

The Collegian

New Renjen Career Center to launch following UC renovations

Karmen Zhao • Staff Writer • May 16

This article was originally written in May of 2025.

On May 1, 2025, Willamette University announced the new arrival of the Renjen Career Center, located on the first floor of the Putnam University Center (UC), in the fall semester of 2025. In hopes of “bringing together Willamette’s career services under one roof in the heart of the Salem campus,” the new Renjen Career Center will include advising offices, private conference rooms that can be booked by reservation, and shared community gathering spaces that will be accessible to both undergraduate and graduate students.

Anne Lapour, Willamette’s executive director of career initiatives explained that with the reconstruction, many of the amenities will remain, such as the mail center, the Bistro, and the bookstore. She noted that a large portion of the bookstore will be shrinking to allow for more career center spaces. There will additionally be a new front entrance along with the already existing main entrance to the UC, as pictured on the announcement.

The announcement additionally acknowledges Punit Renjen ('87) and his family members for fully funding the \$2 million project, thus naming the new career center after Renjen. Known as the former successful CEO of the Deloitte Caribbean and Bermuda, a company providing tax consulting and financial advisory services to governmental corporations, Renjen’s collegiate education began with his economics major at Willamette. The Magazine of Willamette University states that Renjen is a life trustee of the university and worked closely with his wife to

build the new Career Center. He received an honorary doctorate in 2019 and the Sparks Medallion in 2024 from the school.

Additionally, Lapour noted that the Renjen Career Center will be a new and renovated version of the career development office that was originally located on the third floor of the UC. The movement will allow for the Career Center to be more centrally located with higher visibility to encourage more students to reach out for career counseling whenever needed. As finding employment is the next step for many students after their time at Willamette, the greater accessibility of the Career Center intends to allow students to find career opportunities that are purposeful and reflective of their goals.

Lapour stated, “[The Renjen Career Center] will do all the same things that the career development office does currently and more, such as hosting events that will attract alumni, employers and classrooms into a space that will promote career development for the whole campus.” Resources that will be provided include personalized career advising, interactive group sessions and workshops, on-demand information sessions, career communities, and identity-specific resources.

“It will be a more casual, community-oriented place to connect with the career team,” said Lapour. “Most people don’t come to career development unless they have a one-on-one appointment scheduled, but this new space will be less intimidating and more approachable; it will include large central areas with tables and chairs and cozy seating, so people will come to hang out, do work, but also have the career center be right there.”



Construction of the new Renjen Career Center on Aug. 18, 2025.

Photo by SKEET STARR

In regards to Blitz Market, on April 25, Willamette’s Bon Appétit Instagram announced the permanent movement of Blitz Market to the Sparks Athletic Center in order to accommodate the new Renjen Career Center. The exterior rendering of the Renjen Career Center was additionally posted on the university announcement, expressing that the space originally occupied by the Blitz Market will be incorporated into the extension of the Center. It is currently unknown what will happen to the space that the original career development office once occupied on the third floor of the UC.

“I want students to know that this space is for them,” Lapour concluded. “The idea is not just to give us bigger offices. The idea is to enhance what we can do for students and make reaching out for guidance an integral and normative part of the college experience.” When students arrive in the fall, Lapour noted that students can expect the UC to look different, but they can also expect that construction will most likely progress deeper into the semester. Further updates on the construction of the UC and the Renjen Career Center can be found posted on the Willamette Website.

Opinion: For 'Stranger Things' Season Five, the demogorgon needs real fangs

Thalia Reddall • Staff Writer • Aug. 6

The strangest thing of all is how long the final series has taken to come out.

I’ve been a fan of “Stranger Things” ever since it debuted. Even though I didn’t grow up in the ’80s, a decade the show is overtly nostalgic for, the mainstream implementation of cosmic horror along with an interesting cast of characters compelled me, then, and still does now. Many of my generation have grown up with this hugely popular series. While some would disagree, I think it has maintained a relatively decent degree of quality. Nonetheless, the issues in writing for this show have slowly but surely built up over time, and I await Season 5 warily. The show may lose its appeal in this final stretch if it doesn’t get a little more daring.

