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Photojournalism: A Portland ICE protest as captured by Willamette student

Alan Cohen • Freelancer

Several hundred people marched and protested in front of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility in Portland, Oregon on Saturday, October 4, 2025. ... At least two people were taken into custody and transported inside the facility as federal agents in riot gear deployed multiple rounds of tear gas.

Read more on page 7.

A protester offers flowers to federal agents in riot gear at a protest in front of the ICE facility in Portland, Oregon.
Photo by ALAN COHEN



Director of Campus Safety discusses recent library bomb threat

Alexander Berry • Staff Writer

On Tuesday, Sept. 30, Willamette University received an anonymous bomb threat to the Willamette libraries.

The Salem Reporter reported that Willamette staff received the bomb threat at 8:40 a.m. to a university email. In an interview with The Collegian, Executive Director of Campus Safety AJ Christensen specified that the threat came through the Bearcat admissions office.

Other universities, including Nazareth University and Rochester Institute of Technology, reported similar bomb threats Sept. 30. WXXI News disclosed that students received text messages warning of a bomb threat, which authorities believe is part of a larger social media trend. Christensen had limited information about other universities' bomb threats and could not comment on them.

Willamette & PNCA Crime And Fire Log reported the incident at 8:45 a.m. under pending suspicion at the Hatfield Library.

Students were evacuated soon after campus safety was notified, and the community was alerted through email at 9:29 a.m. about a threat to the Hatfield Library and the evacuation that had followed; however, further details were not disclosed at that time. The Willamette community received an "all clear" message around 11 a.m., and the Hatfield library reopened.

Regarding the specificities of the threat, Christensen said, "The threat that we received had a very specific motive, it had a means by which the threat was going to be carried out, it had the location in which the threat was going to occur, and it even had a



Jackson Plaza and the Mark O. Hatfield Library blocked by cones as officials search the area on Sept. 30.

Photo by SKEET STARR

vehicle which was associated with the threat. So it was very specific."

However, as the specific library was not disclosed in the threat email, both Hatfield and J.W. Long Law libraries were searched. The Salem and broader Oregon police departments searched for the vehicle mentioned in the email but were unable to locate it.

During this time, the FBI was sent the threat as well to investigate, and the Willamette University IT team, Willamette Information Technology Services, has been looking

into the data of the email to find potential sourcing. However, there is no further information on the success of these actions.

Christensen said that he, alongside the Salem Police Department and Oregon State Police Department, worked together to ensure the campus' safety throughout the incident. During the evacuation process — which was extended to around 20 minutes due to a few students occupying the bathrooms — the Hatfield Library was searched. Christensen made the executive decision to search

the J.W. Long Law Library as well, which was not evacuated. Nothing was found in either location.

In the case of the Sept. 30 threat, four lines of action were taken, as Christensen explained. The first line of action was to evacuate. Then, the on-campus safety team alongside local law enforcement came together to ensure neighboring buildings potentially affected by the threat were safe as well, including an external sweep of the University Center to investigate potential suspicious activity. After this investigation, a more thorough sweep of the building was conducted, concluded by the sending out of a timely warning to avoid hysteria whilst informing the community. Once the community was informed, internal work began for the police forces to further investigate the source of the email.

Involving higher authorities, such as the Salem and Oregon state police departments, allows Willamette to gain access to more resources.

"There is likely one [campus safety] officer on at times," Christensen said, "whereas a situation like [on Sept. 30], Oregon state police could respond with multiple officers and help clear a building and secure areas, while tracking down the immediate threat to keep everyone safe."

Christensen has remained in contact with a sergeant from the Salem Police Department.

The status of the investigation remains pending, and campus safety continues to collaborate with local, regional and federal authorities on this matter.

WU receives National Science Foundation grant in collaboration with Pacific University amidst federal funding challenges

Avneet Dhaliwal • Staff Writer



Front of Olin Science Center at Willamette University on Oct. 6, 2025.
Photo by SOFIE SZIGETI

On Thursday, Oct. 2, Pacific University and Willamette University were awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) scholarship from program “Track 2” for furthering development of science teaching fellows in the Pacific Northwest.

Out of the four tracks available from the NSF, “Track 2” allows a majority of the grant funds to be utilized for students over a length of five years. Pacific University is the main awardee for this grant, with Willamette the sub-awardee. In the sub-awardee category are also the Woodburn and Hillsboro school districts along with the Murdock Charitable Trust. The purpose of the grant is to encourage more students to con-

sider a science teaching position as a viable and stable career path.

This particular grant from NSF is unique, as it doesn’t follow the typical order in which the money is distributed. For other grants, before the money reaches the awardee, some funds are used for “overhead” costs and for financing the salary of certain staff members. The overhead is what is taken out of a chunk of the grant money for the institution.

“For example, if a grant of \$1 million is received, up to 40%-60% of the grant can be used by the university just for maintaining various buildings around campus,” said David Craig, professor of biology at Willamette University. However, the science teaching fellows NSF grant

will go directly to students participating in science teaching programs and fellowships.

Students from Willamette participating in the program will have professor Craig as an advisor, but much of the educational instruction and teaching will be done on Pacific University’s main campus. However, Willamette students will also be shadowing and student-teaching at high schools in the Salem-Keizer district.

The “Try Teach” program, funded by the grant and led by Pacific University, aims to let science students experience what a teaching position feels like without expenses or lack of resources posing a barrier. The program works with local high schools near college campuses to create lasting bonds between students, teachers, and between educational institutions.

Pacific has already seen success in the Try Teach program, through its connection to Woodburn schools. “[Pacific University’s connection] to Woodburn is particularly strong...going back the last 15 years,” said Jason Niedermeyer, one of the leading directors of the Try Teach program and applied professor of education at Pacific University. “The percent of teachers in the Woodburn school district that came from the Pacific-Woodburn program is well in the double digits.”

With rapid changes being introduced at the federal level, the process of receiving the grant took far longer than usual. The grant team applied back in November of 2024 and would have typically heard a definite

answer from the NSF in February of 2025. However, the grant was not officially awarded to both universities until August of 2025. The grant team was asked by NSF to correct their definitions and use of language used in the application which circled around documenting one’s personal story and using it to empower themselves on their path as they transition from being a student to a teacher.

“There was a list of words that could get your [application] excluded and thrown out. Then, [our] challenge became how to go and keep [our original] concepts in the grant and then rewrite it,” Craig said.

