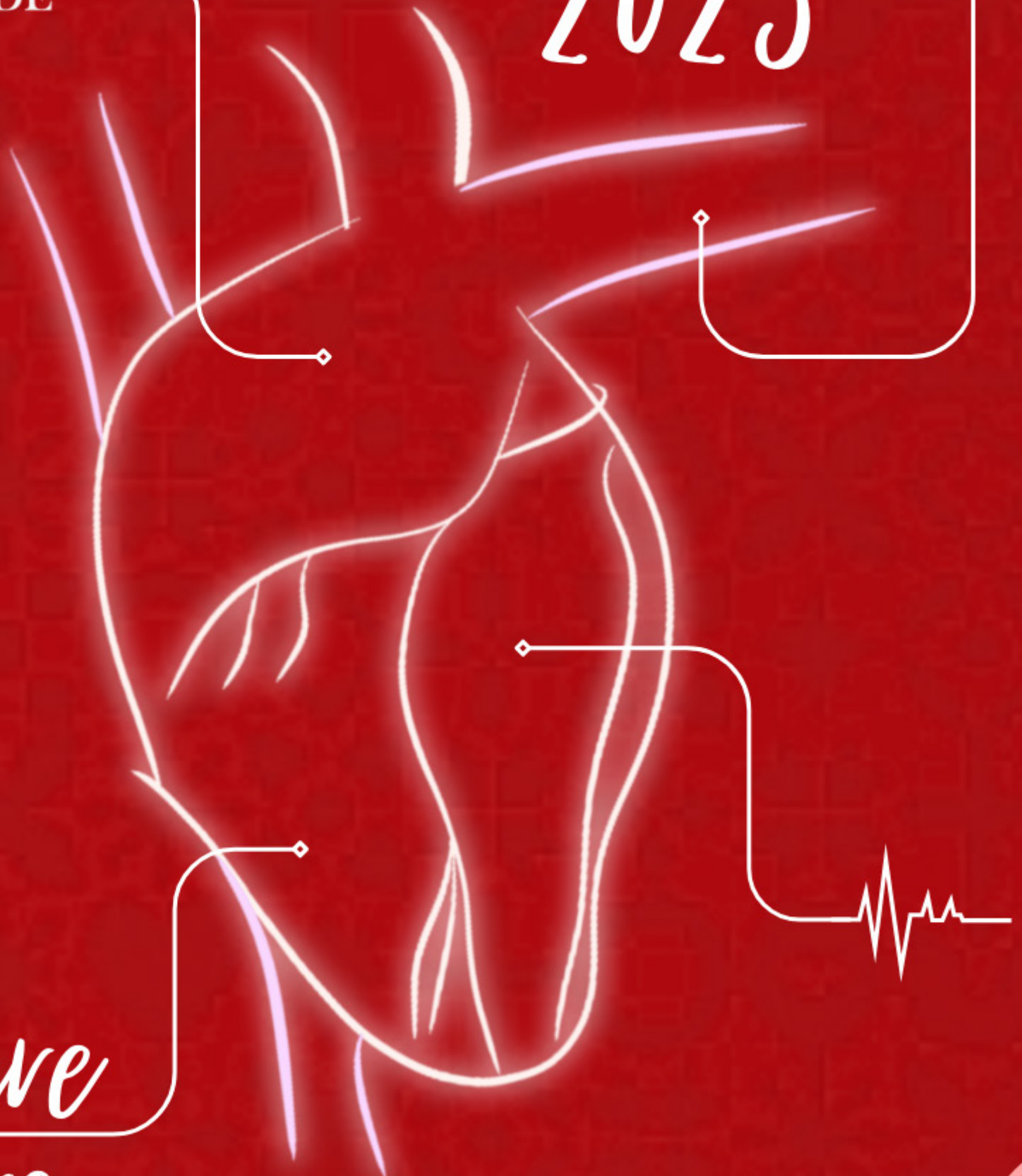




THE LIONS' PRIDE
MEDIA GROUP

February
2025



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2024 unpacked: A year of laughs, tears, triumphs, and memories

Hadassa Ferreira

Arts & Culture Editor

Dec. 31, the final day of the year, is a time when people reflect on the past year, recall significant moments—both good and bad—and consider new changes and goals for the year ahead.

2024 was a year defined by remarkable events across various sectors of society. In the environmental sector, it was notably marked by natural disasters impacting countries around the globe.

On Jan. 1, Japan experienced a severe earthquake. According to the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, the Noto Earthquake was a major event, reaching the maximum seismic intensity of 7 on Japan's shindo scale. It struck the northern coast of the Noto Peninsula, with the city of Wajima being one of the hardest hit areas.

Other nations affected by natural disasters in the first half of 2024 (January through June) included Brazil, which experienced severe flooding, as well as Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, where wildfires were fueled by severe droughts in the Amazon region.

In Brazil, the Rio Grande do Sul floods began on April 27 and lasted more than a month, leaving nearly 500,000 people homeless

and claiming 172 lives, according to the Pan American Health Organization. As for the Amazon wildfires, the organization stated that 2024 was the most drought-stricken and devastating year for the forest since 2005, raising concerns among environmentalists about significant losses in the region's vast biome.

In the United States, Hurricane Beryl marked the start of the hurricane season in Texas, according to the Austin American Statesman. Beryl broke multiple records, including being the earliest Category 4 and 5 hurricane ever recorded. Tragically, the storm claimed 36 lives.

Hurricanes in the Gulf Coast, particularly Helene and Milton, made 2024 the deadliest natural disaster year in the United States. It was also the first year since 2005 to see so many hurricanes in the Gulf Coast during the same season.

"It is crazy and sad how the hurricane season brings so much devastation to so many people in Florida," said Judrich Raphael, a junior student majoring in computer science with a minor in math.

In addition to environmental disasters, politics was another major topic with significant events worldwide.

In Mexico, the historic election of Claudia Sheinbaum on June 6 marked a significant moment in the



The year 2024 saw a record number of hurricanes in the same area during the same season, with four hurricanes hitting the coast. (Photo by Emily Dominguez)

country's politics as she became the first female president of Mexico. Her election also saw the highest voter turnout—60%—since the country's transition to democracy in 2001. According to Brookings, more than 60 million voters cast their ballots for Sheinbaum.

In Europe, political polariza-

tion marked the landscape in many countries, and in the United Kingdom, the victory of the Labour Party redefined British politics—a shift that had not occurred in a long time. According to the National Public Radio, the center-left party achieved its first victory in 19 years.

Like the United Kingdom,

Newsroom

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2024 unpacked: A year of laughs, tears, triumphs, and memories continued

the United States experienced a year marked by political polarization, as seen in the closely contested presidential election between the two major parties—the Democrats and the Republicans. The election ultimately resulted in a significant victory for the Republican Party, with Donald Trump securing 312 electoral votes, nearly 100 more than Harris and 42 votes above the 270 needed to win.

