

# COLLEGIAN

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## Police force invited to train on campus property



SOPHIE SMITH  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Several police officers congregated on Willamette's campus on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of last week. The police, who were spotted on the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) performing training drills on bikes and eating lunch in Goudy Commons, were uniformed and some appeared to be armed.

The Willamette community was not notified about this police presence beforehand, and many members of the community felt unsafe when the police were on campus. Student activists responded by writing protests with sidewalk chalk, and the STEAM Collective, or Students for Transparency, Equity, Accountability, Transparency, compiled resources online for students who may feel unsafe around the police.

According to Ross Stout, the director of Campus Safety, the police were groups of Oregon State Troopers who were using Willamette's campus to perform training drills. The troopers were scheduled to perform this training at the Capitol Building, but they "wanted to expand the types of [training] venues in order to expand the effectiveness of the training," said Stout. The University did not receive revenue from this arrangement.

Rich Dennis, the associate director of Campus Safety, is a retired Oregon State Trooper. According to Stout, the troopers reached out to Dennis to request use of Willamette's campus for their bicycle



DANI GARCIA KING

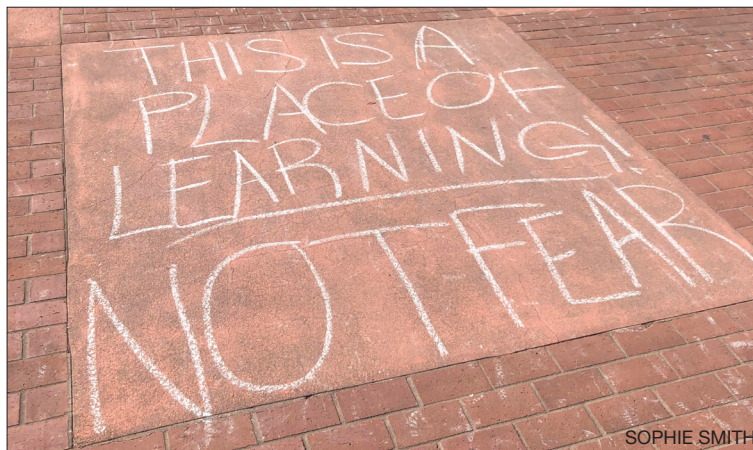
Oregon State Police officers gathered on campus last week to perform training exercises (above). A statement on Jackson Plaza reads, "This is a place of learning! Not fear" (right).

training and arrived on campus per Dennis' invitation. A query placed to Dennis on Monday went unanswered by deadline.

According to Stout, Willamette maintains a close relationship with the Oregon State Police that benefits the University. Stout cited an incident last week in which Campus Safety contacted the Oregon State Police in the Capitol Building to assist in the apprehending of someone who was allegedly harassing students on campus.

"We believe that partnerships between local law enforcement agencies and WU's Campus Safety department can strengthen and sustain our mutual efforts to prevent and respond to incidents," said Stout.

Police groups have used Willamette's campus for training events for several years, most of which



SOPHIE SMITH

took place inside buildings or at McCulloch Stadium. Last week's trainings were held on the Quad and surrounding outdoor areas while many classes were in session.

On Tuesday, Oct. 15, ASWU President Amarit Ubhi ('20) released a statement to the CLA community that addressed this situation. In an email, Ubhi said police will be on campus for additional training in November 2019 and January 2020, the dates of which have not yet been released. The email also says measures may be taken in the future to

ensure that events like this are advertised to the community before they take place, perhaps through the use of the email program Today@Willamette.

"My goal with releasing the statement is to ensure that the student body has as much information as possible about the incidents that took place, as well as what steps I am taking to make sure this does not happen again," said Ubhi. "I cannot make change on campus, but I can advocate on behalf of students." **STUDENTS, 3**

## New York Times article features President Thorsett



MADELYN JONES  
NEWS EDITOR

The New York Times published an article on Oct. 10 titled "Radical Survival Strategies for Struggling Colleges" that featured Willamette University President Steve Thorsett. Reporter Jon Marcus interviewed several campus leaders across the country who are taking innovative measures to preserve the financial wellbeing of struggling midsize universities.

The article reports that on average, 11 colleges have closed their doors in the last three years, and that number is soon projected to rise to 15. Small and midsize liberal arts colleges are facing lower enrollment numbers, and those who fail to adapt will likely join those numbers. Most of the article's discussion about Willamette focused on the multiple graduate programs it offers, setting it apart from competitors.

Thorsett made the student body aware of this article in his weekly 'Words from Waller' email sent out on Oct. 2, where he outlined a week in the life of a university president. He wrote, "I started the day showing off the campus to a New York Times photographer, who is collecting visuals for a future story on innovation in higher education."

The article is now being widely spread through the University. A headshot of Thorsett along with a link to the article greets visitors of the Willamette website. It has also been broadcasted on Willamette's official social media accounts. **THORSETT, 3**

## Volleyball coach expresses optimism about team's future



COURTESY OF WU ATHLETICS

A Whitman player defends against a spike from senior Jennifer Lane.



IVY YEOH  
STAFF WRITER

The women's volleyball team has had a turbulent season. Its

overall record for the season is 4-13, but its Northwest Conference (NWC) record stands at 3-5. Although volleyball has had its ups and downs, the team has played well in the NWC, which is

made clear through a comparison of their NWC record versus their overall season record (with only one win outside the NWC).

With both wins and losses under their belt, the women's volleyball team is one of the least stagnant teams at Willamette University.

In an interview with Tom Shoji, head coach of the women's volleyball team for the last 11 years, he discussed his perspective and role as coach.

Shoji has had a long career as a head coach, not only at WU but at Division I and Division II schools like Indiana University and Colorado State University-Pueblo. In his time as head coach, he has seen the competitive nature of Division I, Division II and Division III schools and was able to elaborate on what that means for Willamette (Division III) athletics: "The amount of money you spend and the recruiting in Division I is quite different. However, when you get in the gym, the drills that you do and the skills

you teach are basically the same. The training for volleyball is often very similar—pass, set and hit. The mental side is a little bit different because Division I athletes have a full-time job, it's 24/7, no time off, with training year round and Division III is quite different. It's a different mindset."

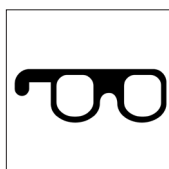
While Division I athletics receives much more funding and can recruit with ease, Division III teams also compete at a high level. However, Division III athletes, and more specifically Willamette athletes, are students first and athletes second.

"[In] Division III, the student comes first, not the athletics, so they don't miss as much class versus in Division I, where they're missing a ton of classes because of their crazy travel schedules," said Shoji.

The balance between academics and sports is especially difficult for those making the transition from the high school level to the university level. Shoji pointed

out that while in high school, the pressure to constantly give 100 percent to athletics is much lower than when playing for a university, where you are expected to be on top of your game in both the classrooms and the courts. However, Shoji praised the first-years on the team. Shoji mentioned a couple first-years by name, like Emma Porter from Honolulu, HI, who Shoji states is "on track to being one of the best setters he's seen on the Willamette team." Shoji also specifically commended Hawaii high school and club volleyball, as it is much more rigorous than most high school sports across the nation. Shoji's appreciation for Hawaiian volleyball culture is obvious with one brief look at the team's roster. Porter is one of four students from Hawaii on a team with 15 members in total.

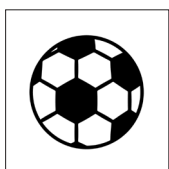
TEAM OF THE WEEK, 7



### LIFESTYLES

Students, family and faculty celebrate sustainability at Zena Fest.

