

# The Collegian

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## ASWU to vote on endowment divestment plan – with new parameters

Amelia Hare, Staff Writer &amp; Robin Linares, News Editor

**Disclaimers:** The Collegian receives most of its funding from ASWU. Additionally, Amelia Hare holds a position in the SEAL office, which reports to Lisa Holliday, advisor of ASWU.

ASWU will vote on Thursday, Oct. 2 on the issue of separating their \$400,000 endowment from the university endowment. Again.

Even though the Associated Students of Willamette University (ASWU) voted unanimously in April of 2025 to divest the ASWU endowment from the larger Willamette endowment, they must first get approval from the Willamette University board of trustees. And, according to Vice President of Student Affairs Lisa Landreman, reinvesting the endowment under the care of ASWU itself, which the senate hoped to do, is not on the table.

Students have called for university divestment before during the 1980s in regards to the South African apartheid system and entities invested in it. But for ASWU, the prospect of pulling their endowment is uncertain.

The ASWU endowment task force, which recommended a vote in favor of divestment in spring of 2025, convened in the wake of student-led protests of the university's potential investment in the arms industry. The protests were specifically concerned with the Israeli government's actions in the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. The task force was composed of students, student senators, and ASWU executive members to analyze the use of the endowment money for students.

Under the advice of University Controller Scott Schaefer and Associate Vice President for Budget and Resource Planning Laura Taylor, the student-led endowment task force researched and weighed two options for the future of the endowment last year. Either leave it in the care of the university and Global Endowment Management (GEM), or identify another investment fund aligned with ASWU's divestment goals. Approximately 2.5% of the ASWU endowment is invested alongside the university endowment, per ASWU bylaws.

However, since the divestment vote, Landreman has articulated



House in Willamette colors with a sign in front saying "ASWU endowment for sale."

Art by ELI FUKUJI

ed that there are only two legitimate options for the ASWU endowment going forward. Either ASWU must leave the endowment in the care of the board of trustees and GEM, or they must move it to a board of trustees-controlled savings account not designed for investment. ASWU will vote on whether or not to present the former option to the board.

The board of trustees meets three times per year, with an upcoming meeting in late October. One of the responsibilities of the board of trustees is to oversee the management of the endowment and its investments. Specifically, the endowment committee, a subsection of the board, is the committee that is in charge of the endowment and is the committee ASWU seeks approval from to get access and control over their endowment.

According to Landreman, ASWU plans to vote during their Oct. 2 senate meeting on options to proceed with ASWU endowment divestment. If they choose to proceed with seeking divestment from the board of trustees, Landreman explained that ASWU President Stevie Bergstrom

(26) would make a formal request to Anne Gallagher, vice president of finance and chief financial officer for the university, who would then act as a liaison between ASWU and the board of trustees' endowment committee.

Bergstrom emphasized the enormity and uncertainty of this process: "This is very uncharted territory," she said.

The ASWU executive team's "primary focus is just getting that money," ASWU Treasurer Mitch Septoff (26) claimed. While that money cannot be reinvested with an outside investor. According to Landreman, it would mean that ASWU's endowment would no longer be invested in GEM.

Landreman elaborated on why the ASWU endowment wouldn't be able to reinvest elsewhere if they were to divest from the university. She noted that the ASWU endowment is a university fund created and supplemented by university-administered student fees, meaning that any investment is the responsibility of the university. Additionally, given the cyclical nature of student leader-

ship and how interests and priorities change between ASWU administrations, the university does not want to put the future long-term investment management of the ASWU endowment "on the backs of students."

However, Landreman expressed that if ASWU were to divest their endowment, there are opportunities that ASWU can explore with the expanded access to the funds no longer invested to continue to directly impact the current needs of student clubs and organizations. "So I think there's a real benefit, if that's the path that ASWU chooses," she said.

Throughout the process, ASWU has sought to prioritize student input and awareness. In addition to student involvement in the task force, ASWU hosted a town hall event in March of 2025 to allow for further student feedback. In his role, Septoff has emphasized student voices throughout the divestment process. "What got us this far was student engagement and passion for this project in the first place," he said.

In attempts to provide further transparency on the divestment process, Septoff and Katelyn Beissel Rosales (28), ASWU director of communication, have launched an endowment website, where students can learn the most recent information regarding ASWU's work on the endowment. Septoff is also hosting weekly town hall meetings during the hour before ASWU senate meetings, which is dedicated to the endowment and student comments or concerns.

Both Bergstrom and Septoff are aware of how important students are in this process and are hoping to communicate more often with the student body. "We want to see this project being completed and not pushed aside," Bergstrom said. "We're pretty protective over this, also just because it's something that is important to the students."

The Thursday, Oct. 2 ASWU Senate meeting will take place in Montag Den from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. There will be an opportunity for public comment before the vote.

Check The Collegian's website for updates on this developing story.

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# WU student tries to start Turning Point USA chapter days before Charlie Kirk assassination

Skeet Starr • Editor-in-Chief • Sept. 19

**Editor's Note:** When asked, Lexi Thorsett told *The Collegian* she is a distant relative of Willamette University President Stephen Thorsett. The president's office declined to comment on family relations.

If anyone hadn't heard of Turning Point USA (TPUSA) before last week, they have now. That's especially true at Willamette.

Lexi Thorsett ('26) tabled at the fall Activities Expo on Sept. 8 in hopes of recruiting members to a prospective new Willamette University chapter of the conservative youth organization. Two days later, its founder and head, Charlie Kirk, was shot and killed on a college campus in Utah.

The future of Thorsett's chapter is unknown, and the group is searching for a foothold amid a tense moment across America.

If it is established, Turning Point would enter a deeply liberal Willamette campus. A scant 5% of respondents to the 2023 Campus Climate Survey identified themselves as "conservative."

Willamette also holds a transgender and non-binary community three to four times the relative size of those at other universities, according to the survey. Kirk was outspoken against gender fluidity and people who are transgender, among other groups. In 2023, he told a congregation of churchgoers that "the transgender thing" is a "throbbing middle finger to God."

TPUSA appears to be the latest conservative group at Willamette since The College Republicans, which the Associated Students of Willamette University disaffiliated in 2021, university administrators reinstated the next year, and has since fizzled out.

