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University terminates Office of Spiritual and Religious Life

Nardin Ishak • Staff Writer

The Office of Spiritual and Religious Life (OSRL) closed its doors this summer following the unexpected layoff of Chaplain Ineda Pearl Player in June. Today, members of the Willamette community remain with unanswered questions regarding the future of spiritual support on campus.

According to Lisa Landreman, vice president of student affairs, the decision to cut Pearl and close the OSRL was made due to budget cuts caused by several factors. She explained that it was partially due to the university's ongoing challenges recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic — a trend felt nationwide by higher education.

She said the financial struggles were exacerbated by last year's botched Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) rollout — which included ongoing delays and technical errors — causing lower-than-expected rates of student enrollment. Other external factors included inflation costs and students needing more financial aid. Landreman said budget goals had to be approved by the board of trustees during their meeting in mid-June.

With the university needing to cut about \$2 million, Landreman elaborated that difficult decisions had to be made while trying to protect the essence of the student experience. Since reducing faculty is much harder, given tenured positions, a few staff positions across campus were left unfilled or terminated. This included Pearl's chaplain role and the closure of the office, staffed by student workers.

"We cut as much as we could, and we still weren't gonna make that number we needed to make, so that's when we had to look at more infrastructure changes," Landreman said. "While it will certainly impact a segment of the population, there are many other things that the chaplain's office did that others can pick up or be duplicative."

Landreman said that while former Chaplain Pearl is "irreplaceable," there are a plethora of readily available worship and spiritual resources around campus. Some former programs run by the OSRL, including "search for purpose and

meaning" experiences, will continue to run under the SEAL office, such as the meditation group. Professor Maegan Brooks will continue to facilitate the "Diversity of Loss" group, Landreman said, and the Queer Inner Care community (QIC) will now be advised by Lisa Logan.

Additionally, as stated by Landreman in her "Changes in the Division of Student Affairs" email last month, Willamette University is currently in discussions with the United Methodist Church bishop of the greater northwest area about a restructured model for the university chaplain position. However, the timeline for decisions on this new model is uncertain.

While the official campus-wide email announcement wasn't made until Aug. 28, Pearl was verbally informed of the decision during a regularly scheduled meeting with Landreman on June 13. Details of the day's events vary slightly by source, including the timeframe in which Pearl was given to leave.

However, multiple sources who were present, including Landreman, confirmed Pearl cleared out her office and turned in her work computer that same day. Student interns working with Pearl over the summer helped her clear out her office. These student interns and those hired at the OSRL for the upcoming fall semester received their official notice from Landreman on June 17, a few days after Pearl, informing them of Pearl's departure and the termination of all student positions as well. Students were referred to Handshake for future on-campus employment opportunities.

Among those student workers was Q Wilson ('27), a former intern of the QIC program who worked closely alongside Pearl. They were also registered to take two fall classes, Convocation and Womanist Spirituality with Pearl to fulfill their Religious Studies major requirements.

As a staff member, Pearl wasn't required to teach classes.

However, she usually taught two classes: Convocation and a religious studies course. Once Wilson received the news of the chaplain's departure, they reached out to their advisor and the registrar's office the same day to ask what would happen with said classes. Both were surprised by the news as neither the religious department nor the registrar were made aware of her termination at that time, according to Wilson. Eventually, students enrolled in the classes received an email from the registrar informing them the classes won't be offered anymore, and students had to substitute their classes.

Wilson noted that Pearl supported underserved groups of students who sought her help as a confidential resource when they didn't necessarily want therapy or counseling services. According to Pearl's LinkedIn, she served as an instructor, the university chaplain and director of Spiritual and Religious Life at Willamette for about three years.



Waller Hall, home to the Cone Chapel
Image by Lucy Devlaeminck

Wilson helped compile a document containing 21 letters from current students and Willamette alumni sharing heart-felt thoughts about and experiences with Pearl after learning about her departure, as well as how the OSRL served and impacted them.

Additionally, there was a separate petition of faculty and community letters written and compiled by an anonymous Willamette faculty member. The petition, which highlighted the impact and importance of the OSRL and Pearl, had a total of 203 signatures from current and former faculty and staff, students, alumni, parents and community members, with shared messages of shock, dismay and

frustration. Both documents were publicly shared and directly sent to President Thorsett, the dean's office, ASWU current and former presidents, Landreman and others.

"The decision had already been made and I fully expected it," said Landreman when asked about the document and petition. "I hired her. I know what a wonderful presence she was, so it was not lost on me that people wouldn't be disappointed, shocked and upset. We anticipated we would get that. I empathize and understand."

Wilson, the faculty petition, and history Professor Wendy Boring also emphasized that Pearl was one of very few Black instructors on campus and potentially the

only Black woman instructor at the College of Arts and Sciences. Even though both the history and religious departments were willing to hire her, they couldn't, given the terms of her severance, according to Boring.