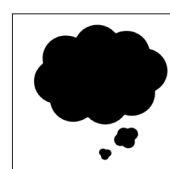
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### SPORTS

Football head coach tackles domestic violence awareness.

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### OPINIONS

New "Joker" movie met with mixed reviews in current social climate.

pg. 8





# Family Weekend offered varied activities

REED BERTRAN  
STAFF WRITER

Friends and family of Willamette University students visited the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) campus this weekend to spend time with their loved ones and experience the student performances and activities that were part of this year's Family Weekend. Visitors were met with performances by Theatre and Music Department students, activities led by Willamette professors and faculty, sporting events, meals at Goudy Commons, an interdenominational worship service and a Gender Resources and Advocacy Center (GRAC) family open house.

According to Gray Gautereaux ('20), the main coordinator of Family Weekend, "Family Weekend is an excellent way to celebrate the families and alum who are connected to WU but don't get to engage with campus life to the same degree as current students. Through programs and events... people from all over get to celebrate and enjoy their relation to WU in a fun and community-oriented weekend."

Gautereaux also noted that many offices and organizations across campus helped plan and host the multiple events throughout the week.

Family Weekend events kicked off on Thursday evening with a sold-out performance of the theatre production "Men on Boats" in the M. Lee Pelton Theatre. On Friday, visitors could explore the exhibits of the Hallie Ford Art Museum and attended a parent leadership event hosted by Willamette's parent leadership council, a group that according to the Willamette University website, "serves as a resource for prospective, current

and alumni parents and partners with Willamette to help engage parents with the university."

Visitors also attended "Jazz Night" in Smith Auditorium on Friday night, watching performances by the Willamette Jazz Collective and Willamette Singers. Later, participants played trivia games in Cat Cavern, in an event hosted by the Willamette Event Board (WEB).

Brett Stoner-Osborne ('20), a tenor saxophonist who performed with the WU Jazz Collective on Jazz Night, said the following about the event: "It's a great opportunity for the different facets of the Willamette Music Department to come together and watch each other perform. This year, the Jazz Collective and Willamette Singers got to perform a piece together, and it's so cool to see that come together. You can tell everyone has worked really hard to make their performances memorable."

Saturday marked the busiest day of Family Weekend, beginning with a brunch in Goudy Commons. In the afternoon, professors led several Mini-University sessions. These sessions were meant to emulate the everyday experience of a Willamette student attending classes on campus. Mini-University sessions were led by CLA professors from the art history, physics, psychology, women's and gender studies, mathematics and exercise and health science departments. Professor Warren Binford of the Willamette College of Law hosted a Mini-University session as well.

Zena Fest, an annual fall event located on the 305-acre Willamette-owned Zena property, offered visitors on Saturday tours and demonstrations by faculty members and hikes around the property. Vis-



DANI GARCIA-KING

*The Jazz Collective and Willamette Singers performed together at Jazz Night (top).*

*Students and their families participated in a trivia night hosted by WEB (right).*

itors to Zena were also served fresh pressed apple cider and a vegan farm to fork lunch.

When asked about Zena Fest's role in Family Weekend, co-president of Willamette's Farm Club Arabella Wood ('20) stated: "I think Family Weekend is an amazing way to show visitors what a liberal arts education looks like. Zena is a space for exploration within the arts and sciences whether that be forestry, farming or food justice. By going to Zena, family and friends are able to see the ongoing projects being done there. It's also a really fun way to get off campus, see another side of the Willamette Valley and explore a beautiful landscape with your loved ones."

Willamette football, men's soccer and women's volleyball all had games on Saturday, and Family



COURTESY OF BLUE

Weekend visitors joined students at a Homecoming Tailgate BBQ for the football team at McCulloch Stadium.

Family Weekend came to a completion in the evening on Saturday with a second performance of "Men on Boats" and a performance by Willamette's classical music ensembles. The classical music performance included the University's wind ensemble accompanied by Artist-in-Residence Jean-David Coen, chamber orchestra, Vox and Voce choirs

and Chamber Choir. Both the University Wind Ensemble and Chamber Choir were conducted by Assistant Professor of Music Hector Agüero, the Chamber Orchestra was conducted by Visiting Professor of Choral Music Wallace Long and the Vox and Voce choirs were conducted by Instructor of Vocal Studies Chris Enghretson. Like the performances of the Theatre Department's "Men on Boats," the classical music concert was sold out.

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## WEEKLY REPORT BY CAMPUS SAFETY

### EMERGENCY MEDICAL AID

**Oct. 8, 11:22 a.m. (University Center):** Campus Safety received a call from an employee reporting that a student was feeling like they are going to pass out. The individual was transported to Bishop Wellness Center then transported to the hospital.

**Oct. 10, 8:24 a.m. (in a campus residence):** Campus Safety received a call from an employee reporting a student having a panic attack. An officer responded and transported the student and their friend to the Emergency Room.

### HARASSMENT

**Oct. 8, 3:38 p.m. (Belknap Hall):** Campus Safety received a call from the Grounds department who reported observing an individual who was harassing students. Officers responded and located the suspect. After making contact with him, the suspect started running and the officers followed. The suspect crossed over State Street

and State Police were contacted. A State Police K-9 unit apprehended the suspect, and he was arrested for harassment and trespassing. The suspect was determined to be a registered sex offender.

### SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

**Oct. 4, 9:19 a.m. (Sparks parking lot):** Campus Safety received a call from an employee reporting a suspicious individual pushing a shopping cart through the lot who did not seem coherent. An officer responded and contacted the individual and assured that they left campus.

**Oct. 6, 2:51 p.m. (Eaton Hall):** While on patrol, Willamette Watch reported a suspicious individual talking to themselves and using violent language. An officer responded and searched the area for the individual, but they had already left campus.

**Oct. 7, 7:32 a.m. (Mudd Building):** Campus Safety received a call reporting a suspicious individual talking to themselves.

An officer made contact with the individual and kept visual contact with the individual who slowly made it off campus.

**Oct. 8, 7:09 a.m. (Skybridge):** While on patrol, an officer observed transients camping underneath the Skybridge. The officer made contact with the individuals and they packed up and left campus.

**Oct. 9, 8:33 a.m. (Skybridge):** Campus Safety received a call from the Grounds Department reporting individuals sleeping underneath the Skybridge. An officer responded and the individuals left campus.

**Oct. 9, 2:56 p.m. (Law School):** Campus Safety received a call from an employee reporting a suspicious individual outside their windows collecting bugs with a tube who was making them uncomfortable. An officer checked on the individual, who then became aggressive towards the officer after being questioned about their activities. The individual was advised that they were on

private property and could be asked to leave if they continued to be aggressive and uncooperative. The individual did provide ID and explained that they worked for the State of Oregon.

### THEFT

**Oct. 6, 11:10 a.m. (WISH Building):** Campus Safety received a call from a student requesting to file a report regarding the theft of their items from the shared fridge in the residence hall. An officer met with the student at the location of the theft and a report was filed.

**Oct. 9, 10:30 a.m. (Jackson Plaza):** A student came to Campus Safety to report that their bike had been stolen from in front of the library. The individual initially received a Snapchat picture from a friend showing their rear tire and seat had been stolen. When the student returned to check on the bike, the entire bike was gone. A report was filed.