Moving forward, applying for grants will pose more of a challenge, especially if the causes it will be used for do not align with the goals of the Trump administration.

“Essentially, [the administration] will not fund any project that proposes anything to do with race [or sex] anymore,” Associate Director of Grants at Willamette University Erin Boers said.

Despite challenges in receiving the grant, all personnel involved in the functioning and teaching of the program are looking forward to working with students to create a safe space for them to explore an alternate career path as well as help them to develop their own stories as they lead future generations of students to forge their own.

“In the same way, [we’re] planting acorns to have oak trees that [we’ll] never see,” Craig said. “[I’m] helping people become high school science teachers so they [will] train students that I’ll never get to see.”

ASWU moves forward with endowment management plan, seeks board of trustee approval

Robin Linares • News Editor

On Thursday, Oct. 2, the Associated Students of Willamette University (ASWU) senate voted 12-1 with one abstention to approve the new divestment proposal to remove the ASWU endowment from the Willamette University endowment. Now, ASWU seeks board of trustee approval of the proposal.

The new proposal requests to remove the approximately \$400,000 ASWU endowment funds from the university endowment and place the funds in a general ledger (GL) account, a type of account that acts similarly to a checking account, meaning that the funds would not be invested elsewhere and would not accrue any interest. Under the proposal, the funds would no longer be considered an endowment, and would be renamed the ASWU reserve. Funds in this GL account would not be invested in any way. However, ASWU would gain more financial control over the ASWU endowment and would no longer need to seek board approval to withdraw funds from it.

This proposal differs from the initial plan ASWU voted on this past April following a months-long task force looking into potential endowment management options, which voted to divest under the assumption that ASWU could reinvest the funds under a separate ASWU-controlled endowment management fund. However, this semester, university administrators notified ASWU exec that this plan would no longer be an option, hence the new proposal.

While the senate vote was overwhelmingly in favor of moving forward with the divestment plan, one senator and former ASWU endowment task force member, Ernest Jones (’28) voted no on the proposal. In conversation with the Collegian, he expressed concern about the financial future of ASWU under this new proposal due to the lack of possible reinvestment opportunities.

With the new proposal approved, ASWU President Stevie Bergstrom (’26) explained the next steps towards full endowment man-

agement. She is currently in communication with Anne Gallagher, the vice president of finance and chief financial officer, to submit a formal request to divest under the senate-approved proposal. Gallagher will then act as a liaison between ASWU and the board of trustees’s endowment committee. The endowment committee is a subcommittee of the board that is responsible for oversight of the endowment and will review ASWU’s proposal.

The board of trustees’s next general and subcommittee meetings are to be held in late October. This is a developing story. The Collegian will continue to report on this as more information becomes available.

Understanding ASWU’s endowment management proposal

General endowment facts:

- Current endowment balance is approximately \$400,000
- Each year, 2.5% of student fees have been deposited in the ASWU endowment
- The board of trustees oversees the strategic direction and fiscal health of the university
- Limits exist on the amount that can be withdrawn from the fund each year

Current management

- Invested alongside the Willamette University endowment
- Endowment managed by Global Endowment Management (GEM)
- ASWU must follow board of trustee guidelines to withdraw any funds
- ASWU funds that reside in the endowment are subject to market fluctuations which can result in earnings and losses

Proposed management

- Funds would be separate from Willamette’s endowment
- Would be put into a General Ledger (GL) account allowing funds to carry over each year
- Funds would be overseen by ASWU and their advisor to ensure spending follows university guidelines
- Funds would not be reinvested elsewhere

Amendment: The article “ASWU to vote on endowment divestment plan — with new parameters,” published in issue 1, volume CXLI characterized ASWU’s recent endowment proposal as including the movement of funds to a savings account, and added that the endowment would be “controlled” by the board of trustees. After release, Lisa Landreman further articulated that the proposal seeks to move endowment funds to a general ledger (GL) account, not a savings account, and that while the GL account would be kept as university funds, decisions regarding its expenditure specifically would lie with ASWU.

Professor Richard Ellis published once more; a look back on Lincoln.

Caelyn Ochs • Staff Writer

Released in February, Willamette professor Richard Ellis' latest book seeks to tackle the question: What do presidents actually have the power to do?

Ellis has taught political science at Willamette University for 35 years. Throughout his lengthy career, he has published an array of books and textbooks, focusing on the history of the American presidency and American political culture. His newest publication, titled "Lincoln's Last Card: The Emancipation Proclamation as a Case of Command," was released on Feb. 25, to coincide with President's Day.

The book focuses on the Emancipation Proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln's 1863 wartime executive order which granted the legal freedom of people enslaved in Confederate states, through the lens of political scientist Richard Neustadt's understanding of presidential power.

Ellis explained the idea for the book stemmed in part from "hearing people talk about what [President Joe] Biden should do with a sort of stroke of a pen, that he could change American politics if he [would] just [be] bolder or braver." He shared that the public tends to "think [that] Lincoln did this on his own by this sort of bold declaration, and what I was trying to show in the book is that

that's really not the way presidential leadership happens."

Ellis hopes to highlight the ways in which Lincoln was pushed into signing the proclamation by congress and pressure from antislavery activists. Most importantly, Ellis argues that the proclamation came only after Lincoln repeatedly failed to persuade the Border States to adopt his own preferred plan of gradual, compensated emancipation, preferably with colonial emigration of free Black people. In his book, Ellis expands on how Lincoln had done his best to explore other options before giving in to Congress' demands. "The argument of the book is as the title suggest[s], that [the proclamation] was his last card," Ellis said.