"It is hard to recruit and keep [people of color] who are willing and happy to stay at [a] predominantly white institution and location," said Boring. "She added incredible value through her identity, experience and background. ... We missed the chance to celebrate all the contributions Pearl made due to the way the decision was made."

In an emailed statement to *The Collegian*, the former chaplain shared with the Willamette com-

munity: "As I have shared publicly, as a professional caregiver, I would never 'quiet quit' or otherwise callously 'depart' or abandon those to whom I provide that professional care. I have loved all of you who make up the Willamette University community and lament the harm that has been caused to you by this decision."

"As for me," her email continued, "I am well and continue to live with integrity, compassion, and joy. Thank you to all, especially you who made the extra effort to connect with me before I had to move away for a new assignment."

Water boiler maintenance leaves Lausanne residents without hot water

Karmen Zhao • Staff Writer

Art by Ellie Starr



Lausanne residents found themselves without hot water a week after their return to campus due to initial difficulties with Lausanne and Doney's new boiler system.

Some Willamette University sophomores are no strangers to water issues in student dorms. In the fall of the 2023-24 school year, the Matthews complex lost hot water due to its own water boiler problems. The university has spent the past year addressing issues regarding the water systems, as Director of Residence Life and Housing Aaron Hukari outlined in an email interview, "The Doney [and] Lausanne water boiler project is a continuation of the boiler decentralization project that was started in 2023." This included the Baxter and Mat-

thews replacement last year and the replacement of water systems with localized water boilers this summer in Lausanne.

By Aug. 1, facilities and contractors aimed to restore hot water to the building for students moving in early. According to Hukari, since the building was built to house 155 students, Lausanne's water was inconsistent and cold from Aug. 1-23 due to low occupancy. "When the buildings have low occupancy, it's difficult for hot water to cycle through the building fast enough to remain hot," Hukari explained in the email statement. "There just isn't enough demand for the hot water so the water will cool in the pipe before getting to an open faucet or shower."

Annabelle Pastori ('27), a

third-floor Lausanne resident, first noticed the issue after moving in on Aug. 16. "At that point, the water pressure and water temperature was all out of whack," Pastori noted. Prior to the regular move-in date there was inconsistent water pressure, causing water to spray from showers, sinks and even water fountains, according to Pastori. However, these initial water problems were fixed by returning students on move-in day.

"It was a little inconvenient but I wasn't really that affected," Pastori recalled. "[Housing] was really rushing to fix it because they understood that a lot of the sophomores experienced the water shut-offs in Baxter last year so they didn't want them to have a second round of it."

Between Aug. 25-28, a spike in hot water concerns urged Facilities to find a solution, causing housing to send out an email on Aug. 28 requesting students who experienced hot water issues to email housing with any information they could provide. With overwhelming responses from Lausanne residents, housing sent another email on Aug. 30 communicating that all Lausanne residents would be given access to Doney Hall for hot water needs.

Doney residents were impacted too, as Allison Cordova ('27) shared. "We were given a heads-up that Lausanne residents would be

using our bathrooms," Cordova said. "I live on the third floor, so not many people would go upstairs to shower. I think people used first-floor bathrooms more than any other floor."

Residents received an email on Sept. 5 from housing notifying residents that a water outage would be planned from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sept. 6 to allow for boiler maintenance.

Lausanne resident Abigail Kirkbride ('27) provided insight on her experience, saying, "We did have hot water. The issue is that it would take forever to come on, and it would only last for about four minutes."

With the overall temperature of campus ranging from 80-90 F at that point, cold showers were occasionally enjoyable. However, the issues lay elsewhere for many other residents. "I don't mind the water being cold. In all honesty, it's more frustration with regards of how my money and the money of other students is being allocated," Kirkbride stated. "The school is fully capable of testing and fixing amenities over the summer when there is no one living in the halls. It's more convenient for both parties to do things over the summer."

Hukari stated that "hot water concerns plummeted around Sept. 3. As of Sept. 4, we have not had any further responses to our request from students to let us know about any issues with the hot water in Lausanne."

While no other large projects are anticipated for residential spaces during the school year, Hukari noted that maintenance and facility issues may come up at any time and urged students to file a Housing Maintenance Report if any concerns arise.

Opinion: Bearcat Book Bundle creates debates over benefits

Brooke Austin • Staff Writer

Art by Samantha Lang



Last spring semester the Willamette Bookstore announced they would be offering a new way for students to purchase or rent their textbooks in partnership with Barnes & Noble called the Bearcat Book Bundle. (Say that 10 times fast.) In summary, the bundle is a system by which students' accounts are charged roughly \$320 – depending on how many credits taken – so that when they arrive on campus, all their textbooks for all their classes are ready to go. All Willamette students were automatically entered into this system. The bundle was advertised as a convenient way for students to get their books without the hassle of fishing for them on several

different websites. Some students appreciated the convenience of the Bearcat Book Bundle, but some found it to be anything but convenient, arguing the price was unreasonable and the opt-out system was irritating.