In terms of foreign relations, while many changes and significant events occurred in the social sectors during 2024, the world order remained largely unchanged from previous years.

The most severe conflicts the international community currently faces are the wars between Ukraine and Russia and the war between Israel and Hamas. In both conflicts, there were moments of heightened tension, with escalations involving attacks on new territories and the use of more destructive weapons. However, no peace or cease-fire agreements were reached for either conflict.

In sports and entertainment, the 2024 Olympics gave nations the chance to cheer on their top athletes. A standout feature was the exceptional performance of female athletes across many sports.

Athletes like Simone Biles and Rebeca Andrade shattered gymnastics records, bringing immense



The American Presidential election of 2024 happened on November 7 and was one of the most anticipated events of the year." (Photo from @us.elections on Instagram)

pride to the United States and Brazil. Sifan Hassan of the Netherlands achieved an unprecedented feat, winning gold in the 5,000 meters, 10,000 meters, and the marathon, becoming the first female to win gold in all three events.

Raphael added, "I feel so glad to see females succeeding internationally in sports. For so

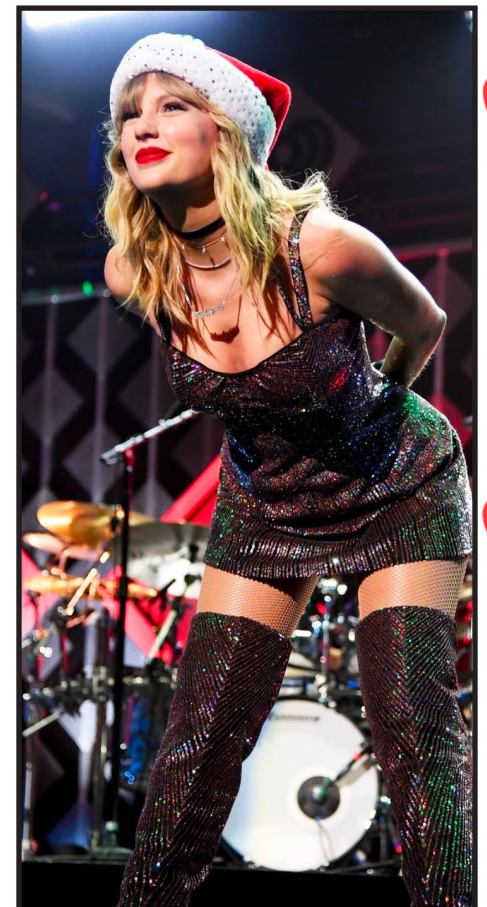
long, it was so difficult for females to conquer their space in so many sectors of society that their success nowadays is inspiring!"

Women broke numerous records in 2024, not only in sports but also in arts and music. Taylor Swift's Eras Tour surpassed \$2 billion in sales, setting a world record for gross ticket sales. The tour also became a cultural milestone, drawing fans from around the globe.

While Taylor Swift exemplified the music industry's success in 2024, it also faced significant controversies, with Sean Combs (P. Diddy) being at the center of the most notable one.

The first sexual assault accusation against Sean Combs was made in November 2023, but the situation escalated with additional allegations in March 2024. Since then, several criminal accusations have surfaced, shedding light on potential dark truths behind many beloved songs.

Equally tragic as the controversies in the music industry, 2024



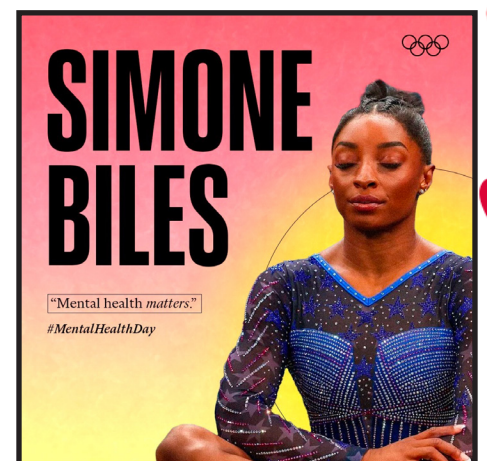
Taylor Swift's Eras Tour spanned over 21 months, with more than 149 concerts across all five continents. (Photo was taken from Instagram @theerastour)

saw the loss of many figures who deeply impacted people worldwide. Names like Willie Mays and Rickey Henderson will forever be remembered by millions of baseball fans, while Maggie Smith will remain in the hearts of Potterheads, and Liam Payne will continue to be the voice for a generation of Directioners around the globe.

While many events unfolded in 2024, it was a year of laughter, sorrow, and lasting memories. Here's to hoping 2025 is as memorable as 2024. Happy New Year!



Electing Mexico's first female president, Claudia Sheinbaum, especially with such a historic voter turnout, is a significant achievement for Latin women. (Photo was taken from Instagram @claudia_shein)



Simone Biles is a phenomenal gymnast and a leading advocate for mental health care in the United States. (Photo was taken from Instagram @olympics)

Heart health: Exploring physical wellness and emotional connections

Brianna Brinker
Staff Writer

The month of love is finally here! It's time to buy some grams of candy, write sweet letters, watch Rom Coms, and eat some chocolate-covered strawberries!

February is an exciting month, but beyond all the Valentine's Day events we all get excited for, it's important to take a second and recognize what the month of February truly is about.

February is known for being "the heart month" which dates back to 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson wanted to raise awareness for the heart and blood vessel diseases. He then chose February to be American Heart Month which shows the importance of taking care of our hearts physically and mentally.

Taking care of your heart can go two different ways. There are many ways to stay physically healthy, but spreading love, kindness, and building relationships with others can also make our hearts happy and healthy as well.

At the beginning of the new year, people tend to take care of their health. But as the year progresses, we stop and get distracted. However, keeping up with our physical health impacts our hearts very much.

Here are some things that you can do to keep up with your heart health, from the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Eat a heart-healthy diet. Some foods that are great for your heart include berries, fish, dark chocolate, pomegranate, walnuts, and green tea. Adding some of these foods into your day is such a great way to make sure your heart continues to be healthy.

Also, get active! Go outside for a walk in the sunshine or ride your bike around the block. Moving your body is a great way to keep your heart healthy.

Getting enough sleep is also very important for keeping your heart healthy. Sleeping at least eight hours a night is so important. A lack of sleep can cause heart disease, so

make sure to go to bed at a decent time so your body feels refreshed and ready to take on the day.

Lily Glasglow, a sophomore majoring in nursing says "To keep your heart healthy you can eat right and do various exercises. For me, I love having a workout buddy, so it keeps me motivated to keep my heart healthy."

Keeping your heart physically healthy is something we should all put on our New Year's resolutions. Taking care of your heart isn't just about physical health - it's also important to nurture it emotionally.