**Oct. 8, 4:39 p.m. (Montag Center):** Campus Safety re-

ceived a call reporting the theft of three mylar balloons from in front of the building by three individuals. An officer responded and found one balloon had popped on 12th Street after being hit by a vehicle.

### WELFARE CHECK

**Oct. 6, 4:14 p.m. (in a campus residence):** Campus Safety received a call from a concerned student regarding their friend and requested a welfare check on their behalf. An officer responded and checked on the student who said they were doing well and the officer concluded the student did not appear to be in any distress.

PLEASE CONTACT  
CAMPUS SAFETY IF  
YOU HAVE ANY  
INFORMATION  
REGARDING THESE  
INCIDENTS.  
(503) 370-6911



# Students shadow professionals

ANNA SEAHILL  
STAFF WRITER

Students at Willamette will have the day off this Friday, Oct. 18 for the mid-semester day break. Some students will trade in their schoolwork for their various “jobs” around Salem as shadows during Friday’s Job Shadow Day.

Job Shadow Day, overseen by Career Development and led by Nicole Dyer, a senior politics and Spanish major, brings together professionals from all over the area to mentor students who wish to gain hands-on experience in their desired career fields. Many of the professional participants are former Willamette students, or past collaborators with the University and its events.

This year, there are 14 participating professionals from a broad range of disciplines thanks to Willamette Career Development’s Career Communities, which organize jobs into the categories of Business/Finance, Communication/Arts/Media, STEM, Healthcare/Public Health, Education/Counseling and Government/NGOs/Public Service.

When selecting professionals, Dyer explained, “[We] tried to get an equal number of professionals in each Career Community.”

Striving to represent as many career paths as possible is an important part of the main goal of Job Shadow Day: to give students the ability to observe professionals working in fields that they are

interested in and ask questions about what it’s like to build a career.

Although Job Shadow Day aims to involve as many students as possible, there is a set number of students each professional can take; 48 students have signed up for the event so far. Another professional involved with Job Shadow Day is Natalie Pate, a reporter for the *Statesman Journal*, Salem’s daily newspaper. She focuses specifically on stories about preK-12 education (mainly in terms of the Salem-Keizer Public Schools district) and education-centered policies discussed at the Oregon State Capitol.

Pate, who is participating in Job Shadow Day for her second time, is a Willamette alumna, having graduated in 2015 with a bachelor’s degree in politics and French and francophone Studies. She began working at the *Statesman Journal* a mere two weeks after graduating and has been there since.

Working as a journalist and still being an involved alumna has proven to be a balancing act because conflicts of interest have to be avoided and personal biases have to be recognized, Pate noted. That said, Pate has found ways to stay connected to Willamette, like being a member of the local alumni chapter and volunteering as a ballet coach for Willamette’s football team.

When asked what drew her to mentoring students, Pate said: “I am always, always happy to work

with rising journalists, or those just wanting to know a little bit more about it. I love my job and think it is such an important profession. Since Willamette doesn’t have a journalism-specific program like many colleges and universities, I want to do my part in helping students still see it as a possible career path for them.”

Through highlighting the day-to-day aspects of working in a bustling newsroom, discussing the various strategies to approaching a story or an interview and through speaking with other reporters, Pate hopes her shadow students can see that everyone has the potential to thrive in the industry.

She elaborated further, “I definitely didn’t take the traditional route of majoring in journalism, but I think I bring a different perspective to the team as a result. It’s taken me a while to see my own value in the newsroom, rather than be intimidated that I didn’t come into it in the more traditional way. I hope students coming see alternative paths as truly viable options. Having mentors tell me that really allowed me to keep fighting to prove I deserve to be here.”

Dyer’s overarching hope for Job Shadow Day is also based on a desire to encourage students to discover their own strengths, with Dyer concluding, “I think it will be a big success for students.”

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# CSL hosts week of sustainability events



Environmental science professor Joe Bowersox leads a hike during Zena Fest.

MADELYN JONES  
NEWS EDITOR

Community Service Learning (CSL) planned and facilitated a week full of events for Sustainability Week, which took place on Oct. 5-12.

“Our goals for Sustainability Week are to spread awareness and encourage individual action to reduce the environmental impact. We wanted to make resources available and promote our office and other campus organizations as well,” said Sarah Connor (‘21), CSL coordinator and co-coordinator of Sustainability Week.

The week commenced and adjourned with Service Saturdays, volunteering opportunities for students that are offered every week where transportation and lunch are provided. For Service Saturday on Oct. 5, volunteers participated in

a Cascade Head cleanup, and the second weekend they volunteered with Zena Fest, an event scheduled during Family Weekend that allows community members and their families to explore Zena through activities like hiking and a farm to fork meal.

On Monday, Oct. 7, community members had the opportunity to view “Before the Flood,” a *National Geographic* documentary about climate change narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio. On Tuesday, there was an hour-long outdoor yoga class on the Quad. Lastly, a sustainability fair was hosted at Jackson Plaza for two hours on Thursday.

“Our Sustainability Week might be over, but there are always opportunities to get involved in eco-friendly service on and off campus with our office,” said Connor.

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# Students react to campus police training

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This police presence on campus made many members of the Willamette community feel uncomfortable or unsafe, and some students have aired their concerns through multiple means of activism.

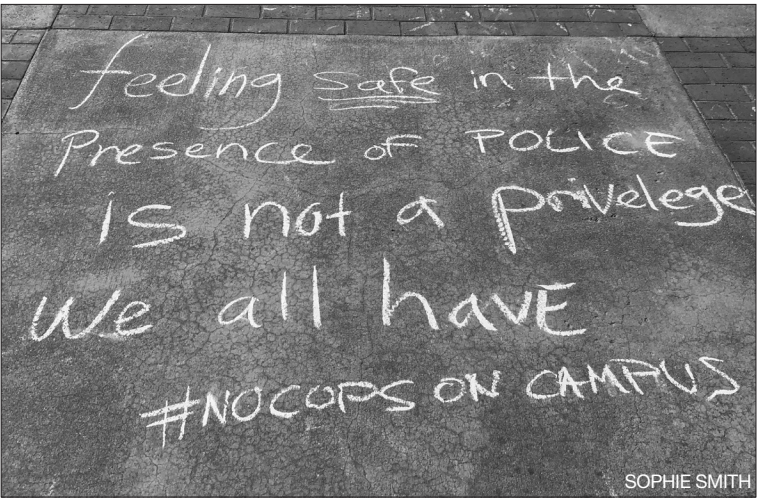
The STEAM Collective created a “safety packet,” which the advocacy group disseminated via social media. The document includes resources and information for students who need safety resources outside of the police and describes what individuals can do in the case of an unsafe police encounter. The safety packet can be accessed through STEAM’s Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Community members wrote statements in sidewalk chalk, which appeared across campus on Friday morning. Some of the messages include, “Feeling safe in the presence of police is not a privilege we all have #NoCopsOnCampus” and “This is a place of learning! Not fear.”

According to a source, the Facilities Management department received a work order requesting the chalk-written statements by Ford Hall be removed. Facilities did not remove the chalk since the messages were not obscene.

Ubhi said the discourse surrounding this police presence should not necessarily surround the chalk messages: “I think our conversation should revolve around how many students felt disturbed and unsafe with the large police presence on campus and therefore made efforts to reclaim their sense of safety.”

When asked about the police



Community members protested the presence of police on campus by writing their concerns in chalk on Jackson Plaza.

presence and the University’s handling of it, Mackenzie August-McClure (‘21) said this was “mis-handled and irresponsible” on the University’s part. “I was taken aback by it. It was weird and kind of scary. You have POC on this campus who don’t feel safe around the police. The fact that no communication came from the school was misleading... Some warning would have been nice.”