The biggest issue “Stranger

Things” has persistently had is a refusal to let go of certain characters. The cast the audience must deal with is massive, and when the only people dying are the villains and season newcomers, it’s only gotten larger and harder to manage with each season. This problem is especially noticeable in Season 4, which split its cast across four different parts of the world. And it’s pretty much universally agreed that the most pointless of all of these was the California sideplot, which featured Mike, Will and Jonathan together in a van with a random stoner. None of these characters served a real purpose outside of their relationships to other more important characters, but the writers’ refusal to write them out of the series or leave them out for a season meant significant amounts of valuable screentime were dedi-

cated to characters that didn’t really have anything to do. They added little to the plot and took up time that could have been better spent fleshing out other characters or aspects of the world.

It’s this refusal to bench any fan favorites that also makes it extremely predictable who’s going to die and who isn’t. Any time a major character does some heroic sacrifice that makes it look like they die, they’re never actually dead. Eleven in Season 1, Hopper in Season 3, and Max in Season 4 are prime examples. The audience knew they’d be coming back. Only newer characters or less relevant characters are capable of getting the axe, starting with Barb and most recently continuing with Eddie Munson. All shows have plot armor to a certain degree, but it lessens au-

dience tension to know that the writers are scared of making any bold choices.

Hopefully, this will change in Season 5, currently scheduled to hit screens on Nov. 26. It will be the final season, and assuming they aren’t planning any spinoffs, the writers can kill any characters they want. Still, with how predictable the show has become, many people seem to expect Steve Harrington — and nobody else — to bite the dust. While I am hoping to be pleasantly surprised by Season 5, the story feels bloated at this point, and if the creators don’t take steps to tighten up, I fear Season 5 may end up being the weakest yet. Any good show, especially one like “Stranger Things,” which dips its toes in Lovecraftian horror, thrives on tension. Let’s hope it can deliver.

Side quest opportunities in the Salem community

Maya Darski • Staff Writer • Aug. 13



Minto-Brown Island park in May 2024.

Photo by Mason Willaims

As summer begins its annual trickle into fall and Willamette students return to the grind of classes, clubs and jobs, it is essential to make time for a little fun and exploration. Side quests are a crucial part of finding the joy in everyday life but for new students, seeking them out might seem daunting. In Salem, though, one doesn't have to look far for opportunities to go on a small adventure.

Quests can't start on an empty stomach. At Salem's various farmer's markets, one can fuel up while searching for hidden gems along the booths. Tasting samples of fresh

fruits and baked goods or striking up a conversation with a seller, one can find connection within the local and small business community. The Salem Saturday Market is only a short walk north of the campus on 865 Marion Street NE. The market is open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will be open every Saturday until the end of October.

For those with a busy schedule, students need not worry. There are other similar opportunities throughout the week. On Mondays, the Salem Hospital Market is open from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with about "15 vendors providing handmade, handcrafted or homegrown products

... sharing the fresh bounty and local products from the Mid-Willamette Valley." On Wednesdays, the Chemeketa Market at the Chemeketa Community College Agricultural Building prides itself on its focus on food and culture. If the above options weren't enough to quench one's thirst for a market-themed adventure, on Thursdays West Salem Market has vendors selling handmade and homegrown products from the Mid-Willamette Valley. These local markets have a range of times, dates and locations, so students are bound to find one that they can explore. Remember to check the Salem Community Market website for which months these markets are available.

Looking further into adventurous excursions, Willamette provides a plethora of opportunities. These adventures include resources such as The Hallie Ford Museum, which is free for Willamette University students to see various cultural and historical art and artifacts. Willamette's very own Hatfield Library has a "Library of Things" with various trinkets and tools to check out. Outdoors-and-nature types can borrow a tent, hammock and lantern from the library — a perfect set for going out to the woods. For more stay-indoors-and-chill adventurers, students can borrow a projector and Nintendo Switch for a cozy movie and game night.

Getting out into nature is also straightforward with Minto-Brown

Island just under three miles away from campus, providing 29 miles of trails that make up nine loops on which one can walk, run or bike. A possibly more relaxing nature spot inside the town is the Deepwood Museum and Gardens where the trees will soon be vibrant with beautiful autumn leaves.

