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# HARVARD INDEPENDENT

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# SPOTLIGHT



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## The Next Chapter of Globalization

Three Harvard professors weigh in on what the United States' new trade stance means for the world economy and development.

BY NASHLA TURCIOS '28

In recent months, the United States has shifted towards an increasingly isolationist trade stance, imposing wide-ranging tariffs and retreating from its traditional role as a champion of open markets. This change in commercial policy has sparked debates about the future of global economic integration and is raising questions about whether the world is entering a period of retreat, fragmentation, or reconfiguration.

To explore these issues, the *Harvard Independent* spoke with three leading Harvard Kennedy School economists: Dani Rodrik '79, Ford Foundation Professor of International Political Economy, who is widely known for his work on globalization and industrial policy; Robert Lawrence, Albert L. Williams Professor of International Trade and Investment and former member of President Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers, who is a leading scholar of international trade and global integration; and Ricardo Hausmann, Rafik Hariri Professor of the Practice of International Political Economy and Director of the Growth Lab, who studies development challenges and the role of productive capabilities in driving growth.

The following interviews were conducted separately and edited for clarity.

### The Independent:

**Some economists argue that protectionism can provide breathing space for domestic industrial policies. Given the U.S.'s recent shift towards an isolationist stance, do you think this could inadvertently create opportunities for emerging economies to prioritize their own industrial strategies? Could the current moment be an opportunity for growth?**

### Rodrik:

Yes, I think you're right. I'm generally a proponent of industrial policy, because I think structural change in the economy—whether it is moving towards renewable and green industries, or whether it is creating the kinds of jobs for the middle class of the future, or whether it's to foster innovation—always requires more strategic set of interventions by the government to promote those structural changes that markets aren't always very good on their own. In that sense, I'm a proponent of industrial policy. Tariffs and protectionism can be indirectly of help to the extent that they provide a kind of shield, or, as you call it, a temporary breeding space for those industrial policies to work. They're much less effective at promoting structural change directly.

I think my main criticism of Trump's policies would be that

you can put up these tariff barriers, but there's no guarantee that, if you make certain local producers more profitable, they will necessarily end up innovating more, or they'll invest in their workforce, or they'll even expand capacity. They can take the profits and spend them on their shareholders, or they can spend them on their managers by paying themselves higher salaries. I think that the criticism of protectionism, although I'm not doctrinaire about it, is that it's not a very blunt instrument, compared to industrial policy, which sort of more directly targets those structural changes by directly encouraging investments in the new areas.

Now, with respect to developing countries, I do think it's both an opportunity and a threat. The opportunity is that as countries like the United States now freely talk about industrial policy, it removes the stigma that industrial policy has in developing countries. It is also a threat because in many areas, developing countries don't necessarily have the capacity or the fiscal resources to engage in as wide-ranging industrial policy as the United States might. And in certain areas where industrial policy takes the form of subsidies—for example, fiscal subsidies or tax incentives—many developing countries might find themselves at a disadvantage because they are much more cash-strapped.

### The Independent:

**In your book, "The Globalization Paradox," you argue that global economic integration, democracy, and national self-determination cannot all be fully pursued at the same time. Why is that the case?**

### Rodrik:

I call that the political trilemma of the world economy, and it says that you cannot pursue economic

globalization, the deepening of democracy, and national sovereignty at the same time. If you want to start from the globalization end of the trilemma, what globalization calls is increasing integration of markets, firms, investors, and market participants playing according to a single set of rules, because that's how you get markets to join together.

But nation-states call for a difference.

Each country has its own historical trajectory, its own cultural traditions, and its own economic policy requirements depending on its level of development. So, in terms of their own policy, the kinds of rules that they want to set for how their economy develops, their rules and regulations will often differ from each other.

And where democracy comes is that if we're going to allow countries to be responsive to their electorates and choose those different rules, then they necessarily will have to keep a certain degree of globalization at bay, because there is going to be a conflict between what their democracies want and what the requirements of global marketing integration require.

Alternatively, of course, they can pursue policies that are purely in pursuit of global market integration. They normally are still nationally sovereign and they're globalized, but they have to keep democracy at bay.

The third possibility is we forget about national sovereignty and we try to erect a democracy at the global level, where there's a global political community, where you can decide on global rules according to sort of a global political, democratic accountability. But of course, that's very far from where we are.

### The Independent:

**Given the diverse global attitudes toward globalization, if the U.S. continues down a protectionist path and further isolates itself, which countries or blocs are best positioned to fill the leadership vacuum? Or do you think the U.S. should retain that role and find a way to stay integrated?**

### Lawrence:

If you had tried to implement a set of American policies that would strengthen the hand of China in global leadership, you couldn't have done a better job than Donald Trump is doing at the moment. What we've seen is that in recent times,

China has become the primary trading partner of far more countries than the United States.

In addition, it's lowered its trade barriers, while the Americans have raised them.

One example in July: the Chinese said all African countries with whom they have diplomatic relations can sell in China without paying tariffs.



More Tariffs!

path and further isolates itself, which countries or blocs are best positioned to fill the leadership

vacuum? Or do you think the U.S. should retain that role and find a way to stay integrated?

You see the striking difference? It's not that all those in the rest of the world will eagerly embrace many dimensions of China and its competitive capabilities, but certainly, they are now in a position where they can benefit from what America is doing.

But we're also seeing that other countries are increasing their efforts to deepen the trade relationships between themselves. We're seeing Canada negotiating more trade agreements. We're seeing Europe doing that with the countries in Latin America. So I think other countries will benefit from what the United States [is doing]. Overall, the world will be worse off. Countries will lose the benefits they got from a deep relationship with the United States. But, let's remember that the U.S. only accounts for something like 15% of global trade, and the other 85% is open for business.

Another preoccupation of the Trump Administration has been to focus on trade in goods. All of these discussions are about trade balances, but purely in goods. And yet, if you look at the data, trade in services has proven vibrant, has continued to grow, and with the potential of the internet and AI, I think this is transforming the nature of trade increasingly to be less about goods and more about services.

#### **The Independent:**

**In one of your papers, you note that smaller economies already struggle with 'original sin' and limited market power. In today's world of protectionism and friend-shoring, is there realistic space for them to insert themselves into global value chains? Are you suggesting they might do so through new alliances with the EU and China?**

#### **Hausmann:**

The U.S. right now has more than America First—an America alone strategy. The message to everybody else is: *'the U.S. is an unreliable, risky partner. You never know when they're going to get mad at something and try to weaponize any relationship you have with them.'* So [countries] across the world [are thinking] you have to take risks [away] from the U.S., and I think that that's going to come at a cost, especially to the countries that are more connected to us, like Canada, Mexico, and Central America. We've essentially seen the idea of value chains that originate in China and make things in Southeast Asia, targeting the U.S. market. I think they will have to target the rest of the world, but they may be able to rebuild themselves. They'll initially pay a cost because of the reduction of the U.S. market or the unreliability of the U.S. market, but they might survive in a world where China plays a significant economic role for other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and Latin America. I think that they will need to rethink how they insert themselves in the world.

#### **The Independent:**

**Many advanced economies—the U.S., EU, and China—are investing heavily in strategic industries like semiconductors and electric vehicles. Do you worry this new wave of investment could widen the gap for developing countries with fewer fiscal resources?**

#### **Hausmann:**

Well, I think that economies have always had more degrees of freedom than they thought, and I think they still have quite a few degrees of freedom to map their course. We've seen dramatic improvements in levels of development in Asia, especially East Asia, Southeast Asia, and so there are growth opportunities.

We don't know what artificial intelligence is going to mean. It could mean that catching up becomes easier. Maybe there will be a few artificial intelligence tools that get monopolized by a few large companies, but the use of those technologies might actually facilitate development, because essentially, you make more of the knowledge of the world available to more people through these tools. There is a world in which some of the technological changes might make development easier.

#### **The Independent:**

**What is your perspective on the future of globalization? Professor Rodrik emphasized that while he does not foresee a full collapse of globalization, he does think we have reached a peak. Do you share a similar view, or do you see the current state of affairs as evidence of a reconfigured globalization rather than a full rollback?**

#### **Lawrence:**

A key driver of the global trends that we saw until roughly 2016 was American leadership. The United States, since then, has turned inward and moved away from its efforts to achieve closer integration with its trading partners.

In 2016, we were still negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We were also trying to negotiate with Europe in what was known as the T-tip negotiations—so-called “mega-regional agreements.” With the election of 2016, both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump rejected the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and we've seen since then the U.S. move in this highly protectionist direction. We've had a number of shocks which have also reinforced the tendency to global fragmentation—COVID, the war in Ukraine, and the shortages that were associated with supply chains not operating—all of which have turned people more skeptical about just simply relying on global markets.

But if you look around the world today, you don't see the same kind of rejection of global forces, of the potential for globalization in many other countries in the world that you are seeing in the United States and somewhat in Europe. We saw what happened with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which was that the other countries that have negotiated the agreement have gone ahead, have implemented it, have expanded its membership, and in effect, continue to commit themselves to deeper international integration. We've seen that most of the countries, except China, have not retaliated against the United States nor erected higher barriers against each other.

We're likely to see a fragmented globalization rather than a disintegration, and that's very different from what happened in the 1930s when other countries followed Smoot-Hawley tariffs by adopting tariffs of their own.

#### **Hausmann:**

I think we're in a period of very significant uncertainty because if these policies [backfire], we can see a lot of reversals and changes of direction.

But if announced policies were to remain, I think it could be quite a significant change.

Globalization happened in the context of a somewhat more unipolar world in which we were all in more or less the same system. The Soviet Union collapsed, and Russia became part of the global economy, and China is [also] part of a global economy. But it may be that we're moving in a world in which it might look very different from the world we're used to, but I can imagine it moving in potentially very nasty directions.

I am concerned that one of the critical things for development is for countries to be able to earn foreign exchange with which to pay for imports of all the things that they need, then they cannot make themselves. And there are directions in which the world might go that would make it very difficult for emerging market economies, for developing countries, to earn more foreign exchange, and I can imagine scenarios in which the direction of the world might turn a little bit nastier.

That said, the U.S. is only 13% of global trade. The U.S. imports 13% of global imports. So there's still 87% and it matters a lot. It could be that in this new world, there will be plenty of opportunities to earn foreign exchange, but because the U.S. is kind of excluding itself from the world and imposing tariffs on everybody, it may very well be that countries will want to diversify away from U.S. risks and get closer to other partners, whether it's Europeans or the Chinese and so on. And when you change your trading alliances, you also tend to change your political alliances, or at least political influence.

So I can perfectly imagine worlds that will look very different from the current ones.

...

Rodrik, Lawrence, and Hausmann paint a nuanced picture of a world economy in transition. While none expect a complete decoupling of the global economy, all see globalization as having reached a turning point. Rodrik emphasized the political trade-offs between democracy, sovereignty, and integration; Lawrence pointed to a fragmented but ongoing globalization; and Hausmann stressed the need for developing countries to adapt by diversifying alliances, solving coordination problems, and seizing new opportunities in global value chains. What unites their views is the recognition that the global economy is not disappearing, but changing and forcing both advanced and developing nations to rethink how they engage with trade, technology, and growth in a more uncertain world.

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**GRAPHIC BY MADISON KRUG**

**'27**

# Reconnecting with Nature Through the Harvard Outing Club

A glimpse into how one student organization is making the outdoors a central part of the Harvard experience.

BY OLIVIA LUNSETH '28

The Harvard Outing Club offers students the chance to step outside the University's urban setting and explore outdoor spaces across New England. Through weekly trips that range from Boston-area outings to weekend hikes, the student-run group aims to make the outdoors more accessible to the Harvard community.

"HOC is Harvard's main outdoor recreation club, but the primary thing that we do is exist to help the Harvard community get outside," HOC Vice President Ashley Dawn '26 said in an interview with the *Independent*. "We lead weekly trips that are open to all Harvard affiliates, and our main goal is to make the outdoors as accessible as possible for everyone that is a member of our community."

All Harvard affiliates are welcome to join HOC—if you have an HUID and become a member, you can go on as many trips as you want. "We have no-questions-asked financial aid. A membership is \$20 and that lasts six months," Nate Marinacci '27, former gear manager and current HOC leader explained in an interview with the *Independent*. "But you can pay part of that, or you could pay none of that, depending upon where you're sitting."



"Last fall, I believe we led around 75 trips over the course of the term," he continued.

In line with its mission of accessibility, HOC organized a trip last semester to Middlesex Fells that was open to all participants, regardless of individual needs of accommodations, according to club president Tyler Shelton '26. "Anyone could join, regardless of needs, of accommodations that needed to be met," he explained.

Marinacci explained that HOC welcomes a wide variety of Harvard affiliates on its trips, including graduate students and University employees. "We've had members who work at the mail center come rent gear from us," Marinacci shared.

"As long as you're affiliated with Harvard...you can come on a trip, you can rent

gear, you can be a member, you can go to the cabin," Marinacci continued.

The HOC cabin is located near Pinkham Notch, N.H. The lodge, owned by HOC, is available to rent at a discounted rate of \$8.28 per person for dues-paying members. It serves as a convenient base for multi-day hikes in the White Mountains.



Beyond trips and cabin access, HOC members can also rent equipment for their own outings. Gear managers Terry McCaffrey '26 and Mia DiLorenzo '26 host gear hours every Tuesday and Thursday from 5-6 p.m. in the basement of the Student Organization Center at Hilles.

As gear managers, McCaffrey and DiLorenzo help people get the gear they need to enjoy nature safely. "We have a lot of different types of gear. Sleeping bags, sleeping pads, tents, spikes," McCaffrey said to the *Independent*. "We have a lot of cross-country skis and poles and ski boots."

In addition to renting out gear, the gear managers instruct Harvard affiliates how to use the equipment they're borrowing. Just before their interview with the *Independent*, DiLorenzo and McCaffrey assisted a group of three students by helping them pack their gear properly, offering tips on protecting it from the rain, and demonstrating the most efficient way to fit a sleeping bag into their packs.

"I think gear can be one of the biggest barriers to entry in the outdoors, and [gear rental is] just a great service HOC provides to make it easier for people who don't want to spend a ton of money," McCaffrey said.

Beyond going on trips and renting gear, HOC also trains a smaller cohort of its undergraduate members to be leaders for trips. Any College student who wants to lead, regardless of prior experience, is encouraged to apply.

"I think that it's a super empowering experience to be able to go from someone who

has nearly no outdoor experience, as many of our leaders are, to being able to fully competently lead backpacking trips in the White Mountains and do that safely for anybody on Harvard's campus," Dawn said.

To Shelton, leading HOC trips has been an opportunity to learn skills that can be translated to aspects of college life. "It gives you a very clear, tangible way that you are helping somebody else, and you get to highlight that and recognize that and learn how to do that better and apply it to other situations."

Shelton shared that, as president, he often gets to lead the "sender" trips that take on challenges like Mount Washington. However, to him, HOC leadership offers so much more. "I love initiating the more intentional, reflective, bonding trips," he added, offering an example of a HOC-led journaling session at the Arnold Arboretum.

"HOC is wonderful because it does both extremes," Shelton said. "You have the agency to choose not only what you want to participate in as a member, but what you want to lead as a leader."

Trip leader Elena Ferrari '28 recalled one of her favorite HOC memories, from her training trip last fall, which brought together trainees with very different levels of experience. "For some of them, this was their first week hiking in their lives. And for others, they had just been hiking with family for years. And we were all together," she said to the *Independent*.

For Ferrari, those kinds of efforts capture what makes HOC unique. "It's not only a space to go outdoors, but it's also this mission of inclusion that runs very deep," she shared.

"I think saying how HOC has added to my Harvard experience is selling it short... I think HOC has really defined my Harvard experience."

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**PHOTOS COURTESY OF  
HARVARD OUTING CLUB**

# First-Year Perspectives: Why Harvard

Harvard College's Class of 2029 weighs in on their commitments amid University-wide uncertainty.