Madeleine Montanye ('25) is a history and English double major who remained opted into the bundle. "I feel like the book bundle is more convenient for heavy humanities majors just because there is so much reading involved," Montanye said, after explaining that they needed a whopping eight books for this semester. Conversely, Madilynn Jackson ('27), a chemistry major, opted out of the bundle as she "didn't need a textbook for anything." The alleged convenience clearly varies from student to student.

Ruth Feingold, dean of Willamette College (formally the College of Arts and Sciences) and dean of the faculty of arts and science was the messenger for the WU students via emails. She explained that the Bearcat Book Bundle is actually not unique to Bearcats and occurs at many other university bookstores that Barnes & Noble owns. "We have a contract with Barnes & Noble for them to run the bookstore," Feingold explained. But WU wasn't completely without any say. "We did play some part in shaping what the book formula would look like," Feingold

said. "For example, I made sure X credits were not part of the credits students were charged for." "X credits" are credits that generally don't involve any texts, like an art class at PNCA.

The standard one-size-fits-all price is \$20 per credit. The average student at Willamette takes 16 credits, putting the average price for the Bearcat Book Bundle at \$320. Feingold emphasized that this price was determined by Barnes & Noble. "My understanding is that [Barnes & Noble] had keyed that to what book order prices were at Willamette in the past — but it may be that they did something more generally, looking at comparable schools across the country and having a similar rate." Feingold also shined light on the incredibly realistic perspective, which is that "they're [Barnes & Noble] a company that is seeking to make business." She explained that only roughly 30% of Willamette students purchase their books from the Willamette Bookstore, and Barnes & Noble is "seeking to increase that rate and that is not an unreasonable thing to do if they offer a reasonable price."

However, some students don't completely agree that \$20 per credit is an accurate pricing. Montanye, for example, paid \$400 for their textbooks and based on that expensive price, assumed that meant that they would own the books. However, they were sadly mistaken when they found out they spent \$400 to simply rent the books. "I'm a history and English major, so I really like to annotate my books," Montanye said. Despite this unfortunate

realization for Montanye, they did admit that it was a slight user error. "I should have looked into the fine print more and clicked [the] 'buy book' option, but I did not, and apparently the default is renting."

So despite some students choosing to immediately opt out, thinking \$320 for a few optional books is preposterous, some students felt it made their life easier to not need to tediously look through numerous different websites and find the cheapest option for their textbooks. It's also worth noting that this new bundle was implemented by Barnes & Noble, the company that owns the Willamette Bookstore. They are responsible for the significantly more stylish merchandise that Bearcats have now but also are a company that relies on people buying their products to make money. There is a common misconception among students that the Bearcat Book Bundle was implemented by the university, but the truth is that Willamette only had a small say in it, but still exercised what influence they had.

The Bearcat Book Bundle is here to stay, so as students learn to navigate it and learn from each other's hiccups (always read the fine print), students will hopefully become more equipped to understand if the bundle is the option for them that makes the most sense. Until then, the majority of students seem to be continuing to buy their books from third-party websites or using PDFs that their professors upload, and only appreciating the bookstore for the fun cardinal and gold merch.

 **ASWU Student Org** *Upcoming Events*

- **Outdoor Program:** Lost Lake Kayaking/Camping - **9/27**
- **ASWU/CAFES?RHA:** Student Funding Workshop - **9/27**
- **Outdoor Program:** Haystack Rock Tidepooling - **9/29**

Be sure to get your club or org event in the calendar by posting to the university events calendar or contacting The Collegian directly.

ASWU sponsored orgs from the University Calendar are added here.
See more at: <https://events.willamette.edu/>

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Opinion: ‘Please Please Please’ go listen to ‘Short n’ Sweet’

Priya Thoren • Staff Writer

With the heights Sabrina Carpenter’s music is reaching, it’s hard to believe she stands at only five feet tall. With five albums already under her belt — some dating back to her Disney Channel days — Carpenter released “Short n’ Sweet” on Aug. 23, 2024. This newest album contains a classic bubbly pop vibe that Carpenter’s Polly Pocket aesthetic perfectly mirrors. That being said, I definitely favor the replay button for certain songs over others; here is my complete ranking of “Short n’ Sweet”:

The last four songs of my ranking, in descending order, include “Juno,” “Sharpest Tool,” “Dumb & Poetic” and “Lie to Girls.” Honestly, I generally preferred the more upbeat tracks on this album. “Sharpest Tool,” for example, just didn’t compare to the energy of “Espresso” or the lyricism of “Don’t Smile.” I also appreciated some of the more unique perspectives that Carpenter portrayed on this album — “Dumb & Poetic” fell short for me and didn’t really hold my interest.

8. “Slim Pickins”
This song is relatable if you’re from a small town (or, honestly, if you go to a small school like Willamette); it can seem as though there are close to zero options, and that the “perfect” person for you does not exist. As usual, Carpenter throws in witty lyricism — for example, “As the Lord forgot my gay awakening, I’ll just be here in the kitchen serving up some moaning and bitchin.” Sorry, Sabrina, it’s not much better on that side either.