If a student seeks to adventure farther off campus but lacks the funds, transportation or desire to plan and organize themselves, WU has it covered. Willamette organizations such as the Outdoor Program (ODP) and Willamette Events Board (WEB) offer a variety of trip options that include transportation for a significant discount. I myself have taken advantage of these opportunities with a trip to Burwinkle's with WEB. This proved to be an incredible time for me, giving me the opportunity to let loose and spend childhood-reminiscent times with my friends in an off campus experience.

College is one of those times where unexpected daily events often end up being the most memorable. It's important to let ourselves relax, laugh, eat good food and try new things to make our sometimes repetitive lives endearing. At some point during this fresh school year, I encourage students to take a day, or even an afternoon, to go out to a market, take a walk to the waterfront, or flip through the Library of Things. There might be a unique adventure waiting for you.

Hiroataka Kanai crossed the world to play football. Now he faces a bittersweet graduation

Ruby Hampton • Staff Writer • Dec. 20

This article was originally published in Issue 1, Vol. CXXXX of *The Collegian*.

For many students here at Willamette, sports are a way to stay rooted and healthy through their college years. For Hiroataka Kanai ('25), a graduating senior, playing college football was the opportunity of a lifetime. Now, on the verge of graduation, he reflects on a college career marked by personal and team struggle.

Born in Tokyo, Japan, a young Kanai didn't know much about the gem that is American football. His father, who was a professional cameraman, showed him a movie that would change the course of Kanai's life forever: the 2004 film "Friday Night Lights."

"Before I watched the movie, I didn't even know what football was," Kanai said. "After watching ... I told my dad I had to play high school football." Kanai set out to find a school in America that would help launch his football career. He moved to Santa Cruz, California his senior year, playing for the Aptos High School Mariners. His rushing touchdown against San Benito High School in the opening round of the 2019 Central Coast Section Division III playoffs helped the Mariners reach the state semifinals.

Kanai explained, "I feel like I had nothing to lose. I did everything I could do before practice, at practice and after practice. As a result, I became a starter and played under the Friday night lights, which has always been my biggest dream. I was ner-

vous, but I enjoyed playing football and I think that is my biggest motivator to keep playing." He was selected to play for the second all-league team after his achievements during the season, which led Willamette football recruiters to his email inbox.

Kanai's college career started off strong. He worked tirelessly on and off the field to improve his gameplay and showed up to the lifts with a positive attitude that extended onto the field. "It was amazing, just amazing. You know, I had nothing to lose, so I knew I had to do everything that I could do and work hard everyday," Kanai said. His hard work paid off. As a first-year, he started on the field and earned plenty of playing time. Then, tragedy struck.

During a spring off season training, a routine squat would end up benching him for the rest of his college career. "After I got injured, I watched my fellow 2025 defenders get better and better, and I felt stuck in one place and left behind." Feeling discouraged and lost without football, Kanai tried his best to get well and play again. During his senior year, a doctor told him the worst possible news: he wouldn't be able to play football anymore.

"It was the toughest moment of my life," Kanai expressed. "The amount of stress was unbelievable, but at the same time I found so many things outside of football, which was a pretty beautiful thing. I could feel a small happiness while still chasing big dream."

It's not a secret that Willamette's football team has been in a

conference game winning drought since 2016. Nonetheless, Kanai speaks highly of the coaching staff and their hands-on approach to making him feel seen and heard even when not physically on the field. "They are my coaches, but at the same time they feel like my second parents," Kanai said. A sports team's morale can be a tricky balancing act between wanting to push yourself and others for the benefit of the win and still remembering the real reason why you play: the love of football.

The seniors this year, who never achieved a conference victory, contemplate an accusation that because of the consistent conference losses, the team has become used to losing. When asked about this, Kanai said, "That is a good point. I feel like because I came from a really competitive high school team, I definitely see a difference between a winning and losing team. I don't think it's only the seniors, though. If one bad play happens, the whole



Hiroataka Kanai during his freshman year football season.

Photo courtesy of Hiroataka Kanai

team's atmosphere goes down. I don't like losing. No one likes losing."