BY SOPHIA GONZALEZ '28

Over the past five months, Harvard University and the Trump administration have clashed in a series of policy disputes. On April 14, the Trump administration froze \$2.2 billion of federal funding from Harvard; on April 16, the federal government threatened Harvard's international student enrollment eligibility; and on April 21, Harvard filed suit against the administration.

Even as the University resisted federal interference, the news quickly became personal for prospective undergraduates. As decision day approached, questions about visas, financial aid, and the institution loomed large. Now that those first-years are on campus, headlines persist, and so do questions about starting their college careers amid University uncertainty.

"[Harvard] was my original dream school. But as the college process went on, I thought, well, Harvard's really hard to get into, so I didn't really think I had a shot," Jack Rubin '29 said in an interview with the *Independent*. "For me, it was about location and opportunity. My main interest is politics and going into public office. The resources here at Harvard are impeccable for the career field I am interested in."

According to official statistics from Harvard Admissions, an estimated 53,000 students applied to the Class of 2029, with only 1,950 receiving offers. For the Class of 2028, there were 54,000 applicants with 1,970 accepted, among whom 1,647 chose to enroll, according to the Harvard admissions office.

For many incoming first-years, Harvard's reputation was central to their choice.

"Who was going to say no to Harvard? No matter what I end up in, the name on the degree looks pretty good," exclaimed Samara David '29.

"Harvard, being an extremely prestigious, if not one of the most prestigious schools, definitely helped me make the decision to go here most of all," Jacob Thierman '29 said.

As the nation's oldest college, Harvard frequently attracts national attention—whether through debates over affirmative action and admissions, campus protests, or leadership controversies. The University also plays a prominent role in national politics, with notable alumni running in the 2024 elections and serving as elected officials. Recently, disputes over the balance of power between Harvard and the federal government have dominated front-page news.

For some freshmen, daily reports about Harvard hardly weighed on their choice: "The politics with the Trump administration, they didn't affect my decision," Thierman said. "But they did make me feel an increased level of pride about going to Harvard after I got in."

Others felt more stressed before arriving. "I was worried about the situation and how students would be treated, and how our incoming class would be shaped," one freshman—who preferred to remain anonymous—told the *Independent*. "But I do really think Harvard has this really special student body, and I'm really proud to be part of this institution where President [Garber] is standing up."

Many students cited Harvard's

opportunities and financial accessibility as a key reason for enrolling, though those very opportunities now feel at risk. "I was a little bit nervous, especially with funding, because the starting cost of the school wasn't my ideal," David said. "But then I could see things that were like 'free tuition if you're under this level of income.' I was like, 'Will that go away? Will that change?'"

55% of Harvard undergraduates receive need-based aid from the University. Recent funding cuts, however, primarily impact research funding rather than tuition.

"Some things you can't control. I couldn't control funding, but I can control my own decisions... I'm not going to let that ruin my 18-year dream," Lydia Donahue-Wilfred '29 said in an interview with the *Independent*.

The Class of 2029 seems to share Donahue-Wilfred's outlook, pursuing what for many has been a lifelong aspiration. The Harvard name, after all, remains an enduring force, tied to generations of presidents, scholars, and Nobel laureates.

"The school's older than the country itself... Harvard is supposed to embody certain values that it's able to look at within a broader scale... It's operating on a different time frame than any other institution," Thierman said.

While Harvard has long been a household name, it has also harbored connotations of wealth and privilege. Now students see the University's high-profile disputes, and the coffers that allow for its defense, as a defense of intellectual independence—an example for other universities to follow. "Harvard is fighting back, and that's something super important to me as a student to see that our institution is taking the stance and not giving in, which is the more convenient, easier path," said the same anonymous student.

Undergraduates have now begun to settle into life in the Yard as classes kicked off on Sept. 2, followed by the club fair on Sept. 5. First years have thousands of courses and 500 student organizations to choose from. Courses, extracurriculars, and friendships are at the forefront of student life.

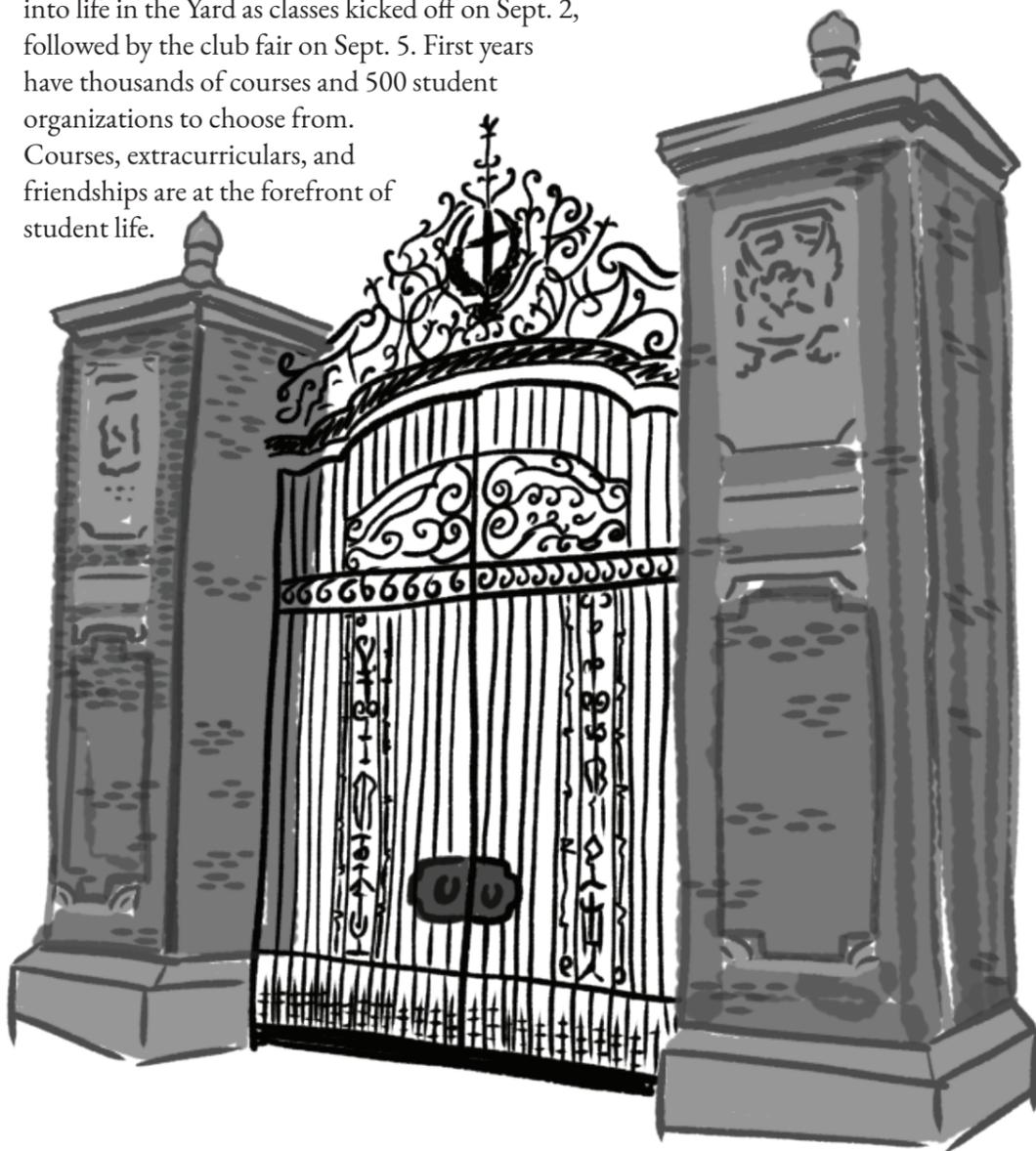
Many speak to the friendliness and feeling of belonging they have already experienced. "I feel like I've been really surprised by how social and also by how generally 'normal' people seem here... I found that people are obviously very smart, but also you're just a kid and you're probably not that different from the kids in my hometown," Thierman reflected.

As events continue to unfold, Harvard has positioned itself as a principal institution in the debate over federal authority and higher education. Recent court rulings also soften the tension between the institution and the federal government, with the Supreme Court citing some of the Trump administration's actions against the University as unlawful on Sept. 3.

"No matter what [Harvard's] facing nationally, at the end of the day, people are still going to be like 'They went through all of that and they're still pumping out geniuses,'" David said.

**SOPHIA GONZALEZ '28**  
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**THE INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHIC BY EMMA CRAGO '28**



# Attention: Harvard ROTC!

Spotlighting the history and modern practice of Harvard's Reserve Officers' Training Corps.

BY MEGAN LEGAULT '28

Since its founding, Harvard has been renowned for its rich military history—starting with the University's "Indian College's" involvement in King Phillip's War in 1675 and progressing into the modern day with the University's distinguished Reserve Officers' Training Corps program.

The University currently holds the title for the most Medal of Honor recipient alumni out of any non-military university in the world, with 18 recipients. This history is also cemented within the architecture of the institution's campus. The Continental Army was quartered in Massachusetts Hall. Additionally, Memorial Hall and Memorial Church both contain commemorative architecture dedicated to our University's veterans, who have served in every American war since King Phillip's War.

Progressing into the twentieth century, Harvard ROTC was the first in the nation upon being established in 1916 when President Wilson signed the National Defense Act of 1916 for military expansion efforts.

Since its inception, ROTC has expanded to over 1,700 programs at universities and 3,500 junior ROTC programs nationwide providing gateway programs specific to branches of the military. 2011 marked the official reinstatement of ROTC at Harvard after it had been banned for nearly 40 years following the Vietnam War—a time of ideological division over the role of the United States Armed Forces. Harvard ROTC, in partnership with the program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has continued its legacy of excellence with the induction of over 100 officers into the forces in the 14 years since its reinstatement.

To join ROTC, interested Harvard affiliates from all stages of education follow a formal application process. In addition to written statements, letters of recommendation, interviews—all somewhat typical to college and scholarship application processes—cadets and midshipmen must also complete a physical fitness test and a Department of Defense approved medical exam.

In spite of ROTC's historic legacy and tradition of excellence, some might wonder what motivates cadets to sacrifice time—and notably sleep—as a college student in addition to requirements to serve a determined number of years of service upon completing their baccalaureate degrees.

"I initially joined ROTC because I was inspired by my father's commitment to military service," Grace St. Laurent '28 wrote in a statement to the *Independent*. St. Laurent, who studies molecular and cellular biology at the College on the pre-medicine track, explained that her current ambition is to complete medical school and residency concurrently with the required service in the Army reserves after the ROTC program.

"I participated in a Navy Junior ROTC program in high school that both taught me a lot outside of the military, and also showed me the incredible opportunities available through the military to both serve our country while simultaneously gaining invaluable skills and personal experiences," Grayson Caffrey '28 wrote in a statement to the *Independent*. "The main motivators for joining ROTC [were] my exposure

to the Navy in high school and the scholarship opportunity."

The financial assistance provided by the ROTC scholarship is a largely attractive feature for many participants. Once awarded the scholarship and accepted to an academic institution, ranging from partial to full-ride depending on branch criteria, the scholarship is distributed to the college of your choice.

Regardless of preliminary interests or passions, all cadets and midshipmen find themselves working to maintain a balance between academics and ROTC obligations. As part of the typical ROTC schedule, cadets are required to wake up at 5 a.m. numerous mornings a week for physical training at MIT. In addition to early mornings, they must attend extra leadership courses for their respective branches, weekly labs on practical skills, and occasional field training exercises, which can occupy entire weekends



tallying a roughly 15-hour commitment per week.

However, many of Harvard's cadres and unit staff—military professionals instructing and mentoring student cadets and midshipmen—factor in undergraduate participants' lofty ambitions when designing ROTC's training program.

"ROTC mostly affects my life Tuesday through Thursday. The biggest difference between my schedule and non-ROTC [*sic*] student[s] is early mornings," Caffrey wrote.

"Our cadre[s] are super accommodating and encourage us to prioritize academics, giving us more time off during the week or support during [field training exercise]," St. Laurent wrote.

Caffrey, who studies Economics at the college, explained that the schedule flexibility alongside the financial assistance offered by the program played a pivotal role in affording his education. "The scholarship opportunity is amazing, and made going to school here far more reasonable for me and my family to manage," he wrote.

"There isn't much of a connection between undergrad major and our job when we commission," Caffrey wrote when asked how his academic and ROTC worlds intersect. "For a lot of people, in our careers outside the military, our military experience will be our main resume item."

Beyond the facets of the program itself, both Caffrey and St. Laurent emphasized how their fellow cadets maintain their individual interests. Upon entering the program, St. Laurent

was concerned that the program's culture would be too intense and her fellow classmates' identities might be consumed by their involvement with ROTC. To her relief, this has not been the case.

"Everyone whom I've met through ROTC is exceptionally multifaceted," St. Laurent added. "So many cadets are involved with so much outside of ROTC, whether that be varsity or club athletics, pre-professional organizations, challenging course loads, research, study abroad, and more."

"My decision to study abroad was what one could say was very last-minute but my [Lieutenant] understood how important it was for me to have a study abroad experience," said Sydney Slazak '26, who is currently studying abroad in Sydney, Australia, in a statement to the *Independent*.

Slazak took an unconventional path from ROTC to studying abroad. Having decided to pursue this opportunity at the last minute, she worked closely with her Lieutenant to maintain enrollment in required ROTC classes virtually while off campus.

Caffrey similarly commented on one of his favorite unique experiences in Navy ROTC thus far, the summer cruise.

"This summer I had the chance to fly in a trainer fighter jet, go underway on a surface ship and nuclear submarine, attempt a Marine Corps endurance course and do some rappelling, talk to enlisted and officers in a huge variety of careers and roles, and the whole time I was hanging out with students from other colleges and getting paid!" Caffrey joked about his unconventional summer experience: "It's essentially our 'internship' for the Navy, but in my opinion, a lot more fun than working for a company for free for three weeks."

Despite the divergences on their paths to and journeys in Harvard ROTC, St. Laurent, Caffrey, and Slazak find commonality in their appreciation for the community the program has provided.

Slazak and Caffrey both emphasized the close knit nature of NROTC being a smaller program—something Slazak has longed for while studying abroad.

"While I don't miss waking up at 5 a.m. or how demanding our schedule can get, being away has helped me realize how significant the program has been to my college experience," Slazak wrote. "I especially miss the goofy small moments that will enviably become a running joke, the post [physical training] Dunkin runs, and our weekly Quincy breakfasts."

"There is a level of camaraderie that extends outside of regular [physical training] and classes," St. Laurent echoed. "I stay in ROTC because it has created a community that has been quintessential to my development as a person and my college experience."

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**PHOTO COURTESY OF KALVIN  
FRANK '28**

# FORUM

## Out Of Your League: The Dying Art of Mundane Interaction

Poetic reflections on self discovery and being alone.

BY MEGAN LEGAULT '28

**B**ut midst the crowd, the hurry, the shock of men,  
To hear, to see, to feel and to possess,  
And roam alone, the world's tired denizen,  
With none who bless us, none whom we can  
bless..."

*Solitude*, Lord Byron  
Solitude.

As the youngest sibling of three and one of the younger grandchildren in a sprawling family, solitude has forever been unfamiliar to me. I never truly experienced it until I left my communal hometown of Las Cruces, New Mexico—a small, vibrant, Hispanic college town—for the big, bad, hustle-cultured East Coast. There, in a city of millions, I had my first taste of being utterly and entirely *alone*.

The paradox struck me: in a crowded metropolis, where everyone is forced into proximity, I found that people had never seemed so distant.

Sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, and the common man alike have speculated the causes of this phenomenon. Did industrialization lead to the deconstruction of societies interconnectedness? Is technological advancement responsible for the modern adaptations of the human experience, one that is increasingly individualistic?