Spreading love and kindness holds great value in keeping your heart healthy. Having a group of people who care about you is such a blessing. This February, make sure to focus on spending time with loved ones, including your family, your friends, significant others, teammates, and co-workers. The key to keeping your heart happy and healthy is sharing love with the people around you.

Family and friendships make the heart burst with love. The people who are there for you no matter what, who love you for you, who support you, and who are proud of you. Those people are the ones we need to keep close to our hearts and show them the love they deserve.



Having a Valentine's date: a Valentine's Day with your friends, such as a themed picnic, is a great way to celebrate Valentine's Day! (Photo by Brianna Brinker)



Friendships are key to making the heart happy. (Photo by Brooke Brinker)



Stay active and keep your body moving. Doing at least one form of exercise a day is important for your heart health. (Photo by Brianna Brinker)

The key to keeping your heart healthy is also protecting it from harm. For example, knowing who and what our heart wants before entering into a relationship with someone holds such a high importance.

As young adults, we should learn what it means to be responsible when entering a relationship and taking a minute to make sure we're in a relationship for the right reasons.

Know your worth, know your values, and know how to love yourself before loving someone else. Our hearts are so important and when they are impacted by emotional situations, it can take a toll on our health.

There are so many ways to make our hearts happy. Here are a few more examples. Handwrite cards to the people who are special to you, leave notes on people's doors or cards with compliments to make their day. Have a Valentine's picnic with your friends, go on a date with your significant other, and focus on who you love this month.

As the year progresses, make sure you're doing something active every day, resting your body every night, and eating foods that take care



Eating balanced meals throughout your day is healthy for the heart. (Photo by Brianna Brinker)

of your heart. But most importantly, enjoy the moments you have with family and friends, express your love for the people around you, and show kindness to everyone.

Laugh, smile, and make memories because what the heart craves is love!

Remembering Jimmy Carter's big heart and lasting legacy

Emily Hernandez Dominguez

Managing Editor

On Dec. 29, 2024, former President James Earl "Jimmy" Carter Jr. passed away at the age of 100, becoming the longest-living president in U.S. history. His humanitarian efforts and enduring legacy have left a profound impact on both the United States and the world.

Born on Oct. 1, 1924, in Plains, Ga., Carter was the first U.S. president born in a hospital. His mother, a registered nurse, instilled in him a strong sense of service—a value that would define both his life and career.

Carter began his political career by winning the 1976 presidential election, defeating incumbent Republican President Gerald R. Ford. His presidency marked a new era of diplomacy, human rights, and public service, cementing his legacy as a leader committed to progress.

"Jimmy Carter's presidency included several policies that directly demonstrated his commitment to service," said Dr. Austin Trantham, assistant professor of political science. "Carter's support for human dignity led him to pressure authoritarian regimes in Chile and Argentina to end repressive practices, in some cases cutting off economic aid to nations that refused to address human rights abuses."

Although Carter is widely respected today, his path to the White House was marked by significant challenges. He took office just 30 months after the Watergate scandal, which had left the federal government in turmoil. Carter confronted a series of crises—including an energy shortage, Soviet aggression, tensions with Iran, and, most notably, widespread public mistrust in leadership.

Before becoming president, Carter was relatively unknown on the national stage. Though he had served as Georgia's governor, he had little experience in Washington, D.C. He worked tirelessly to convince voters that an outsider could lead effectively—an approach that ultimately both helped and hindered his political career.

When Carter took office in 1977, the U.S. economy was in crisis. The nation was grappling with stagflation—a mix of high inflation, slow economic growth, and rising unemployment. Despite efforts to reduce inflation through energy policies and government spending cuts, economic conditions worsened, undermining public confidence in his leadership.

The Iran hostage crisis also tested Carter's foreign policy and negotiation skills. Fifty-two Americans were held hostage for 444 days in Iran, and a failed rescue attempt further damaged his standing. Many saw his handling of the crisis as ineffective. However, Carter prioritized diplomacy over military action, demonstrating his commitment to human dignity by refusing to abandon efforts to secure the hostages' release.

Ultimately, economic struggles, the Iran hostage crisis, and a growing desire for stronger leadership led to Carter's landslide defeat in 1980. Many saw him as a well-intentioned but ineffective leader, struggling to navigate both domestic and international crises.

Despite these challenges, Carter's post-presidency became a model of humanitarian service. His work with Habitat for Humanity, global peace initiatives, and humanitarian missions earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002, solidifying his legacy as a champion of human rights.

As an outspoken Christian, Carter's faith played a central role in both his personal life and presidency. His deep commitment to Baptist principles—emphasizing service, human rights, humility, and integrity—strengthened his resolve to lead with a moral and humanitarian approach.

His presidency reflected his dedication to service through policies that prioritized human dignity. He pressured authoritarian regimes in Chile and Argentina to end repressive practices, even cutting off economic aid to nations that refused to address human rights abuses.

Carter's commitment to conflict resolution was evident in his role in brokering the Camp David Accords, a landmark peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. Coming

from a rural background, he had a deep compassion for the poor, which inspired policies aimed at rural development. His belief in forgiveness also led him to pardon Vietnam War draft evaders, a controversial yet morally driven decision.

As president, Carter brought ethical and moral leadership to the White House, something many Americans sought following Watergate. His commitment to social justice guided his firm stance on human rights in Latin America.

After leaving the White House, Carter continued his lifelong commitment to service. His desire to help the less fortunate led him to work with Habitat for Humanity, while his faith and dedication to global justice inspired him to establish the Carter Center, an organization focused on promoting peace and human rights worldwide.

Carter began working with Habitat for Humanity in the 1980s. Over the next four decades, he and Rosalynn Carter helped build more than 4,300 homes. Each year, Habitat for Humanity sponsors the Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project, a weeklong home-building initiative in the United States or abroad, which Carter launched in 1986.

"Carter's work with Habitat for Humanity defined him as a humanitarian who led a life of compassion, service, and social justice

while broadening the organization's profile and raising awareness of housing scarcity," Trantham said.

Carter's post-presidential work inspired world leaders, including Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. Starting in Panama in 1989, he worked with the Carter Center to monitor elections, ensuring fairness and transparency in democratic processes. To date, the Carter Center has overseen more than 100 elections in nearly 40 countries.

In public health, Carter traveled to Nigeria and Kenya in the early 2000s to help reduce the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS. He also visited remote villages in Africa to assist in the eradication of parasitic infections, contributing to a 70% reduction in these diseases over time.

In 1999, President Bill Clinton awarded Carter the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in recognition of his humanitarian efforts and contributions to democracy and public health.

"Younger generations would be wise to emulate Jimmy Carter's lifetime of service and commitment to helping others," Trantham said. "His work in democracy-building, global health awareness, and housing demonstrates that actions speak louder than words. Carter's compassion and empathy sent a powerful message about thinking beyond ourselves to better those around us."