How students perceive the politics of this group varies, depending on who you ask. Thorsett describes herself as a "moderate Republican." TPUSA describes itself as "conservative." Citing its late leader's belief in the "great replacement theory," and the organization's advocacy of Christian Nationalism, the Southern Poverty Law Center classified

TPUSA as "hard-right" in a 2025 article. Among the most vocal attendees of Willamette's recent activities expo, another term was used to describe the group: "fascist."

## Protesters push back against prospective chapter at Willamette

On the same morning of the expo, WU Students for a Democratic Society posted on their Instagram that TPUSA would be present at the expo. An ad hoc group of students then demonstrated feet from the table throughout the two-hour fair on the UC second-floor balcony. One demonstrator used a flag to partially cover the TPUSA table before being directed to the other side of the walkway by university administrators.

Demonstrators looked on as students visited the table to debate or sign-up for the club, periodically yelling, "1 ... 2 ... 3 ... Fascist!" in unison, and calling out to individual visitors of the table. There were no physical altercations during the protest.

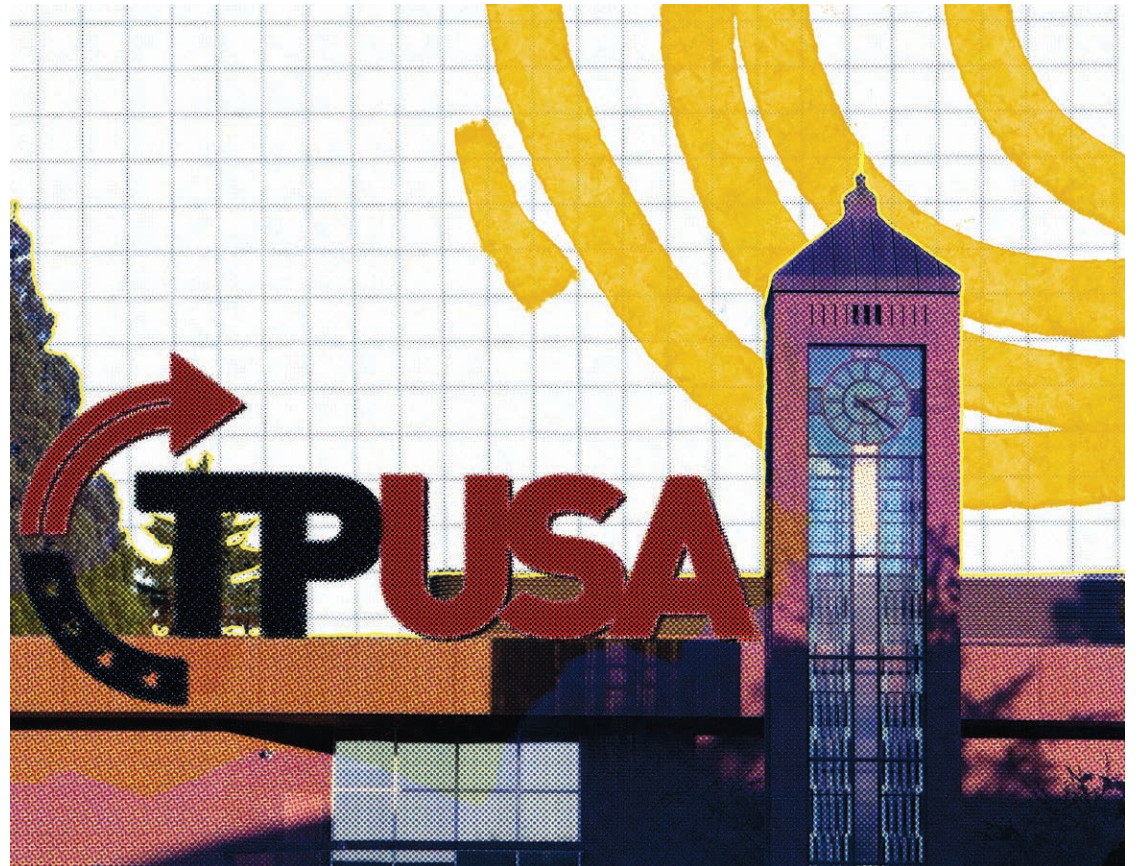
Vilet Adams ('29), who joined the demonstration, explained that in her high school's district, TPUSA funded the campaigns of school board members who took action against transgender students' ability to use their chosen bathrooms and went after LGBTQ+ affinity clubs and liberal clubs. "Avoid them," she said. "Don't support them. ... Try to make sure they don't take hold."

Another person dropped off a letter at the TPUSA table, which was later shared with *The Collegian* by Thorsett. It's unclear who the author was, as the name signed on it did not match any Willamette University email. In the letter, the author argued, "The presence of a far-right conservative hate group is actively unsafe for [queer and BIPOC students]. Encouraging white students to in-

clude in a history that makes them feel better about themselves enables them to treat BIPOC and queer students badly."

## Thorsett's vision for the club

Thorsett was joined at her Expo table by Rilie Ashby, a non-Willamette student and coordinator for TPUSA's Oregon college and university chapters. Jodi Santillie,



Turning Point USA on campus.  
Art by DASHA ALLYN

assistant director of Student Engagement and Leadership (SEAL), said that Ashby tried to set up a recruiting table at last year's expo but was escorted off campus by campus safety because she is not an enrolled student.

Then, according to Thorsett, she and Ashby met at a conference in Florida this summer, where they decided to try to establish a chapter again with Thorsett at the helm.

Santillie said that prospective clubs are allotted tables at the activities expo alongside established clubs and noted that around three of said groups were present at the Sept. 8 event. All that's required to reserve a spot is a conversation with the SEAL office.

After the expo, Thorsett stated that she will not be seeking ASWU affiliation, given that she has enough financial and structural support from TPUSA, a stance Santillie was not aware of at the time of TPUSA's registration for the Expo.

Other non-affiliated clubs exist on campus, generally with staff or faculty support, including one that tabled next to the TPUSA advocates. But without ASWU affiliation, TPUSA would not be able to reserve university space through the usual channels or receive ASWU funding.

Despite bearing the TPUSA name, Thorsett said her beliefs and goals do not perfectly align with those that Kirk held. Both Thorsett and Ashby said they do not plan to contribute to the "Professor Watchlist," a public database of professors TPUSA has determined to be "radicals."

What's more, Thorsett explained that she may differ from other members of TPUSA in her stance on gender issues. She explained that,

since arriving at Willamette, she's "gotten better" at using people's preferred pronouns and that people who transition are "just trying to make [themselves] feel better and feel more comfortable with [themselves]."