In my succinct two semesters at Harvard, I have had the distinct privilege of indulging my humanistic romances outside of my typical, laborious STEM coursework as an Integrative Biology concentrator. Although limited in scope, in each of the courses I have taken outside the brutalist walls of the Science Center, discussion regarding space appears to be ever-present.

I first encountered this notion analyzing the novels of Jane Austen with the guiding hand of Professor Dydre

Lynch in "English 145a: Jane Austen's Fiction and Fans." Unabashedly, I will admit that my original intention for enrolling in this course wasn't academic in the slightest. My sole reason was that my sister had made me watch the 2005 adaptation of "Pride and Prejudice" ad nauseum and insisted I take a "fun" class instead of LS50. And yes, we are big fans of the infamous hand flex.

This course ended up being my favorite that semester. Among the many themes of Austenian literature, we discussed how Austen brilliantly used the notion of place, manipulated setting, even, to implicitly provide social commentary and express the metamorphosis occurring within her characters.

Although I didn't recognize it then, I know now that, ironically, the manipulations I was studying on paper were simultaneously happening around me.

I had unintentionally ripped myself out of the comfort of familiarity and placed myself in an alternate reality. In every way you can imagine—weather, people, food—Cambridge is entirely antithetical to the place where the roots of my existence are planted.

I spent the first months here in a dissociative state: entirely overstimulated and engulfed by the novice world that surrounded me.

As much as I had believed that my identity was concretely fixed, upon arriving in Cambridge it became almost entirely detached. The social customs I had grown up unconsciously mimicking—something as simple as gesturing a thank-you to drivers as they allowed me to cross the street—slowly disappeared as I tried to adapt to my new environment.

I felt an internal war waging between who I knew myself to be and who I felt I must become to belong. My humility seemed to be irreconcilable with the self confidence I needed to thrive, or at least so I thought.

One of the biggest attractions to Harvard we generally discuss is the dialogue that happens within its gates. But truth be told, the best and most grounding conversations I have had here have been with complete strangers. People who remind me that the world extends beyond the Harvard bubble—coming up for air from the world outside.

The Uber driver who first picked me up from the airport asked me about the social culture of the University, drawing upon his experiences immigrating to the United States from Trinidad. Having struggled adjusting from the communalistic nature of home himself, he transposed the wisdom he could muster about finding community in the big city.

The unhoused woman I gave my change to outside of Blank Street before the last dreaded LS1b final told me that I looked like I needed a hug. Granted, I hadn't slept for

days, but her keen observation reminded me that the simplest gesture of kindness never goes unappreciated. Together, we shared a mutually therapeutic embrace.

The historian seated outside the Granary Cemetery who handed me a self-guided tour he had meticulously assembled for pedestrians who take the time to engage, rather than just blowing past. The sparkle in his eyes throughout the duration of our conversation following my promenade of the monument. An unspoken look that expressed his gratitude that I took the time to enjoy the fruits of his labour and intellectual contribution to the history of Boston.

Something even as simple as the man I met just the other day while I was sitting against the tree I have claimed as my own at the Boston Public Garden—a proud employee of the Home Depot plant department who just wanted to show someone the colossal plant encyclopedia he had freshly purchased from the Brattle Book Store. A purchase he believed would help him aid others find the "plant of their dreams."

Each of these interactions echoed a sentiment that I had unintentionally buried 2,000 miles away. I wish I could express it more profoundly, but it is simple in nature: we all shared the desire to connect. Anyone to talk to. Anyone to make us feel less alone.

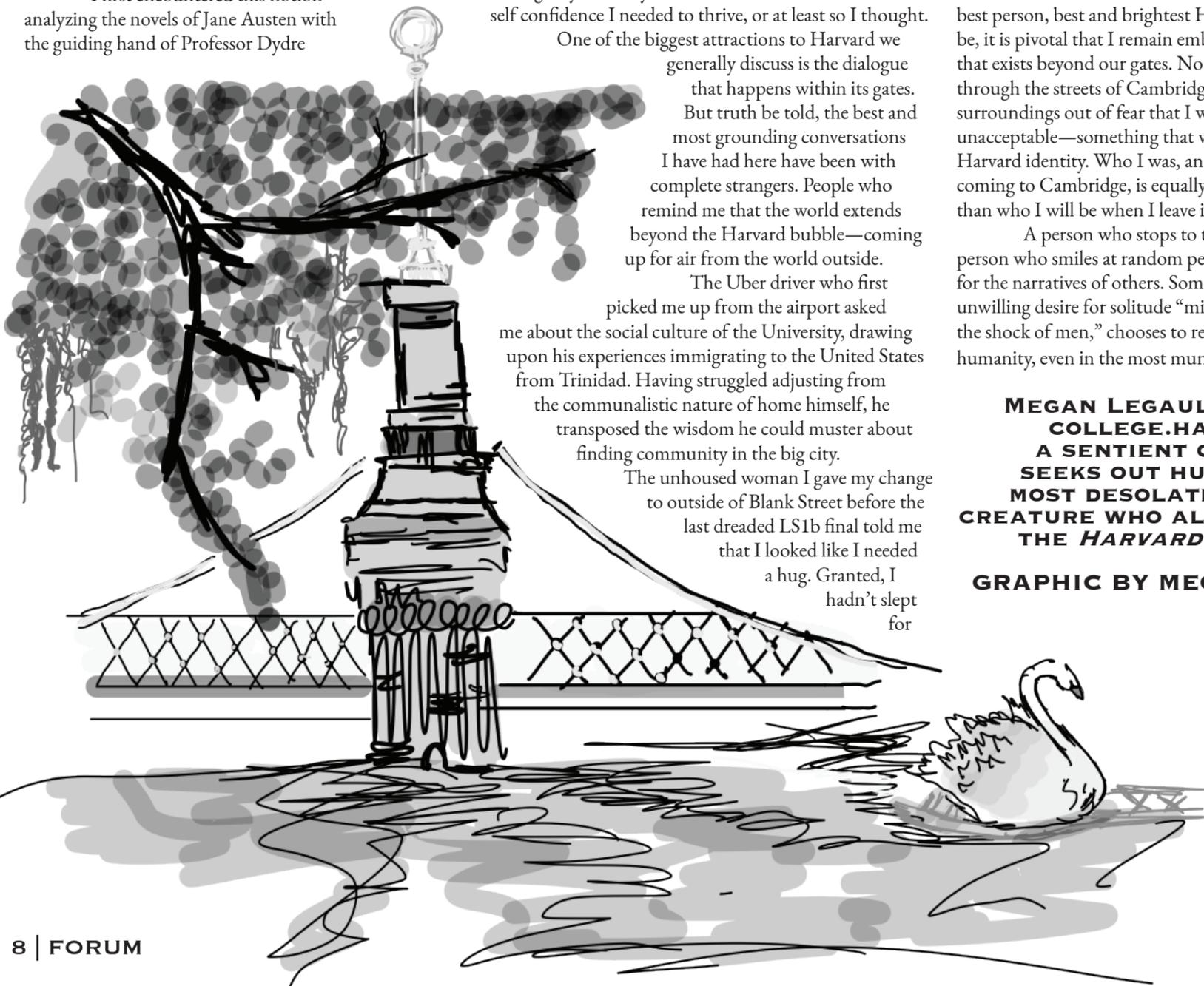
Returning to Cambridge for the second year, it is in these subtle interactions that I have come to realize the substantial metamorphosis I have undergone. Having spent the summer at home, this immediate frame of reference has allowed me to contrast the sense of self I have developed unaffixed to space. By no means am I the same person who arrived at Greenough Hall last August, but in the same breath I am not entirely different.

I have learned that in order to truly be the best person, best and brightest Harvard scholar I can be, it is pivotal that I remain embedded in the world that exists beyond our gates. No longer will I rush through the streets of Cambridge disengaged from my surroundings out of fear that I will do something socially unacceptable—something that will tarnish my shiny Harvard identity. Who I was, and where I was before coming to Cambridge, is equally, if not more, important than who I will be when I leave it.

A person who stops to talk to strangers. A person who smiles at random people in the street. A host for the narratives of others. Someone who, despite the unwilling desire for solitude "midst the crowd, the hurry, the shock of men," chooses to remain connected to humanity, even in the most mundane of fashions.

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**GRAPHIC BY MEGAN LEGAULT '28**



# Thoughts from New Quincy: Metric Mindset

The seduction and danger of living by the numbers.

BY LUKE WAGNER '26

Here's a moment every shopping week when the choice isn't between two classes you love, but between an easy A and a harder B+. You look at the syllabi side by side: one packed with weekly papers, late nights, and the risk of failure; the other promising generous curves, lighter reading, and a safer GPA. Most of us know how that calculation ends.

Throughout life, humans are trained to prioritize what is most tangible rather than what is most valuable. Grades are only the undergraduate version of a much wider habit—an insistence that worth must appear as a number. This same logic governs salaries, follower counts, step trackers, and even my WHOOP sleep scores. But we need to realize: metrics may be efficient for sorting, but they are a poor guide for living. They quietly reorganize our choices around the wrong objective function.

Start with the mechanism: metrics change behavior. Once a student's output in a course is reduced to a letter and a GPA, they optimize toward that output: reliable syllabi, predictable assignments, maximized points. This is not a moral failure; it is the system working exactly as it's designed. A transcript is a scoreboard, and scoreboards invite competition. The results are expected: the more pressure we place on an index, the less faithfully it represents the thing it claims to measure. Knowledge becomes performance, and curiosity becomes risk.

That narrowing would be troubling enough inside a classroom. But the same pattern governs how we rank jobs, status, or care. Salary stands in for meaning. Followers stand in for attention. Productivity dashboards stand in for craft. The common denominator is the comfort of comparability. Numbers are administratively convenient—but existentially thin.

Another problem is the logic of endless escalation. When success is defined by a number with no natural ceiling, the pursuit itself ensures dissatisfaction. A 3.7 GPA immediately points toward a 3.8; six figures imply the need for seven. The finish line continually recedes, leaving aspiration without arrival.

In a recent sociology section, my TF posed a deliberately uncomfortable thought experiment: if your measure of happiness is “eliminate inequality,” you have chosen a target that can never be reached. Because total eradication is impossible, failure is guaranteed, and every partial gain feels emotionally discounted as “not enough.”

The same logic applies to money. If the condition for happiness is “make money,” then happiness will always recede, because you can always make more. In both cases—whether moral or material—the problem is that the metric has no ceiling. When fulfillment is tied to a number without an endpoint, satisfaction is never achieved.

So the problem is not simply that grades are imperfect. It is that treating what can be measured as what matters most produces three distortions.

The first distortion is false precision. A one-decimal GPA suggests clarity where none exists. Judgment is situational; courage resists neat grading. Some of the most valuable intellectual moves—taking the hardest version of a course, admitting ignorance, revising a conviction—are punished in the short run by the very number meant to summarize them.

A second distortion is attention misallocation. What can be counted crowds out what counts. In group projects, students split tasks for efficiency rather than wrestle with ideas together, because “who did what” can be measured while generosity and collaboration cannot.

A third distortion lies in the incentives that emerge from these conditions. Once grades are treated as the dominant currency, students rationally adapt their behavior to maximize them. Courses with low

workloads and professors known for leniency become attractive not because they promise deeper learning, but because they promise safer returns. The responsibility is not only individual but institutional: when evaluation systems reward caution over exploration, they tacitly discourage the very risk-taking and curiosity that higher education claims to value.

Each of these undermines what college is supposed to cultivate. Higher education claims to develop judgment under uncertainty, the ability to ask better questions, the stamina to dwell in difficulty, and the capacity to work with and for other people.

With this compression of an entire academic record into a single number comes a false sense of precision. Whether rounded to one decimal or two is beside the point: the problem lies in reducing situational judgment, intellectual risk, and uneven collaboration into a format that suggests clarity where none exists. The most formative intellectual moves are often low-scoring in the short run—taking the hardest version of a field, admitting ignorance publicly, revising a conviction in the face of evidence.

And yet the digit holds sway for a reason. Metrics make progress legible: a rising GPA or a clean decimal feels like proof that work is paying off. Numbers also project fairness and neutrality—everyone weighed on the same scale, no messy judgment required. That simplicity explains their persistence, but also their danger: the convenience of comparison makes it too easy to confuse clarity with truth.

The alternative should be practical, not performative. “Grades don't matter” is unserious; of course, some form of evaluation must exist. The question is whether we have an evaluation of priority and proportion. A healthier allocation would treat grades as inputs rather than outputs. A transcript should be one small feature in a larger portfolio that includes evidence of long-horizon projects, writing and argument quality over time, testimony about how a student engages with other people, and demonstrated risk appetite.

At the institutional level, grades could be balanced with richer forms of evaluation—narrative letters, public defenses, or critiques that highlight process as well as outcome. A studio critique or a replication exercise reveals judgment in ways a GPA cannot. Difficulty markers and wider grading bands would also reduce GPA-shopping, so that ambition is not punished. The goal is not inflation but alignment: rewarding the behaviors colleges claim to value.

At the course level, syllabi could deliberately carve out space for non-

quantifiable aims. A small but real portion of credit might reward field-building behaviors: constructive seminar presence, peer mentorship, reliability under deadline, and intellectual generosity in sharing sources or crediting interlocutors. These are the civic muscles of a scholarly community. They are not fluff; they are infrastructure.

At the individual level, students can reweight their own decision rules. Before adding or dropping a class, selecting a research topic, or committing to an extracurricular, they might ask three simple questions: Am I choosing to minimize variance or to maximize learning? Will this choice leave me with something to show for it—a paper, a project, a skill—six months from now? If GPA did not exist, would I still make this choice? If the answer to any of these questions is no, the metric is driving more than it should.

None of this denies the usefulness of numbers; it only resists their monopoly. Metrics are invaluable tools and terrible masters, made visible with the pass/fail semester many schools adopted during COVID. When the scoreboard dimmed, some students drifted, but many did harder and more interesting work because the fear of visible failure receded.

Let's return, finally, to the “inequality” example, because it forces the hardest concession. If the right goal cannot be total eradication—if the horizon by definition recedes—what makes pursuit rational?

First, marginalism: measurable improvements at the margin, whether fewer barriers to access or less hunger in a given community, are morally significant even if the aggregate asymmetry remains. Second, the virtue of process: certain practices are valuable irrespective of endpoint—learning to listen, building coalitions, cultivating steadfastness.

The same logic applies to learning. You will not “finish” economics, nor “complete” literature, nor “solve” philosophy. But the disciplined pursuit of better questions, better models, better readings is intrinsically worthwhile and instrumentally powerful. The absence of a final victory condition is not an argument against trying; it is an argument against pretending the scoreboard is the victory.

If colleges want to align their mission with their mechanism, they should say so out loud and design accordingly.

The point of all this is not to romanticize the immeasurable; it is to put numbers back in their place. College should be where we practice living with incomplete information, conflicting goods, and goals that refuse to collapse to a single axis. While the metric is a tidy way to keep score, it is a poor way to build a mind.



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**GRAPHIC BY EL  
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# Too Late or Too Soon? The Right Time to Think About Graduate School

Graduate school, backup plans, and the art of choosing what comes next.

BY NASHLA TURCIOS '28

**A**t the start of high school, I set a simple, resolute goal: get into a top college. For me, that felt like the ultimate measure of success, the culmination of years of work. Many students share that mindset—the process is grueling, but in hindsight, the path looks fairly straightforward. The formula is not exactly a mystery: discover an interest early, cultivate it, join aligned clubs or organizations, and trust that the pieces will fall into place.