The public library offers plenty of books about the remarkable life of Jimmy Carter. (Photo taken by Emily Hernandez Dominguez)



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Looking ahead to SGU's plans for a successful semester

Sanjea Taylor

Staff Writer

Spring 2025 is here, and with a semester full of new events, renovations, and student-driven projects, students are looking forward to what lies ahead.

From bringing back past traditions to bringing in fresh new ideas, SGU has a plan in place to guarantee that this semester is the best one yet.

After enjoying a very well rested winter break, students are all back on campus and ready for what the new semester has to bring, but so is the Student Government Union (SGU). Following weeks of preparation, the student government has a calendar for this semester that includes many activities, events and more, all to help students have fun and make new friends.

Tamar Olguin, the Student Body President and a junior majoring in clinical psychology, shared what SGU has in store for students that will make sure this semester will be a momentous one.

"Student government union has always had the same mission: to enhance the student's experience, and we are aiming to achieve that goal this semester," said Olguin.

"The key events we had last semester will remain, but we do have a lot of fun things in store, especially for Leo love week, and we are cohosting events with student family engagement in the future," continued Olguin.

"In fact, we're bringing back an event that we did last semester, the "Crush on You" event, because people really loved it last Leo love week," stated Olguin.

Similar to the "Crush on You" event, there are many past events returning this semester, like the intercultural Student Association Pageant that just passed and the end of semester event Moonlight Breakfast. However, SGU is always planning new events for students to enhance the student's experiences.

"We always strive to fund things that will not only be fun for our students to attend but will also be something educational.

So, events where you're getting to meet new people and learn about different cultures." stated Olguin. "Like our Intercultural Student Association Pageant."

This Semester SGU has scheduled a lot of events for students this semester, even events that were scheduled for the previous semester but due to unforeseen circumstances were unable to occur.

"Last academic year we were trying to have Fall Family Festival, however, due to the hurricanes, that was no longer an option to host this event," said Olguin. "So, for this academic year, at Family Weekend, student government is tabling Feb. 15, and we'll be doing an event there."

Also, SGU is always aiming to improve returning events for students to make sure all students can have a share in these events and enjoy these events, an example of this was the Intercultural Student Association Pageant.

"Last academic year, this pageant was at a cost to students. But this year it was free for all students. We were happy to be funding this so that students have the opportunity to engage in these events," said Olguin.

However, it's not just the events SGU has planned to improve this semester, as they are aiming to make new renovations to various facilities on campus and improve different initiatives that were introduced.

"We're looking to keep expanding our food pantry and getting

a variety of items that students still need," stated Olguin. Additionally, Olguin continued, "the commuter lounge, we are looking to see what renovations we can do there."

Student input is crucial to SUG's planning of upcoming campus activities since it informs SUG of the things that students like and dislike.

"We get feedback constantly with every single event. When students say that they really like a certain event, we are always looking to bring it back the next semester," said Olguin.

SUG and Olguin have ensured that there is multiple ways students can make their voices heard and share their feedback from various events.

"Our opportunities for students to voice their opinions have always stayed the same. For example, our public Senate meetings in TECO Hall 6pm on Wednesday nights have always been open to the

public," stated Olguin.

With all these opportunities for students to express their opinions and SUG's constant creation of new activities for students to enjoy, you may contribute your ideas and opinions to make your semester even more enjoyable.



Just like the Moonlight Breakfast event, SGU is always aiding in funding and co-hosting various other events on campus that are hosted by other clubs and organizations like the Campus Activities Board (CAB). (Photo taken from @Saintleocab on Instagram)

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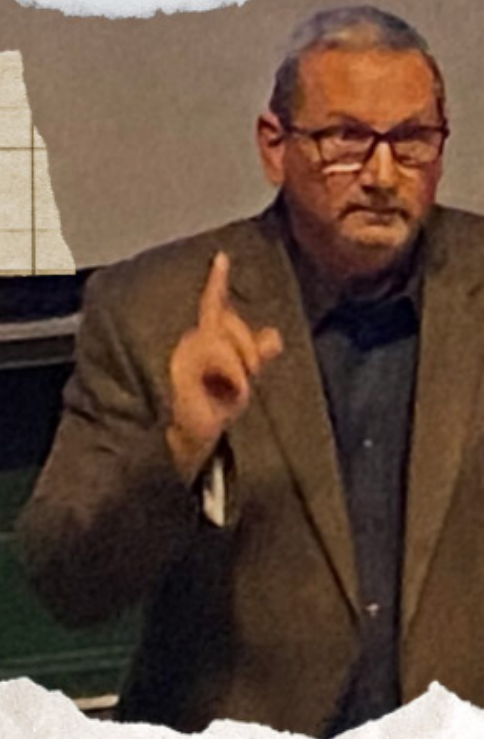


When attending SGU senate meetings students should keep in mind that while SUG is not always able to provide answers to all questions, they can assist in addressing any questions or issues students may have. (Photo taken from @Saintleosgu on Instagram)

† February - Truth Seeker



"Please do not be afraid to come to church..."



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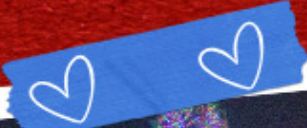


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Romance or horror: The “dark side” of romance media

Josie Osborne
Campus News Editor

The talk of romance fills the air during this month of love with Valentine’s Day festivities in full swing. People love to talk about love, so it’s no surprise that they also love to read about it.

Throughout the years, romance books have topped the charts in the publishing world. But “romance” is a broad genre, so what really determines if a work fits the title of a book of love?

Of course, that creates a whole other assortment of inquiries. We then ask, “Well, what is love?”

Dr. Allyson Marino, Associate Professor of English, attempts to answer this question in a class she often teaches, UE: ENG 210: Love and Desire in Literature.

“That’s a big question,” she says. The class often spends the whole semester trying to answer that one seemingly simple question, but it ends up leading down rabbit holes with no end in sight.

Throughout the history of humanity, we’ve been trying to answer this question. From Greek mythology and Middle Age stories of courtly love to contemporary novels of romantasy, the idea of love has evolved time and time again.

But as we traverse this romantic landscape of literary works, some popular stories are to be questioned. Are they really romance?

Take “Wuthering Heights” by Emily Bronte, a 19th century novel often found within high school curriculum, for example. Upon first glance from an unknowing, book-loving Goodreads user, this novel appears to be one that has “the passionate love between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff” at its core, as stated in the first line of the Goodreads summary.

However, upon further examination from a mature reader, one will find this “romance” to be quite disturbing and problematic, as it involves obsession, violence, a traumatic powerplay that transcends generations.