Still, Thorsett said she feels her beliefs regarding gender-affirming care for minors and transgender women's participation in sports separate her from most of her classmates.

In expressing her goals for the club, Thorsett explained that she sought to "flip the script" on students' perceptions of TPUSA, and that she doesn't want anyone to feel unsafe by her prospective club's presence. She hopes to create an environment in which conservative students can speak freely, something she said does not always feel socially possible on campus right now.

"I just want to push for: 'Hey, it's OK to have conservative values and opinions. Here are more people you can talk to and relate to,' she said. 'You won't get called a fascist. You won't get bullied. ... You're not alone.'"

## What comes next

Thorsett said shortly after the club fair that she was unsure whether she was "doing the right thing" and that the backlash took an emotional toll on her. But after receiving words of support from Willamette community members, and after the death of Kirk, she said she's more determined than ever to start a chapter.

"This poor guy [Kirk] died standing up for what he believes in, which is mostly what I believe in," she said. "So I'm going to pursue this ambition that he died for."

Both Thorsett and Ashby said they registered roughly 10 sign-ups for the club at the expo.

Keep up with the  
ASWU Endowment!



Here we will post  
endowment progress  
and important dates!



**Correction:** The Aug. 21 print article "New Renjen Career Center to launch following UC renovations" misstated the number of donors to the Renjen Career Center project. In addition to the Renjen family, the project was funded by more than a dozen other donors.

# Students, Willamette's international office navigate Trump's immigration and higher ed crackdowns

Amelia Hare • Staff Writer

Since President Donald Trump took office in early 2025, changes and interruptions to the student visa application process have caused confusion and stress for prospective international Willamette students and the Office of International Education (OIE) staff.

In May 2025, the U.S. Department of State ordered a pause of all international visa interviews, prompting a wave of confusion and anxiety across the globe. One Willamette international student was able to book her visa appointment just days before the pause: "The only problem was time pressure," they said.

The Collegian spoke with several international students for this article on the condition of anonymity out of concern for their safety and immigration status. For this reason, none of them are being named.

Worries were augmented by the Trump administration's ongoing search and seizure of students' social media accounts.

"I feel like that just made me really worried," a second international student told The Collegian. Before entering the country this fall, the student had to disclose any social media accounts used within the last 10 years.

Since the pause in May, which was lifted a few weeks after going into effect, President Trump issued sweeping orders banning entry into the United States from 19 countries. In late August, he ordered a suspension of all Palestinian visas.

Trump's attacks on international students are aligned with his broader fight against higher education and free speech on campuses. In the months since he took office, the president has been in legal battles with universities such as Harvard over allegations of antisemitism and discrimination.

Trump's other attacks on higher education include the gutting of federal funding for larger research-based schools, canceling debt relief for graduates and working to remove any Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (DEI) programs. In May, a Tuft's international doctorate student was detained by federal agents for an op-ed written in her school's newspaper.

The increase in political force used against students has influenced how Willamette's international students feel about coming abroad: "Many people told me not to come here," a third international student said, referring to the fear her family and friends relayed.

Some international students are paying more attention to how they live while in the United States. "You self-correct," another WU international student told The Collegian. "I can't get in trouble."

Through this, Willamette's Office of International Education is still working to bring international students to Salem — both for study abroad and for four-year programs.

"Our first and foremost concern is that our international students



The Office of International Education (OIE) in spring of 2021.

Photo by ANUSHKA SRIVASTAV

feel safe here," said Joe Bowersox, the director of the international education office and Dempsey Chair of Environmental Policy & Politics.

Bowersox said these concerns require more communication between schools, their different departments and potential students.

The office is also keeping an eye out for potential issues with visa applications that could impact incoming students.

"It does feel like we have to work a little bit ahead," said Chris Andresen, associate director of the international education office.

Bowersox said the OIE continues to stay informed and use "a lot more communication and diligence." The office works in tandem with the Office of Admissions to support students in their application processes, arrivals and more.

Bowersox and Andresen noted that there has not been a decrease in incoming students despite the tense environment. Bowersox said "We're small enough that we can really provide that individual attention, which I think, particularly now, is really important for international students."

# Glow Run dashes toward a gleaming future

Maya Darski • Staff Writer



Four college students wearing glow-in-the-dark accessories running at night.

Art by WES MOWRY-SILVERMAN

The Willamette Events Board (WEB), Campus Rec and Intramurals kicked off the start of the fall on Sept. 17 with a Glow Run, giving students an opportunity to have a fun, active, outdoor run on a warm, not-so-dark fall evening.

The Glow Run commenced at the Chicken Fountain, from where students walked and jogged around campus gathering glowsticks, shiny sunglasses, and other glowing items. Members of the triathlon team jogged ahead as some students walked and chatted with friends. Students dashed or strolled around Sparks Field, out

to the sidewalks, and north up 12th Street SE, west through State Street and south down Winter Street back to the Chicken Fountain, picking up the various glow items.

Elisa Michels ('28), who competes on Willamette's women's swim team, reflected, "I thought it was pretty fun. I didn't realize you could walk or run until I did it; it was nice that there were options. I liked the glowsticks we got!"

The Glow Run was first hosted in March of 2025 and was ushered in with a wonderful Oregonian spring downpour. Only around eight

students participated; many that had signed up to join these runners chose to stay indoors to avoid getting soaked. This time around, the Glow Run was met with pleasantly cool weather, not a gray cloud in sight.

According to Jodi Santillie, advisor for WEB, the student-led organization starts planning events a semester before. Santillie remarked that when choosing events, the group will often think, "Who is the audience that we don't always reach?" WEB decided to reach out to Campus Rec and Intramurals to collaborate on an event that involved something more active, and after a little brainstorming, the Glow Run was created.

In order to make events run as smoothly as possible, WEB pays careful attention to details among their planning. For example, when discussing options for items that participants could collect during the run, WEB sought to choose objects that would be fun but not weigh students down. In the end, the team decided on shiny sunglasses, glow stick bracelets and necklaces, and bigger glow sticks — items that were light and easy to put on, freeing up hands and not taking up space.

Another big factor in making the Glow Run happen was WEB's collaboration with other campus organizations to reach more students. The joining of Campus Rec and Intramurals allowed word to be spread to the sports teams. Marketing members from WEB, Campus Rec and Intramural Sports worked together to make posters, organize sign-ups on the registration program IMLeagues,

and connect with facilities to get tables set out. The Student Athlete Advisory Committee made the event a way for athletes to obtain Bearcat Cup Points, enticing more athletes to join. All of these efforts from a wide variety of student organizers resulted in 15 students signing up initially, almost double the participation from the last attempt. When it came time for the run to start, however, 36 people total showed up to participate.