7. “Coincidence”
Carpenter expresses frustration with her partner for still being connected with his ex. Supposedly — although not confirmed explicitly by Carpenter herself — this song is directed at Shawn Mendez and his continued infatuation with fellow singer Camila Cabello while he and Carpenter were together. Carpenter confirms that she knows where her ex’s heart

has been all along, calling him out for “holding space for her [Camila’s] tongue in [his] mouth.”

6. “Please Please Please”
I’ve had many conversations with friends dissuading each other from certain relationships, which is why the tone of this song was so familiar to me. Carpenter presents a humorous take on her not-so-great track record, explaining that she knows she has good taste, but it’s “funny and ironic that only [she feels] that way.” Carpenter places her heart on the back burner and begs her significant other to keep her ego in mind, reminding them to “Please Please Please” spare her from the embarrassment of being wrong about a man, yet again.

5. “Bed Chem”
Known for a slight talk-singing style in her songs, Carpenter uses a flirty tone to describe a “cute boy with [a] white jacket and thick accent,” which many listeners have inferred is her current boyfriend, Barry Keoghan. Carpenter’s continued use of wordplay is what earned this song a spot in my top five. The song’s playful mood combined with Carpenter’s subtle allusions to her sexuality make for a spirited listening experience (complete with a great chorus).

4. “Espresso”
While the relatability and lyricism of the top three songs earned them their rankings, I will admit that this song is here purely for its catchy tune. I unwillingly know all of the lyrics to this song; how could I not, after it took TikTok by storm? The perfect accompaniment to “Brat Summer,” Espresso may not be the deepest song, but it has a vibe akin to a cute and quirky rom-com. I’m also fond of the wordplay Carpenter sprinkled throughout, an honorable mention being “I know I Mountain Dew it for ya.”

3. “Taste”
To keep this ranking fair, I won’t bring attention to this song’s incredible music video. The lyrics are



Image from Shutterstock

directed towards the “other woman” who simply can’t compare to Carpenter, suggesting that she is merely a rebound for the ex. Carpenter explains that she has left a long-lasting impact on her ex, again exuding an almost cocky attitude through lyricism and an upbeat tempo. This song in particular is one that I know many would like to shout from the rooftops, and I found it to be reminiscent of Olivia Rodrigo’s “deja vu,” which is a favorite of mine from her 2021 album “Sour.”

2. “Don’t Smile”
Although “Don’t Smile” is the last track on the album, it is far from the worst. Carpenter’s soft vocals express the desire she has for her ex to mourn their relationship in the same way she is. The repetitions, “I want you to miss me,” and, “don’t smile because it happened ... cry because it’s over,” provide a juxtaposition to the post-breakup feelings that are usually the norm. Carpenter relays the sentiment of not wanting to be hung up on somebody who has already moved on. I personally find

a lot of comfort in this song, and the way that Carpenter sings about how someone can continue to control your feelings even when they are no longer a direct part of your life. The ethereal melody of the song doesn’t hurt, either.

1. “Good Graces”
This song is quite the earworm; I’ve found myself humming it absentmindedly at various hours of the day. “Good Graces” is Carpenter’s way of expressing her standards and serves as a warning to not get on her bad side. The upbeat song has a feel-good energy, with Carpenter affirming that she “won’t give a fuck about you” if you do her dirty. Carpenter’s confidence transcends the music and gives listeners a reminder to never settle, making it a staple in my “feel good” playlist.

As a whole, “Short n’ Sweet” encompasses the highs and lows of young love and lust and makes an appearance in several of my playlists — perfect for when I’m going out for a run or daydreaming in the library.

Dance Co. auditions: Behind the curtains

Aubrey Tuttle • Staff Writer

Willamette’s Dance Company is a student-run organization that brings the community a full dance production every semester, but just how do they pull it off term after term? The first step towards the showcase is auditions. This fall’s semester-long process of producing this performance only recently started, with auditions held

on Saturday, Sept. 14. The audition consists of three parts: seeing the choreography, learning the audition dance and auditioning.

First, the choreographers show the dancers a taste of the dances they are auditioning to be a part of. One after another, the choreographers take the stage and perform a quick 30-second demonstration

of their dance and provide a general overview of the performance, what they are looking for in a dancer and the difficulty level. The auditioning dancers then rank these dances in order of preference. After submitting their preferences and basic information, the dancers hit the stage and take their turn showing the choreographers what they’ve got.

On stage, they are taught en masse how to perform two short dances in the styles of ballet and hip-hop. Izzy Cornelison (‘27) taught the ballet portion, taking on the responsibility of teaching nearly 80 dancers. They stated, “It was stressful with 83 or so people on stage at once, but I thought it was an absolute party.”