“Twilight,” a romance series

that has stood the test of pop-culture trends since its release in 2005, features a handsome, desirable male lead in the form of an immortal vampire, and a competing secondary male lead as a possessive, buff werewolf.

While many romanticize the paranormal saga, many could argue the behaviors Edward and Jacob exhibit aren’t healthy attributes that compose a good relationship. With a majority of “Twilight” readers being young adults and teenagers, we encounter the danger of the “love story.”

With dark romance on the rise in the thriving world of Book-Tok, these problematic ideas and themes are illustrated more than ever. Is this media romanticizing toxic relationships, cannibalism, and dystopia more akin to romance or horror? And if so, why are they so popular?

Dr. Marino suggests there is more than just love at play.

Dark romance, she suggests, often blends the idea of love, death, and power, all ideas humans struggle with and have struggled with for centuries.

On one hand, with a variety of new subgenres, including dark romance, a plethora of perspectives are shared, allowing every person to see their individual preferences and experiences.

On the other hand, these subgenres offer an exploration of something else.

“Romance novels with dark or horror themes is to have a catharsis, a place to explore those feelings,” Dr. Marino says, “the ideas of power, powerlessness, and agency.”

“Fiction, whether it is film or novels,” she continues, “lets us deal with the forbidden or to lose self-restraint.”

“Especially when the subject is taboo, like we see it with horror in general, it allows us to explore that idea in a way that is not taboo, because it’s all happening in the imagination or a creative way,” Dr. Marino explains.

Romance novels and their subgenres give readers the chance to explore love and forbidden relationships as the concept of romance and dating culture changes. However, we find ourselves facing a

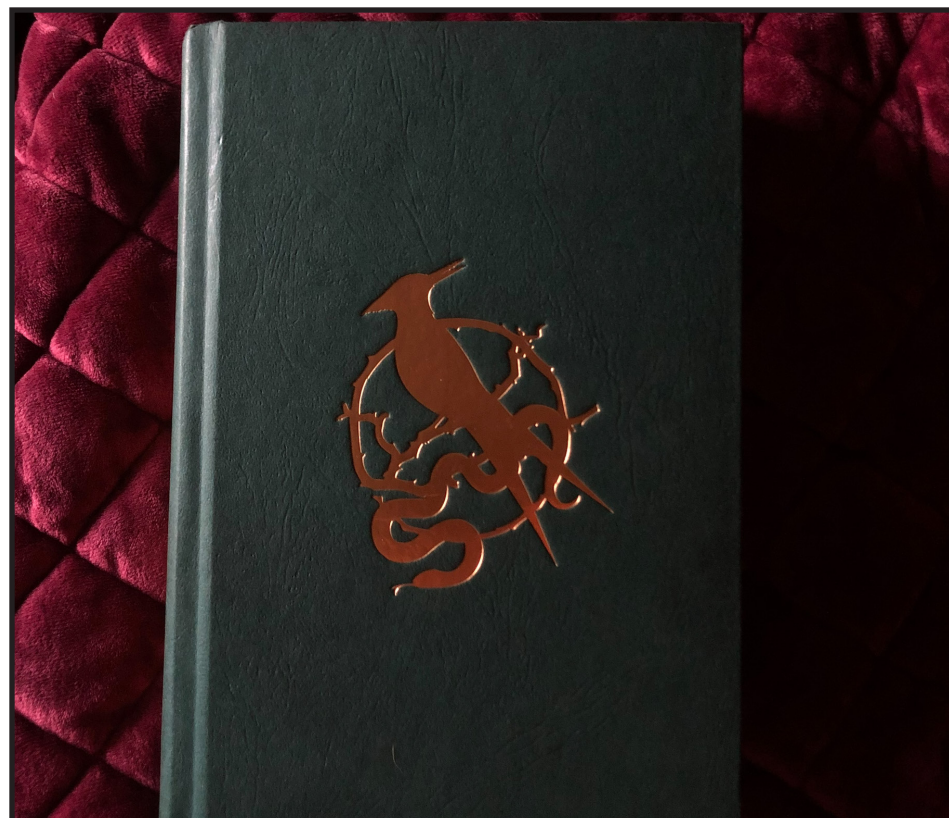
double-edged sword.

“We love horror films, but we don’t want to be in a horror film,” she qualifies.

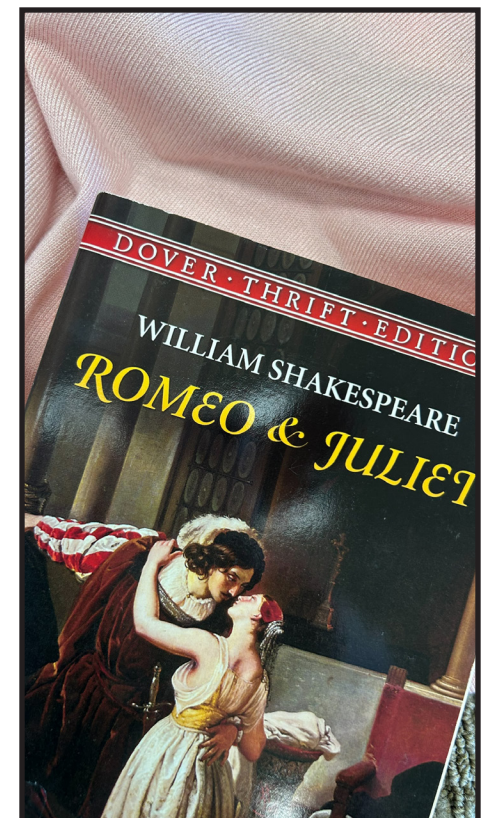
While it may be comforting for people, especially young adults and teenagers as they journey through fields of uncertainty and changes, to read of all-consuming love from vampires and cannibals or the eternal companionship of gods and mythological beings, it is important to make the distinction from a healthy reality and an escapist fantasy.

“You know that you’re not really going to go meet a 117 year old vampire who will be your love for the rest of time,” Dr. Marino says, but she continues to explain that these stories allow readers to feel less alone, seen, and at the end of the day, comforted by the pleasure they offer.

Therefore, while romance media will always have a warm place in consumers’ hearts, it is important to understand, especially as younger audiences, that these stories have their place, and sometimes, it’s best to leave them on the pages.



In “The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes” by Suzanne Collins, themes of romance are the driving force behind the plots course. However, the male lead, Coriolanus Snow, is seen taking his love too far, overall creating a toxic and violent relationship between him and the female lead, Lucy Gray Baird. (Photo provided by Joelle Peppe)



Just as Dolly Parton says in her 1993 hit “Romeo,” many people “want to be [Romeo’s] Juliet,” but many seem to forget that this Shakespearean tale of clandestine lovers is a horrific tragedy in its end. (Photo taken by Josie Osborne)

The impact of African American influence on music, fashion, and trends in 2025

Hadassa Ferreira

Arts & Culture Editor

The year is 2025, and if you ask people about their dream sneakers, many will say an Air Jordan. Similarly, if you ask young people about their favorite music style, many will say R&B. When it comes to their favorite clothing aesthetic, many will say they prefer streetwear.