Anya Olsson ('28) said that she believes the Glow Run "is a good way to get people involved in exercising and campus rec."

Chloe Maki ('28), who came to attend with Olsson and Michels, said that if the Glow Run were to happen again, she would attend because "it was nice to have an organized campus event and see familiar faces."

WEB is seeking to organize another Glow Run next year; they will connect with Campus Rec and Intramurals to discover their opinions on the event. Santillie noted that the growth of student participation between the spring and fall was big, so there is a possibility of the route expanding outside of campus and more into the city of Salem in the upcoming years.

WEB's goal is to give students a break from schoolwork stress and allow students to have fun with a feeling of community. With the collaboration and hard work of organizations around campus, events such as the Glow Run have the potential to reach many students. As Santillie remarked, "It seems like something that could grow into a tradition."

## Despite retirement, Reyna Meyers' door remains open to Willamette community

Maya Darski • Staff Writer

Over the past two decades, humanities students and faculty called upon Reyna Meyers when they needed support. She was someone who kept her door on Eaton's first floor open for anyone to come into. Meyers' office door closed with her retirement on June 27, 2025, but her connection to Willamette will remain strong.

Meyers started her career at Willamette in 2005 in the registrar department. From there, she transitioned between a few roles before finally settling down as the administrative program coordinator for the College of Arts and Sciences in 2017.

As admin, Meyers was a key factor in helping the departments and programs in the university flourish. She accomplished this by working behind the scenes, organizing events such as guest lectures, readings and symposiums. Meyers remarked that "if anything went wrong in an event, [she] was there."

Meyers' touch extended far past event facilitation: she helped faculty by making copies, scanning articles and books, and supporting faculty and students with grants for other faculty or to students.

Meyers' office was located in Eaton's lobby, creating a tight bond between her and each of the depart-

ments and programs residing there. This tight relationship led to archaeology professor Scott Pike extending an invitation to Meyers to join him and his students on a summer program trip to Scotland in 2019 and 2023. The trips would end up being a favorite memory for Meyers.

"I would be in the trenches digging with the students, having lunch breaks with them," Meyers recalled fondly. "I would literally be with the students the whole time. It was so much fun and so engaging. ... And when I came back the next academic year, I was able to convey what I learned and experienced with the students applying for the program the next year. If students shared interest in the program, people would say, 'Talk to Reyna. She's been there!'"

Meyers said her relationship with the faculty and students was filled with warmth and support. It was "genuine, heartfelt — they treated me like a co-partner, made me feel like I was part of the department. It was absolutely wonderful." One of Meyers' core beliefs was "no matter who the student is, I want to have a relationship with them. So with each of my students, I kept my office door open."

Meyers hoped that students would feel welcomed at all times to

ask questions or talk. She held this sentiment for every student from every grade, including law school students. "Many of the students that came to the law school come from other professions. But the minute the people come back to school, they turn back into students who need support and someone to guide them. I always wanted to be that person."

Despite having retired, Meyers plans to stay affiliated with Willamette for a long time. She has continued her involvement in the Willamette Institute of Continued Learning (WICL), Phil Hanni Scholarship and the archaeology department as a volunteer. Whenever she finds herself back on campus, she is happy to stop to chat with students.

"There's absolutely nothing like being around students. They've always given me a certain energy."



Reyna Meyers, Willamette University's former Administrative Program Coordinator, in front of Eaton Hall on Sept. 2, 2025.  
Photo by MAC CHILDERS

Even after her retirement, Reyna Meyers' door will be warmly open, for each and every student.

## Opinion: Ranking the new smoothies at Blitz Market from divalicious to purely nutritious

Maisy Clunies-Ross • Staff Writer



The four smoothie options from the new Blitz Market, outside of Sparks Athletic Center on Sept. 17, 2025.  
Photo by PATRICIA KREPEL

While celebrities are no strangers to brand collaborations, over the past few years, a new mode of self-promotion has swept the scene. It's not enough to have a makeup brand or a fashion line. It's not enough for your fans to see you or hear you. Now, they have to drink you in. All the it girls have smoothies. The craze first started in 2022, when high-end grocery store, Erewhon, debuted Hailey Bieber's Strawberry Glaze Skin Smoothie. Since then, Erewhon has collaborated with Bella Hadid, Olivia Rodrigo, Sabrina Carpenter, Kourtney Kardashian and many others to create a wide array of brightly colored delectably Instagramable concoctions.

One celebrity has been left conspicuously absent from Erewhon's roster. This blue-eyed, silky-haired bombshell has more star power in one

find out at the new Blitz Market in the Sparks Athletic Center for only \$5.25.

Although I can't say with confidence which smoothie is Blitz's favorite, I'll do my best to inform the public by providing a smoothie ranking of my own.

### 1. Green Machine

This smoothie represents an alluring juxtaposition — its appearance implies health food despite its taste primarily implying sugar. The spirulina and agave balance out the spinach as the coconut water and pineapple give the smoothie a tropical summery sweet flavor. The grassy green hue makes the smoothie feel refreshing even before it enters your mouth, and this sensation only intensifies once you begin to drink it.

finger tip than all of the Kardashians combined, and yet, Erewhon has still left consumers empty-handed. This icon is more fuzzy than some of their counterparts, but it needn't give the public pause that they have, well, paws. The Erewhon smoothies sweeping the nation lead us to wonder ... what kind of smoothie would Blitz the Bearcat drink? As of this fall, students now have an opportunity to

I don't really eat vegetables or drink water, so I mostly move through the world like a tumbleweed, pattering around dryly, kicking up dust in my wake. For the 45 minutes I was drinking the green machine, I felt a little less like a tumbleweed. I felt my skin get dewier, my muscles more relaxed, my worldview more peaceful. It almost made me want to drink water more often, but water doesn't taste like pineapple, so it's less appealing than the green machine.