"Seven or eight years ago I was this skinny Japanese boy watching "Friday Night Lights," and now I am playing college football in the U.S. My life is like a movie." Kanai looks back on his time at Willamette fondly and has high hopes for the future of the Bearcats football program.

Opinion: Beauty Is Tyranny

Maisy Clunies-Ross • Staff Writer • Aug. 12

For decades, diet culture has been as quintessentially summertime as beach towels and watermelon. There's always a pressure to mold one's body into the ideal "beach bod" — thin, tanned and toned — by the time swimsuits come out. This summer, the culture surrounding so-called self-improvement has reached new heights. The obsession with eurocentric hyper-traditional aesthetics that has accompanied the rise of the alt-right in America, in combination with political instability and the lack of control many individuals have over their own lives, has led people to focus on what they can control: their own bodies.

Discourse around Sydney Sweeney's looks and political affiliation is sweeping the internet. People are looksmaxxing, joining skinnytok, and investing thousands in skincare, makeup and cosmetic procedures. There's no escaping the constant conversation around beauty. This culture is turning people into mad scientists, devoting themselves to experimenting with tinctures and torture methods, in search of the combination that will perfect them. It's an isolating pursuit, which encourages individuals to focus their energy inward. This obsession with a warped idea of beauty can impact all relationships, from romantic to platonic.

This individualistic practice is often sheathed in the facade of community building, as these practices often originate from congregation in online spaces. These spaces are technically communal. However, presenting them as such ignores that they are predicated not on connection but on competition.

Additionally, these spaces present a limited idea of what it means to be part of a collective, considering true acceptance only comes from homogenization. While some creators encourage natural features, there is an overwhelming push towards conformity. Conformity to a white ideal.

While every culture has some form of beauty standard, the most prevalent standards today originated

in colonialism and white supremacy. Thinness was not always prized by Europeans; bigger women were idolized for centuries. However, colonization and the expansion of the slave trade changed this because white people needed some way to assert their intellectual and biological superiority over other races. This manifested in phrenology and in the idea that Black people were more gluttonous, and thus morally weaker, than whites. Therefore, white people, specifically white women, must strive for thinness to distinguish themselves from Black people.

This mindset has persisted and evolved over the years, becoming a central fixture of eugenicist messaging and fatphobia. Eugenicist movements have always featured beauty and physical exceptionalism as key components of their ideology, serving as visual representations of a perfected gene pool. Feminine white women are a powerful part of this propaganda, functioning as figureheads to rally behind, vessels for future generations and symbols of legitimacy for burgeoning movements. The latest symbol in this long-standing tradition is actress Sydney Sweeney.

Sweeney recently starred in an ad for denim brand American Eagle, which features a slow pan up her body, as she monotonously drawls, "Genes are passed down from parents to offspring, often determining traits like hair color, personality and even eye color. My jeans are blue." The simple pun "jeans" and "genes" may have been innocuous if Sweeney wasn't a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, incredibly conventionally attractive white woman, a picture-perfect icon for a white supremacist fantasy. The heavy-handed use of the word genes in the ad is a response to the current culture, one where a racist, fascist

conception of beauty has become ubiquitous.

Also concerning is the left's response to this alt-right wet dream. In response to the propagandistic use of conventionally attractive women by the right, many progressives have decided to push back by highlighting the sexiness of women on the left. Fight fire with fire, fight the objectification of women by objectifying more women. People hold up examples of liberal women commenting on their attractiveness or proclaiming, "This is how you age when you're unproblematic," while dogpiling on the botched plastic surgery or lack of femininity exhibited by some MAGA women.

bullying feels cathartic and potentially radical. Unfortunately, while this strategy succeeds in subverting the notion that only the right's traditionalist Aryan maiden can be beautiful, it plays into the ideology that one's body is one's merit.

What if a bad person is prettier than a good person? The notion that there is some cosmic justice that makes empathetic, caring people more beautiful makes it challenging to admit when a gorgeous person is rotten to the core. It forces people to make justifications instead of confronting reality. Beauty and morality are in no way related.