Participants raved about this student-led aspect of the audition and its contributions to their experiences. Sage Miller ('27) said, "Since it is student-led, everyone is super nice and very patient." Dance Co. is open to all levels, which many find takes the pressure off of performing. As Miller said, "If everyone doesn't know what they are doing then it's like you fit in more."

After each respective bootcamp (ballet and hip hop), the dancers audition in groups of five. Choreographers watch closely, on the lookout for potential dancers. While it is an audition and the choreographers are looking for key characteristics, every dancer who auditions is guaranteed at least one spot in their top 10 dances. When looking for potential dancers, choreographers are often looking not only for skills but also stage comfortability and general stage presence. Kaiona Apio ('24), a grad student who has been choreographing for three semesters, says that what they look for in a dancer goes beyond just how well they perform the specific audition piece: "What I'm looking for first and foremost is someone who is not afraid to look a little silly." Since some of the

dances taught at Dance Co. might look or feel silly on their own or out of context, it is important for choreographers to make note of these more fun qualities.

If dancers can't make it to the designated audition date, there is an online opportunity sent out. However, most prefer to do the experience in person. Miller said that "going and experiencing auditions in person is so much fun and it really adds to the experience and gives you an opportunity to meet new people." Once all of the auditions, online and in person, have been processed, the choreographers take their pick of the eligible dancers and send out acceptance emails.

However, there is still so much that goes into these performances between the audition process and the showcase coming up in November. Now that the auditions are over and the students have been sorted into their dances, the next stage of the process begins. For the next few months, choreographers are leading rehearsals once a week, teaching the students their dances and getting the steps down for another highly anticipated performance on Nov. 21 and 22.



Art by Wes Mowry-Silverman

Professor Scott Nadelson's newest novel is an ode to home and family

Ike Turman • Staff Writer

Professor of English Scott Nadelson released his ninth novel on Sep. 4. "Trust Me" is a story about a father and daughter and the weekends they spend together in the foothills of Oregon's Cascade Mountains. It is here that main character Lewis Nelson lives, in the cabin he bought as a last failed attempt to

save his marriage. The idyllic area, described in the novel for its lush ferns and clear waters, is inspired by the Little North Fork River just east of Salem – a place dear to Nadelson's own heart.

The first chapter follows the subdued scramble to find lost keys and get to school on time as another

weekend together comes to an end. It will be five days before Skye, Lewis' daughter, gets to come back to her father. Between the insecurity of a divorced father and the angst of a young tween is a deep emotionality, equal parts profound and mundane.

"Writing some of the just ordinary moments and trusting that was the hardest part," Nadelson shared. "[The book] follows a year in their lives, revisiting them every

weekend. So, there are 52 chapters, one for each weekend." The chapters are short; eight pages at their longest and three at their shortest. "Each chapter is kind of its own little mini short story," Nadelson said. "That felt right to me."

"I'm a short story writer at heart, in part because I feel like my experience in the world fits in [that] form more easily. My life is not novelistic, and imposing a novelistic plot onto the characters I'm interested in usually feels very artificial. I have a really sensitive BS meter." He admitted, "It's a very plotless book in a lot of ways."

Nadelson cited Finnish author Tove Jansson and her novel "The Summer Book" as an inspiration: "Most of my work, and this is similar, starts with me being in conversation with other books that I love and other writers I admire. ... What [Jansson] does in that book is really beautiful." "The Summer Book" follows a grandmother and granddaughter and their summer together on a little island in the Finnish sea, which "kinda feels like all summers in a way," as Nadelson put it. "And so I was thinking, I mean, I don't have an island in the Finnish sea, but what's my magical place?"

"I spent a lot of time in the foothills of the Cascades here and on that river. My kiddo was about 4 years old," he said, recalling the

book's inception. "Part of it was me projecting forward and imagining what it was gonna be like when they were [a] preteen [or] teenager, and imagining that relationship many years forward. That was the starting place." It's a book just as much about a father and daughter as it is about the place they share. In Nadelson's own words, "It's about the three of them. It's like a kind of a love triangle."

It was partly this magical aimlessness that saw Nadelson abandoning the project, then returning to it, then abandoning it again over eight years of writing. Then came the fall of 2020, when Oregon's Labor Day fires burned to the ground that place that had served as an inspiration for Nadelson. "I finally had a breakthrough after the fires," he recounted. "[It] unfortunately gave me a direction where the book had been maybe inevitably going all along. It wasn't where I wanted it to go, but that's where it finally needed to go. After that, it came together pretty quickly."

"Trust Me" is available for purchase, and a reading will be held at the Book Bin on Nov. 1 at 5 p.m., alongside "The Entire Sky" author Joe Wilkins. "I never have much expectation once it comes out," says Nadelson. "I hope that it might find its way into the hands of a few people that it moves in some way."



Image by Keenan Yoshizawa

What you need to know about Bearcat fall sports

Skeet Starr • Staff Writer

Hello, Bearcats. Feeling behind? Good. Fall sports have already begun. Please, memorize the following document. It will be brought up later.