### 2. Chocolate Indulgence

I don't mean to have a full Karen from Mean Girls moment here, but I did wonder why a smoothie called the chocolate indulgence was white. Nevertheless, I forged forward, overlooking the smoothie's pale appearance to imbibe its rich chocolatey goodness. I still find it a little bit odd that something so clearly white tastes exactly like a Reese's peanut butter cup, but the more I drank it, the less I minded. This was the most filling of the smoothies, with a rich, creamy consistency and a strong nutty aftertaste. The first thing to hit me was the sugary, chocolate flavor, but the taste of the sunflower butter lingered in my mouth even after the smoothie was gone. It was like drinking a milkshake, but with a superiority complex.

### 3. Strawberry Banana

The great thing about the strawberry banana is you get exactly what you sign up for. I came in expecting strawberry and banana, and my needs were met. This smoothie has a comforting, nostalgic flavor. It calmed my stomach, while playfully invoking the smoothies of my child-

hood. Strawberry and banana is a timeless combination, one of the few duos I truly believe will stand the test of time. Simon and Garfunkel broke up. Donald Trump and Elon Musk broke up. Even my parents broke up. But I can say with confidence, strawberry and banana will never break up. A classic for a reason.

### 4. Mixed Berry

Mixed berry, I must admit, you are not as captivating or show-stopping as your peers, but you are worthy of love regardless. Something need not be attention-grabbing or particularly innovative to be a quality product. To me, that is the experience mixed berry provides. I had a lovely time drinking it. It was cool and sweet, and it did a wonderful job tiding me over between breakfast and lunch. Mixed berry filled my tummy and put a smile on my face, but I just don't have anything particularly groundbreaking to say about it.

Admittedly, I do have favorites, but I'd highly recommend all of the Blitz Market smoothies. They're simultaneously filling and thirst-quenching, nutritious and delicious, accessible and decadent. Drinking these smoothies made me feel glamorous, like an aging starlet who wears huge sunglasses and drives a little bit too fast. I took such joy in holding the straw betwixt my fingers, slurping down the last dregs of frozen fruit conspicuously as if to announce to my classmates, "Don't you know? I'm a diva. Look, see, I have a smoothie." The Blitz Market smoothies have all the social status of their Erewhon counterparts, but unlike Hailey Bieber's signature smoothie, Blitz's smoothies don't cost \$20!

# Opinion: The conversation around overconsumption needs to change

Maisy Clunies-Ross • Staff Writer

American consumption has reached a new high (and for those concerned about human rights and the environment, a new low). Consumerist culture has been fundamental to the American identity for decades, and the internet has only heightened the desire for goods. The luxury that used to be only visible through movies, magazines and proximity to wealth is now available at the click of a button. Social media users are faced with a never-ending barrage of clothing hauls, Stanley cup collections, and now, the infamous Labubus.

For those lucky enough to be unaware, Labubus are collectible bag charms. They're sold in blind boxes and some are incredibly rare, providing them with a gambling appeal and a cult fanbase. The past couple months, Labubus — and their counterfeit counterparts, Lafufus — have been everywhere. Clipped to bags, on the news, at Madonna's birthday party, and even on Karl Marx's grave. But long after the Labubu craze has died down and the toys' felt bodies have withered away, their plastic faces will join the ranks of millions of forgotten toys comprising 6% of global landfill plastics.

Almost as prevalent as Labubus are their detractors. One would think it was legally mandated for YouTubers to bug out their eyes, mouths agape, their captions boldly proclaiming "Labubu obsession has gone TOO FAR!" Ironically, the industry around low-effort criticisms of consumption seems to be nearly as profitable as the hyper-consumptive content itself. To a certain extent, it feels like the content serves to platform these exorbitant displays of consumerism just as much as it serves to critique it. It's virtue signalling: it provides no recourse for the vice.

This is one of the primary issues with the current state of overconsumption discourse, at least as it exists outside of academic spaces. It's more focused on scolding those involved or gawking at the gaudiness of someone's purchases rather than addressing why such behavior may be prevalent or how it could be mitigated. Many of the videos and articles on overconsumption conclude either, "It's not wrong to want to shop

or collect, just be mindful about your purchases," or, "Resist temptation and just don't shop." Neither of these conclusions is enough.

For influencers, there are algorithmic and financial incentives for such wasteful consumption. They are buying goods not just to have them but to profit from owning them. For everyday people, social pressure and the challenges of day to day life often encourage such shopping. This is "little treat" culture, the suggestion that a hard day can be improved by a tasty drink, new trinket or other minor purchase. President Trump's tariffs and the looming fear of recession may have spiked the need for "little treats" due to what economists call the "lipstick index." This theory posits that economic uncertainty makes relatively minor acts of consumption more frequent as a result of consumers craving some form of luxury when they cannot make larger investments.

Lower-income consumers may be more likely to participate in this phenomenon, considering they have less financial means to make large purchases or long-term investments. While the accuracy of the lipstick index is still debated by many economists, the illusion that material wealth and goods are necessary for one's happiness has been integral to capitalism from the beginning. This lie is especially important in relation to the working class, considering it motivates people to produce consistently and efficiently so that after they fulfill their basic needs, they must purchase goods that provide actual "happiness," and maybe one day, be in a position of power themselves.

The joy of commerce and the possibility of future privilege is a distraction from the reality that American capitalism fails to meet the majority of people's basic needs. Many people's access to housing, healthcare, clean water and food are always in a state of precarity, even in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Instead of being provided with stability or the resources necessary for a fulfilling life, people are given the "freedom" to buy little treats. The instant gratification from such purchases subdues people from resisting their own subjugation and encourages complicity in the subjugation of