The notion that beauty is separate from morality isn't to say the pursuit of beauty is inherently immoral. On an aesthetic level, the pursuit of grandeur is natural. A sunset or a work of art can be profoundly moving. On a socioeconomic level, there are social and financial benefits to being conventionally attractive. However, one must not confuse this individual success with empowerment or a step on the path to collective liberation. This idea tricks people into believing that by perfecting ourselves, we can improve the

world around us. We become blinded to the possibility that this quest for self-improvement is merely a distraction from the world crumbling around us. We needn't throw away our eyeliner or salicylic acid, nor task ourselves with undoing the centuries of shame and oppression wrapped up in self-beautification culture. Such historically engrained forces cannot be changed in a day, within ourselves or our communities. The best start is to remind ourselves that perfect skin is not a perfect soul is not a perfect world. Then we can look revolting. And start revolting.

“ The best start is to remind ourselves that perfect skin is not a perfect soul is not a perfect world. Then we can look revolting. And start revolting. ”

—Maisy Clunies-Ross

These women are abhorrent, immoral monsters. They don't need sympathy or defense. Yet, one must consider the line between speaking truth to power and leftist men gleefully partaking in politically-sanctioned and socially-acceptable misogyny.

There are merits to the approach of critiquing the appearance of women on the right. It highlights the hypocrisy in the standards of feminine beauty they impose, when those imposing them cannot even meet the standard. An ideologically consistent approach hasn't proved effective for progressives thus far, so

Letter from the editor: The state of The Collegian

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up or clicking on The Collegian, the independent student newspaper of Willamette University. To any new readers, I am new as well in my role as editor-in-chief, having spent the last five semesters as the sports and recreation section editor. Stepping into my new role, I have been inspired by the contributions of my predecessor Eleanor Hu ('25) and the last three executive teams. They have each made the paper incrementally stronger, and I'm excited to be able to contribute to their legacy.

The Collegian's accomplishments as a staff last school-year were best exemplified in the form of six Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association (ONPA) awards. Our entry into ONPA's contest was the first of its kind in any current staff member's memory, though The Collegian used to participate regularly according to some decaying certificates in the corner of our office. Being new participants, I secretly worried we would go home empty-handed. Instead, The Collegian stayed in the mix, landing somewhere in the middle of the pack. We even got ahead of a big school, though apparently it's not really a competition, and I should be "happy for everyone's achievements."

The Collegian also earned some more important, less visible victories. Last year, our readership engaged with the paper by commenting on, discussing and critiquing our work, in some cases overwhelmingly. The support and challenges our readers presented to us helped keep the paper healthy. I hope they will continue to contribute to The Collegian through their voices in the coming year.

Our staff tweaked some processes for the better. For example, our news team began using Instagram slideshows as opposed to singular images for sensitive articles, so our shortform audience could get the information they needed while still enjoying a bite-sized reading experience.

Since the end of last year, two new strong additions have joined the editorial team. Aubrey Tuttle ('26) replaced Lee Parsons ('25) as the lifestyles section editor. Tuttle has been a prolific contributor primarily to the lifestyles section since last fall. Catie Mohr ('26), who joined The Collegian in the spring, has taken on my former role as sports and recreation editor.