Once you get to said college, however, the picture becomes more complicated. Having completed my first year and stepping into my second, I see post-college options as both wider and more daunting than I imagined. Graduate school, in particular, looms large—I consider whether to pursue it at all, and if so, in what field. These questions no longer feel like distant hypotheticals but like choices requiring real answers. The open-ended exploration of my first year has given way to the pressing weight of what comes next. At times, it feels exhilarating, the sense that I could choose anything. But it also feels overwhelming, like I could just as easily choose wrong and close doors without realizing it.

When I arrived at Harvard, I intended to study computer science. Much of my high school experience revolved around tech: robotics competitions, STEM-based summer programs, even app-building contests. It felt natural to continue that path. However, after two semesters, I found myself drawn toward economics, especially through a development lens. Suddenly, I was more excited about applying programming skills to empirical research on innovation policy than about building full-stack apps for their own sake.

The transition was exciting yet disorienting. I worried I had wasted time chasing the wrong path, and I wondered if I was already “behind” compared to classmates who knew their concentration tracks from day one. What pulled me forward, though, was the realization that computer science could be used to drive social change. In classes like Ec50: “Using Big Data to Solve Social and Economic Problems,” I encountered projects that amazed me: machine learning models being used to deliver food aid in Sub-Saharan Africa, massive datasets revealing patterns of upward mobility in the United States. Seeing how technical tools could illuminate questions of inequality and policy made me think harder about graduate school, not just as the next logical step, but as a way to deepen my interests.

This summer, I raised these concerns to co-workers at my tech internship, and a piece of their advice stuck with me. A colleague explained how she always framed her future in terms of Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C. Plan A is where you devote your main effort should go; Plan B runs quietly in the background as a practical backup; Plan C provides a safety net, less ambitious but still viable. The point, she stressed, is that preparing for all three turns a potential “failure” into a controlled pivot.

For me, this framework did not just make sense on paper, it made me breathe easier.

Suddenly, graduate school did not seem like an all-or-nothing bet. If Plan A did not work, I was not doomed; I had pivots built-in. That realization gave me permission to take my interest in economics seriously, without being paralyzed by the fear of choosing wrong. In practice, this could mean mapping out concrete steps for each path: research experience and applications for graduate school, networking and internships for the private sector, and policy fellowships for public service, so whichever way things unfold, I am already moving forward.

If graduate study is your Plan A, knowing its demands early matters. Requirements and timelines differ dramatically across fields. As a first-year, I find it worthwhile to explore widely. At Harvard, many students apply to finance or career-oriented programs—not necessarily out of herd mentality, but because experimentation clarifies what genuinely interests you. Others pursue entirely different avenues: launching startups, joining nonprofits, or exploring creative paths. By engaging thoughtfully, you gain a clearer understanding of which opportunities align with a graduate school path worth pursuing.

Clarity early on is especially important in fields with high barriers to entry. I learned quickly that economic Ph.D. programs come with steep, sometimes hidden prerequisites: advanced math like real analysis, meaningful research experience, and ideally a thesis. None of this was obvious to me at first, and I realized that without careful planning, I would easily need a two-year fellowship before applying. Students who realize this early can plan accordingly—taking the right courses, building research experience, and apply straight from undergrad if they choose.

Timing, in short, matters. Some programs—foreign fellowships, Ph.Ds—require early and deliberate preparation. Others, like law school, are more flexible: the LSAT can be taken later, and many majors remain competitive. Medical school falls somewhere in between: strict science prerequisites must be completed during college, but many applicants take gap years before applying.

The real challenge is the cost of late discovery. Students can still pivot into demanding fields, but they must be prepared to spend extra years

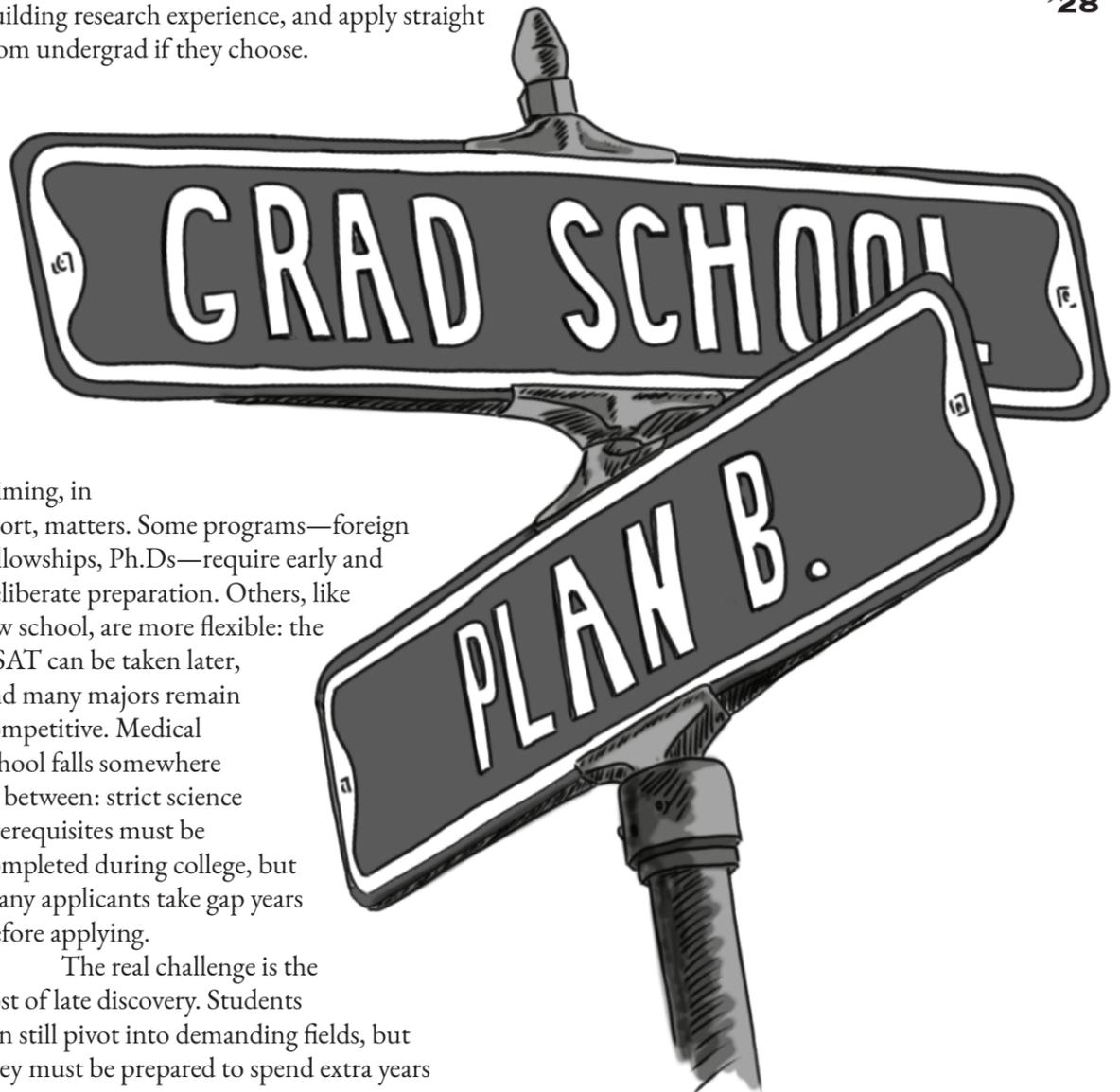
filling in the gaps. This is where Plan B becomes critical. For me, Plan B might look like working as a research assistant after graduation—something that would let me stay close to economics while buying time to strengthen my application. Plan B isn't a downgrade, but a detour that still moves you forward.

Plan C, meanwhile, offers quiet reassurance. I take comfort in knowing I could always return to tech. It may not be the dream anymore, but the skills I built in high school and my first year still give me a stable fallback. And, paradoxically, that stability frees me to aim higher for Plan A—when you know you won't collapse if your first choice doesn't work out, you're more willing to take risks.

Looking back, high school felt like a straight line: set the goal, follow the formula, and trust the outcome. College has been different, less of a straight line and more of a maze. I've had to accept that uncertainty is not a sign of failure but a space for discovery. The real lesson is about agency: using your early college years to explore, your middle years to prepare, and always keeping alternative plans in view. Graduate school may be the goal, but the deeper challenge is learning how to choose with intention and build options that let you steer your own future.

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**GRAPHIC BY EMMA CRAGO '28**



# “I Don’t Eat Before 1 p.m. Because I’m Better Than You”

How social media has changed the stakes of diet culture.

BY MIA WILCOX '28

I don’t eat before 1 p.m. because I’m better than you. Eat 300 grams of protein, sleep 8 hours, drink 8 glasses of water, reduce stress, get 10,000 steps, lift heavy, and remain in a calorie deficit. For a high-protein afternoon shake, put a large steak and matcha powder into a blender.”

Over the past few weeks, every time I’ve opened Instagram, I have been attacked by AI fitness junkies and influencers preaching protein maxing and biohacking—each short more extreme than the last. Their satire rings uncomfortably close to the reality of what diet culture now looks like online.

Yes, our generation has made strides toward body positivity. But with the rise of trends like #SkinnyTok and influencers such as Liv Schmidt promoting a hyper-specific “skinny aesthetic,” it feels as though we are regressing back to the 2000s, an era that idolized thinness often at the expense of physical health. However, social media has changed the landscape of diet culture, with content existing in an instantaneous and unavoidable format, wherein individuals with no verifiable knowledge have a platform to spread misinformation and toxic standards.

This shift coincides with the growing accessibility of GLP-1s—drugs like Ozempic that regulate blood sugar and insulin release. Once reserved for patients of diabetes or chronic illnesses—and for celebrities who could access them—GLP-1s are now available to friends, neighbors, and even parents, repurposed from medical treatment into a tool for aesthetics. This availability has rendered weight loss an instantly accessible commodity for those who can afford the often steep treatment plans, making the pursuit of the ‘ideal’ body feel closer than ever.

As Vanessa Friedman noted in her June New York Times article “Extremely Small and Incredibly Tight: The Bandage Dress Makes a Comeback,” the resurgence of the skinny aesthetic is “wrapped up in the Ozempic-inspired rise of a new form of body consciousness and diet culture.” The return of the Hervé Léger bandage dress, infamous for its unforgiving fit, is a visual marker of this shift. At its peak, Friedman reminds us, the dress was “a way to differentiate your body from the bodies that couldn’t get into [it].”

Influencers like Liv Schmidt, founder of “Skinni Société,” push restrictive ideals under the guise of health. The result is a repackaging of Kate Moss’s infamous 2009 mantra, “Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels.” Companies like “Skinni Société” make fitting a highly restrictive “ideal” feel like an exclusive club, where eating only one bite of brownie is the admission price.

The resurgence of that style alone is a stark signifier of where we are currently standing with regard to diet culture.

The problem isn’t wanting to eat well or train hard. It’s when health becomes a commodity and disordered habits are rebranded as empowerment, allowing companies and individuals to profit from perpetuating insecurity. #SkinnyTok primarily targets a vulnerable audience of young women online; it is especially troubling to see girls as young as 12 years old engaging with this content in the comments. Even if the impact is not immediate, it plants seeds of doubt.

As one student explained in an anonymous interview, “Just yesterday, I was looking for fun recipes to make, and every single video, without fail, had to incorporate the number of calories that it had in it and the amount of protein it had, and this obsession with numerical value in what we’re consuming.”

“It’s masked with the idea that it’s very healthy

for you and makes you strong,” they explained, referring to the restrictive ‘one-bite’ diets she has been seeing on social media.

She’s right. Recipes online increasingly sound like AI parodies: “Put cottage cheese into a blender with cottage cheese, bake it, and spread cottage cheese on it, giving you delicious, high-protein cottage cheese.”

Personally, I’d rather enjoy a cinnamon roll made with flour, butter, and sugar than its “high-protein” substitute, leaving me genuinely satisfied both physically and mentally, instead of fixating on what I denied myself.

This constant stream of “wellness” content doesn’t just shape our momentary choices, but rewires how we think about food and health. By commodifying nutrition, influencers create a feedback loop of guilt and anxiety. “Come with me to burn 10,000 calories at the gym”—creates a persistent sense of inadequacy that outlasts the trends themselves.

“Health” has become inextricably linked with productivity; if I didn’t eat 400 grams of protein and burn 10,000 calories at the gym today, I’m a couch potato with no discipline. All there is time for in the day is a hustle of work and “wellness.” This mindset takes away from so much of what wellness has been about—self-care, meditation, downtime—other than working out and eating well.

And beyond this, diet culture on social media is riddled with inaccuracies.

Dr. Deirdre Tobias, nutritional epidemiologist and assistant professor at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women’s Hospital, stressed the need for evidence-based guidance in an interview with the *Independent*. “Claims that we have some sort of issue with getting enough protein are actually not very accurate for most Americans,” she said.

“The more you over consume in any one category, even if it’s relatively neutral on its own, can have those unintended consequences of displacing foods that you know provide additional nutrients and fiber.”

Yet products like the David Bar, boasting “28 grams of protein in only 150 calories,” continue to sell. Behind the shiny gold wrapper and sleek branding lies an ultra-processed, chemical-heavy snack. The allure of “high protein” trumps the value of whole, natural ingredients we actually need.

And that’s not to say you shouldn’t eat what you want, just don’t be fooled by the glossy packaging and claims of ‘health’ and ‘wellness.’

Dr. Tobias also warned about the lack of oversight online. “There’s no requirement or even social accountability for something like a social media post to actually be reflecting truth, right? And the regulation of that is almost non-

existent.”

This exists in stark contrast to the world of academic research, which is built upon decades of research and evidence. But in the influencer economy, credibility loses out to marketability. “There’s no money to be made off of telling people to eat from the produce section,” Tobias said.

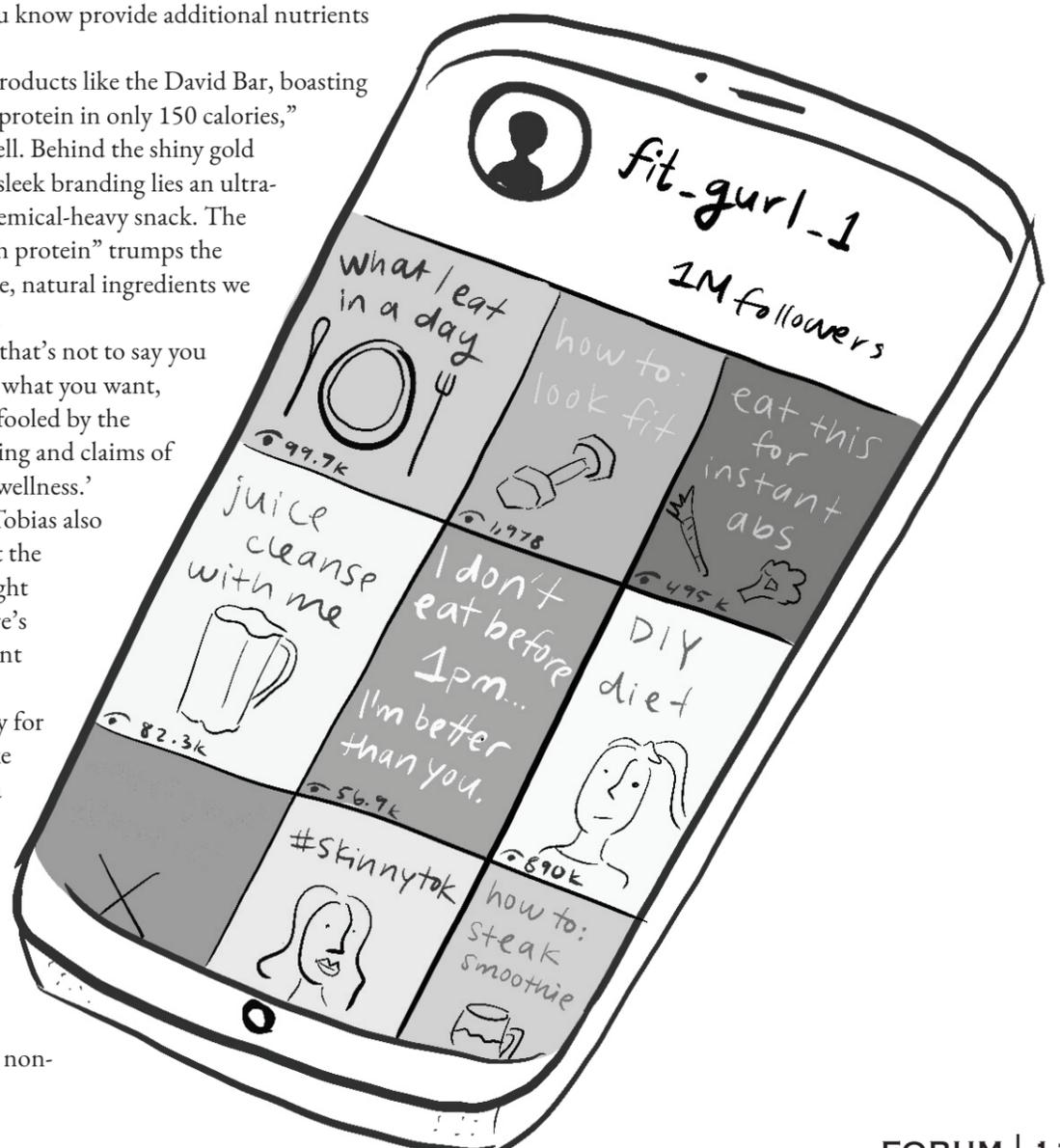
So what’s the takeaway? Both your diet and your media diet are personal choices, not dictated by algorithms or influencers. Goals and aesthetics are fine, but remember to take online “wellness” with more than a grain of salt. Balance matters more than protein counts or step totals. It is essential, and what we should all be doing is listening to our bodies to prioritize our health, instead of spending time keeping track of every calorie and gram of protein.