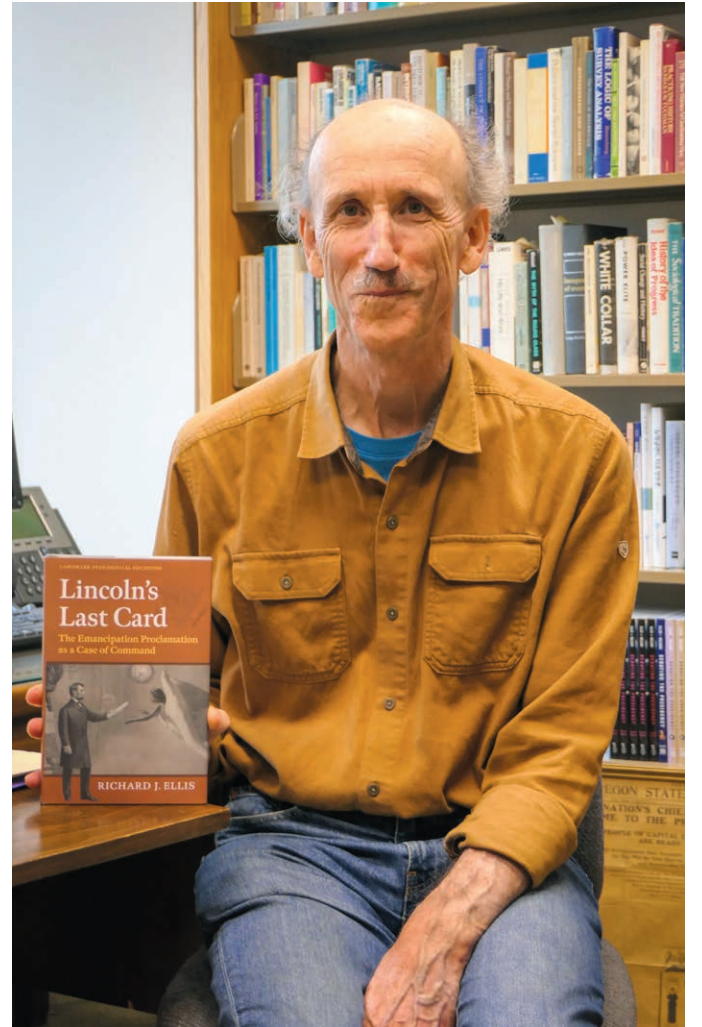
Ellis started writing and researching for this book during his last sabbatical, in the fall of 2023. This research resulted in the shortest book he has ever written, but the choice of length was intentional. "The idea for the book was that it would be for classroom use, and it would be short and accessible," he said. With the book only being 101 pages, Ellis hopes it will be easier for teachers of the presidency to incorporate the book into their courses.

During the writing process, Ellis did not just get the chance to look back on American history but also on himself and his teaching ca-

reer. When he first came to Willamette, he gave a job talk on Lincoln and Lincoln's leadership. "Writing this book was kinda fun because it was a chance to go back to the job talk that I gave 35 years ago and revisit the subject of Lincoln and also make use of all the Lincoln books I'd accumulated over 30 years that I wasn't sure I would ever get to use," he stated.

Professor Ellis hopes this book is useful for classes and can help shape the way the presidency is taught. In doing so, he wants to continue to help educate students on the truth of the past and the present, as he has for the last three and a half decades.

"Lincoln's Last Card: The Emancipation Proclamation as a Case of Command" is available for purchase on Amazon.



Ellis poses with his new book on Sept. 29, 2025. Photo by JACK GODSIL

Different oaks for different folks: Willamette's Oak Fest celebration

William Weeks • Staff Writer



Students planting oak saplings during Willamette University's Oak Fest on Oct. 3, 2025. Photo by MAC CHILDERS

Even parents could be found meandering with Willamette students and other community members to celebrate the fourth annual "Oak Fest" from Oct. 2-5.

This year's Fest, an event organized by Growing Oaks, covered a wide range of events such as an ecological tour of Bush Pasture Park, a potluck dinner presenting a natural dye workshop with oak materials, and a winery shindig. A student-led grant project funded by CAFES, Growing Oaks aims not only to live up to its name and "grow oaks" but

also assists student research and fosters connections between communities in and around Willamette, as well as the Indigenous tribes of the land.

Oak Fest opened this year's first event with a panel for the college colloquium students of biology professor and Growing Oaks cofounder David Craig. For the panel, author Dr. David Lewis was brought to campus to discuss his work, which doubled as the colloquium students' required reading.

Lewis is a professor of anthropology at Oregon State Universi-

ty (OSU) and a member and former historian of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, a descendant of the Takelma, Chinook, Molalla, and Santiam Kalapuya peoples of western Oregon. His book is the first Indigenous history of the local area. Around 15 students from OSU and Linfield also attended the event.

The next day, Oct. 3, was a doubleheader. Kicking the day off with a tour of Bush Park, attendees observed the oaks and Willamette's football stadium while receiving a history of the park. Craig articulated that it's thanks to the help of Indigenous communities such as the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, philanthropists and many others that this park is so biodiverse and beautiful today.

Later that afternoon, several environmental and cultural clubs such as Castaway Club, Native and Indigenous Student Union, and Climate Action Alliance met at the community garden on campus and shared their ongoing projects while potting acorns and learning the future of oaks in our environment alongside local traditions.

On Oct. 4, folks were hosted by the Grand Ronde Native Plant Nursery, focusing on education, restoration and cultural cultivation. Formerly a Christmas tree farm, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde repurchased the property to restore the land to its original ecology.

Oak trees hold an important role in nearly all cultures of the northern hemisphere. The Oregon white oak is particularly notable, be-

ing the only species of oak native to Oregon.

David Craig couldn't understate the value of these trees, noting, "The trees are also the single most important biodiversity trees, so more species of fungus, moss, lichens, spiders, millipedes, insects and birds are on these trees than any other tree in the Willamette valley or in Western North America."

The final event, held at Left Coast Estate vineyards, began with a short bird walk among the oaks of the property. During the walk, crowds were introduced to LIVE, a sustainable wine-growing certification specific to the Pacific Northwest.

Chris Serra, executive director of LIVE, discovered Growing Oaks through a Statesman Journal article, which, in conjunction with Growing Oaks, was able to plant around 8,000 trees last year.

LIVE's work has just begun. Starting with no budget just a few years ago, they now have materials and space to pot their 11,000-tree goal this year.

Concluding the event, people enjoyed pizza, wine (for those above the legal drinking limit) and live music from student performers Bad Press, Karina May and Harness. Altogether, a sense of kinship pervaded the scene.

"I love the passion behind Growing Oaks, and I want to get involved," Em Geromichalos ('29) said. As a passive attendee and colloquium student of professor Craig, she continued, "It's built a great community of like-minded individuals with similar passions and interests."

Professor Chasar's new book deep dives into the work of Bob Dylan

Maya Darski • Staff Writer



Professor Mike Chasar answers a question about his song analysis during a lecture on "The Poetry of Bob Dylan" in Willamette University's Rogers Music Hall on Oct. 1, 2025.