Last fall, the habitually beleaguered **football** team saw an excess of coaching turnover. Following a precious and narrow pre-season victory over LaVerne, then head coach Isaac Parker ('02) departed from Willamette for reasons yet undisclosed by either himself or the university. He was thus temporarily replaced by defensive coordinator Tim Rude, who continued the Bearcat's proud five-season tradition of not winning a single game in conference play.

In the spring, Aric Williams, a one-time OSU Beaver and Philadelphia Eagle, took the helm; immediately implementing some unorthodox recruiting strategies. If he manages to guide the 'Cats to a win this fall, consider his statue already built. The football team plays at McCulloch on Saturdays.

In 2022, **men's soccer** earned their first outright conference championship. Last fall, however, they crumbled to a dreary fourth-place finish. In the dying minutes of their season's final game, the clouds pummeled them and a bland but victorious Pacific side with slugging raindrops. Following the season, former head coach Sam Adelman announced his departure, planning to follow his fiancée to Boston.

A highly contested replacement hiring process saw the reinstatement of Matthew Corti-Young, an assistant coach from UC San Diego.

Corti-Young says he hopes to bring a non-dogmatic array of perspectives to the job. Further reporting on his progress will occur as soon as we find out what dogmatic means!

Badly injured throughout the season, **women's soccer** earned only two wins in '23, their fewest since at least Northwest Conference incorporation in 2006. They did however come back from 1-2 down to defeat University of Puget Sound away, the first victory of its kind since 2018. Their victory was woefully underreported by The Collegian at the time, but will remain a sole, bright memory as they try to claw their way back this fall. Both soccer teams play at Sparks on Fridays, Wednesdays or on weekends.

The **triathlon** team is a lot like that annoying high school friend who got into an Ivy League school: you never hear from them, but their success is omnipresent. Although only three years old as a program, triathlon has sent athletes to natty's all three seasons. Head coach Brett-Franz had a monster off-season, growing the squad from eight members to twelve. They are also overwhelmingly young, featuring nine underclassmen. However, this fall they are notably lacking last year's standout prospect, Riga Grubis.

Few would say that the **cross country** teams are outright disappointing, but they also haven't left 'Cats fans with much to be jazzed about over the last two seasons. Jay Chew ('26), Will Hennem ('25) and Zoe Heino ('26) are the heaviest hitters. If you see them on campus it's

customary to nod respectfully.

Last but certainly not least, **volleyball** remains a wildcard. After six consecutive non-winning seasons, the 'Cats have snaked their way into +.500 territory over the last two. In '23 they earned a conference tournament berth but were brushed aside by an undefeated PLU. This year they are without either of their second-team all-conference standouts Shyla Sato ('24) or Emma Porter ('24). They will test their recruiting class on Tuesdays, Fridays or Saturdays at Cone Field House through November.

More uni athletics updates are released online every week in the "Fast Break Sports Report." Sports and Rec also covers clubs, community events and whatever counts as recreation.



Blitz ingests some sports updates from The Collegian
Image by Skeet Starr

Minto-Brown Park: Salem's escape

Mason Williams • Staff Writer

Riverfront Park is a well-known Salem destination, less than a mile from Willamette's campus and stationed right by the Willamette River. Across the Pedestrian Bridge at its edge, Riverfront links itself to another of Salem's parks; Minto-Brown Island Park. It's the largest in the city, spanning over one thousand acres, and offers a multitude of outdoor activities right next door to downtown Salem.

Minto-Brown is not a true island as a portion of it is connected to Salem's mainland, though the Willamette River separates the rest of it from Salem. Its spanning biome is covered in roads, open fields, sloughs, ponds and creeks. There is also a conservation area within, providing the opportunity to see wild-

life. Throughout different areas of the island, you'll either find yourself in a wide grassland or beneath overhanging trees within a small, densely packed forest.

Upon crossing the Pedestrian Bridge, the surrounding horizon shifts from the tall and numerous business buildings that characterize downtown Salem to a widening view of trees, marshes and open fields. The shift in scenery offers an escape from the urban environment less than a mile away, and once you travel further down the road through the island, you're so surrounded by it that the buildings become obscured and it seems as if you've exited Oregon's capital city despite being so near to its center.

The roads and trails that pop-

ulate the park split off and return to one another through multiple routes for miles, which leaves plenty of options for people who wish to choose to travel at different distances. There are ten trails and loops running throughout the park, all of different lengths. The quantity of routes through the park gives opportunities to explore different parts of the island on repeat visits; paths are flat and even, proving to be a popular choice for joggers or those searching for a scenic walk. Because of its size, there are restrooms littered throughout several areas in the park for pedestrians who go longer distances.

To the island's south lies a 30-acre dog park which can be accessed by trail or car if entering the park from the southern side. Picnic

areas are available as well as shelters that can be reserved online. There are multiple designated fishing spots: one at the duck pond, and three more along the length of the Oxbow Slough, all of which are near the dog park and parking lot.