For my part, I won’t be choking down cottage cheese brownies, but I also don’t plan to eat a pint of ice cream at every meal. And I certainly won’t be freezing affirmations into ice cubes to blend into my protein shakes for “subconscious gains.”

Ultimately, for me, balance will beat biohack any time. Maybe the real hack is just eating what leaves you satisfied and feeling good.

**MIA WILCOX '28 (MWILCOX@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS GOING TO FINISH EVERY BITE OF HER BROWNIE.**

**GRAPHIC BY CLARA LAKE '27**



# MEET THE MASTHEAD

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# Hungry for More: Dexter Suhm's Ascent into Music

Harvard student artist Dexter Griffin '27 reflects on his crescendoing music career.

BY LAYLA CHAARAOU I '26

**D**exter Griffin '27 took a lingering pause when I opened our interview by asking him to describe himself in three words.

While I could have answered the question for him—creative, artist, visionary—he chose instead to revisit the question at the end of our conversation, offering me only one:

“Hungry,” he said when I asked him again. “I want to be a killer.”

...

Griffin performs under the artist name Dexter Suhm. His father, a musician and composer, immersed him in music from an early age. By preschool, he was already playing the ukulele, strumming Beatles tunes or the blues for his Berkeley, California community. “I didn’t really have much of a choice in terms of music being a part of my life,” he told me. “I think it’s always just been there.”

Suhm describes music as his “home base” for everything, explaining how the way he “experiences life is very much colored by music and driven by music.” His passion developed quickly: he learned jazz guitar through middle and high school, branched into music production with friends, and began songwriting in seventh grade. By his freshman year of high school, he was releasing music publicly, though none of those early tracks remain online. “I think it is not representative of the music I’m really trying to make,” he reflected on his original work. “In high school, at 16, 17, I’m trying to figure out what I want to say and, musically, what kind of world I want to build.”

Since then, that world has taken remarkable shape. While in high school, Suhm attended a UC Berkeley talk where he met producer ThankGod4Cody, a long time collaborator of American singer-songwriter SZA. In February 2025, Suhm was a producer, composer, and lyricist on “Take You Down,” a track from SZA’s 2025 album “SOS Deluxe: Lana.”

“I’m just grateful that it actually brings joy to people’s lives,” he said, referring to the song, which has over two million views across SZA’s official YouTube channel. “When it’s at a level of mass consumption like that, it can actually make a million people’s day better, which is amazing.”

“Breaking into music is hard, and for one of the first people I’ve come across in the industry to be someone like [Cody]—willing to share, willing to be that generous, really believe in me whole heartedly—I always have to be so grateful,” Suhm said.

That recognition was not misplaced. Put Suhm in a room, and he says he can make a beat out of thin air—a rare, on-demand skill that showcases both his technical ability and undeniable talent. Songwriting, however, especially for his own work, is a more

meticulous process—one he finds comes most naturally in solitude.

“My thesis with a lot of my artist projects that I’m working on right now is to be hyper-intimate, and for emotion to be the guiding thing,” he said. “I really need to figure out what I’m saying and say things out loud—I sometimes just need to stumble through the words, and they find you.”

With the support of his family and community, Suhm has not only deepened his love for creative expression but has also found ways to give back. One of his achievements is founding Berkeley Electronic Arts & Technology Scholars, a free after-school program for BIPOC elementary students. Suhm was inspired to form this initiative after noticing that his school district’s music program both lacked students of color and suffered from resource limitations. “If you don’t have representation in the staff necessarily, then kids don’t see themselves there,” he said. “It’s just another barrier to entry to being in those spaces.”



Suhm’s ultimate goal was to offer mentorship to the students in the program. “How can I make these kids feel cared about?” he recalled asking himself. “That an older student that understands them and is young enough to relate to them, and also comes from a background of understanding and is willing to meet them where they’re at, and give that extra siblinghood and support?” Teachers and parents began to notice the program’s impact extending beyond music: students showed greater excitement for learning and improved classroom performance, which Suhm called a “win.”

Suhm’s passion for music also extends into his extracurricular life at Harvard, where he serves as director of publicity for The Kuumba Singers of Harvard College—a choir founded in 1970 to bring Black students together through music and spirituality during a time of alienation.

Suhm first saw Kuumba perform at his first-year convocation and was immediately drawn to the group. He explained that he had been looking for Black spaces to join at

Harvard—places where he could feel a sense of community while also pushing himself musically. “It has been one of the most gratifying things I’ve done here. It’s one of the most special things on campus.”

Suhm also serves as development chair for the Harvard Undergraduate Music Business Association, a newly formed student group dedicated to connecting Harvard students with the music industry and related careers. “There was undeniably a big gap between Harvard undergrads and careers and entertainment, specifically in music,” Suhm said. “I’m glad that we’re able to bridge that gap a little bit, and provide some of that network and resources.”

While he loves music, Suhm emphasized he’s “not just music” and notes how his academic interests have strengthened his creative ones as a psychology concentrator. “Part of the reason why I’m addicted to making music myself is you really get to handle emotions at some of its purest level. Sometimes it’s pure, raw emotion and memory and thoughts—the human experience.”

“Psychology is very much: How does your mind work and how does your mind trick you? How can you trick your mind? I’m just really attracted to that.”

...

This past summer, Suhm split his time between New York, where he worked at a fashion company, and Los Angeles, where he focused on music production—including a dedicated week of sessions for himself. Now, he’s ready to make his first true statement as an artist, starting with a few singles followed by a larger project. “It’s a piece of me. I’m really excited to see that go out to the world,” he said. “I want to come out swinging—it’s so near and dear to my heart. I feel like I have something to say.”

For Suhm, this is only the beginning. With a hit record alongside one of the world’s top artists and new projects already underway, he’s carving out his name as both an artist and a producer—a “50/50” balance he’s grateful to be pursuing. Gratitude, a theme that surfaced throughout our conversation, continues to shape not only his approach to music but also the high standards he sets for himself. “I want to achieve my fullest potential. I don’t want to look back and be like, ‘I could have done this and that.’ I want to work hard and make myself and my family proud.”

It’s fitting that the one word he ultimately chose to describe himself was “hungry.” He’s eager for what comes next—and so are we.

**LAYLA CHAARAOU I '26**  
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GRAPHIC BY KAYLA LE '28

# d4vd's Musical Guide to Love, Loss, and Performative Males

A recount of d4vd's Aug. 28 stop in Boston on the "Withered" World Tour.

BY COURTNEY HINES '28

Since the writing of this review, on Sept. 9, ABC7 Los Angeles reported that a woman's decomposing body was discovered in an impounded Tesla registered to d4vd. The investigation is ongoing, and a spokesperson for d4vd said that he is cooperating with authorities.

There's a particular scream that only happens in the two seconds between house lights dimming and an adored artist sprinting onstage. At the Roadrunner stadium on Thursday, Aug. 28, that scream erupted like a wave and then—bam. d4vd exploded into "What Are You Waiting For," his barreling pop-rock single from his debut album, "Withered." The question immediately became rhetorical as the crowd jumped around in lockstep.

The "Withered" 2025 World Tour has been a long time coming: d4vd (David Anthony Burke) started out making Fortnite montage videos during the pandemic and eventually began recording original indie pop music in his sister's closet to avoid copyright strikes. These tracks, including the ultimate tear-jerker, "Romantic Homicide," blew up on TikTok and Spotify, kickstarting his musical career. Three years later at 20 years old, he filled Roadrunner to the brim following the release of his album in April 2025. Boston obviously had been itching to see him.

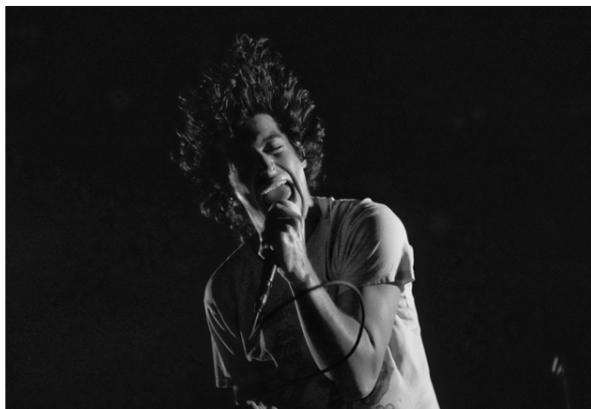
Let's start at the beginning of the night: Before the openers came on, I took a moment to appreciate the white roses and deep green vines that covered the stage. They wrapped around white marble pillars and coated the sides of a second, taller stage. Beautiful. Classic.

Right on time, New York's LAUNDRY DAY set the energy for the night, with crunchy guitars and sticky hooks. Sawyer Nunes (vocals/drums) had me tearing up, giggling, and kicking my hypothetical feet in a hypothetical chair. Beautiful man with a beautiful voice. Nunes played beside Jude Ciulla-Lipkin (vocals), Henry Weingartner (guitar), and Henry Pearl (bass). Each brought their unique but equally magnetic spirit to the performance.

As soon as LAUNDRY DAY said their goodbyes, the crowd started chanting for d4vd. Flashes of red and ominous music introduced him and his big blonde hair onto the stage, only for him to jump into "What Are You Waiting For." It was a witty choice; demonstrating he could be taken

seriously while still knowing how to get an audience enlivened. At times, his dance moves seemed Fortnite-emote-esque, kind of nostalgic.

From there, the night toggled between exhilarating and existential. d4vd used his unique voice, a soft-focus tenor that vibrates into falsetto, to carry the audience through "Here With Me," the viral hit that I would cry alone in my room to three semesters ago even when life was going perfectly.



He followed this with "This is How It Feels," his 2023 slow-burn duet with Laufey, but not without addressing the performative males in the audience first. Naturally. All of the Laufey fans in the crowd turned into a disjointed choir as he sang, each of them trying to sing louder than the other in hopes of getting a signed Labubu from d4vd. A couple of Hello Kitties were thrown into the mix, too. I was hoping for a mid-show matcha or maybe some feminist literature, but I'm sure d4vd just saves these things for after the set.

The pendulum continued to swing to and from mayhem, with the most heartbreaking songs saved for last. "My House Is Not a Home" had the entire audience silent, watching d4vd in awe as he played the piano. He told a painful story about distance and coming undone in a relationship, sharing vulnerability with the audience in a way I had never witnessed onstage before. I first assumed that his Garfield hoodie, sweatpants, and pink shirt that said "love a pretty girl" would

make it difficult to see him under a serious context, but it was undeniable that his stage presence came before anything he could have worn.

This vulnerability spilled over into how he interacted with his fans. He was quick to sing "Happy Birthday" to someone at the front of the pit and jumped down from the stage to hold peoples' hands, including mine, twice... Does d4vd want me? Throughout the entire performance, he consistently found the time to communicate his appreciation for Boston.

After once again sharing a few grateful words with concertgoers, d4vd went into his second-to-last song (and the one we were all waiting for), "Romantic Homicide." I heard sniffles and wail-singing all around me. Maybe I was sniffing and wail-singing too. d4vd only heightened emotions, belting the most hard-hitting parts of the song.

I realized with this final song that while "Withered" might read like a concept record about a dying rose, in person the show feels the opposite: alive, thorny, generous, weird. d4vd's message was transparent; he could show complexity in his songs, powerful chords with heavy words, and in the same breath, lift the energy in the crowd to the ceiling. 10 seconds after "Romantic Homicide" finished, d4vd put on "Fein" and stage dove.

d4vd is a rare artist, and an authentic one. He has a background and a story that an entire generation can relate to, and it spills into his humor, his lyrics, the subjects he discusses in his music. I've never seen a young personality, someone literally my age, take on both a debut album and a stage with such mastery and artistic vision.

**COURTNEY HINES '28  
(COURTNEYHINES@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU) CAN'T WAIT TO  
SEE ANOTHER SHOW FOR THE  
INDEPENDENT.**

**PHOTOS COURTESY OF KAYLA LE  
'28**

# Fall 2025: What's on at the HRDC?

A rundown of the performances taking place across Harvard Theater this fall.

BY MEENA BEHRINGER '27



As always, the start of the fall semester comes with the Harvard-Radcliffe Drama Club's announcement of upcoming shows and productions to take place at Harvard this season. The stage is set for an exciting lineup of performances ranging in genre, style, and scale.

Learn more about the upcoming HRDC productions for Fall 2025:

## Loeb Experimental Theater

The Loeb Experimental Theater is slated to host a variety of performances this fall, both original and traditional works. More commonly known as "The Loeb Ex," the space is a smaller black-box theater inside the Loeb Drama Center. "The Scottish Improv Show," presented by Three Letter Acronym, will be the first performance to take stage at the theater. In residency from Oct. 20-26, the show will be directed by Katie Silverman '27 and produced by Gunnar Sizemore '27 and Amy Morissey '28. TLA is Harvard's only improv troupe that follows the Harold format, a long-form improv style.

"Get A Clue," an original musical written and directed by Olivia Data '26, with music composed and orchestrated by Preston Bushnell '26, will take stage at the Loeb next. It will be in residence from Nov. 13-16. Transporting the audience to the glamour of speakeasies in 1920s New York City, the show is a detective noir dramedy following six characters at a soirée that takes a turn. Tickets will be free to all.