Photo by MAC CHILDERS

Brought together by a shared passion for the work of renowned American singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, professor Mike Chasar welcomed Willamette professors James Miley and Erik Nofle, as well as Western Oregon University professor Dr. Ryan Topper, for a book release party and discussion in Rodgers Music Center on Oct. 1.

The book in question, "The Poetry of Bob Dylan: 30 Essays on 30 Songs," is a collection of 30 essays from 30 different professors of poetry, literature, music and cultural studies, curated and edited by Chasar. Each professor selected a song by Dylan and wrote an analysis of the lyrics, music and historical context that a casual listener might not be aware of.

According to Nofle, while

there are many scholarly works on Dylan, many of them "presuppose that people know the history of the blues or surrealistic poetry. That kind of background knowledge may be hard for all students to access." Chasar's book does not presuppose this background knowledge, instead providing a breakdown of each song, bringing in context so both newcomers and longtime fans can learn something new. Nofle added, "It takes each song in on itself and applies critical analysis to figure out what the song is doing. It's a nice addition to the Dylan scholarship, and it really succeeds in being a concise and thoughtful investigation of individual songs."

The Oct. 1 book release event was interdisciplinary, much like the

book itself. Topper, who contributed one of the 30 essays to the book and could thus speak on behalf of the writing process behind it, came together with music professor Miley, psychology professor Nofle, and English professor Chasar to each play a Bob Dylan song and then discuss and analyze the different aspects and meanings of the songs.

For example, Topper discussed how the song "Highway 61 Revisited" mixes old-timey cartoonish music with rock and roll. "The history of the world is in this little song," Topper said, referring to how the song begins with imagery and references to the Old Testament of the Bible and ends with the world ending via war. Topper also connected the song to Dylan's own life going from the town of Duluth, Minnesota to New Orleans, Louisiana and how in the world of music, "laws no longer apply." The discussions held during the event are a hint at the kinds of ideas presented inside the book.

The idea of creating this book first surfaced within Chasar when Nofle, who teaches a colloquium class on Dylan, came to Chasar to ask for advice on how to better help the students understand the complexity of the words.

"In an ideal world," Chasar remarked, "I would have a big book that goes song by song explaining how the words work. I couldn't give Nofle that, but a handbook with 30 samples would give others a model by which to understand other songs."

The production of the book ran on a timeline of two years. In fall of 2023, Chasar gathered the authors and set a deadline for the essays to be submitted to him one year later. During this year in which the authors wrote their essays, Chasar put into motion the process of getting the book accepted by a publisher. He also spent the summer before the essays

were due independently studying Dylan.

"I spent four months listening to all his music, reading the lyrics, and reading what other people have written about Dylan to educate myself, so that I would be able to respond to writers credibly while editing," Chasar recalled.

Once September of 2024 rolled in, Chasar would undergo a year of editing the essays, writing an introduction and afterword, piecing them all together into one manuscript, and working with the publishing company for proofreading and working on the physical production of the book such as choosing cover art.

Chasar said, "It was thrilling to watch the essays by people I respect develop, and I am grateful that they trusted me to work with their writing and for getting a chance to have an inside view on how people's thinking evolves over multiple drafts."

The completed book, packed with analysis on songwriting and music, is a gateway to not only helping understand Dylan but understanding American songwriting and music as a medium. Chasar remarked that "when the Nobel Prize for literature was given to Dylan in 2016, it praised 'Bob Dylan and the American songwriting tradition.' Dylan became representative of the American songwriting tradition as a whole. So, this award not only recognized one American writer but a whole American art form, and it's an art form that people engage with daily. Bob Dylan can give us the tools to better understand the music that we listen to in our daily lives."

The e-book version of "The Poetry of Bob Dylan: 30 Essays on 30 Songs" has already been released, and the physical version will be released later this month.

Opinion: What's really inside the tote bag? An analysis of the "performative male" trend

Teresa Butzerin • Staff Writer

In early August 2025, Seattle's Cal Anderson Park was the venue of a Performative Male Contest, drawing large crowds of matcha-drinking, tote-bag-wearing contestants. This event was one of many similar gatherings throughout the nation, in the wake of the performative male trend gaining significant traction on social media platforms.

For those who are unfamiliar, Urban Dictionary defines performative males as men who create a persona for themselves based on niche interests in music and literature, often feminist, in the hopes of winning the romantic favor of women. While these young men dressed in thrifted clothes and carrying around copies of Sylvia Plath's "The Bell Jar" may seem harmless or even a positive challenge to gender roles, they represent a new wave of anti-intellectualism, consumerism and toxic masculinity hiding behind a façade of insincere wokeness.

The performative male taking center stage of social media discourse in the last year has contributed to a

subtle but growing wave of anti-intellectualism specifically targeted towards men. It promotes the idea that men cannot engage in "feminine" hobbies or enjoy certain media without appearing disingenuous to onlookers, further discouraging men from taking genuine interest in literature and music.

When asked if the performative male trend has made her more likely to assume a man reading in public was doing it performatively, Lola Nelson ('29) responded, "The better part of me would say no because that kind of feels mean to assume that someone, if they're enjoying a passion ... that they're trying to do it to get attention. But also, you do have to be wary of that kind of thing now."

With his sudden interest in collecting niche vinyls and journaling in cafes, the performative male manipulates women while simultaneously making it difficult for non-performative males to engage genuinely with music and literature. (continued on next page)



The "Performative Male" paper doll with all his accessories. Art by BASIL ALLEN

Saida Seelig ('26) emphasized the negative impact that the trend has on men, specifically: "People are just assuming if a guy has interests and hobbies, it's because he's trying to impress women," they said. This trend is an unfortunate development as the number of women in higher education continues to outpace men. Between the online condemnation of "simping," toxic masculinity, and now the widespread mockery of performative males, social media is making it increasingly difficult to exist as a male-identifying person without being placed into one of these derogatory categories.

While performative males strive to appear progressive on the surface, this manipulation is perhaps even more harmful than a man being genuine about his lack of concern with feminism and "wokeness." As stated by Nelson, "They're pretending to stand for something while not actually doing anything for it because it garners female attention." Performative males cast themselves as the antithesis of "toxic masculinity" but

possess none of the necessary convictions. Their existence can create the perception that young men are becoming more empathetic and breaking through gender roles, while in fact the motivation of the truly performative male is to take advantage of women by cultivating a persona that is fundamentally deceptive.