Upon a visit to Minto-Brown Park, one can only see so much of the massive island it encapsulates. It encourages the visitor to come back again and again, fully experiencing the many loops, scenes and amenities it has to offer. The park's closeness to Willamette helps make return trips convenient, so Bearcats can easily access it at their leisure. It remains a proper spot for exercise, sightseeing or a simple short escape from the urban environment we're all accustomed to.

Highlights from the ‘Tour de Bearcat’: Top 5 parks and what I learned

Ernie Samora • Staff Writer

In the summer of 2023, I left my car in Oregon and utilized biking as my primary method of transportation around Denver. I fell in love. Biking turned the entire world into a spectacle. There was so much to see just slightly off the beaten path. Upon returning to Salem, I sold my car. Needing ways to spend my mornings besides staring at the ceiling questioning the past or worrying about the future, I took to biking.

However, I quickly realized biking without direction does little to fill the soul. I decided to give myself a challenge, something to empower me: a SMART goal. I planned to bike to every park in Salem before my graduation. The “Tour de Bearcat” has taken me to Salem’s hidden corners, spanned over three bikes and profoundly changed the way I view myself and life. Here are the five best parks, in order of visitation, paired with what I learned along the way.

Geer Community Park requires a bike ride down State Street. While a designated lane exists, the constant barrage of cars hurtling past at 45 mph demands nerves of steel. For my own safety, I chose the sidewalk. State Street is one of the only routes close to campus that crosses I-5. While the newly planned skatepark has yet to break ground in

Geer, there is a designated bike park at the back. I spent nearly an hour on the trails that day and have since returned solely for the bike park.

Fairmount City Park sits atop a long incline. Once I climbed my way to the top of the hill, I found a bench overlooking the Fairmount Reservoir building. As I sat, a flock of birds danced in the skies above me. The best part about climbing a hill is that you can enjoy coasting back down — feel the wind on your face and be free.

Clark Creek Park, a hidden serene haven, lies tucked away just beyond the bustling commerce of Commercial Street. Life overflows from this park, from the titular Clark Creek flowing through the area to the bee that really wanted to be my friend to the family playing basketball for the duration of my visit. The park’s profound effect on me left a sparkle that not even my bike being stolen three days later, nor the hidden, irreparable frame damage of a Facebook Marketplace lemon three months later, could extinguish. Besides, the cost of my bikes over the year was less than what I would have spent on gas in a semester.

Just a 10-minute bike ride from campus, **Englewood Park** is Salem’s first city park. Filled with trees, Englewood looks as if some-

one decided to install a playground in the middle of the forest. For me, this was a perfect spot to take a break after a two-hour bike ride and contemplate my journey. The trees shade Englewood while the few sun rays peeking through gently kiss the forest floor. Wow, life is beautiful! After sitting for a brief moment, I hopped back on my bike and headed home, quickly reentering the suburbs which appear distant from any forest.

Keizer’s Sunset Park also ranks among the best. The entrance is a small gate on a suburban corner. Intrepid bikers may miss the entrance entirely when exploring the area. A small trail welcomed me — I felt as though I was walking into someone’s backyard. Once inside, I found a huge open field right on the Willamette River. Houses on either side of the park are the only reminders of the city which surrounds it. Growing up in Denver, it was impossible to escape the urban sprawl without physically leaving the city. Several Salem parks offer a complete escape from the city bustle, allowing one to leave their worries behind and immerse themselves in nature’s tranquility. In Sunset Park, all that exists is Sunset Park.

Honorable mentions are (of course) Minto-Brown, Bush’s Pas-

ture Park and Riverfront. You can get completely lost in both Minto-Brown and Bush’s Pasture. Bush’s Pasture features another forest that I love. In the spring, you can catch the Willamette Bearcats hitting a homer into the trees. The Soap Box Derby hill is also great fun to speed down. Riverfront Park, sitting right on the Willamette River, is open, welcoming and always full of life.