Allison Silverstein (‘22) said, “I felt like there was no reason why [the police] should be on campus because they made a lot of people feel unsafe. Because of that, I don’t think they should have been here.”

One CLA student, who prefers to remain unnamed, said, “Police officers are part of an oppressive system, and it’s not fair to have

them in a space for students, a space for learning.”

When asked to respond to students’ reactions, Stout said, “We understand that depending on students’ experience with law enforcement, seeing a group of them on campus, even for training, may influence their comfort levels.” However, Stout maintained that the relationship the University has with Oregon State Police is an important and mutually beneficial one.

“We’re required to live here and eat here and work here,” said the student who preferred to not have their name published. “I think it’s the job of the administration to make sure all students on campus feel safe.”

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# Times interviews university leaders

CONTINUED from Page 1

Here’s what we learned about Willamette from the article:

- In 2016, “annual expenses [outpaced] operating revenues by \$14 million
- To address this financial problem, the article states that instead of making cuts, Thorsett decided the University will “grow bigger, not smaller.” The main way this is happening is through offering three graduate programs: the College of Law, Atkinson Graduate School of Management (AGSM) and the newly acquired Claremont School of Theology (CST).
- Thorsett’s goal is to raise enrollment from 2,700 to 4,000 in the next 10 years.
- The acquisition of CST is projected to bring in 400 students that will help meet Thorsett’s enrollment goal.
- Willamette is also employing “money-saving accelerated programs” as a selling point, offering students a chance to get an undergraduate and graduate degree in a shorter amount of time than other schools. An example of this is the BA/MBA program, in which students are enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts for three years, and then AGSM for two years, allowing students to graduate with two degrees in five years.

- A joint BA and master’s of divinity degree program may be available in the future.

The article features the voices of other university leaders, including representatives from Howard University, Clark University and Linfield College. These colleges are using their own strategies in hopes of bolstering admission rates.

Linfield has put an emphasis on recruiting first-generation students. This initiative is supported by hiring “full-time admissions officers who are bilingual, four Spanish-speaking ‘student ambassadors’ and new scholarships for students who are the first in their families to go to college,” the article says. For its most recent class, Linfield experienced a 38 percent increase in enrollment, with more than 40 percent being first-generation students.

The article focused on how Willamette is growing instead of administering cuts, but did not mention any of the cuts that the campus community has experienced already. For example, two years ago, food services at Cat Cavern were ended, and Bishop Wellness center temporarily lost many of its health services. Student organizations funded by the Associated Students of Willamette (ASWU) were also asked to make major cuts to their budgets because lower enrollment rates meant less student fee funds to allocate to groups.

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# Students & faculty celebrate Zena Fest



Second-year students Maira Romanov (left) and Lauren Montana (right) end a hike through Zena Forest (top). Arabella Wood ('20, left) and Hope Heideman ('21, right) press fresh cider with Zena-grown apples (bottom).

SANJA ZELEN  
STAFF WRITER

Zena Fest, an annual event that promotes sustainability, allows students and faculty to celebrate Zena Forest's importance to the

Willamette University community. This past weekend, around 100 Willamette students and seven professors went out to Zena Forest, located 20 minutes from Willamette, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for an afternoon of nature walks, music,

locally-grown food and sustainability talks. Joe Abraham, director of Willamette's Sustainability Institute, described Zena's history. Zena Forest, a small part of a 2,000-acre property, provides educational

opportunities to students in multiple scientific disciplines.

"The University purchased the 300-acre property 11 years ago and we have since used it to teach about agriculture, sustainability and forestry. Most of the work revolves around prairie and forest restoration. There have been student-led agricultural activities out there as well."

The Zena Farm Club makes frequent visits to the property to pick produce, which is often sold on campus. Students majoring in environmental science or biology have opportunities to go out to Zena with their classes to observe and work with the forest's flora and fauna.

Zena Fest is the ideal way for students to explore the property, as a special access key is required for students to get to the trails otherwise. The property was closed off to students until a year ago.

"We have to keep the place locked," Abraham said. "You're not supposed to be there unless you've gone to the service center and picked up a key and checked it out. Then afterwards, you return the key. It's important that students know that if they like being out in nature, it's an option."

This past Saturday, students were easily able to access Zena by car and a shuttle that made two trips from Willamette to Zena at 11 a.m. and noon. At Zena Fest, students were able to explore trails on their own, or learn what a prairie is and why it is being restored while taking nature walks with a faculty member. Guided walks included a study of tree rings with Professor of Environmental Science Karen Arabas, a bird walk with Professor of Biology David Craig and a history of forestry with Professor Bowersox. Dr. Catherine Lee of Willamette's music department even led a soundwalk for students, playing her oboe as students explored the trails.

Locally-sourced food was provided as well. The Farm Club served

a pre-purchased lunch and helped students press apples into cider, letting them know how to get involved with the club in the process.

Saki Wantabe ('22), a participant of Willamette's Community Service Learning program, helped set up tables and booths at Zena Fest. She enjoyed the atmosphere and food provided at the event.

"I liked making apple juice. I got food that was harvested in Zena. It was a good opportunity to learn more about Zena Farm," she said.

Most food that was served at Zena Fest was either grown there or locally sourced. Lunches consisted of squash, sliced fruit, fresh vegetables, beans and rice.

If students missed Zena Fest, they can still visit Zena on their own. It is important for students to remember that they need a key to reach Zena Forest's trails. Once access is attained, it is easy for students to navigate the property, Abraham said.

"We put in a way-finding system, installed out there on all the roads and trails. There's a map and 13 signs where all the trails and roads meet, where it'll tell you where you are on the map and how far it is to the next point."

More information about visiting Zena Forest can be found on the Willamette website. The property is valuable to students and faculty alike, providing opportunities for anyone interested in farming, agriculture, forestry or simply getting outdoors.

"The property is an educational asset for the University," Abraham said. "Zena Fest is an opportunity for us to open it up to the community, so it's understood what we're doing out there, why we have this property and what it means to us."

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## Horoscopes for the week of Oct. 16-Oct. 23

BILLY ULLMANN  
LIFESTYLES EDITOR



**Aries:** The moon is in fixed Taurus until Oct. 17, so recharge a bit and give yourself more time to think. The moon then enters energetic Gemini, making it a good time to attend to many projects. The moon then enters its ruling sign Cancer on Oct. 19, making emotions a top priority, even if you aren't thrilled to be dealing with them. On Oct. 21, the moon enters fellow fire sign Leo, so be confident; it should come easily.



**Taurus:** Feel free to cozy up with appetizing, as the moon is in your sign until Oct. 17. When it the moon is in Gemini it is a good time to seek things out and learn; keep yourself occupied. The moon moves into sensitive Cancer on Oct. 19 so take some time for processing and feeling any built up emotions. The moon then enters bold Leo on Oct. 21; go out and show off your charms.



**Gemini:** The moon is in Taurus until Oct. 17, so relax and try to recover from any stress or strain that has been put on you. The moon enters your sign, giving

you plenty of energy to multitask, get things done or get distracted. The moon then moves into soft Cancer on Oct. 19 so rather than try to analyze them, try to let your feelings happen and deal with any emotions that may rise. The moon then enters Leo on Oct. 21, bringing some pep in your step.