Like most social media trends, the issue of the performative male is much smaller than online algorithms make it feel. Performative males are likely only seen in high densities attending indie concerts or wandering the isles of a local book store, but this trending archetype is one of many potentially harmful personas on the internet such as the "basic white girl," "old money" or the "clean girl" that conflate material possessions and styles with character traits.

The connection between these trends and consumerism is undeniable, as following them requires buying whatever items currently define the archetype. "It's almost as if what you consume becomes your identity," said Seelig. This may seem like

meaningless internet shenanigans to people who are able to critically view media, but the endless stream of social media trends certainly has an impact on impressionable young people who are liable to fall victim to these consumer traps.

It's not just non-performative males that are taking a hit from this viral internet persona. The trend has brought the very idea of being perceived as performative to the forefront of public discussion, leading to increased awareness of how one's interests are viewed by others. Nelson mentioned how this negative side of social media has personally affected her. "It definitely makes me more conscious of, like, 'What band tee am I wearing?' And also the things that are associated with it."

Seelig revealed a similar struggle with this hyper-awareness: "When I was on the internet, it made me feel like I was always being perceived. I felt like there was always somebody filming, in a way, even if I was just by myself." The struggle for authenticity in an increasingly

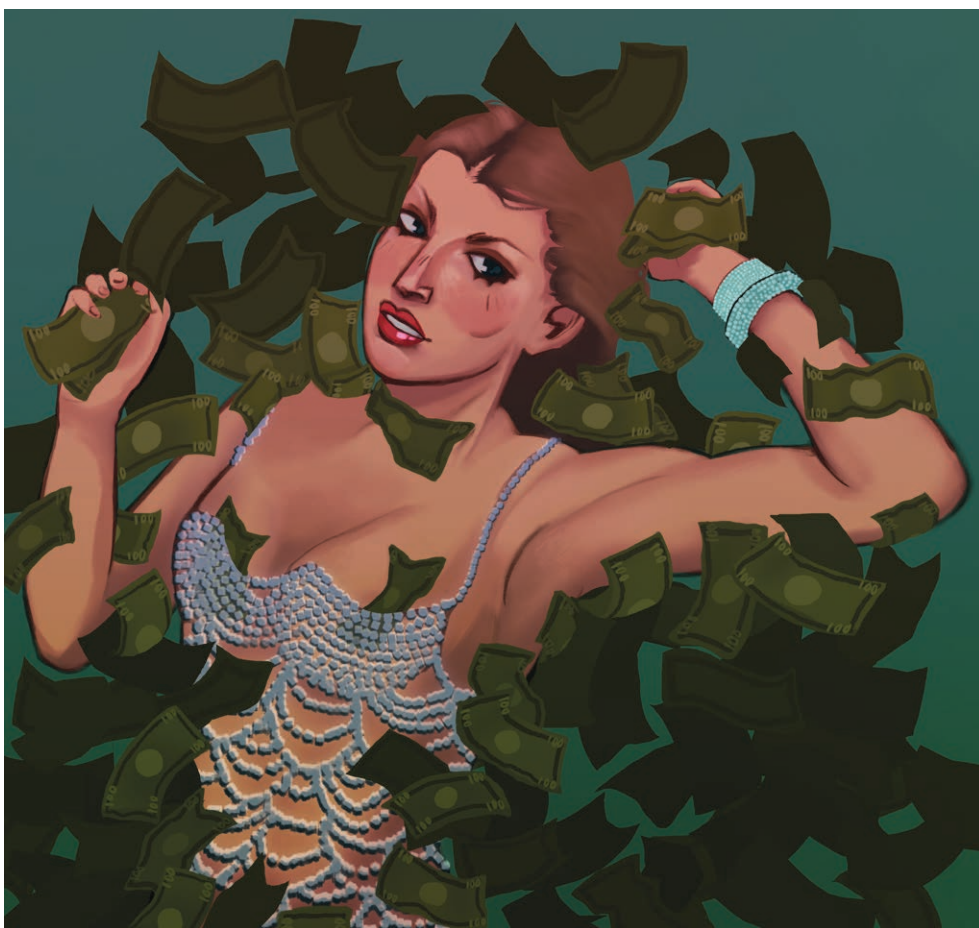
performative world has only become more apparent as these trends mutate and spread.

Seelig insightfully talked about how our interests should serve to attract the people we want to surround ourselves with. "People can and should go to the ends of the Earth to find the people that they love," they said. Humans have always displayed who we are to others by how we choose to appear. Truly performative males and their manipulations designed to take advantage of women should be differentiated from the way we all try to reflect our personalities outwards.

The performative male trend is not the first viral internet persona of its kind, and it certainly won't be the last. It's important to learn how to co-exist with the effects of social media and establish boundaries to prevent it from harming our enjoyment of life and everything it has to offer. As for the performative male, all good trends must ultimately come to an end — unfortunately for the matcha industry.

Opinion: Why Swift's most recent album fell flat

Maisy Clunies-Ross • Staff Writer



Taylor Swift posing in a bathtub as seen on the cover for her new album, "The Life of a Showgirl." Rather than water, the tub is filled with hundred-dollar bills. Art by WES MOWRY-SILVERMAN

On Oct. 3, 2025, Taylor Swift dropped her 12th studio album, the highly anticipated "The Life of a Showgirl." Within moments of its release, the album and its subsequent discourse consumed the media ecosystem. Rolling Stone released a resounding endorsement, even changing the colors of their webpage to orange and mint, the promotional colors for the album. Other publications, like Pitchfork and The Guardian released far more critical reviews. Within minutes, the din of the discourse was louder than the album. Is Taylor Swift a feminist icon? A sellout? A misogynist? A savant? Was the album good? Does any of that even matter?

In some ways, it matters for the same reason all pop culture matters. Pop culture is both a microcosm of larger socioeconomic trends and, in some cases, it is the spark from which the flames of cultural division grow. Taylor Swift is arguably the big-

gest pop star in the world right now, so the ideology promoted by her work and public persona will likely ripple throughout society. It's not Swift's responsibility to be a political figure, but to disregard her potential socioeconomic impact would be naïve.