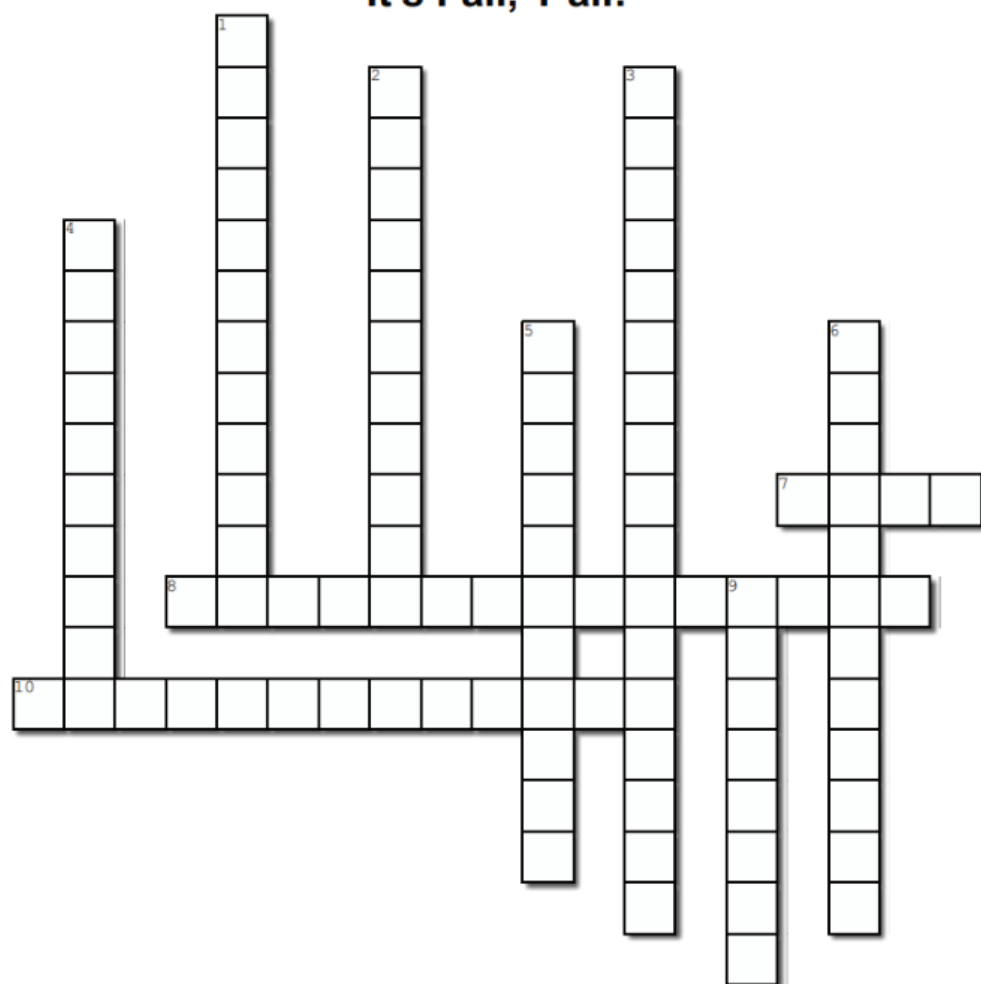
This is just a small glimpse of what I saw throughout the Tour de Bearcat. There is so much beauty to Salem if one seizes the opportunity to look for it. My favorite thing about the Salem parks is how quickly you can completely immerse yourself in nature, forgetting you are in a city.

Biking has become a true love of mine. I bike nearly every day, and it saturates my life with meaning. Even a full wipeout on a beer run could not stop me from getting back in the saddle the very next day. When life knocks you down, it is okay to hunch over in pain saying ‘ow’ for a few minutes, but you have to get up, grab the rest of your beer and ride on. Sure, the pain will persist, but you can continue on. You can climb any hill, calm any storm, master any route. With just 11 more parks to go before my journey is complete, I can peddle away from this journey a changed man.



Images by Ernie Samora

It's Fall, Y'all!



Across

- 7. Colonel Mustard with the candlestick in the conservatory
- 8. The Neighborhood's 2013 hit song
- 10. It's raining _____!

Down

- 1. Town where 'Gilmore Girls' is set
- 2. German beer festival occurring in late September
- 3. Mix of cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, allspice and cloves
- 4. Horn of Plenty
- 5. This 1993 film just had a sequel hit theaters
- 6. Halfway between the summer and winter solstices.
- 9. Jackson's dance among the undead

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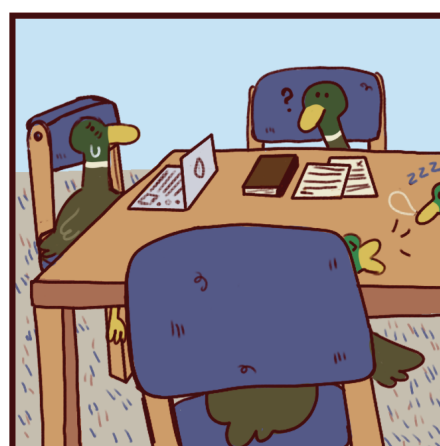
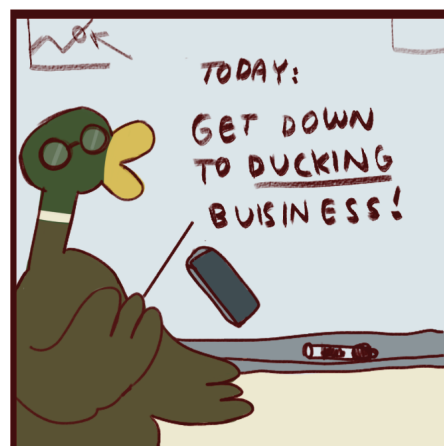
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