Do you know what those things have in common? They are powerful symbols of the influence and lasting impact of African American culture on today's popular culture. The truth is, black culture has been a driving force behind cultural movements and aesthetics for decades, shaping how people dress, speak, entertain themselves, and more.

The Great Migration, a movement of black people from the South to the North during the Jim Crow era, was responsible for a major shift in how Americans created and perceived fine arts. The presence of black people in a new, free, and dynamic environment in the North allowed them to create art that represented their culture in a pure and powerful way.

Today, walking the streets of Chicago or touring famous neighborhoods in New York, like Brooklyn, SoHo (South of Houston Street), and Harlem, people can see the African American influence everywhere— from art galleries and music halls to theaters, clothing stores, and restaurants.

Blues, for instance, was solidified during the Great Migration. However, it originated in the second half of the 19th century as a development of the spirituals and sorrows sung by black enslaved people in the fields and plantations.

A similar thing happened with jazz, a genre that originated in the early 20th century in New Orleans, La., where Black spirituals blended with European folk and harmonic music.

The mix of African American blues and white country music gave birth to one of the most beloved genres of all time: rock 'n' roll.

This African American cultural influence has extended to other areas of pop culture as well. One of the most interesting films released in recent years, *Air: Courting a Legend*, tells the story of how the legendary Black basketball player Michael Jordan became more than just a basketball phenomenon—he became a cultural and fashion revolutionary.

The Hip Hop movement, which began in the late 1970s and spanned the next three decades, is one of the most revolutionary African American cultural movements in shaping American culture as a whole. It started in the Bronx, N.Y., and highlighted the socio-economic struggles and challenges faced by African American youth. Amidst these economic hardships, an urban youth group—primarily black, along with Caribbean and Latino communities—gathered in the streets for recreation and self-expression.

When the 2000s arrived, Raven-Symoné became one of the most prominent names on Disney Channel. She and her character, "Raven Baxter," became major symbols of fashion and style for many girls of that generation. Raven was a remarkable character who, beyond helping Disney Channel establish itself as the leading TV channel for pre-teens at the time, embraced and strongly showcased African American culture.

Dr. Marissa Rhodes, from the history department, said, "I've noticed black culture's influence on pop culture, especially on social media like TikTok. Trends such as exfoliation routines and styling 'baby hairs' have long been part of black hair and skin care but have recently gained mainstream popularity."

Now, one might wonder: If black culture's influence on popular culture has been so prominent for so many years, why are people still fighting and debating issues of cultural appropriation?

The issue of cultural appropriation is tied to the incorporation of African American elements into mainstream, majority-white culture without proper recognition or validation of its roots.

The problem isn't the use or appreciation of African American culture and its elements by white individuals. The issue lies in the mass adoption and appreciation of these elements by white people, following a period of rejection when they were exclusively enjoyed and experienced by black people.

For example, one of the popular teenage movie series of the 2000s was *Bring It On*, a franchise centered around high school cheerleaders.

Since the 2000s was a period of significant rise in the popularity of black culture, the *Bring It On* movie series often marketed its films as having at least "50-50%" racial representation in their storylines.

However, in practice, the films appropriated many black cultural elements—such as music, dance, and fashion—while the African American characters were consistently in the minority and relegated to supporting roles.

Bring It On is the perfect example of how racism denies black people the right to empower themselves and claim their culture as great—not only after receiving white approval but also while it is lived and enjoyed by black people. It encapsulates what cultural appropriation truly means.

Dr. Rhodes also added, "I think the key to honoring black culture without exploitation or appropriation is understanding its history and significance. Rather than blindly participating, one should learn about the cultural and historical context of elements like dreadlocks, soul food, or hip-hop in black communities."

The year is 2025, and the reality is that young people from Gen Z and Gen Alpha have R&B as one of their favorite music styles, wear oversized shirts and pants, and want to braid their hair in cornrows.

Clearly, African American roots run deep in today's popular culture. Everyone can enjoy it, understanding the history of struggles and triumphs lived by resilient black people, which gave birth to such an incredible culture.



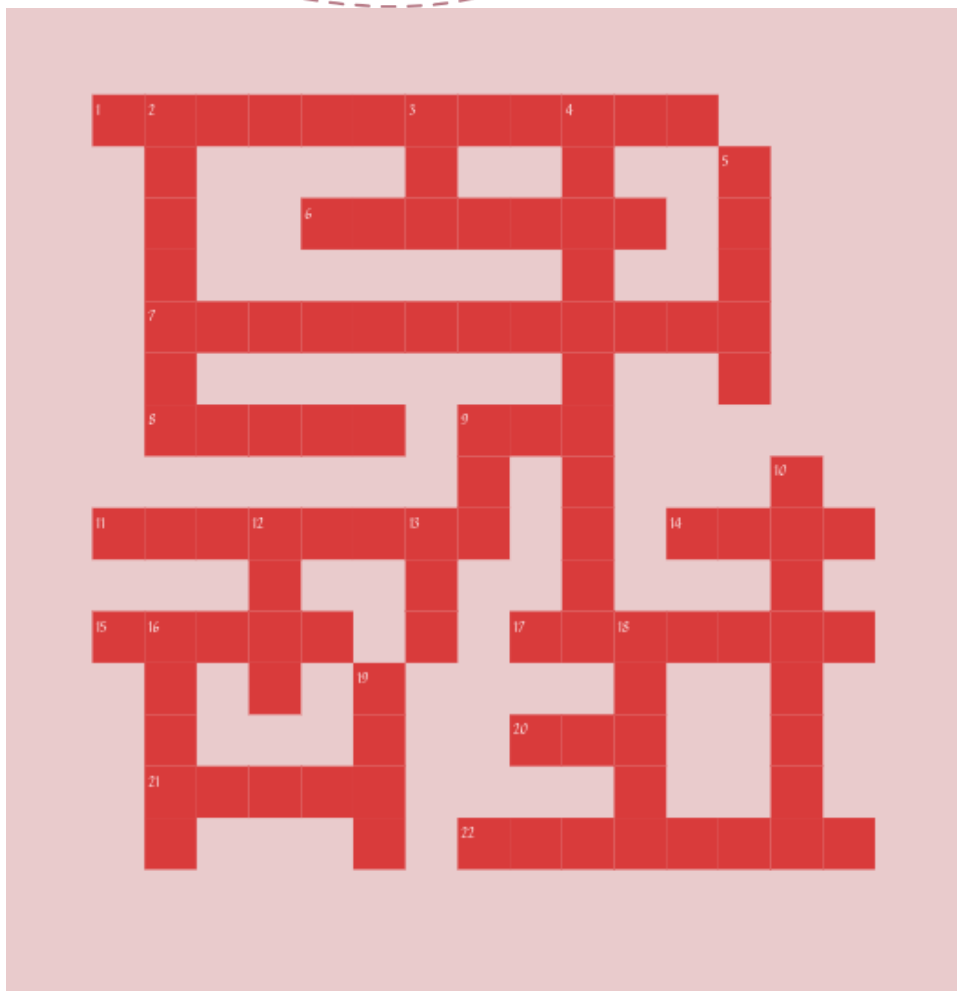
The Hip-Hop movement influenced many entertainment pieces in the 1990s and 2000s. Queen Latifah embodied both black culture and the Hip-Hop movement in films like *Beauty Shop* and *Bringing Down the House*. (Photo was taken by Hadassa Ferreira)