**Cancer:** Before entering Gemini on Oct. 17, the moon is still in Taurus so indulge in something you've wanted. The moon moving into Gemini means that life might feel a little unfocused but you will be taking in a lot of info. The moon then enters your sign on Oct. 19; take some time for yourself to feel your emotions and doing any necessary self care. The moon moves into Leo on Oct. 21; enjoy yourself for who you are.



**Leo:** The moon is in stubborn Taurus before moving into Gemini on Oct. 17, so don't feel bad if any of your persuasions fall short. The moon in Gemini should bring a sense of curiosity and pep, encouraging you to try new things or meet new people. On Oct. 19, the moon enters its ruling sign Cancer, bringing some calm and some time to emotional re-

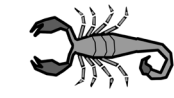
charge. The moon moves into your sign on Oct. 21, putting you in a confident and driven mood.



**Virgo:** The moon is in fellow earth sign Taurus, bringing you some stability. On Oct. 17, the moon enters distracted Gemini so feel free to direct your energy to many things during this time. The moon then moves into Cancer on Oct. 19 so your and others' emotional states should be more of a priority. Trust in yourself and win over others as the moon enters fire sign Leo on Oct. 21.



**Libra:** Relax with something or someone you love before the moon leaves Taurus and enters fellow air sign Gemini on Oct. 17. While the moon is in Gemini, build your social network and try something new. The moon enters its ruling sign, Cancer, on Oct. 19, bringing energy to your emotions and to matters of the home. The moon then enters proud Leo on Oct. 21; go into the world sure of yourself.



**Scorpio:** The moon is in sister sign Taurus until Oct. 17, so focus your energy on love

and art. The moon enters Gemini and brings attention towards learning and networking. The moon moves into fellow water sign Cancer on Oct. 19, so take a night or two in to heal yourself, both inside and out. On Oct. 21, the moon enters Leo; go out and be seen as you might feel more secure about yourself than usual.



**Sagittarius:** Until the moon enters sister sign Gemini on Oct. 17, the moon in Taurus will call you to relax and indulge. The moon in Gemini will bring you energy to try anything and multitask. The moon then enters Cancer on Oct. 19, so be sure to watch your and your loved ones' emotional states, as they might be fragile during this time. On Oct. 21, the moon moves into Leo, bringing sureness and confidence.



**Capricorn:** The moon is in fellow earth sign Taurus, so enjoy a feeling of groundedness. The moon moves into flighty Gemini on Oct. 17, bringing restlessness and curiosity; forgive yourself if you don't finish what you start. On Oct. 19, the moon enters sister sign Cancer, so take care of those around you but more importantly, take care of yourself. The moon enters Leo on Oct. 21 so feel free to take pride in all you do.



**Aquarius:** With the moon in steady Taurus until Oct. 17, you will probably feel inclined to stay in and recharge. The moon enters fellow air sign Gemini so you may feel drawn to discovering new things or starting a project. The moon then enters Cancer on Oct. 19; you should probably take some time to sit with your emotions and feel them with no judgment. The moon in Leo starting Oct. 21 calls you to take joy in yourself.



**Pisces:** The moon in Taurus, ending Oct. 17, brings some stability and self indulgence. The moon enters Gemini so you may feel an inclination to get distracted in many tasks. The moon enters fellow water sign Cancer on Oct. 19; your emotions may feel stronger than before but they deserve the attention they demand. The moon enters Leo on Oct. 21, so you should put on your favorite thing and feel good.

*DISCLAIMER: I am not a professional or trained astrologist. Any guesses made are simply that: guesses.*

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Graphics: Blake Carlile



# Star Trees may face environmental threats

CLEIGHTON ROBERTS  
CONTRIBUTOR

On Willamette University’s centennial birthday 77 years ago, five Sequoia sempervirens were donated by then-president Carl Sumner Knopf, who was forced to resign later that year amid controversy over Knopf being a conscientious objector of World War II. The saplings were planted by Professor Robert Gatke. They have since grown to be known as the iconic Star Trees, and are the largest Sequoias on any American college campus. Due to environmental issues and overcrowding, however, the future of the Star Trees may be uncertain.

In 1997, 55 years after the planting of the Star Trees, Maynard “Tree Man” Dawson, a Salem barber and founder of the Oregon Heritage Tree Committee, thought of the idea to create “the largest living Christmas trees on a college campus.” Since then, the lighting of the Star Trees has been a tradition at Willamette that brings students and faculty at Willamette together with the locals of Salem. The lighting of the trees is accompanied with festivities like a holiday sing-a-long, hot cocoa and a winter clothing drive.

However, this tradition has faced some issues in recent years. In 2014, the other festivities happened without the tree lighting. It wasn’t until 2017 that the trees were lit again.

“The concern with the lights is even though they’re putting them up

with a high lift it can be pretty stressful for the trees on the limbs, and the idea was that they wanted to give them a rest because it had been done for so many years in a row,” said Joe Bowersox, professor of environmental science. The strain the lights caused is a particular problem for coastal redwood trees. Sequoia sempervirens have particularly thick bark, making them brittle.

“One thing about Sequoia sempervirens is that there will be branches that are shed over time and the branches can be a little brittle, so [the grounds crew is] a little concerned about that,” said Bowersox.

Additionally, the weather in late 2014 had caused problems with the trees. In October, a windstorm blew large branches off of the Star Trees and in early December, around the time the lights would have been put up, Salem was rocked with 50-60 mile per hour winds which knocked out power and would have made putting up the lights dangerous and difficult.

Despite all of this, Christmas lights and wind isn’t the Star Trees’ biggest problem. The Star Trees have grown quite a bit from when they were saplings in 1942, and now have grown too close together.

“My concern is that they were planted too close together” said Bowersox. “They need to photosynthesize and one of the things that happens with trees all the time is that they start searching for light. Depending on

where you look on the trees, you can see that they’re searching for more light and they’re bowing out, trying to get a little more of their mast photosynthesizing. The trees are feeling kinda crowded; they’re already competing for resources.”

The bowing Bowersox is talking about is very visible, especially in the westmost Star Trees. This is likely because they get the least amount of sun. In the mornings they are in the shadow of the eastmost trees, and in the late evening they are, at least partially, in the shadow of the art building.

“They’re competing against each other and at some point, one or two of them are going to lose the race. Probably won’t be in my lifetime, might not be in your lifetime. A nice thing about Willamette is that we have such a dedicated grounds crew and they’re really good at staying on top of these things. Our trees, our shrubs and other plants and just really well taken care of. These guys are professionals. They know what they’re doing when it comes to the health and vigor of the trees,” said Bowersox.

These recent health issues may not be enough to bring Willamette’s historical trees down in the future. Sequoia sempervirens can live for thousands of years, and the Star Trees are almost 80 years old. Willamette will continue to have the largest living Christmas trees for years to come, even if they need a break every once in a while.

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The Star Trees, seen from the North Lawn, were planted in 1942.

# Discussing religion, faith and the Newman Club

ANDREW PEARSON  
CONTRIBUTOR

Willamette University’s Newman Club is open to all students with Catholic-adjacent interests. Whether someone is Catholic or only has a desire to do community service, Bible study or philosophical symposiums, the Newman Club has a place for them.

The club’s Catholic students are active in club and campus life. In addition to their academic and club activities, members attend Mass, secure funds, make plans for the Club and attend ecumenical Bible studies.

The members of the club are at many different stages of their spiritual lives. George Masson (‘21), who is planning to be baptized on Easter, says his relationship with God is now “better than it was.”