While the current state of celebrity and Swift's position in the world make her music nearly impossible to divorce from its political and cultural implications, it seems reductive to discuss her art without analyzing the art itself. The album is unabashedly pop; it's upbeat and high energy, with a few enticing hooks and catchy choruses. Perhaps unfortunately for Swift, she is known for her lyricism, which is where this album truly falls flat. The album would be acceptable as a music teacher, but Taylor Swift is a self-identified "English teacher." Her public persona is built on some level of intellectualism. She's been lauded for her conscien-

tious engagement with literary allusions, metaphorical language and robust vocabulary.

While all of these elements are still present in "The Life of a Showgirl," her self-serious tone and her overuse of internet language detract from the quality of the writing. Lines like "Did you girlboss too close to the sun?" and "But I'm not a bad bitch / and this isn't savage" ground her perspective not in the vintage glitz and glamor she seems so desperate to emulate, but in the mind of an internet-afflicted millennial. In her last few albums, Swift saw increased exposure, as her lyrics like "I'm so depressed, I act like it's my birthday every day" became viral soundbites and sparked TikTok trends. The lyrics were the perfect kind of self-deprecating relatability to connect with a large audience, and their subsequent virality seemed to positively impact album promotion. Now, it feels as if she's writing to cater to these algorithms. Her use of online buzzwords feel like a calculated attempt to give other chronically-online women something #relatable to post about. "Married to the hustle" is for the 6:00 a.m. grindset girls, "eldest daughter" is for perpetual victims, and "cancelled" is for people who still support J.K. Rowling.

But despite her bids at relatability, Swift seems intent to distance herself from other women. Swift has long sung about her distaste for "the haters," from mean girls, to misogynistic critics, to ex-lovers, but in "The Life of a Showgirl," it feels less like she is lifting herself up and more like she is purely putting others down. This is particularly evident through her labeling of other women as "bitches" in "Honey" and throughout "Actually Romantic," theorized to be a response to Charli xcx's "Sympathy is a knife." Swift makes digs about the singer's use of cocaine and implies xcx has an obsession with her, all while utilizing more graphic language than she could muster to describe her fiancé. Swift's mean spirited critique of a biracial woman, in combination with the racial implications of distancing herself from "bad bitches," a phrase popularized by Black women, has led many to call out the exclusivity of Swift's white feminism.

The final nail in the coffin was "CANCELLED!," wherein Swift

proudly proclaims she likes her friends "cancelled ... cloaked in Gucci and scandal." One can certainly critique the immediacy of backlash and the way puritanical expectations have replaced nuance online, especially in relation to women, who Swift astutely notes can get away with far less than their male counterparts. However, Swift's mention of a designer brand immediately establishes the song as an anthem for the critique-resistant social elite. In combination with Swift's public friendship with noted Trump supporter Brittany Mahomes, the song feels less like a critique of internet mobs and more like a defensive response to any criticism of Swift and her wealthy peers.

This is the key theme of Swift's work. More than the joys of love or the plight of fame, the album is about money. As of the time this article is being written, six days after the album's release, Swift has released 28 different editions of the album. Some are limited edition, some have acoustic bonus tracks, some have varied promotional pictures or contain different colored vinyls — anything and everything for fans to purchase as much as they can. There appears to be more effort put into the promotion of the album than the music itself.

It seems that not just her artistic integrity, but her morality has fallen victim to this all-consuming quest for profit. Swift previously criticized AI, as she was both a victim of AI-generated pornography and AI-generated content endorsing then-presidential candidate Donald Trump. Swift has never been a radical political figure, nor has she ever claimed to be such, but she offered a clear, articulate statement clarifying her allegiance to the Harris-Walz campaign while highlighting the dangers of AI misinformation. As a result, the seeming use of AI in her most recent promotional cycle has left fans confused and disappointed. Unfortunate as it may be, this comes as no real surprise, considering Swift has made it clear her primary loyalty lies with herself and her bank account. While she was making fun of Charli xcx for a potential cocaine addiction, she herself suffers from an addiction to something far more dangerous: exorbitant wealth. And until she seeks treatment, her music isn't going to get any better.

Opinion: Stuffed animals aren't childish, but a keystone of college culture

Gimena Baez Baez • Staff Writer

Fluffy, stuffed and charming: a child's trusty sidekick. Stuffed animals are common objects of comfort and can function in various ways. They can be a bedtime companion, a soft shoulder to cry on after a stressful midterm, and, depending on the brand, a cute heating pad. These objects serve many purposes that children often overlook. Whether it's a ratty, washed-out teddy from childhood or a new fuzzy friend, owning a stuffed animal isn't childish. In fact, it's college culture.

Early in the college packing process, I was aware that I could not bring my entire stuffed animal collection. Bringing a stuffed animal at all concerned me a little because of the potential for judgment. As I acclimated to the Willamette community, I realized something. In an environment where stress is everywhere, people are burning out left and right, and final papers are due seemingly every other day, it's only natural to own a comforting object when one's usual friends and family are unavailable.

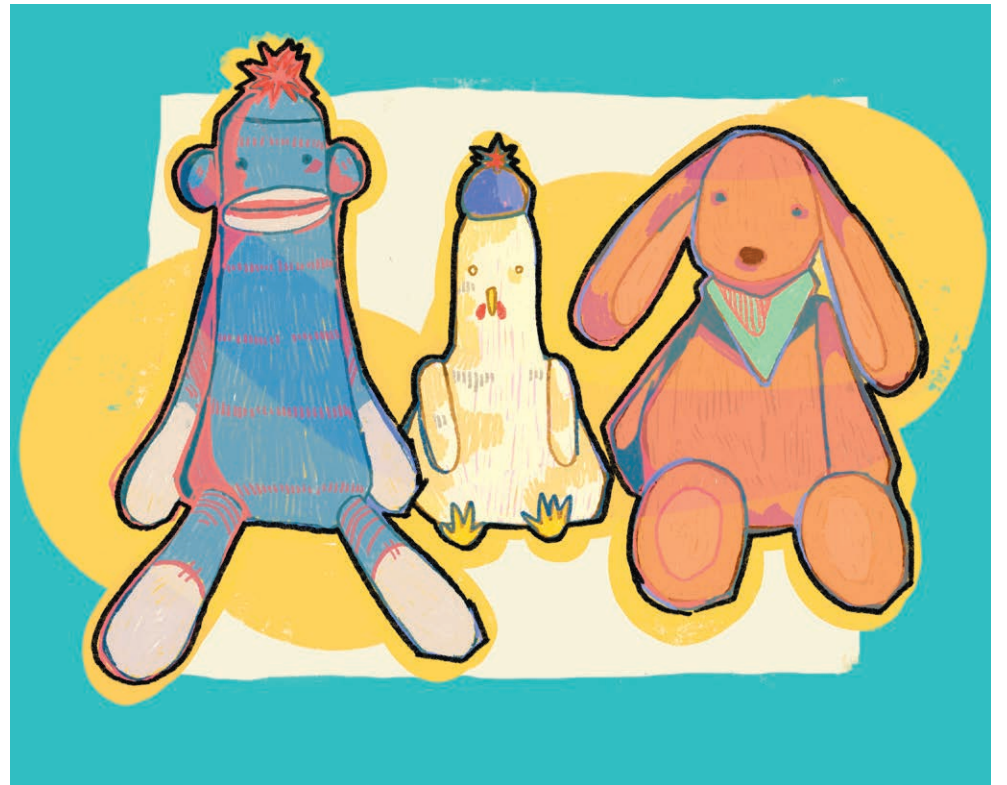
After speaking with Willamette students, it's clear that many of them wholeheartedly accept stuffed animals, even in college. Kate Rivera ('26) described stuffed animals as "excellent, perfect, amazing." She continued, "Every baddie I've ever known sleeps with stuffed animals, still," and she claimed that it "really says something about our society."

