 54 De Matteo of "The Sopranos"
- 55 Like some rats



Not a quack-ademic weapon.
Comic by ADDIE MARTIN

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