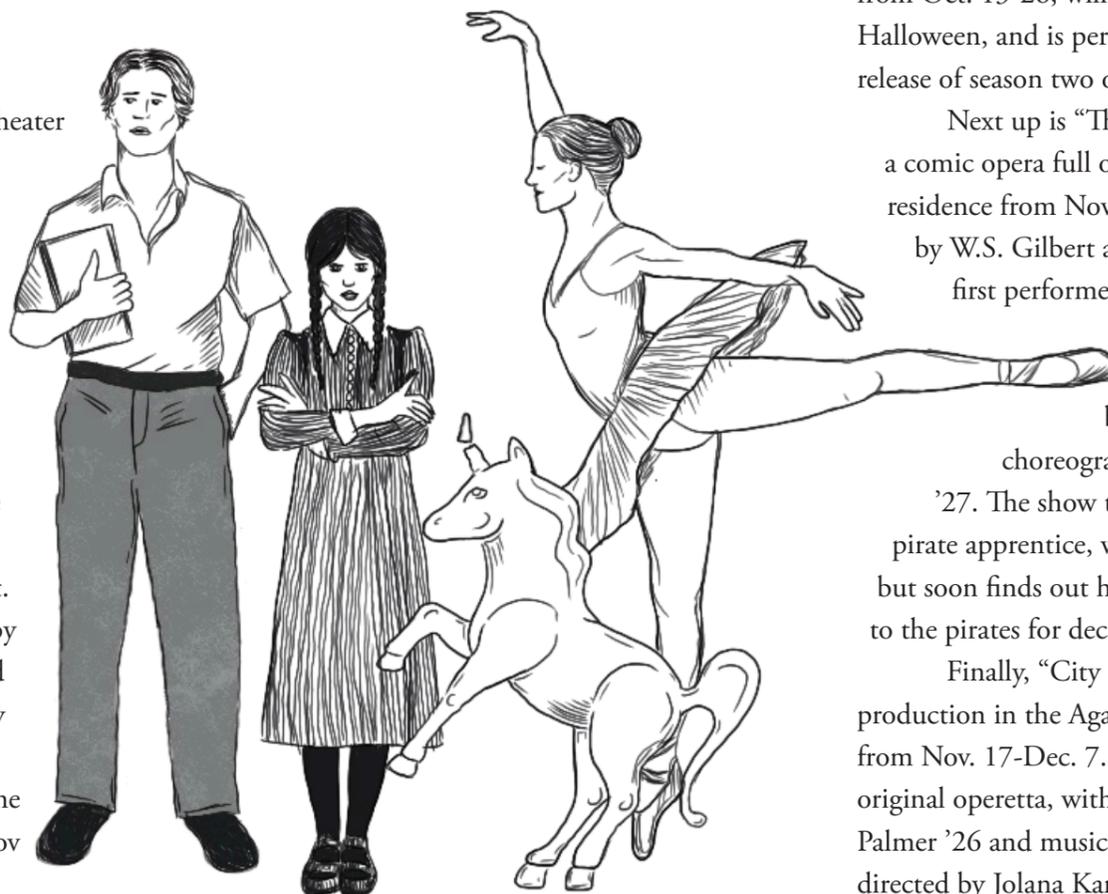
Debuting next is "Ex Machina," the Harvard-Radcliffe Modern Dance Company's fall production. Kathryn Nairn '26 and Olivia Ma '26 will direct this performance, which will incorporate the show's historically stunning visual elements and energy. It is set to be in residence from Nov. 17-23.

The Ex's final production of the season will be "The Glass Menagerie," directed by Texaco Teixeira-Ramos '26 and produced by Katherine LeBuhn '26. Written by Tennessee Williams, "The Glass Menagerie" is a memory play with autobiographical elements that follows the narrator, Tom Wingfield, as he looks back on his life with his family in the Great Depression era. Through recollections of his mother, Amanda, and his sister, Laura, who receives a gentleman caller, the play touches on concepts of love, disillusionment, and dreams. "The Glass

Menagerie" will be in residence from Dec. 1-7.

## Loeb Proscenium

Two performances will take the stage at the Loeb Proscenium, the largest venue featured with over 550 seats and shared with the American Repertory Theater. "Merrily We Roll Along," directed by Ben Arthurs '27, will be the first production of the year.



The musical was originally based on a 1934 play of the same name, with a book by George Furth and music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Set over the span of 20 years, the comedy follows Franklin, Charlie, and Mary as they pursue their dreams and artistic careers. This follows the play's recent revival on Broadway from 2023 to mid-2024, starring Daniel Radcliffe, Jonathan Groff, and Lindsay Mendez. "Merrily We Roll Along" will be in residence from Sept. 29-Oct. 26.

Next at the Loeb Proscenium will be "Nocturne," the Harvard Ballet Company's fall show, from Oct. 27-Nov. 9. The play will be directed by Emma Nagler '26 and Olivia Callander '26 and marks a return back to the Proscenium after their past spring show at the Harvard Dance Center. Both extensive productions will thrive in the grandeur of the Proscenium's stage.

## Agassiz Theater

Last but not least is the Agassiz Theater, the historic 350-seat venue in amphitheater design, where a mix of musicals and opera style shows will occur. The first production to take place at the Agassiz is "The Addams Family," directed by Riley Jackson '27 and Mia Schenenga '27. With lyrics and music written by Andrew Lipka and book by

Marshall Brickman, "The Addams Family" was originally based on Charles Addams's cartoons in the New Yorker from the 1930s. The musical follows the eccentric and dark Addams family when Wednesday, their daughter, falls in love with a normal boy, Lucas. Her father, Gomez, must keep the romance a secret from his wife, Morticia, leading to a night of chaos when Lucas is invited to family dinner. The adored show, in residence from Oct. 13-26, will be a lively way to ring in Halloween, and is perfectly timed with the recent release of season two of "Wednesday" on Netflix.

Next up is "The Pirates of Penzance," a comic opera full of energetic characters, in residence from Nov. 3-16. Originally written by W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan and first performed in 1879, the show will be directed by Alicia Chu '28, music directed by Jack Damon '28, and choreographed by Cooper Skenyon '27. The show tells the story of Frederic, a pirate apprentice, who falls in love with Mabel but soon finds out he is unexpectedly indentured to the pirates for decades more.

Finally, "City of Peace" will be the last production in the Agassiz this fall, taking residency from Nov. 17-Dec. 7. "City of Peace" is another original operetta, with book and lyrics by Paul Palmer '26 and music by Christian Liu '26, to be directed by Jolana Kampfova '28. The production is inspired by Ukrainian author Mykola Hohol and follows Khoma and Khalivia, who leave the Kyiv-Brotherhood Monastery, only to end up on an intense escapade.

This season promises a magical range of performances that spotlights Harvard's creative talent, with both traditional and original pieces, and is the perfect time to explore theater on campus. Find out more about this season's productions on the HRDC's website or Instagram.

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**GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA RYMAN '28**

# Love is an American Bath Story

A conversation with Lisa Rizzo, owner of Dillon's Steam Bath in Chelsea, MA.

BY MARIE PRUNIÈRES



Portrait by photographer ©Darlene DeVita, supported by the Chelsea Heritage Grant.

Last spring in Chelsea, Lisa D. Guglielmi Rizzo—the magnetic owner of Dillon's—opened a new window of America for me. Week after week, I returned to enjoy the traditional shvitzing (sweating in Yiddish), oil rubs, and platza (shoulder whacking with an oak leaf) at her establishment, a hidden gem 30 minutes from campus that has been operating since 1885. Talking with her at the counter also taught me a tremendous amount about love—for, as Harvard philosopher Elaine Scarry put it, “the beautiful things have a forward momentum, the way they incite the desire to bring new things into the world.”

Dillon's belongs to my dream garland of personable old businesses on the East Coast, all with unique, cinematic stories. Here too, Lisa is extremely passionate about her establishment, which welcomes a diverse but inclusive clientele. For that reason, she insists on keeping prices affordable (\$36 for two hours, about \$60 with a massage), with bathing being an integral part of the fabric of Chelsea, Massachusetts's smallest town. Our last conversation in May remains memorable to me as Lisa radiated kindness, glamour, and the immense power of solace through action.



Regulars of the Ladies' nights on Mondays. Lisa stands on the right. ©Dillon's.

Lisa's story is quintessentially Bostonian. Born into a large Italian-Argentinian family with 14 aunts and uncles on her mom's side, she served coffee at Dunkin' in high school, where she met her husband—the young Anthony Rizzo Jr. (unrelated to the famous baseball player). He asked her to his prom, she recalls with a smile, and the two were together for thirteen years before marrying. During that time, she worked as a customer representative for airlines, maintaining her independence.

“I thought I would later get married and have a big family,” she confided in an interview. “My husband wanted to have six kids!”

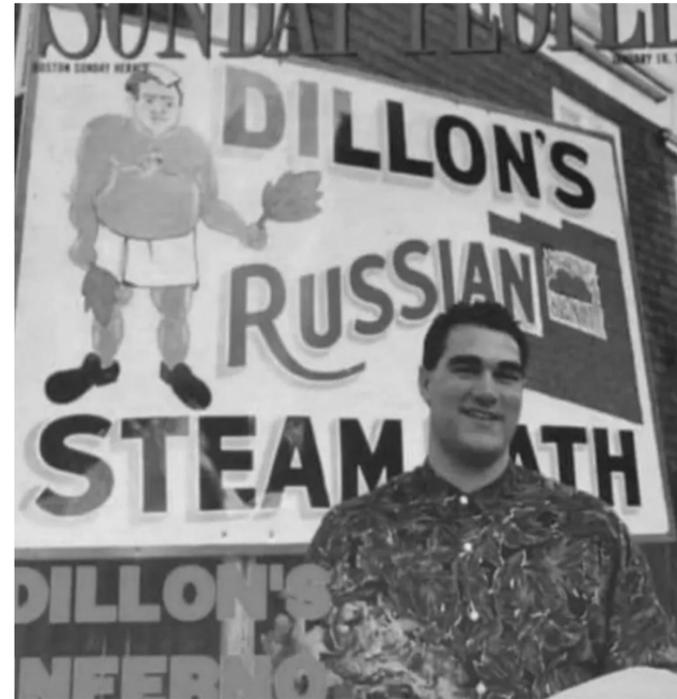
This vision first took form when Anthony Jr. purchased Dillon's in 1992, pursuing real estate and emboldened by their relationship, as Chelsea was recovering from financial collapse. He felt a special attachment and committed “a hundred percent” to the bathhouse—the oldest in the country—long before the domestic showers' revolution—in an immigrant neighborhood that was a major destination for waves of Russian and Eastern Europeans back in the 1870s. At that time, the community was made up largely of Russian Jews, including Israel and Tillie, the original founders of Dillon's—affectionately known as the Shvitz (Yiddish for “sweat”).

Due to the Great Chelsea Fire of 1973 ravaging the town's archive, we are only left wondering about the bath's first hundred years. But 250 miles south, in New York City, a New York Times photo essay pictured the last banyas (Russian for steam baths) at the turn of the century, with their historic lores of deaf masseurs for businessmen, vodkas in the lockers, and closures during the terrible AIDS epidemic. This gives us an imagined background of the beginnings of the Russian banya as a diasporic phenomenon.

Many tensions certainly seem to have characterized it. According to Olga Petri, who reviewed Brown professor Ethan Pollock's book, “Without the Banya We Would Perish,” the steam room has indeed functioned for one-thousand years as a “camera obscura [that] refracts the complex spectrum of society, culture and politics” in Russian territories. The conflicts it crystallizes between what she has called the “sanitary” and the “grit, intimacy and chaos” could only take similar and new forms with the transfer to American land.

As for Dillon's, settled in a town long plagued by corruption, a Boston Globe journalist described men convivially playing poker and getting oil scrubs by

the steam room in 1997—a more clement period for the city following the institution of a new council—manager government system in 1995. This was Rizzo Jr.'s heyday, dearly remembered by his clients, many of whom have been coming since Eisenhower.



Anthony Jr. Rizzo on the front cover of the Sunday Times, January 1993.

Alas, life and the bathhouse took a devastating turn when Anthony Jr. died at 30 from complications of dermatomyositis in 1999, leaving Lisa a widow with a one-year-old child, Anthony III. Grief and responsibility intertwined, as she mourned a partner of heart and honor to her, while inheriting an institution that functioned like a men's club six days a week.

“Some men said the repairs and constant upkeep was heavy,” she explained; others tried to take advantage of her.

But 27-year-old Lisa had learned to build nerves of steel when she turned down unsolicited offers for acquisition during her husband's illness. She could also count on her beloved friends Madelyn and Linda, a therapist and a customer who jumped right behind the counter to help.

Moved by their support, Lisa decided to prolong her great love with Rizzo Jr. by keeping Dillon's—with the help of her mother, who moved in with her to care for her baby.

“I had no time for depression,” she affirmed. And in many ways, her decision further embodies Scarry's interpretation of beauty as “the active state of creating,” or “[in] the site of stewardship in which one acts to protect or perpetuate a fragment of beauty already in the world.”

“Every time there was a hiccup or an issue I would always just take a deep breath and ask to myself

“What would Anthony do?” And it all came together,” Lisa added.

“Over the years, I gained a lot of support and respect from my male clientele, especially after I undertook a renovation phase, with the help of Plaza specialist Patsy. The biggest part of this was the rebuilding of the oven, which required a lot of time and preparation, as well as the right people to get it done.”

Many locals indeed praised her courage. In a letter that she keeps framed next to the entrance and that “still moves her to tears,” one of the regulars expressed how proud he was of her “making Dillon’s the best Shvitz in the whole wide world.

Dear Lisa,  
I just wanted to take a moment to tell you how proud I am of you for making Dillon's the best "Shvitz" in the whole wide world.  
I know Anthony, who is certainly up in heaven, feels the same way. He always spoke of you and your baby with love and respect. When Anthony smiled he literally lit up the room. His smile was contagious and you could see the joy in his eyes.  
I kiss Anthony's picture and say a prayer for him every time I visit the steam bath.  
Can you imagine the beautiful "shvitz" he has built up in heaven? When my time comes, I will be comforted knowing that Anthony will be there to greet me and give me a big hello as he is giving me towel, soap and a new pair of slippers. He even have a special VIP locker for me. Naked Joe will be there, for sure, to give me a "platza".  
The only thing different will be that 6 days and evenings will be devoted exclusively for ladies and one night exclusively for men. The reason being is because  
there are more women in heaven than men!  
With fond respect,  
Bill L.  
PS: I also want to compliment you on your great website at

Letter to Lisa enframed in Dillon’s ©LisaRizzo.

That thus made for a reborn Russian bath. Certainly because, for Scarry again, “a beautiful thing seems—[and in fact] is—unprecedented: and that sense of being without precedent conveys a sense of the ‘newness’ or ‘newbornness’ of the world.”

One of Lisa’s reinventions, in particular, was the Ladies’ Nights on Mondays, which she had suggested to her husband and started implementing before his illness. He was proud of these special nights, which she manages herself to this day. “Many women open up to me; they talk about their sex lives and menopause. Some even celebrate their divorces!” she exclaimed.

The bathhouse’s demographics have also changed in accordance with the state. Chelsea was once called “Little Jerusalem” in 1885, but today, the town is more than 60% Latino following a migration wave in the early 1990s. Many citizens from Ukraine or the Arab world also frequent the bathhouse, which makes for countless variations on the same bathing ritual—and possible tensions in online reviews. Politics are never too far away either, and especially among men, Lisa and her late manager for men’s days, Patsy, have had to neutralize some boisterous rows.

“I try to keep the lounge television neutral,” she told me, keen to preserve the friendliness that can make the United States so charming and conventional.

After all, beauty, Scarry writes, is pacific: “its reciprocal salute to continued existence, its pact, is indistinguishable from the word for peace.”



Lisa and a client, posing in front of a Ukrainian flag. ©Dillon’s.

In fact, the communal bath is an ultimate maker of beauty, architecture, and sociability worldwide. At the Hammom Kunjak of Bukhara, Uzbekistan, a 15th-century stone jewel lit by candles, Russian women savor tourism or a new life away from Moscow—which many have fled since the escalation of the war against Ukraine. At Istanbul’s Cagaloglu Hamami, calls to prayer resonate from the skylight, in between the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia, where the archaeology of sounds would reveal the confessions of Florence Nightingale and Kate Moss.

Dillon’s, by contrast, is a local institution—you might instead meet Harvard house deans here in disguise. I heard longings for Czechoslovakia in the late Soviet Union, or desires to visit Paris in the fall. There were chatters about sons joining the military, as well as younger girls playing sports. All this came to represent an American society in the making, right down to the news broadcast about airplanes in the living room, with a warmth and intimacy that lasted longer than the steam.