Names like Aretha Franklin, Nina Simone, Whitney Houston, and Lauryn Hill will always come to mind when people think of the greatest voices. (Photo was taken by Hadassa Ferreira)



Viola Davis, Octavia Spencer, Taraji P. Henson, Denzel Washington, Idris Elba, and Kevin Hart made a significant impact on the Hollywood scene in recent decades, representing African American culture from multiple perspectives. (Photo was taken by Hadassa Ferreira)



Josie Osborne
The Lions' Pride Media Group



Across

- 1 National celebration dedicated to paying tribute to African Americans throughout February
- 6 Scholar credited with establishing "Negro History Week" which later evolved into the answer for 1 Across
- 7 Phrase often exclaimed while making New Year's resolutions
- 8 The city in which the witch trials began in February, 1692
- 9 The emergency procedure performed when the heart stops, briefly
- 11 How Saint Valentine was executed on February 14
- 14 Color often associated with love, innocence, and femininity
- 15 The 2025 theme for 1 Across, relating to the work of African Americans
- 17 The president who established February as American Heart Month
- 20 The national organization that leads efforts dedicated to American Heart Month, briefly
- 21 The European city of love
- 22 Originating in Japan, the holiday that follows-up Valentine's Day one month later

Down

- 2 The couple who fought Virginia in the Supreme Court, resulting in the banning of laws that forbid interracial marriages
- 3 Phrase uttered when being wed
- 4 What Shakespeare's Juliet says
- 5 The campaign used to raise awareness about Heart Disease, the Number 1 killer of Women in America
- 9 Alternatively known as heart disease, briefly
- 10 The first Black student to attend Saint Leo
- 12 The god of love and fertility, the greek name for Cupid
- 13 Valentine's Day is one of the most famous winter holidays without this preceeding day
- 16 The name for love that is unconditional and selfless
- 18 The four chambered organ
- 19 What couples do on Valentine's Day

It's game on!: How *The Lions' Pride Media Group* brings games to life

Sophia Sullivan
Editor-in-Chief

At *The Lions' Pride Media Group*, we're always seeking ways to enhance our content and fully engage our readers. What better way to do that than with games?

This semester, we launched "Puzzle Monday," a weekly game (typically a crossword) posted on our social media to kick off the week. Each week, Social Media Editor of *The Lions' Pride Media Group* Beatriz Trevisan de Jesus works hard to come up with a theme and creates the post from scratch for our viewers to enjoy on multiple platforms.

"It was the first time our social media had something like this, a way for people to connect with us through intellectually engaging, newspaper-related content, and it turned out to be a great idea," said Trevisan de Jesus.

To take this a step further, though, we thought we would extend our games to appear in our print issues.

Campus News Editor Josie Osborne of *The Lions' Pride Media Group* immediately began brainstorming



If you have an idea for a new game we should include in our prints, let us know your thoughts! (Photo was taken by Sophia Sullivan)

"My inspiration for the crossword was, of course, the *New York Times*," said Osborne. "Often last semester, my friends and I would sit around and work on completing them together, so I wanted to bring something to the newspaper that others might enjoy just as much as we did."

Her process begins with brainstorming, and from there, the clues are inputted into a crossword

demo program. This program allows Osborne to piece the actual words together in the shape of the crossword grid. Lastly, she uses Adobe Express to finalize the grid and design the background specific to the theme.

"I always learn something new when I am making the crosswords; it wasn't until making the one for February that I knew Saint Valentine was beheaded! I hope

that the readers can also learn new things in playing my crosswords," said Osborne.

Online and Multimedia Editor Bao Han of *The Lions' Pride Media Group* also works alongside Osborne to bring our crosswords to life, but in a slightly different fashion.

After our first printed puzzle debuted in November 2024, Han began wondering how he could transfer that design to *The Lions' Pride Media Group* website. After much research, he came across a platform called Amuse Labs, where anyone can create and share games.

"I got to meet with one of the designers in Amuse Labs, and she showed me how to create and customize the games that fit best on the web," said Han. "The design looked simple, yet powerfully built, with its enjoyable features that work perfectly on any devices."

After two months of hard work and trial and error, the digital game page was born.

"We now have a new version of Puzzle Monday so that people can interact, play, and share to everyone."

The rise and fall of New Year's resolutions

Julien Bernard
Contributing Writer

Every year people scribble down their New Year's resolutions, a laundry list of goals and aspirations. But as time passes, it leaves many of those well-intentioned resolutions gathering dust alongside last year's forgotten gym membership.

Why is it that this annual ritual of self-betterment so often ends in disappointment? So much of a disappointment, in fact, that Jan. 10 is celebrated as "Quitters' Day," an official holiday for when people give up on their New Year's resolutions. Is there something wrong with proclaiming a resolution? Or is it the fault of us that this tradition is deemed to fail.

Many people do not know that Jan. 10 is "quitters' day" despite most people having a New Year's resolution. Many students at Saint Leo share similar New Year's resolutions. Nearly all of them were related to a career or working on their health, like eating better or focusing on the gym.

Despite the resolutions being alike, when it came to them following through on their New Year's resolution, it was a very mixed bag. Some of them said that although difficult, they still consistently follow through on their goals.

Others said that they quit or even forgot about their New Year's resolution soon after the beginning of the month. But the majority said

that they struggle to stick to their New Year's resolutions, they stay consistent for a short amount of time then stop before repeating the cycle.

In general, Saint Leo students believe New Year's resolutions were ultimately a good thing.

Freshman Gabriel Russel who majors in computer science said "I'd say they're a good thing. It's good to have a good outlook towards the future, to have at least some sort of plan for what's next and an idea of what you want to change or do."

In addition to this, the students agreed that discipline is necessary for people to actually accomplish their New Year's resolutions. The problem with New Year's resolutions is discipline and remaining true to the promises people make to themselves.

In 2025, people have instant access to all kinds of addictions and distractions from the things they need or want to do. If we just rely solely on our motivation, we are doomed to fail because of all the distractions that come our way.