Donald Hagen (‘21) said “I have a better relationship with God than I do with the Church” nowadays.

Abraham Alvarez (‘23) said the following on his religious experience: “[It] was really great when I had a youth group” in high school.

Some members of the club agree that navigating their faith on Willamette’s campus can be challenging. Benjamin Love (‘21), a Protestant satellite member of the Newman Club, agreed that “other people see...that your religion is something you base your life upon.”

Gregory Gandy (‘21) and Co-President Estefania Ramos Torres (‘20) agreed that their less religious friends don’t understand some aspects of their religious lives, but those friends were still amicable and open when discussing them.

“They thought it was a little crazy,” Gandy said, when several Newman members walked on a pil-



DANI GARCIA-KING



DANI GARCIA-KING

St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, located on NE Chemeketa St., provides students with a place for prayer.

grimage from Salem to Mt. Angel, a 21 mile overnight journey which the club plans to repeat on Nov. 1.

Masson, from sectarian Scotland, is relieved by the lack of open religious animosity he finds at Willamette. “It’s better that peo-

ple just sort of learn about [others’ beliefs] instead of [having] heated discussions, because that’s where the violence starts,” he said. “I haven’t seen anyone get in a proper fight here” over religion, like he’s witnessed in his native U.K.

Other students also report satisfaction with the campus atmosphere, but Newman members generally feel that religious discussion is stifled at Willamette University.

Catholic students are not alone in this: Love remarked that “on campus

there’s... indifference and scoffing” made towards religious claims.

James Kalama (‘21) said he experiences pushback when he tries to explain Buddhist doctrines to non-Buddhists: “When people enquire about Buddhism, I’m like, ‘Sure! So the Four Noble Truths, the first one is ‘life is suffering,’ and then a lot of people will see it as me saying ‘life is terrible, all hell is on earth.’” Kalama says his Muslim friends also feel unable to talk substantially about their religion on campus, though he believes Christians catch the most flak.

Love, a nondenominational Protestant, said that “more exposure” to the Church through the Newman Club has changed his view of it—the “richness of the traditions” comes through “despite the vast differences.”

Newman Club co-presidents Daniela Camacho (‘20) and Torres do most of the group’s planning and coordination. There are about 10 other students who regularly attend Newman Club events.

“It takes up [most] of my time,” Torres said. “I wish we had more active members.” She wants more effort from regular attendees but also for more of Willamette’s Catholic students to join the club, because its numbers are very relative to the number of Catholic students here. Chaplain Karen Wood sent out invitational emails on the Newman Club’s behalf to dozens of students at the beginning of the academic year, but only a small fraction of those are currently active in the club.

Newman Club meetings take place at 6 p.m. on Friday evenings in Cat Cavern.

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# Undermanned men's rugby struggles at home

JAKE PROCINO  
STAFF WRITER

Before the football match last Saturday, Oct. 12, another team of hard-hitting Bearcats took to the field at McCulloch Stadium. The Willamette Rugby Football Club squared off against its Willamette River rivals, Western Oregon University (WOU) (6,000 students), which made the short trek to Salem, fresh off a win over Oregon State University. The initial difference between the teams was stark: WOU brought a decent-sized squad of at least 30 players, while WU, marred with injuries from the game the week before, was only able to bring 16 players to the field. Two of the 16 were students of Pacific University. Junior Andy Theil commented before the match: "I wasn't worried about the match all week, until I found out they beat OSU."

WU won the coin toss and elected to kick off. Despite being undermanned, the Bearcats held their own for much of the first 20 minutes of the 80-minute match. They came out firing and scored first. Wing sophomore Nate Howard recovered a fumble around the Willamette 22-meter line and scampered down the sideline before being high-tackled 10 meters from the try-zone. The try-zone is the rugby equivalent of an end-zone in football. High-tackling is a penalty that stops play temporarily. The team with possession restarts play with the ball and the entire defending team has to start 10 meters back from the ball until it is tapped in with the foot. Club president and team captain junior Aidan Kuhn tapped the ball in and smashed through the Wolves' defense to score the first try of the game. Theil missed the conversion, keeping the score at 5-0.

In the ensuing kickoff, miscommunication and improper po-



COURTESY OF ZACHERY LUIS

*Sophomore Tommy Gray and the Wolves compete for the ball during a line-out at McCulloch Stadium.*

sitioning allowed WOU to recover their kickoff. In 15-a-side rugby, the scoring team receives the kickoff, unlike football. However, they were unable to capitalize, losing possession and allowing WU drove down the field. Sloppy play plagued both sides early in the match. WU was frequently off-sides and WOU suffered from

poor passing. Off-sides occurs when a team is defending and a defender lines up in front of the furthest back defender in the scrum.

This cost the Bearcats, as WOU was awarded a penalty try. The Wolves were then tackled within five meters from WU's try-line. When the scrum-half passed the

ball out from the ruck, WU was called for another off-sides penalty. A penalty-try is awarded when the match official judges that a try would have been scored if a penalty had not been committed. The scoring team is automatically awarded seven points, with the conversion being tacked on top, which gave WOU a 7-5 lead.

WOU received the kickoff again. Possession went back and forth until WOU was able to break out another long run into the try-zone. With a successful conversion, WOU extended their lead to 14-5. Shortly after WOU received the next kickoff, a WOU player suffered a severe upper-arm injury. Play was suspended for 20 minutes as emergency service was called and he was taken to the hospital.

Play resumed with both teams' defenses standing strong. Neither team was able to gain much ground for the next 15 minutes. WOU was able to push themselves into the try-zone by finding a hole on the sideline. A missed conversion brought an end to the elongated first half, with WOU up 19-5.

A shortened halftime ended with a kickoff from WOU to WU. WU's offense pushed aggressively and it paid off, with Kuhn scoring again on a WOU penalty. Starting 10 meters out, he touched the ball down in the middle of the try-zone. Theil was able to convert this time, making it a one score game, with WU trailing 19-12.

This would be the last time that the Bearcats would score. Fatigue began to set in as the match hit the 60 minute mark. Willamette only had one available substitute compared to WOU's eight available substitutions. WOU began dominating the rucks and winning many counter-rucks. WOU scored and converted four times in a row to end the game 47-12.

Despite losing, Theil remained positive: "We played with heart."

The Willamette Rugby Football Club plays its final game of the fall season next Saturday, Oct. 19, at Klamath Falls against the Oregon Institute of Technology.

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## Head football coach leads new program to support DVAM

BRITT SHUNN-MITCHELL  
CONTRIBUTOR

**Content warning: This article discusses domestic violence, suicide and sexual violence.**

On top of an exciting season on the field, the football team has had a productive year off the field by working closely with Director of the Gender Resource & Advocacy Center Andrea Hugmeyer and participating in many different educational advocacy trainings. Head coach Issac Parker explained, "We wanted to create a new football program that was all encompassing of both character development and integrating with our campus being a healthy participant of campus culture and community." In explaining why he had decided on taking the #SetTheExpectation pledge and supporting Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM), Parker said: "[DVAM] was good timing since we hadn't had a chance to meet since August. It was good to have a moment to have a conversation... I think a big part of it and what I really love about the #SetTheExpectation pledge is [is] identity formation. Our players don't find their value in their athletic endeavors or sexual conquest, that they can define healthy

masculinity is important for them to find themselves outside of their sport—their value apart from football. That was one thing that made it easy to get behind."