...

As for herself, Lisa wants women to enjoy themselves and embrace life to the fullest by their own standards, manifesting the spirit of second-wave feminism that reclaimed equity from the 1960s to the 1990s. It is clear that her principal role in managing Dillon’s epitomizes this movement, which revolutionized family, sexuality, domesticity, the workplace, and reproductive rights.

“The resistances of the world, far from oppressing me, served as support and material for my projects,” Simone de Beauvoir wrote of herself in “The Prime of Life,” while occupying the forefront of such a turn.

For “ultimately,” Francis Jeanson claimed in 1966, “a happy existence is [for Beauvoir] one that makes a wager on being so: happiness is given for that very purpose.” In other words, happiness is a gamble that generations of feminists can take forward.

In Lisa’s case, full participation in society involved the American ideal of individuality, resilience, and ownership. But it also came through motherhood, and with a sense of duty to fulfill—a word that often comes up to her—she passed on her success story to her son, who opened a second bath location in Quincy in 2024 and designed a line of Dillon’s bath gifts and hats for their regulars.

“I feel like a bartender,” Lisa remarked of her job on Mondays. “I compare it to that—which means I am a good secret keeper. But the best part, which I had been waiting for years and was always hoping for, is that Rizzo

III loves Dillon’s and wants to keep old traditions alive like his father did!”

Unfortunately, “clients sometimes stop coming when they become mothers,” she laments, which I too overheard, in a lobby filled with musings about both the joys and anguish of having a baby in one’s turn. “I know, I haven’t been here in years — I have had one, then another...” I overheard a woman say.

But many of them still come around, and through conversations, they together keep on generating life out of life. “I can’t tell you how many times I have seen women exchanging phone numbers,” Lisa laughed.

As for men, “during COVID, they were in bath withdrawal,” Lisa recalls, using this occasion to greet managers Gene, Alex and Steven, as well as Tom, the new plaza specialist. “Regulars called me on the phone just to talk about Dillon’s.”

Thinking back to her struggles, she now feels at peace with the state of the bathhouse. “Knowing how much my late husband loved it made me stronger—it was all worth it when I hear people say: ‘Thank you for giving us a place to leave all our worries at the door’ or ‘Dillon’s is so special it’s like going to church.’”



Lisa posing with Patsy, who was already a figure of Dillon’s before Anthony Jr. purchased it in 1992. “He became my voice of reason and helped me rebuild the sauna every season. Patsy was a special man,” Lisa said ©Dillon’s.

Among the tradition of bathers and the old telephone ringing for massage appointments, Lisa still feels Rizzo Jr.’s presence around her in Dillon’s. She succeeded despite the crushing loss of the man she loved, and her bathhouse only continues to grow. In this regard, her story illustrates the power of cherishing memories through action, of embodying within ourselves the qualities of those who have left us in the most tragic way.

When discussing her brutally interrupted marriage, she always associates it with Dillon’s very existence—with boldness, creativity, and self-fulfillment—as well as the legacy she can gift to their son.

There is no doubt that such a relationship was based on faithfulness and independence. Through all the pain, this is enough for Lisa and her enlarged family, which just welcomed a grandson, to be born and reborn in beauty.

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**PHOTOS COURTESY OF DARLENE  
DEVITA, LISA RIZZO, AND DILLON’S  
STEAM BATH**

# Crimson Jam in Review

Performers and first-years shared their reflections and impressions of the first major campus event of the year.

BY OLIVIA LUNSETH '28

Last Friday, Harvard Yard was transformed into a mini-festival ground as students gathered for the annual Crimson Jam. Hosted the first week of each September by the Harvard College Events Board, the event is a signature kickoff to the school year, drawing hundreds of students—especially first-years—eager to embrace one of their first large campus traditions.

This year's headliner, Bryce Vine, known for hits like "Drew Barrymore" and "La La Land," quickly proved himself to be a crowd pleaser. During his hour-long set, students tightly packed into the center of the Yard, with many first-years running to join the excitement which reverberated through their dorm rooms.

When Vine was first announced as the headliner, the CEB faced some backlash. On Sidechat—an internal anonymous messaging platform—students wrote about being unfamiliar with Vine and his music. On the CEB's official Instagram announcement post and press release, one user commented "Who," receiving five likes.

Despite initial skepticism, students in attendance ultimately seemed to enjoy Vine's performance. Old Yard came alive with students singing and dancing to his fusion of hip-hop, pop, and rap. Saving his biggest hits for last, Vine sustained the excitement by connecting directly with the audience. He took a selfie and recorded a video with the audience in the background, dedicated a "Happy Birthday" sing-along to a student, and entered the crowd of students during one of his songs, turning his set into an unforgettable experience for the crowd.

Harvard student performers set the tone before Vine's appearance. Student bands Belly Band, the TGs, and YardBops opened the night, showcasing campus talent while adding a personal touch with familiar faces on stage. Crimson Jam provides a unique opportunity for these bands to introduce themselves to the Harvard community, especially first-years.

One highlight performance from the student bands came from the TGs'

lively rendition of "I Will Survive," a crowd favorite thanks to its instantly recognizable lyrics. "It really got a lot of the crowd excited and on their feet. It's actually one of my personal favorites to sing as well, just because it has so much power and it's so much fun," said Bekuochukwu Uzo-Menkiti '28, lead singer of the six-person band.

While most students eased into the semester, the bands were also busy preparing their sets for the stage. "We found out, actually during the summer, that we would be doing Crimson Jam," Uzo-Menkiti shared. "Once we all were on campus, we had a rehearsal every single day leading up to Crimson Jam."

Uzo-Menkiti's standout moment from the concert stemmed from the support she and the band received from their peers. "It was seeing all of my friends and friends of all the other band members in the crowd cheering us on," she said. "It was just really heartwarming to know that they're supporting us and that they're in our corner."

"It was great performing at Crimson Jam. An honor, truly. It was so much fun. Loved the crowd, loved the energy," she added.

Aside from live music, Crimson Jam offered a variety of activities, including a tie-dye table, a photobooth, airbrushed bucket hats, a bouncy slide, and even a miniature train to carry students around the Yard. A Mediterranean buffet kicked off the evening, allowing students to socialize before the music and festivities started.

"The variety of things that people got to do was really nice," Mst Begum '29 shared in an interview with the *Independent*. "If you're not into music, you can do some arts and crafts, or you can just go out in the lawn."

The longest line of the night formed at the airbrush booth, where bucket hats became coveted souvenirs. "We waited in line for really long, but I think it was definitely worth it," said Candy Deng '29. "The overall vibes were just really good."

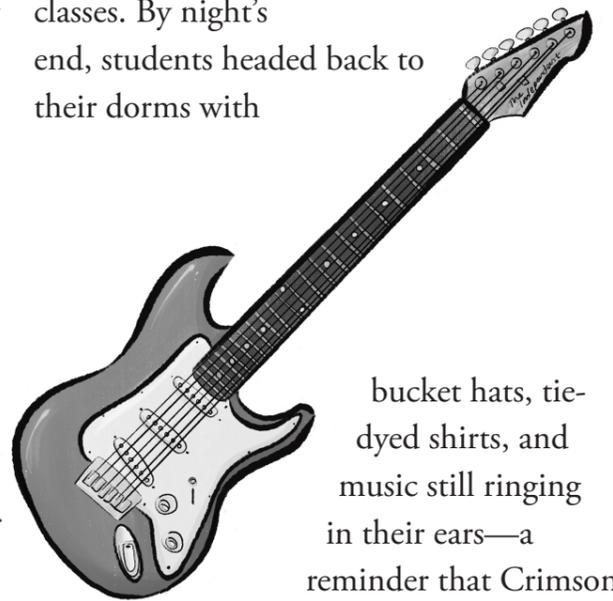
For many first-years, the wait itself became a chance to mingle. "I did meet a lot of new people," Begum added.

"Especially waiting in line and going on the train."

As students waited in line, they had the chance to take in the Yard's preparations for the event. For Cocecia Siewe '29, even the smallest touches stood out. "My favorite little part about Crimson Jam was they had the houses lit up in red. I think that was a pretty cool detail."

While waiting for airbrushed bucket hats, students could watch friends striking poses at the photobooth and racing each other on the bouncy slide. "I had fun racing with my friends," Siewe said. Just one week into classes, the wide array of activities at Crimson Jam gives freshmen a chance to bond with new friends, while upperclassmen reconnect with old friends or reminisce about their own first Crimson Jam experience.

Overall, this year's Crimson Jam was a hit, turning the Yard's usual evening calm into a lively celebration to mark the end of the first week of classes. By night's end, students headed back to their dorms with



bucket hats, tie-dyed shirts, and music still ringing in their ears—a reminder that Crimson Jam's activities were just as memorable as its performers.

**OLIVIA LUNSETH '28  
(OLIVIALUNSETH@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU) LOVES THE  
BUCKET HAT SHE GOT AT  
CRIMSON JAM.**

**GRAPHIC BY MADISON KRUG  
'27**

# SPORTS

## Fantasy Roundup: Week 0

An introduction to the *Independent's* NFL season coverage.

BY TYLER DANG '28

The NFL season has officially arrived. Finally, fans have another event to fill their schedules alongside the hundreds of baseball games and the phallic interruptions of the WNBA. Instead, plop down on the couch, grab your (surely nonalcoholic) beverage of choice, and watch as the Cowboys once again fail to reach the NFC Championship. At least you can watch Dallas's cheerleaders in between the Wildcard-level play of "America's Team."

This year, the *Independent* has elected to cover the NFL season uniquely—through fantasy football. We have drafted six teams that will compete throughout the season including the playoffs. Each week, we will update you on how each team did while highlighting key moments from the past week's games. Without further ado, here are the teams:

### Bring it Dome (1st Overall Pick)

QB: Josh Allen  
RB: Bucky Irving - James Cook  
WR: Ja'Marr Chase - Puka Nacua  
TE: T.J. Hockenson  
FLEX: A.J. Brown (WR)  
D/ST: Steelers  
K: Jake Elliot  
Bench: Jaxon Smith-Njigba - TreVeyon Henderson - Mike Evans - Calvin Ridley - Isiah Pacheco - Jakobi Meyers - Jacory Croskey-Merritt

Led by the dangerous pair of Josh Allen and Ja'Marr Chase, this team has the potential to tear up the league. The roster is balanced across all positions: the explosiveness of Buffalo's James Cook, the reliability of Tampa's Mike Evans, and even Jake Elliot to hammer down the (almost) connection to Domus. Nacua, entering his third year, has been thrust into the spotlight with the Rams having moved away from 2022 Super Bowl MVP Cooper Kupp. Wide receiver A.J. Brown is on the potentially-cut-list, as he had a sharp decline in targets in his third season with the Eagles, but the season-opener against the Cowboys will show whether this trend is to continue.

### First-and-Lowell (2nd Overall Pick)

QB: Jayden Daniels  
RB: Saquon Barkley - De'Von Achane  
WR: Drake London - Tyreek Hill  
TE: George Kittle  
FLEX: Chase Brown (RB)  
D/ST: Ravens  
K: Cameron Dicker  
Bench: Terry McLaurin - Tetairoa McMillan - Xavier Worthy - Travis Hunter - Aaron Jones Sr. - RJ Harvey - Evan Engram

This Lowell roster is quite strong with powerful players at the RB, WR, and TE positions. Barkley, coming off a historic season, is projected to decline slightly, but he is still a dangerous player on a dangerous Eagles roster. With Penix Jr. taking the reins of the Falcons, Drake London might also see many opportunities to put points on the board alongside George Kittle, one of the best tight ends in the league. All eyes will be on Jayden Daniels in his sophomore season to see if he can continue his early success. Rookie Travis Hunter will be exciting to watch as he hopes to transfer his dominance from college to the league.

### Kirkland Cousins (3rd Overall Pick)

QB: Lamar Jackson  
RB: Jahmyr Gibbs - Josh Jacobs  
WR: Amon-Ra St. Brown - Tee Higgins  
TE: Travis Kelce  
FLEX: James Conner (RB)  
D/ST: Vikings  
K: Harrison Butker  
Bench: Omarion Hampton - Marvin Harrison Jr. - DJ Moore - Jaylen Waddle - Jameson Williams - Tony Pollard - Stefon Diggs

Though this team's name is an ode to Kirk Cousins, this roster is led by Lamar Jackson and Jahmyr Gibbs and looks like it could be a contender. In addition to Amon-Ra, Josh Jacobs, and Tee Higgins, Kirkland has strong point-scorers for the season. Lamar Jackson is among the top ranked quarterbacks primarily due to his versatility on offense. The biggest question is whether the bench will be able to pull its weight as the season progresses. Diggs will make his debut with the Patriots, and although it has been a hot minute since his best years with the Vikings and Bills, he still shows flashes of brilliance. Further, Waddle's place on this roster depends on whether Miami's head coach Mike McDaniel and quarterback Tua Tagovailoa can regain their peak form.

### The Inn-Zone (4th Overall Pick)

QB: Joe Burrow  
RB: Bijan Robinson - Ashton Jeanty  
WR: Nico Collins - Ladd McConkey  
TE: Sam LaPorta  
FLEX: Derrick Henry (RB)  
D/ST: Texans  
K: Chris Boswell  
Bench: Garrett Wilson - DK Metcalf - D'Andre Swift - Rome Odunze - Matthew Golden - Michael Pittman Jr. - Jaylen Warren

A roster featuring Joe Burrow, Bijan Robinson, Ashton Jeanty, and Derrick Henry seems like a cheat code. Throw in LaPorta's scoring and the talents of Nico Collins, the Inn-Zone has a chance to win it all. The big question for the team is whether the bench players will mesh with their respective quarterbacks. Garrett Wilson will be on the field alongside Justin Fields, who has had a tumultuous career thus far. Metcalf will be receiving from Aaron Rodgers who, while considered one of the best ever to play, is aging. While the bench is filled with great players, it is unclear whether the connection will be there.

### Pfirst Down (5th Overall Pick)

QB: Jalen Hurts  
RB: Christian McCaffrey - Jonathan Taylor  
WR: Malik Nabers - Davante Adams  
TE: Trey McBride  
FLEX: Alvin Komara (RB)  
D/ST: Broncos  
K: Chase McLaughlin  
Bench: Breece Hall - Jerry Jeudy - Courtland Sutton - Rashee Rice - David

Montgomery - Emeka Egbuka - Tyrone Tracy Jr.

With Jalen Hurts on the team, expect to cheer for the tush-push as they crawl for a (p)first down. Like other top quarterbacks in the league, Hurts is a versatile playmaker who is guaranteed to put up impressive stats. Nabers, coming off an individually successful rookie year, hopes to continue impressing; however, he may be hindered by a lackluster quarterback situation. This roster also features proven talent of Alvin Kamara and Jonathan Taylor. Hopefully, Trey McBride continues his upward trajectory. The biggest question surrounds McCaffrey's health. While one of the best running backs in the game, CMC missed 13 games last year.

### The Ball Curriers (6th Overall Pick)

QB: Patrick Mahomes  
RB: Kyren Williams - Chuba Hubbard  
WR: CeeDee Lamb - Justin Jefferson  
TE: Brock Bowers  
FLEX: Brian Thomas Jr. (WR)  
D/ST: Lions  
K: Jake Bates  
Bench: Kenneth Walker III - Zay Flowers - DeVonta Smith - Baker Mayfield - George Pickens - Chris Olave - Ricky Pearsall

Last but not least: the Ball Curriers. Immediately, a high scorer like Justin Jefferson shines as the brightest star among this lineup. The Vikings wide receiver has consistently broken reception records. Sophomore tight end Brock Bowers, who really impressed the league last year, and the Panthers running back Chuba Hubbard add depth in the backfield. The biggest uncertainty surrounds quarterbacks. The Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott needs to stay healthy for CeeDee Lamb to have the impact that we expect from him. Patrick Mahomes, undoubtedly one of the best quarterbacks in the league, has put up average regular-season stats.