For Willamette specifically, as a campus that has a majority female student population — 62% female to 38% male, according to the *The Princeton Review* — a figure which certainly discounts a substantial por-

tion of nonbinary students — and approximately 31% students of color, there is a possibility that the diverse backgrounds of our students lead to a more accepting environment for those who, for example, still sleep with stuffed animals. In a college climate where everyone needs to appear stoic and collected, it is understandable to own an object whose sole purpose is to provide comfort. Maintaining a façade of composure is challenging, and being able to lower your guard is crucial in promoting the mental health of students. Those who have been exposed to marginalization and discrimination and don't "fit the norm" could be more accepting of others who also don't fit the norm, even if it's a wildly different circumstance.

An important point was brought forth by Thaddeus Laken Payne Billingslea ('29). He identified that stores need to "raise the size" of stuffed animals due to a lack of variation within the current market. With a staggering amount of adults still purchasing and owning stuffed animals, it's fair to ask for more size variety. A child-sized plush isn't as satisfactory to cuddle with as a larger one that's been scaled for an adult. Furthermore, truly jumbo-sized stuffed animals are mostly available around the holiday season, which doesn't seem fair for those who want non-holiday-themed jumbo-sized companions.

Lainey Hickman ('28) said that stuffed animals are "overhated." They further stated that others "shouldn't rain on their parade. ... People need to be more whimsical."



Some silly little stuffed animals.

Art by DASHA ALLYN

Though plushies aren't everyone's comfort, they explained that we should all be accepting of those who do use stuffed animals as a reset and appreciate the sillier side of life.

Overall, it seems clear — and many on Willamette's campus would agree — that stuffed animals should be destigmatized for people of all ages. These student sentiments are great news for the campus bookstore, since it even sells a Bearcat Fred Bear plush if you're really feel-

ing the Bearcat pride. Now, whether this widespread acceptance is due to the university's student body demographics, coincidence, or some other confounding factor, it's unclear. Either way, it seems that stuffed animals are an intrinsic part of college culture: a decoration in a dorm room, a reminder of home or a plush sold at the student bookstore. They're here and they're not going away any time soon, childish or not.

An overhauled men's soccer tackles steep learning curves and stiff competition

Virginia Vaughan • Staff Writer



Bearcats face off against the Lutes on Oct. 20, 2024.
Photo by KEENAN YOSHIZAWA

Willamette's men's soccer team has had a rough start to the season. As of Oct. 8, they held an overall record of 1 win, 5 losses, and 5 ties, which marks their worst first eleven matches points-wise since 2008; however, that record doesn't tell the whole story.

What the record doesn't show is that men's soccer gets an average of

10 shots per game and has scored 12 goals in 11 games played.

"We are losing games that are winnable," assistant coach Jett Starr said of the season. "We are playing in a way that's winnable. Eventually, if we keep doing the right things, then the results are a byproduct."

The team's record also doesn't show that there are 18 new players

this season, 15 of whom are first-years. For any team, the learning curve that comes with such a roster overhaul and a squad that's over 50% first-years will be steep — and that struggle definitely rings true for men's soccer.

"It's been a lot of learning. It's a lot of trying to figure out who's good at what, what roles everybody is playing, and how to actually play college soccer," said Starr.

There is a substantial jump between high school and club soccer compared to the college level: "You end up being 18 playing 22-year-olds who are just going to smack [the ball] at you and then truck you," Starr explained. The focus of the first half of the season has been about integrating all the new players into the college soccer world.

"It's all those little things," Starr added, "like how hard you work in training, that [the Willamette players] are very good at, and eventually those [skills] just build and grow."

This learning curve was most evident in the Bearcats' match against defending conference champions Pacific Lutheran on Sept. 27, the final result a 3-3 tie. Willamette scored first in the 39th minute of the game, courtesy of Ky Iliev ('29), but less than a minute later gave up a penalty kick, making it easy for the Lutes to tie it up. After halftime, another pen-

alty was given to the opposing team, and the Lutes were up by one goal, but Willamette soon equalized again with a goal from Rory McKee ('27). Pacific Lutheran won a free kick and scored their third goal of the game, only to have their lead canceled out in the 76th minute by Lorenzo Trejo De Dios ('26) through what would be the final goal of the game. Although the Bearcats came back to tie, all of Pacific Lutheran's goals came from simple fouls committed by Willamette in dangerous areas of the field. The Bearcats dominated in possession and overall skill, but simple mistakes cost them a win.

Now that the season has hit the midway point and things are getting solidified, each player is working to understand their role and what they have to do in order to create a successful team on and off the field. While the record fails to show the uphill battle of an overhauled roster, the players and coaches head into the last half of the season with a plan and optimism for the future.

Over the weekend of Oct. 11-12, the Bearcats defeated Lewis & Clark 1-0 after out-shooting them 22-4, then drew Pacific 1-1 after out-shooting them 8-3. At the time of publishing, they will have faced George Fox at home, who they tied last month after playing down a man for over half an hour.