*"I pledge to display courage and stand up against sexism and violence against women and others. I will not stay silent. If I see something I will say something."*

The non-profit #SetTheExpectation, was founded by Brenda Tracy, a victim of sexual abuse. Her advocacy started when she almost ended her life after a traumatic ordeal involving four rapists who played football for Oregon State University. There is more information about Brenda Tracy and her story at [brendatracy.com](http://brendatracy.com), but be warned that her story could be triggering. The mission statement of her non-profit is: "We are dedicated to combat-

ing sexual and physical violence through raising awareness, giving back, education and direct engagement with coaches, young men and boys in high school, col-

legiate and professional athletic programs." The pledge not only addresses individual actions, but also the actions of others with statements such as: "I pledge to display courage and stand up against sexism and violence against women and others. I will not stay silent. If I see something I will say something." Parker and Hugmeyer have been working to educate the football student athletes of the bystander effect, and how not being the person com-

mitting the crime or inappropriate behavior is not enough if they would truly like to change their communities for the better. More details on the specifics of the

Bryant said: "I feel like I've known a lot of people and been around a lot of people who have been victims of [domestic violence and sexual abuse] and I feel like it was a good way to show my support. I feel like I need to be a part of this and it's obviously a good cause. I just felt that it was something necessary." When speaking about the whole team and the importance of taking the pledge, Bryant said: "I think it is important as the largest club or group on campus; it is an important subject and to use this as a positive message to the community that the football team is concerned with more than just football and sports. We want to be an integral part of the community as well."

Parker also mentioned that it is one of his goals to help the football student-athletes become a healthier part of the campus community, acknowledging that "there is a great risk because there is no guarantee because we signed a pledge and put a sticker on their helmet. It is a process... I truly believe there is a chance for their ignorance to be flushed out. You hope that by doing things we are doing it makes them think twice. You're hoping some of the educational pieces are sticking with them."

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# Bearcat Spotlight: interview with Austin Davis



Austin Davis

JACOB BLOOM  
STAFF WRITER

Although sophomore Austin Davis said he doesn't "like to be in the spotlight," his showing at men's golf's recent tournament makes him hard to ignore.

After placing second at the Varsity Men's Golf Bulldog Invitational on Saturday, Sept. 21 and Sunday, Sept. 22, Davis was named the Northwest Conference (NWC) Men's Golfer of the Week. Davis says he was humbled when he found out about the honor. "It's a boost of confidence for me. It's humbling because you have to realize there are people who are out there who can do the

same thing or better... even to be validated for one week is awesome."

Davis believes that his ability to stay mentally focused under adverse conditions was a key contributor to his recent success at the Bulldog Invitational. "I just stayed in it. It was really hot and a lot of people can just give up and let the heat get to you. I played a lot of holes in a short amount of time. Just staying in it, being patient, really trusting your swing and the shots you're going to hit."

He also added that staying patient and striking a good balance between risk and reward is important to his or any golfer's success: "You don't always have to be ultra-aggressive to place

high or win... You don't always have to be the hero. For me that helps me settle down and realize it's five hours out there... you don't always have to push yourself. Always stay in it. Never give up."

Davis has played golf his whole life, but only competitively since high school. He says the individualistic aspect of the game is what he loves most about it. "I played sports my whole life. I played baseball growing up. Golf on the side. I just like relying on myself, golf is a selfish game. It's a team sport, but at the end of the day you have to play for yourself because that's the best way you can help your team. That's why I quit baseball. I was done relying on other people, so golf is a sport where you have ups and downs by yourself but you're surrounded by your teammates to pick you up."

Although Davis loves the individualism of golf, he says support from his teammates has been a crucial component of his recent and past success. When asked about what he thought were any misconceptions about golf, Davis replied, "It's more of a team sport than you think." He expanded on this, adding: "You really have to have a good bond with your teammates even though you're out there by yourself. If you don't have a good bond you won't get anywhere."

Davis views golf as a way to learn about life. He talked extensively about the lessons golf teaches him and how he tries to allow those lessons to inform the way he lives. "I decided to play at the collegiate level because I feel like it makes me a better person. You have to deal with peaks and valleys in the

game while you're playing and practicing, just like life, so it was really good to find a place that respected academics as well as my golf game."

He also talked about sixth-year head coach Patrick Daugherty and the lessons he has learned from him. "He teaches us to never give up, to fight. He does a good job of channeling our competitive drive and making us feel calm and confident and believing in ourselves. He's never overly aggressive or hard on us. He's not drawing up plays or yelling at us from the sidelines, all he can do is watch and recommend, so he knows when to step in and step out. So that kind of indirectly has taught me when to speak, when to not speak, when to help, when to not help and that can help transcend into life decisions."

Much of Davis' philosophy is about striking balance, both on the golf course and in everything else he does. When asked about how he prepares for games, Davis responded that he needs to work out his life away from golf before he can be at his best. "For me personally, how I prepare is I have to balance everything else in my life first. If I have work to do I have to figure that out first, or figure out my relationships. And then I can focus on golf and dedicate my time to that."

The men's golf season ended this past weekend. Willamette placed third overall in the NWC with the help of Davis's ninth place finish and sophomore Andrew Kibbee's first place win. The team will begin the second half of its season its February.

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# Team of the week: women's volleyball



COURTESY OF WU ATHLETICS

The women's volleyball team poses with its coaches. Head coach Tom Shoji stands in the top left.

CONTINUED from Page 1

Porter is not the only talented first-year to join the team. Sophomore Kela Iwata said, "We have a lot of first-years and each of them have different qualities that they contribute towards our team. A lot of them have contributed on as well as off the court, whether it be physically playing or cheering and supporting one another. Every

single time that every one of them have been on the court, they have been very successful."

Shoji is a self-proclaimed "tough coach." The team practices every day from 4:30-6:30 p.m. and every practice needs to be the next step in the progression of their skills. As Shoji puts it, "It's a continuous learning situation. We'll work on something different today, but you can't forget what we did yesterday."

He wants to see the techniques taught throughout practice put into play in the games, no matter how simple. Shoji said, "If you do the little things well, the big things become a little bit easier."

The team's next match is a home game against Lewis & Clark on Friday, Oct. 18. The game will begin at 7:00 p.m. (PDT).

Shoji says, "We like to think that when an opposing team

comes in our gym, they don't like to be there because one, we're good, and two, because the fans are crazy." Students can come and be one of those crazy fans and support the women's volleyball team on Friday!

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## This week at Willamette

JACK KUYPER  
SPORTS EDITOR

### WOMEN'S SOCCER

Sat. 10/12

Willamette @ Whitworth

1-0

Sophomore Sydney Wilson scored the game-winning goal with 3:59 left in overtime.

Sun. 10/13

Willamette @ Whitman

1-0

Sophomore Emma Blackburn scored the game-winning goal in overtime.

### Next week's matches:

10/19: vs. Linfield in McMinnville

10/20: vs. George Fox at home

### MEN'S SOCCER

Sat. 10/12

Linfield @ Willamette

1-2

Sophomore Josh Schneider scored game-winning goal with 17 seconds left.

### Next week's matches:

10/19: vs. Pacific Lutheran at home

10/20: vs. Puget Sound at home

### FOOTBALL

Sat. 10/12

Pacific @ Willamette

59-14

### Next week's matches:

10/19: vs. Linfield at McMinnville

### VOLLEYBALL

Sat. 10/12

Willamette @ Pacific Lutheran

2-3

Sun. 10/13

Pacific @ Willamette

3-2

### Next week's matches:

10/16: vs. Linfield in McMinnville

10/18: vs. Lewis & Clark at home

### MEN'S GOLF

The Bearcats took third place overall with a score of 585 in the NWC Fall Classic. Sophomore Andrew Kibbee took first in the individual championship.