A good solution to keep up with your New Year's resolutions is to start by writing it down. When asked about good ways to not give up on their New Year's resolutions, many Saint Leo students said that writing it down is the most effective way to overcome it. There are many different suggestions and forms

of writing it down, such as using a calendar, notebook, or an app.

According to New Scientist, writing things down increases connectivity linked to memory and learning between different areas in the brain. According to The Bucket List Journal, 42% of people are more likely to achieve their goals by just writing them down. Some students implied that guilt is used as a motivator or promote having a friend who can hold you accountable for sticking with your resolution.

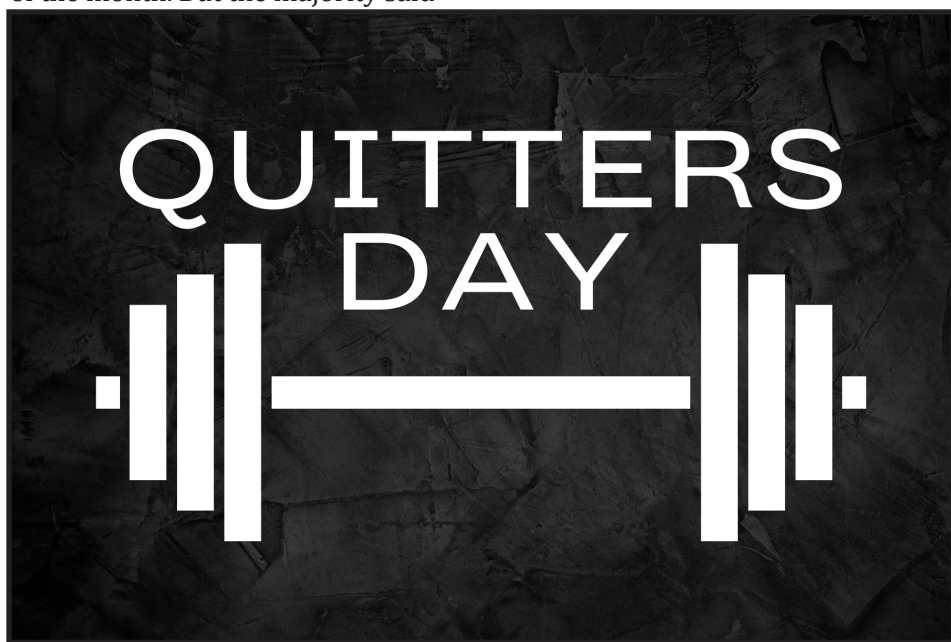
Overall, there's a plethora of different ways that we can make

having a resolution viable. The biggest problem when it comes to resolutions is people struggling to find discipline and consistency, however it seems each person can work around this by finding a niche way to help them succeed.

Even though Jan. 10 is an unknown holiday credited as a joke among many in society, the concept of a New Year's resolution seems very real and sincere to people. New Year's resolutions are more than just promises; they're a reflection of our hopes and aspirations. Let's remind ourselves that change is a journey, not a destination.



People commonly make resolutions about health, finances, and career growth. But ultimately people make resolutions about all sorts of things, from career goals to travel plans to simply being kinder to themselves and others. (Photo taken from @thehughjackman on Instagram)



60% of Americans have New Year's resolutions, approximately 80% of people who set resolutions tend to give up by mid-January, also known as "Quitters' Day." (Photo created by The Lions' Pride)



There are various reasons why people struggle to keep their resolutions. Some common factors include setting unrealistic goals, lacking a clear plan of action, not having enough support, and simply losing motivation over time. (Photo from The Lions' Pride archives)

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Probation termination: Determined Dadez regains academic accreditation for Saint Leo University

Maeve Kiley

Contributing Writer

On Dec. 9, 2024, students' minds were filled with research papers and finals looming over the horizon.

The only good news they could comprehend was the professor changing a grade or canceling a class, but expectations were exceeded when an email from the Office of the President arrived.

The past two years have been challenging for our private university. Since the university was facing serious financial difficulty, The Southern Association of Colleges and Universities Committee on Colleges (SACSCOC) took away the university's accreditation.

Specifically, the university failed to comply with Standard 13.3 of the Principles of Accreditation which deals with financial responsibility.

This resulted in an extreme budget cut which terminated the contracts of several staff members, reduced class sizes, and discontinued several sports teams (men's and women's track, men's and women's cross country, and men's and women's swimming teams).

This was an unexpected and upsetting blow to the student population who were discouraged by the loss of accreditation and concerned about their school's future.

However, President Ed Dadez remained firm that the university would escape the dark cavern of financial debt and emerge victorious. Since the loss of accreditation was due to financial difficulty, Dadez actively sought new revenue opportunities for our university.

Alliances were formed with other organizations and sponsorships with nearby businesses. In 2024, the university received sponsorship from Xerox and Neumann Construction and Roofing, LLC. New degree programs were launched as well, including the Bachelor of Arts in Business, Master of Science degree in Artificial Intelligence, and a new minor in entrepreneurship.

In addition to in-person, the Saint Leo University Online Program

received updates with an online BA in Veteran Studies launched in Fall 2024. During all of this, Dadez assured students, staff, and faculty through regular updates, which kept morale strong.

Dadez's promises came to fruition when The Office of the President proudly proclaimed that the SACSCOC reestablished Saint Leo University's academic accreditation after a Texas meeting.

"I am very pleased with the recent positive news regarding Saint Leo's accreditation status with SACSCOC and am excited for St. Leo's future" said Dr. Diane Bell, Assistant Vice President of Accreditation and New Program Integration.

"I am grateful for Dr. Dadez's leadership, the leadership team, and the dedication of the entire University community to ensure Saint Leo's future success" she continued.

Students, staff, and faculty rejoiced at the welcomed news which paved the path for a potential Golden Age for their beloved university. With accreditation reacquired, the administration can now focus solely on program investments and financial stability. This will allow expansion in campus programs, services, and outreach.

Although Fritz the Lion may be dancing a celebratory jig, the woods have not been completely cleared. Breaking free from financial instability is a challenging endeavor, one that may take another few years to reach fruition.

Some students are even doubtful if the university will be able to reemerge after all the budget cuts and spending concerns, but Dr. Dadez's resolve remains unwavering.

"The University is quite pleased that we have been able to do the difficult work to regain our good standing with SACSCOC," Dr. Dadez stated, "We still have much work to do to strengthen our university to thrive for another 136 years."

A fruitful tree has blossomed and with a little more elbow grease, that tree's branches will spread throughout the entire campus.



Dadez promises to commit to maintain the university's academics, athletics, and all other members of our community. (Photo by Maeve Kiley)



A new horizon shines over Saint Leo University. (Photo by Maeve Kiley)