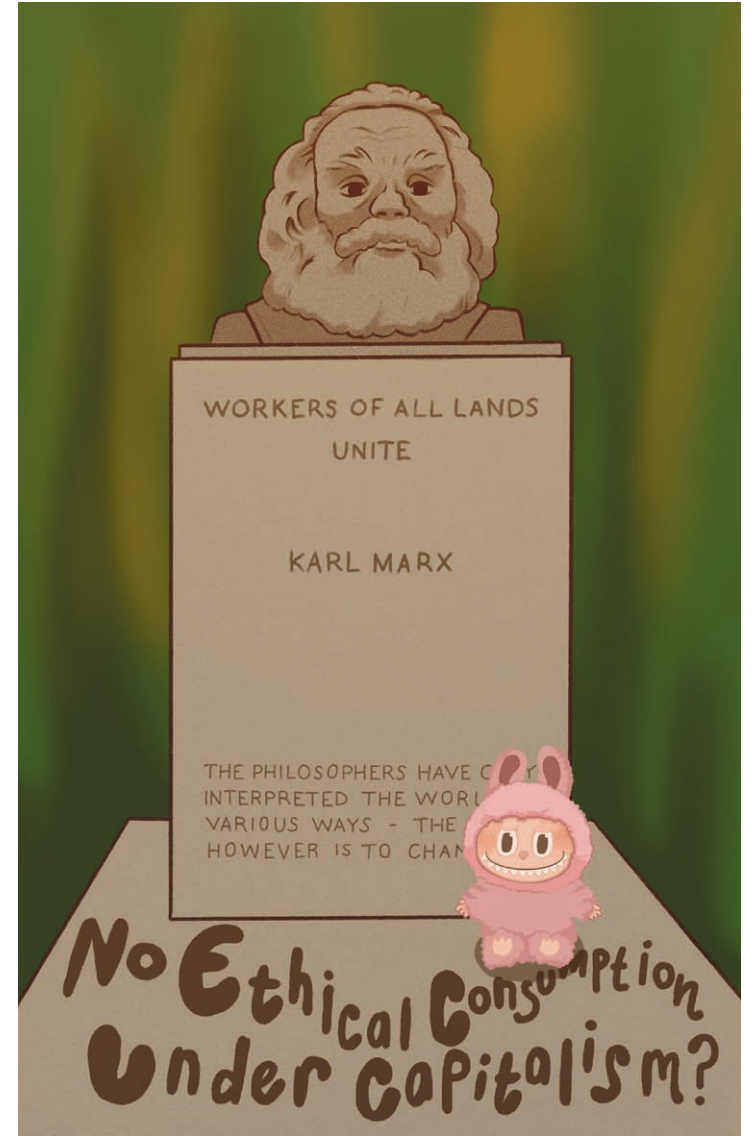
others.

This power imbalance is a fundamental aspect of the capitalist system. Both land and people are only as valuable as their contributions to the acquisition of wealth for corporations. People aren't valued for their personhood; the environment is not appreciated for its beauty or crucial role in sustaining life. Everything is seen through the lens of profit, so there will never be an equitable or environmentally-conscious world under capitalism. There's no amount of buying from sustainable brands or chiding others for their purchases that will change that.

To be clear, "there's no ethical consumption under capitalism" isn't a justification for thoughtless shopping. Choosing humanely-made and environmentally-friendly products or trying to purchase less altogether are still worthwhile pursuits. However, focusing purely on commerce just puts a bandaid on a gaping wound.

So what now? There's no simple solution. That's part of what makes this conversation far more challenging than the typical overconsumption discourse. No one gets to pat themselves on the back or take the easy way out. This problem didn't start with big eyed bag charms and it won't end with them either. The process of deconstructing American capitalism will be complex and lon-

glasting. It will take years of protests, boycotts and community organizing. It will take advocating for policies that protect working-class people, investing in restoring and protecting social services, holding CEOs and political figures accountable, and freeing ourselves from the individualistic prison of capitalism to prioritize the needs of society's most vulnerable people. We must address this problem methodically and holistically, rather than falling victim to finger-pointing or punitive notions of justice. We can't miss the forest for the trees. Or pretty soon we might not have either.



A pink Labubu plushie sitting at the base of philosopher Karl Marx's grave. Art by WES MOWRY-SILVERMAN



**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'

## STAFF PICKS

Compiled by Priya Thoren • Opinions Editor

**Topic: Favorite fall treat**

**The Pick:** Trader Joe's pumpkin spice yogurt cookies  
**Submitted by:** Sofie Szigeti, Staff Photographer

**The Pick:** Jack-O-Lantern shaped Reese's Peanut Butter Cups  
**Submitted by:** Gimena Baez Baez, Opinions Writer

**The Pick:** Pie, especially when it's warm and with a scoop of vanilla bean ice cream  
**Submitted by:** Avneet Dhaliwal, News Writer

**The Pick:** Stew  
**Submitted by:** Skeet Starr, Editor-in-Chief

**The Pick:** Roasted pumpkin seeds  
**Submitted by:** Addie Martin, Digital Artist, and Alexander Berry, News Writer

**The Pick:** Candy corn  
**Submitted by:** Caelyn Ochs, Lifestyles Writer, and Patricia Krepel, Staff Photographer

# Bearcat Network under paywall after Northwest Conference sells media rights to FloSports

Ruby Hampton • Staff Writer



Willamette students watching Bearcat sports.  
Art by ADRIAN AXTELL

**Disclaimer:** Ruby Hampton is a member of the Willamette lacrosse team

All of the Northwest Conference (NWC) media platforms, including Willamette's Bearcat Network, are undergoing a facelift this year. As of the fall of 2025, Willamette and nine other schools across Oregon and Washington have entered into an exclusive five-year media rights agreement with FloSports.

FloSports has a \$19.99 monthly subscription fee for non-students and \$9.99 for anyone with a ".edu" email address, which is a drastic change from the formerly free-to-watch Bearcat Network.

Founded in 2006, FloSports is a global sports media company for live event coverage as well as "comprehensive sports data solutions for passionate and underserved sports fans." According to a Bearcat Athletics press release, this partnership intends to improve visibility and lessen the cost for Willamette in terms of filming and producing sports film.

Presidents of the nine NWC schools, including Willamette's President Steve Thorsett, voted on this decision back in July 2025.

According to the same Bearcat Athletics press release, Shana Levine, commissioner of the NWC, said of the change, "Partnering with

FloSports marks an exciting step forward for the Northwest Conference as we expand our reach and elevate the visibility of our student-athletes. This collaboration allows us to share compelling stories that reflect our core values of academic centrality, unity, and competitive excellence — while ensuring the NWC is well-prepared for the ever-evolving landscape of college athletics."

When asked about how FloSports may affect Willamette's coaches and student-athletes, Director of Athletic Communications Chris Sabato said, "It's hard to say. Obviously, it's a change, and for parents who are used to watching games for free, there is now a charge. For incoming freshmen, it's probably not going to be as big of a deal because their families have been having to pay to watch them play forever."

Sabato also explained that by selling its media rights, Willamette saves money. Broadcasting is not cheap — it's an expensive process that involves the purchase and maintenance of high-tech equipment, including cameras, computers and sound equipment. It isn't a process that pays for itself.

FloSports streaming allows schools to invest in their broadcasting programs, sanctioning money that could possibly be poured into departments that support rights fees,

production, product technology and marketing. It's important to note that 18 other NCAA conferences are currently available on FloSports, making it a highly-exposed platform for viewership. According to Sabato, in order for Willamette to continue producing high-level quality broadcasting, it must benefit from a more lucrative form of revenue.