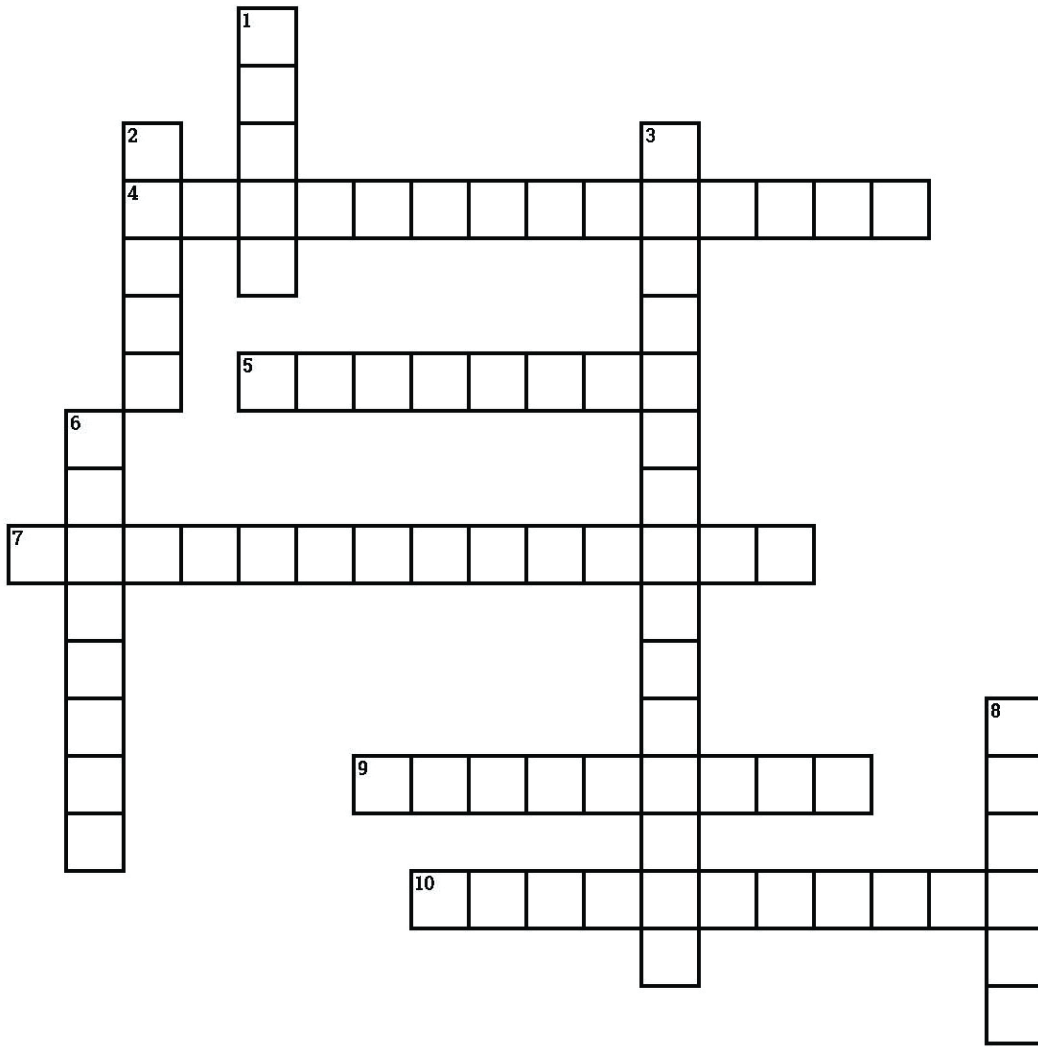
Staff also faced challenges. Across sections — even at the sports and rec desk — as our university's relationship to the federal government was tested, writers and editors had questions about balancing the well-being of sources while still delivering accurate and complete reporting.

Undoubtedly these questions will demand answers from us as we continue into the new school year. But questions aren't new. At The Collegian, we are in a constant state of learning to seek truth and report it — just ask the poster on the wall of our office. Learning necessarily means questions. For us, some questions are high-stakes, others not. "Seeking truth and reporting it" may not be as straightforward a job as the slogan suggests, but it's a goal that has remained unchanged for a long, long time at The Collegian and across the field of journalism. Students at Willamette have been running this paper continuously through 25 U.S. presidencies, two world wars, and 135 Willamette University graduating classes. Here's to the 136th and our enduring goal, whether we're covering Goudy options or federal policy.

Skeet Starr
Editor-in-Chief

Opening Days Crossword

Crossword by Eleanor Hu



Across

- [4] Group to go hiking, climbing and kayaking with
- [5] Type of “birds” atop the Hatfield fountain
- [7] Quietest place on campus
- [9] Price of a Bistro chocolate chip cookie
- [10] WU’s restroom-located, second-best news source

Down

- [1] Everyone’s favorite bearcat
- [2] The Collegian’s mascot
- [3] Name of Steve Thorsett’s community-wide emails
- [6] A capella group known for their signature accessory
- [8] Rodent often seen by the Mill Stream

- Answers**
- [1] Blitz
 - [2] Boots
 - [3] Words From Waller
 - [4] Outdoor Program
 - [5] Chickens
 - [6] Headband
 - [7] Hatfield second
 - [8] Nutria
 - [9] One dollar
 - [10] Toilet Paper

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