### WOMEN'S GOLF

The Bearcats came in ninth overall with a total score of 907.

### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The women's basketball team is looking for practice players. They are welcoming all genders to practice with them. Please email ktowry@willamette.edu for more information.

All images in the score boxes are used courtesy of the respective institutions and do not belong to the Collegian.

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# “Joker” is complex, but should have been shelved

CLAIRE ALONGI  
STAFF WRITER

It's hard to imagine 2019 producing a more divisive film than Todd Phillip's “Joker.” *New York Times* writer Jennifer Vineyard collected a sampling of reviews, interviews and commentary about the film: the *NYT* calls it “an empty, foggy exercise in secondhand style.” The *Observer* says it “borders on genius,” and *Variety* and the *New York Times Magazine* have pieces that debate the polarizing nature of the film and why it struck so many nerves. There's a reason it's hard to find some kind of consensus on the film: it's messy, dark, hypnotizing and taps into a complex character history and supernaturally tense current political environment. It's not as simple as lauding it or condemning it. Is it a brilliantly done movie? Yes. Should it have been made now, in the way that it was? Probably not.

“Joker” may feature Batman's most well-known nemesis, but he's not straight out of the comic books. The new film didn't derive its titular villain's origin story from any specific comic arc and instead borrowed from a few different sources.

The story follows Arthur Fleck, a middle-aged man down on his luck and living with his mother as the fictional Gotham City suffers an infrastructural collapse.

Arthur's life quickly deteriorates along with his sanity: he's fired from his job as a clown after bringing a gun to a gig, social services are cut, he loses access to his medication and his mother has been hiding something from him. It's one blow after another and the audience is, depending on your feelings on the film, hypnotized or horrified to watch Joaquin Phoenix give it all he's got as Fleck transforms into the iconic villain.

Viewed in a vacuum of zero cultural context, “Joker” is an amazing film. The combination of Phoenix's acting, gorgeous cinematography and editing and an absolutely phenomenal score by Hildur Guðnadóttir makes “Joker” a superbly crafted movie.

But it's hard to view the film in a cultural vacuum, which is what has thrown critics and movie goers into a frenzy. “Joker” is not the first movie of its kind; it's gotten many comparisons to the equally disturbing and renowned 1970s “Taxi Driver.” Making movies about supremely creepy people is not new. So what about it has set everyone off? Many reviewers and commentators have actually praised it: Jeff Yang of *CNN* calls it a “political parable for our times” while Christopher Borrelli of the *Chicago Tribune* describes how the movie lays out motives and that Joker is the result of “our social contract [being] shattered and no one—not politicians, not the rich (who are targeted in the film)—are held accountable to anyone anymore.”

There is certainly political commentary in “Joker.” But it feels overshadowed by seeing a man so broken down

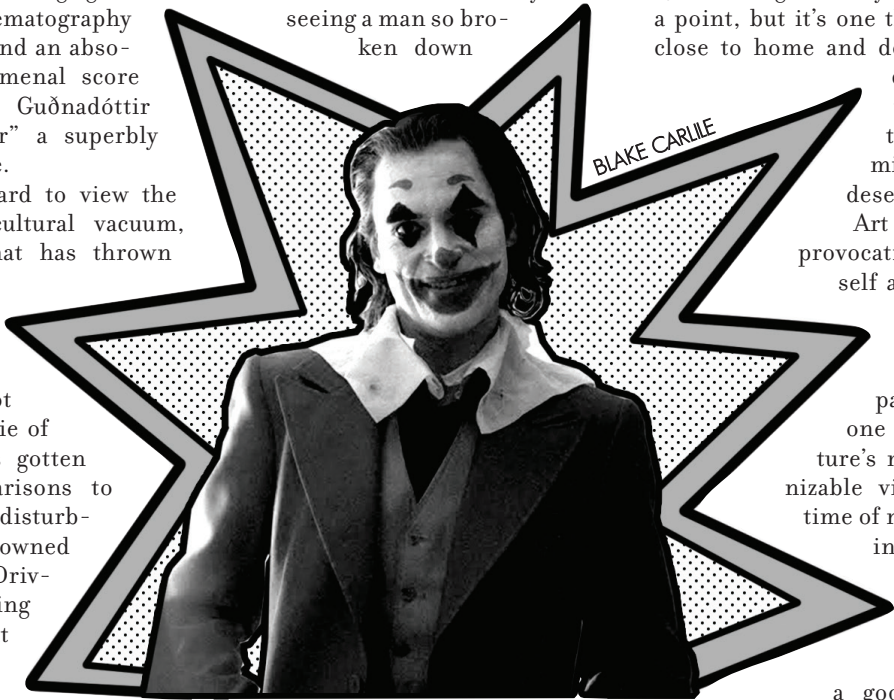
and twisted that he takes to the streets with a gun with nothing to lose.

Ambiguity in villains is compelling, but perhaps the reason “Joker” has been so widely condemned is that no one wants to see ambiguity in a character like Fleck. While Phillips and Phoenix worked to create a multi-faceted character, it's not one that people actually want to sympathize with. Even though the movie may be released internationally, its American audience is embroiled in a toxic battle for gun control. “Joker” might be trying to make a point, but it's one that hits too close to home and doesn't handle everything with the care it might have deserved.

Art should be provocative, but also self aware. Trying to get the world to sympathize with one of pop culture's most recognizable villains at a time of national and international upheaval and violence was not a good call. In

particular, it harkens back to the Aurora, CO movie theater shooting in 2012 that took place during a showing of “The Dark Knight.” *Variety* reports that the Aurora shooter wasn't dressed like or inspired by the Joker, but the fear is tied to the franchise just the same. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, survivors and family members of victims killed in the shooting petitioned to have “Joker” banned from the theater where the shooting took place. They succeeded.

It's hard to say if there is a place for movies like “Joker,” or if there should be. “Joker” is tricky because everything it brings up is something worth critically examining. Using a big platform like film to constructively discuss toxic people (and all the complexities that can feed into that) and societal and structural decay can be useful if done thoughtfully. But the line between “conversation starter” and “fire-starter” can be pretty thin. “Joker” seems to have started a fire, turning a casual conversation into a shouting match. Once you release something into the world it is no longer wholly yours, and regardless of the filmmaker's intentions, “Joker” has left a mark of darkness and discomfort as it intermingles with discussions of gun violence.



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OCTOBER 25 | 7:30 PM

## BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH

From the unsurpassed drama of its opening notes to the still-shocking power of its finale, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony remains the most revered masterpiece in the repertoire.

### PROGRAM ALSO INCLUDES:

Gabriela Lena Frank's Walkabout, inspired by Peruvian culture, and Witold Lutosławski's devastatingly powerful Cello Concerto

### FEATURING:

Artist-in-Residence Johannes Moser (pictured) and conductor Carlos Kalmar  
The Artist-in-Residence program is sponsored by Drs. Cliff and Karen Deveney.

Tickets start at \$35  
SMITH AUDITORIUM  
WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY

Willamette University students can attend Oregon Symphony performances for free. Free student tickets available on night of concert only.

Subject to availability, available to registered full-time, degree-seeking Willamette University students only. Student ID is required.



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CARLOS KALMAR, MUSIC DIRECTOR

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