The former Bearcat Network was a free-to-watch resource that broadcasted live feeds of all matches, games and meets of Willamette's varsity sports, including away games — provided that their host had adequate streaming equipment.

As might have been expected, some Bearcat families are dissatisfied with the change — and the \$19.99 monthly price tag.

Avid Willamette women's lacrosse watcher Lisa Owens, an Idahoan mom of a second-year lacrosse player, said, "It's a little unusual. Willamette is not an inexpensive school; tuition costs a lot. To make us pay to watch our kids play seems silly, especially because they don't give out sports scholarships."

The free and beloved Bearcat Network will be missed, but the NWC has determined FloSports as Willamette's new normal, and if Willamette athletics doesn't keep up with the times and conference, the worry is that it will get left behind.

# New-ish Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Leslie Shevlin talks return to Willamette and vision for athletics department

Jack Godsil • Staff Writer

This August, Rob Passage transitioned into a role in HR after eight years serving as Willamette's director of intercollegiate athletics, allowing former Assistant Athletic Director Leslie Shevlin to take over the role. After a year in Williamstown, Massachusetts, Shevlin returned to Salem to fill the AD position. The Collegian got to sit down with her to talk about what this job means to her and her vision for Willamette's athletics department.

**Interviewer:** What drew you back to Willamette?

**Leslie:** I mean, this is where my family is, and I was here for 15 years with a strong connection to the institution and the community. I hope to grow connections with the community in this very important and hopefully impactful role. ... I wanted to be an athletic director where my family wants to be, in the Pacific Northwest and Salem.

**Interviewer:** So how much of a role did family play in your decision to come back?

**Leslie:** A lot. I've been wanting to be an athletic director for a while, but while I was at Williams [College], I didn't apply for a bunch of jobs to get out. I was planning to be there for a bit. ... It was [the opening of] this job specifically that brought me back.

...

**Interviewer:** How are you enjoying your first month?

**Leslie:** It's good. It's a lot. Athletics

... really is going on all summer. ... I came back pretty quickly because we had folks on campus starting Aug. 12. I'm just trying to balance being on board and kind of being along for the ride while asking a lot of questions and not making too many sweeping changes too quickly because that would be really hard for folks.

And really, even though I was here before, this is a different role. Willamette has evolved and had successes and challenges the whole time I've been here before, so I've just been trying to relearn and ask a lot of questions in this first month. But it's been fun being at some soccer games and seeing the women win on Sunday [Sept. 7 vs Warner Pacific] and being at football games trying to reconnect. I love connecting with the families and the student-athletes. It's a little harder in this role to get to do that as much [when compared with my former role].

**Interviewer:** Can you briefly explain the difference between your job now and the job you had before at Willamette?

**Leslie:** In the associate athletic director role that I had before, I was in partnership with the athletic director, helping to make a lot of decisions. Ultimately, [former AD Passage] was making a lot of the decisions. But now, the big difference is I'm asking for the input and then ultimately I'm the one either making decisions or asking my boss if I can make decisions. I supervised coaches a little bit while I was here as an associate AD. It was one of the primary roles I held at Williams College, supervising 12

of their sports. And here now, I am more or less supervising all the head coaches that we have. So that's a lot more — needing to meet with them one-on-one, needing to check in on scheduling and gear purchasing and all that kind of stuff, that's now all going through me. And I'm still doing some of the things I did as an associate AD as it relates to the budget and finance.

**Interviewer:** I know you've only been gone a year, but have there been any major changes at Willamette?

**Leslie:** I mean luckily, I'm really grateful all the head coaches were still the same. So that's nice because it's actually allowed me to be a little bit more task-focused. Normally, it probably would have just been [just] shaking hands for the first month, so that's been really helpful. I don't know how much has changed, but it's interesting how quickly you forget the processes. And they seem brand new to me, even though I was doing them before.

**Interviewer:** The last question I have for you is, "What do you plan on doing for the future?"

**Leslie:** Yeah, that is a question you should definitely come to and ask me again next fall. In all honesty, sometimes we see leaders come in, and



Leslie Shevlin.

Photo courtesy of the Willamette Athletics Department

they have such a strong vision that they start making changes without talking to people who those changes are going to affect. And I want to be really mindful .... If I see something that needs to be adjusted, and it's critical to student-athlete health and safety, we're going to make those changes. But outside of that, I need my coaches' inputs. I need conversations with my boss before we make any big changes that will affect student or coach experience. So I will, again, not this January, but a year from this January, I hope to have a ... kind of strategic 10-year plan for the athletics department. I have my vision, but again, it's gotta fit with the goals of the institution. Or it'll always be a challenge.

# Photojournalism: The Martha Springer Garden sprung back to life

Sofie Szigeti • Staff Photographer

**H**ave you ever taken a walk behind Sparks Gym, near the bridge over the Mill Stream, and noticed the big, open, green space? Last year, the Martha Springer Garden underwent a revitalization project to help fix up some damage. This year, with the project complete, new features and beautiful native plants have been added for viewers to enjoy. All photos taken in Willamette University's Martha Springer Garden on Aug. 20, 2025.



A relaxing spot in the Martha Springer Garden.  
*Photo by SOFIE SZIGETI*



Dahlias are one of the many breathtaking flowers in the Martha Springer Garden.  
*Photo by SOFIE SZIGETI*