Photojournalism: A Portland ICE protest as captured by Willamette student

Alan Cohen • Freelancer

All work courtesy of Alan Cohen (25), freelancer and former Collegian writer. Photos and some of Cohen's writing were originally published on his Instagram account: @iamalancohen.

Several hundred people marched and protested in front of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility in Portland, Oregon on Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025. They started marching from a nearby park at 12 p.m. and the protest continued throughout the evening. Protesters sang chants and held signs against President Donald Trump's deployment of military troops in the city, mass deportations of migrants and what experts regard as an ongoing genocide in Palestine.



Federal agents arrest a protester at the ICE facility in Portland, Oregon. Agents later took the protester in custody inside the facility.

At least two people were taken into custody and transported inside the facility as federal agents in riot gear deployed multiple rounds of tear gas. The protest was organized by grassroots groups such as Portland Contra las Deportaciones and Portland for Palestine.

Around 5 p.m. the same day, a federal court ruled that President Trump lacks the authority to deploy troops domestically under federal law unless under circumstances of invasion, rebellion or when the laws cannot otherwise be executed, none of which, the court ruled, are the case in Portland. The next day, the same judge ruled that such prohibition applies to any state's National Guard, not just Oregon's.



Federal agents in riot gear stand by the main entrance of the ICE facility in Portland, Oregon, shortly after deploying a round of chemical crowd control.



Hundreds march on South Moody Avenue in Portland, Oregon against ICE and President Donald Trump's deployment of troops.



Federal agents arrest a protester with a bicycle. Agents later took the protester in custody inside the facility.



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'

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Federal agents in riot gear stand by the main entrance of the ICE facility in Portland, Oregon, shortly after deploying a round of chemical crowd control.

Early October Puzzle

Crossword by EZRA NELSEN

ACROSS

- 1 Rapper, __ Rocky
- 5 __ Lanka
- 8 Soft touch
- 14 Configured key bindings
- 16 Pub device
- 17 Evaluate the worth of
- 18 Sherpa, usually
- 19 Humongous fool, or when rearranged, important exchange
- 21 Attorney's deg.
- 22 Pou __ (vantage point)
- 23 __ wave
- 24 Prefix with "kind" or "made"
- 27 USPS "graveyard"
- 29 City council rep.
- 31 Super Mario Bros. console
- 32 Persistent fibber, or when rearranged, careful contemplation
- 36 9-down, e.g.
- 37 "__ tu" (Verdi aria)
- 38 Colorful new-world parrot
- 42 Immature associate, or when rearranged, serious discussion
- 45 Network with an eye logo
- 48 CEO's corporate planner
- 49 Opposite of norte
- 50 "Roundabout" band
- 51 Little songbird
- 53 Washington __, NYC
- 55 2024 Vice presidency candidate, Walz
- 57 Jumbled information, and what 19-

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14			15				16					
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19							20					
21						22			23			
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32			33			34			35	36	37	38
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42	43	44										
45	46	47	48			49			50			
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61						62					63	64
65							66					
67							68			69		

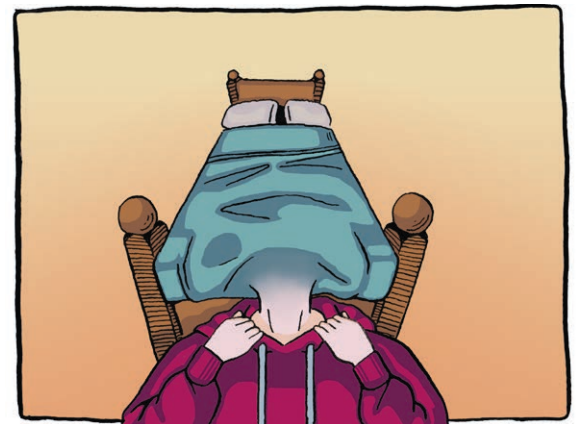
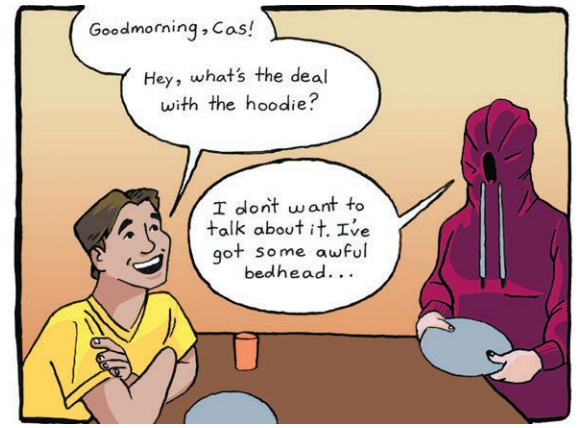
Crossword puzzle solutions are posted on our website: www.willamettecollegian.com

- 32-, and 42-across literally are
- 61 "drivers license" singer, Rodrigo
- 62 Screws right
- 65 Record protector
- 66 Like some organic salts
- 67 Chestnut horse
- 68 Finnish guns based on AKs
- 69 Grassy yard

DOWN

- 1 Greek godly altar
- 2 Jul, Aug, __
- 3 Convenience store chain
- 4 Given orally, in law
- 5 Rod for twisting yarn
- 6 Break
- 7 Concepts
- 8 Tubular Italian pastry
- 9 Guinness of "Star Wars"
- 10 Seized autos

- 11 Brightest star in Draco
- 12 __ solution
- 13 Food seasonings
- 15 British physicist who predicted anti-matter
- 20 Slanted letters
- 24 Extinct bird of New Zealand
- 25 It's easy as 1-2-3
- 26 Fishing device
- 28 Each citizen's right, in a democracy
- 30 "Hell, yeah!"
- 33 __ Quixote
- 34 Uno + due
- 35 Batman villain, __ Al Ghul
- 39 Shy
- 40 "__ you serious?"
- 41 Oz. and lb.
- 43 Abraham's first son
- 44 Power failures
- 45 "Bonnie and Clyde" gas station worker



A really serious case of bedhead.
Comic by ADRIAN AXTELL

- 46 Scouring pad brand
- 47 Hotter
- 52 "When pigs fly!"
- 54 Cool red giant
- 56 Heavy subgenre of rock
- 58 Fall
- 59 Epic
- 60 __ record
- 63 Unused
- 64 Nine-digit ID

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