A beautiful sunflower in the Martha Springer Garden.  
*Photo by SOFIE SZIGETI*



A waterfall flows in Martha Springer Garden.  
*Photo by SOFIE SZIGETI*



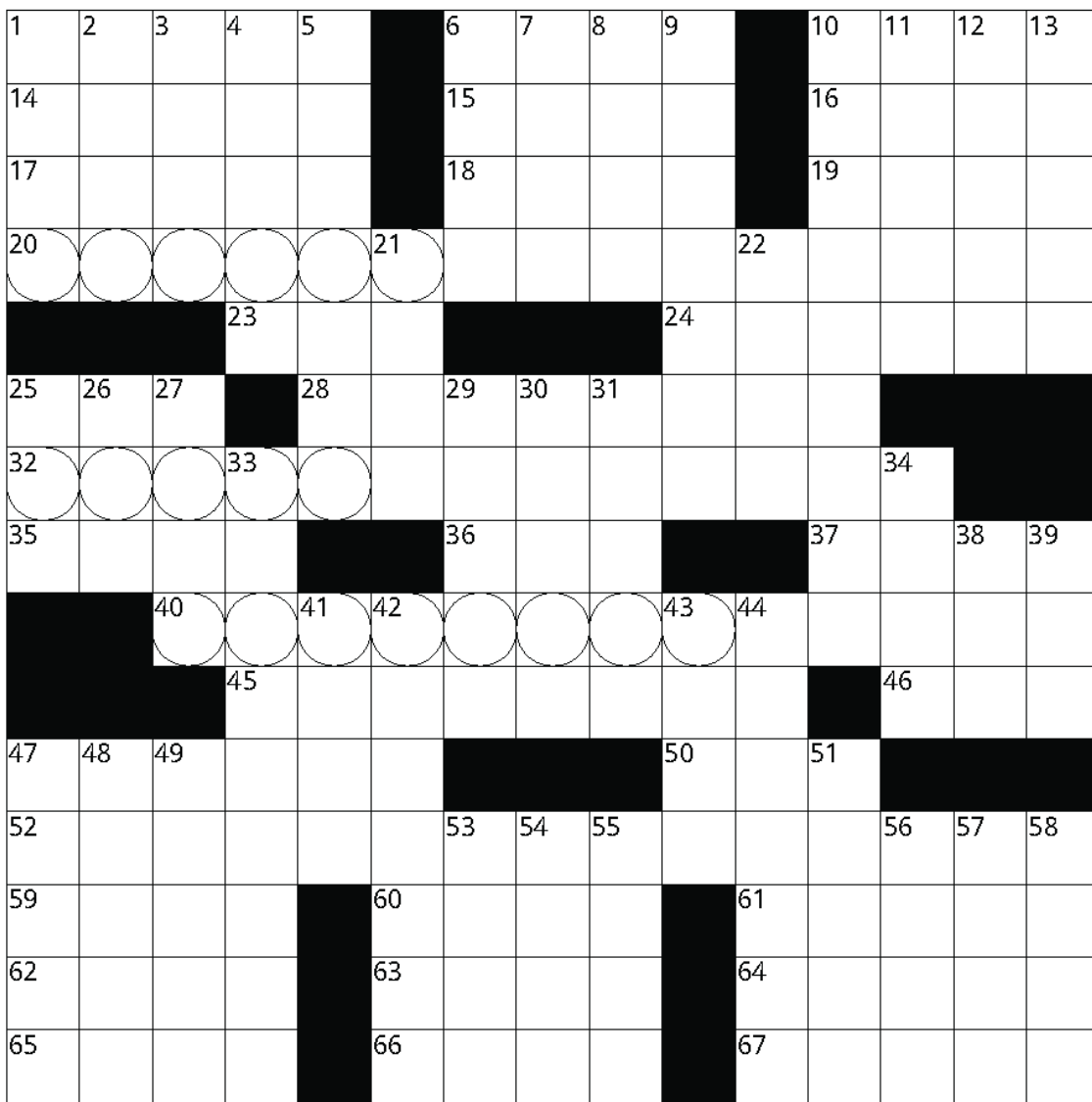
Visitors enjoy the views of the garden.  
*Photo by SOFIE SZIGETI*



Vibrant flowers in the Martha Springer Garden.  
*Photo by SOFIE SZIGETI*

# Early October Puzzle

Crossword by EZRA NELSEN



- Williams as a genie
- 6 \_\_\_'acte (intermission)
- 7 Where "champagne tastes like Coca-Cola, C-O-L-A, cola"
- 8 Jazz genre which often features banjo or tuba
- 9 From Dubai, say
- 10 Tequila-based cocktail
- 11 Love, in French
- 12 Approach evening
- 13 Ms. Doolittle
- 21 Thanksgiving sweet potatoes
- 22 "Don't worry about me"
- 25 1977 Steely Dan album
- 26 It's between Est. and Lith.
- 27 Narrow strip of land: Abbr.
- 29 Student
- 30 Photoshop company
- 31 Comedian Wyatt
- 33 Because (of)
- 34 Franklin D.'s mother
- 38 "Proud Mary" band, abbr.
- 39 Tic-\_\_\_-toe
- 41 Ingenuous one
- 42 Attendees at Chase Center, e.g.
- 43 Small songbird
- 44 Touching words?
- 47 Loathe
- 48 Two-door car
- 49 Bikes have two of them
- 51 Medieval weapon that dangles
- 53 Thought
- 54 Koi, e.g.
- 55 Angsty teens, perhaps
- 56 Green fruit
- 57 Tesla CEO, Musk
- 58 Tabula \_\_\_

**ACROSS**

- 1 The only American president from Hawaii
- 6 East, from Spain
- 10 Like a Rooster or Bull
- 14 Record \_\_\_
- 15 Comedian, Macdonald
- 16 Human rights lawyer Clooney
- 17 Stadium
- 18 Southeast-Asian cuisine
- 19 Naan alternative
- 20 "Six Feet Under" Actor who was nominated for an Emmy
- 23 Childcare writer LeShan
- 24 Excavation site where cuneiform was discovered
- 25 Boxer, Muhammad
- 28 "Transformers"

- Autobot who wields a harpoon
- 32 Actor and creator of "Ted Lasso"
- 35 Abbr. on an envelope
- 36 "\_\_\_ de Replay" (Rihanna song)
- 37 Diplomacy
- 40 Carthaginian general who crossed the alps
- 45 San Francisco transport
- 46 Prefix with "sin" or "cos"
- 47 Savanna tree
- 50 U.K. fliers
- 52 Successful movie, and what 20-across, 32-across, and 40-across share a name with
- 59 Netflix competitor
- 60 Driver of "Ferrari"

- 61 Daughter of 25-across
- 62 Sign on a thriving storefront
- 63 Claudius' successor
- 64 Long rides?
- 65 Break
- 66 Chumps
- 67 Supreme Court justice Kagan

**DOWN**

- 1 Lemony Snicket villain, Count
- 2 \_\_\_ Body (Inactive x chromosome in females)
- 3 "Float like a butterfly, sting like \_\_\_"
- 4 Sierra Leone natives who revolted on a slave ship in 1839
- 5 Disney film starring Robin



Fall is falling on campus!  
Comic by BASIL ALLEN

Read the "Fast Break," Willamette's premier university athletics column ... or else. New issues Tuesday mornings.

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