### League Rules

To make it easier to follow, teams will not be switching defenses throughout the season. Instead of picking up a team's defense if they are playing an easier team, our fantasy teams will stick to their drafted defenses. Moreover, each weekly roundup will cover the previous week. At the beginning of week three, for instance, the roundup will cover the games from week one, to fit within our publishing schedule. Trades will generally not occur unless a proposal truly helps both teams. Waivers will only occur for players who have consistently been underperforming relative to their projections for multiple weeks.

The Inn-Zone may be a front runner to take this season, with a great player at every position as well as phenomenal bench. So far, though, it is too early to affirm this prediction, as fantasy teams are always full of surprises. Time will soon tell how our league performs, and which team will ultimately win it all.

**TYLER DANG '28 (TYLERDANG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) BELIEVES THE TITANS WILL REACH THE PLAYOFFS.**

**GRAPHIC BY CLARA LAKE '27**



# Crimson's Crowds Are Back!

Harvard's sporting prowess is back in full swing after a long summer.

BY TILLY BUTTERWORTH '28

Returning to campus after a long summer break means one thing: countless opportunities to spectate and support all the fall athletes taking the stage in the 2025 season. With the ever-growing competitiveness of Harvard as both a top academic institution and a sporting hub of talent, grit and ambition, fall sports teams begin their seasons with the addition of exciting prospects to showcase the results of their endurance and hard work during preseason. Now that the school year has started, here's what to expect from the teams as they face high-level Ivy League and national opponents.

**Women's soccer:** Both the women's and men's soccer teams are back in full swing with competitive games early in the season. Harvard women's soccer opened with matches against UMass and Fairfield, both resulting in 2-1 defeats, and a 0-0 draw against Kansas State. The team followed with a 2-1 loss to Monmouth and a 1-1 draw with local rival Northeastern. Their Ivy League home opener against Dartmouth on Sept. 20 looks to open an extremely competitive conference season, with Yale and Princeton highlighting the depth of the league's athletic talent. Last season, Harvard went 3-3-1 in Ivy League play and qualified for the Ivy League tournament despite their heavily injured roster. The 2025 season offers a chance to compete for the championship again, with the addition of first-years and the return of players such as 2023 Ivy League Rookie of the Year Ólöf Kristinsdóttir '27.

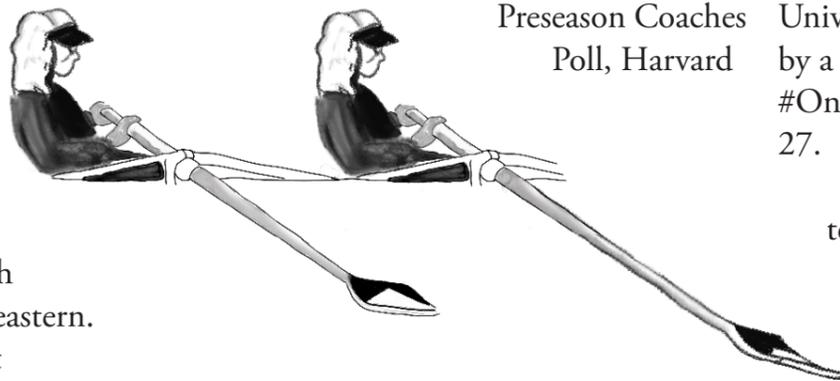
**Men's soccer:** Like the women's team, the Harvard men's soccer has been back since early August in preparation for the 2025 season. A first-year class of nine players adds an exciting range to the team, whilst senior athletes lead by example and welcome them into the Crimson family. After finishing tied for fourth place in the Ivy League standings in their 2024 season, the team will be hungry to convert this season into an opportunity to compete in the Ivy League Tournament championship. Thunderstorms did not stop their first competitive game, which resulted in a battling 1-0 loss against Belmont. They followed with a 2-0 away win over Providence College. On Sept. 27, the Ivy League season opens for men's soccer with a guaranteed thriller against Princeton on the Crimson's home field.

**Women's rugby:** Harvard women's

rugby continues to prove year-in and year-out their ability to dominate in all their appearances. The team reinforced this once again in their home opener against the American International College Yellow Jackets, with a supreme 55-7 victory followed by a professional 26-17 victory over Lindenwood this past weekend. An exciting 2025-2026 season looms with many players recording their first career appearances. Upcoming games include their Ivy Home Opener and Friends and Family Weekend on Sept. 13 against Brown. After concluding their previous season with their third rugby 15s NIRA Championship victory, the team has moved up a division, making them a spectacle to follow at Mignone Field.

**Field hockey:** Beginning the season ranked No. 8 in the NFHCA Division

Preseason Coaches Poll, Harvard



field hockey recently traveled to California to face off against UC Berkeley and Stanford for the first time since the COVID-19 shutdown. The Crimson came out on top in both games with thrilling overtime victories. After winning the Ivy League Tournament back-to-back, the team hopes to return to the NCAA tournament and come home champions. The team's home opener against Ohio State on Sept. 12 looks to be an exciting contest.

**Men's water polo:** Starting the season ranked No.16 in the country, Harvard men's water polo hosted the competitive Bruno Classic and Harvard Invitational at Blodgett Pool. The Crimson earned three wins in their opening weekend, beating Bucknell (15-12), Gannon (16-10), and Wagner (13-9). They continued their success at Princeton, losing narrowly to California Baptist and Navy and securing a nail-biting overtime win against Bucknell. Starting Sept.12, they head across the country to California to take on top-level opponents, including UCLA and Long Beach. The team's strong defense continues to impress with Oliver Price '27 picking up the NWPC Defensive Player of the Week.

**Women's volleyball:** Harvard women's volleyball opened its season on Sept. 5 with away games in Florida, resulting in three losses to North Florida, Howard, and

Presbyterian. The season home opener will take place on Sept. 12 at 7 p.m. against Washington State, as the MAC will once again be packed full of Crimson action and its sporting community.

**Football:** Returning from summer strength and conditioning training, football players have filled Harvard's stadium once again as they prepare for the start of their 2025 season. The development of the Football Championship Subdivision this year adds a thrilling new edge to Harvard's football season, involving a new championship to compete for alongside the Ivy League Championship that offers the team post-season games and competition. The team works towards back-to-back Ivy League championships after bringing home the 2024 title. Their first game is against Stetson University on Sept. 20 in Florida, followed by a home Ivy League opener and official #OneCrimson Game against Brown on Sept. 27.

**Cross Country:** The Cross country team's preparation for their season continues, as they travelled to Chestnut Hill for a warm contest with Boston College on Sept. 5. Later this October, the team will travel to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for the Paul Short Run at Lehigh University. After such a strong performance at the competition last year, the women's team took first spot and the men's in a close second, ambitions could be set to make the double this year. The NCAA Cross Country Championships in November marks the ambitious end goal for the Cross country team, as many impressive Harvard runners strive to prove their athletic status and talent to the sporting nation.

All students are able to attend Harvard's sporting events using free student admissions, allowing the college community to support Harvard's student athletes as they passionately compete on the nation's sporting stages.

**TILLY BUTTERWORTH '28**  
([MBUTTERWORTH@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU](mailto:MBUTTERWORTH@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)) WILL BE ATTENDING ALL SPORTS EVENTS UNDER THE SUN THIS SEMESTER.

**GRAPHIC BY JOYE WINGARD '28**

# Sports Spotlight: Chandler Piggé

Piggé is captain of the men's basketball team and played in the 2025 World University Games.

BY WHITNEY FORD '28

This July, senior guard and captain of the men's basketball team Chandler Piggé '26 traveled to Bochum, Germany, to help Team USA secure the silver medal in 3x3 basketball at the 2025 FISU Summer World University Games.

"It was my first time representing the United States in international competition, which was very awesome... To have my family's name on the back of my jersey as well made it mean so much more," Piggé said in an interview with the *Harvard Independent*.

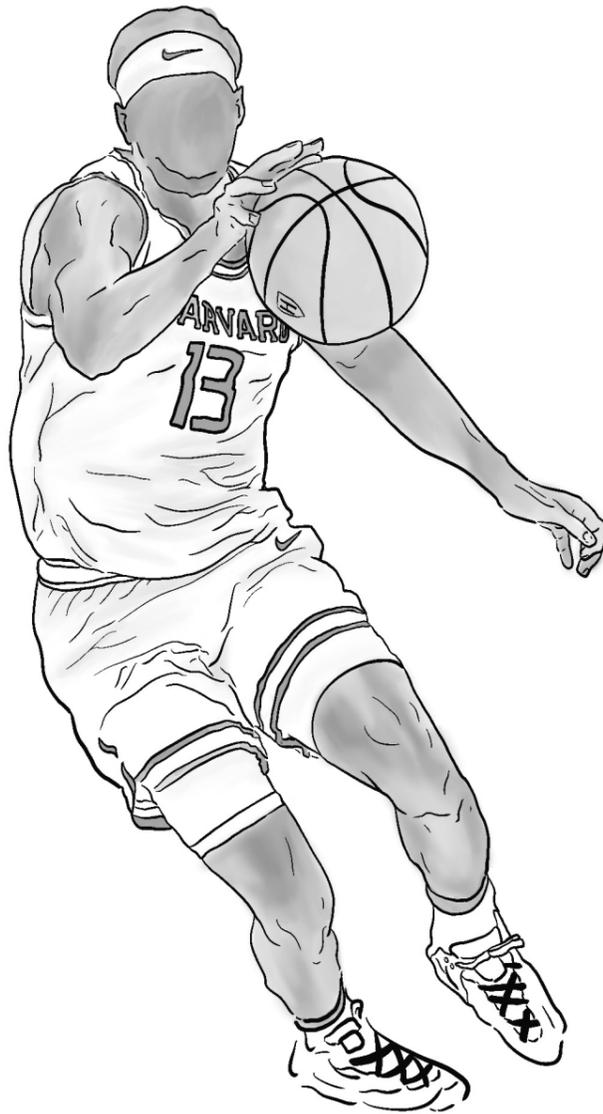
3x3 basketball is the largest urban team game in the world—originating as a street sport and played three-a-side on one hoop. 3x3 competition was added to the Olympic Games during the 2020 Summer Olympics, which were held in Tokyo in 2021, and this summer marked its debut at the World University Games. With Piggé on the roster, Team USA defeated Chile and Italy to win Group A before advancing to conquer Poland and the Czech Republic in the quarterfinals and semifinals, respectively. The team faced Lithuania in the finals and ultimately clinched the silver medal after losing 16-21 in a tight competition.

Born in Houston and raised on military bases in Japan and Germany, family influence was always a guiding factor for Piggé. His mother is an Army education counselor, and his father who works for the Department of Defense as a teacher and high school basketball coach influenced his decision to play. "My dream was always to play for my dad... He always taught me that the fundamentals were the most important, just playing the game simply, making sure that you involve your other teammates around you because it's a team sport, not an individual game."

Piggé ultimately played under his father, achieving three consecutive high school championships before joining the Crimson roster. Upon graduating from Baumholder American High School, he attended Phillips Exeter Academy for a post-graduate year, after which he came to Harvard.

Outside of his accolades, basketball had always been a mode of cultural connection for Piggé, having grown up playing the game in multiple

countries abroad and in the United States. Every summer, Piggé would return to Houston to participate in AAU Basketball tournaments and camps, where he felt challenged to develop his skills, facing competitors at a higher level than he had experienced in Japan and Germany. Reflecting on his experience at the University Games, Piggé remarked that interacting off the court with teams



from diverse backgrounds, trading team pins, and sharing experiences reminded him of his multicultural upbringing in other countries but on a larger scale—making the experience even more meaningful.

Now in his final year, Piggé has risen through the ranks of Harvard basketball, an experience that he attributes to his father's instruction.

"I started off on the bench, not playing at all. I was a guy who played sparingly to a guy who eventually became a starter, and now I'm a team captain for our team," he said.

"That's due to my work ethic and my discipline in terms of how I approach the game, something, once again, from my dad."

This success has not only been represented by his stellar stats but further reflected by a number of awards and honors.

In his freshman season, Piggé was awarded the Floyd S. Wilson Sportsmanship Award, which is given to the Harvard basketball player "whose respect for sportsmanship recalls the manner and values of Floyd Wilson," a storied former coach for the Crimson who served the team for 14 years. During his junior year and first year as captain, he won the team's Raymond P. Laviertes Most Valuable Player award, determined by player vote, as well as the Thomas G. Stemberg '71 MBA '73 Iron Man Award, presented to the Harvard player who plays the most minutes in the season.

Just as his father guided him through high school basketball, Coach Tommy Amaker has been another fundamental figure in Piggé's journey. "Just seeing the way he leads us before and off the court, he wants us to really succeed... A lot of us have professional goals, so being able to succeed in that, but also being able to be great men as well, and being able to take advantage of the network that we have here at Harvard."

Piggé's immediate goal after graduation this spring is to pursue a career in professional basketball. However, as a psychology concentrator, he is also pursuing opportunities in sports psychology. "I'd like to pursue sports psychology to be able to interact with the next generation of young athletes and talk to them more about the mental side of the game, and help them in the midst of their careers."

Above all, Piggé attributes his success to his faith throughout his basketball career. "I always say that I'm grateful to God for the opportunity that he's blessed me with, to be able to be at Harvard and to have opportunities like this."

**WHITNEY FORD '28 (WFORD@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES SPORTS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHIC BY KERRIE ZHU '28**

# Quad Life, Preseason Edition

The trials and tribulations of being a student-athlete in the Quad during preseason.

BY PAIGE CORNELIUS '28

It's 5:45 a.m., and Storage Squad still hasn't delivered your scooter.

Instead, you're trudging across Cambridge with calves that feel as heavy as bricks. Before the sun is even up, you spill coffee all over yourself trying to juggle your belongings for the day. To top it off, you yelp from a hamstring cramp after tripping on the uneven bricks outside Joe's. Welcome to preseason: the annual ritual where student-athletes spend two weeks training like professionals and commuting like bankers—minus the salary.

For Harvard student-athletes, preseason comes with mixed feelings. It's a time to reunite and connect with teammates while getting sorted ahead of the academic year. However, it comes at the cost of associated performance anxiety and constant body aches before school even starts. For these reasons, completing preseason is a proud accomplishment. Even worse, the Harvard Radcliffe Quadrangle poses greater

challenges for its commuters.

This year, athletes were housed in Kirkland from their arrival until Aug. 18. Few thought to bring box fans or even pillows, leaving them sweating through at least three nights in stifling rooms. With two rat sightings a day minimum and overheating phones that couldn't charge overnight, the conditions were far from ideal for peak performance. Looking back, however, Quad residents remember Kirkland as a paradise and long to return.

The Quad houses about 1,050 undergraduates in Pforzheimer, Cabot, and Currier. While it is an oasis for some, for athletes who are expected to be in their locker rooms at ungodly hours, it can feel like a prison sentence. Sitting 1.2 miles from Dillon Fieldhouse, it takes just under 30 minutes on foot to make the dreaded trek across the river.

Waking up earlier and going to sleep later than teammates on the river, Quad athletes often lose crucial rest. "Most of my teammates have time to take a nap or just crash at their dorm between practices," soccer player Nicholas Willen '27 explained. "Living in the Quad makes this difficult or impossible."

"By the time I scooter back to the Quad, walk up four flights of stairs and get sorted, I need to start heading back to the river, ultimately making it not worth it," volleyball player Alicia Guo '28 echoed.

Beyond exhaustion, the Quad can make athletes feel isolated from their teammates. "Most of the hanging out and socializing does happen on the river. I usually end my nights back in Cabot," Guo said.

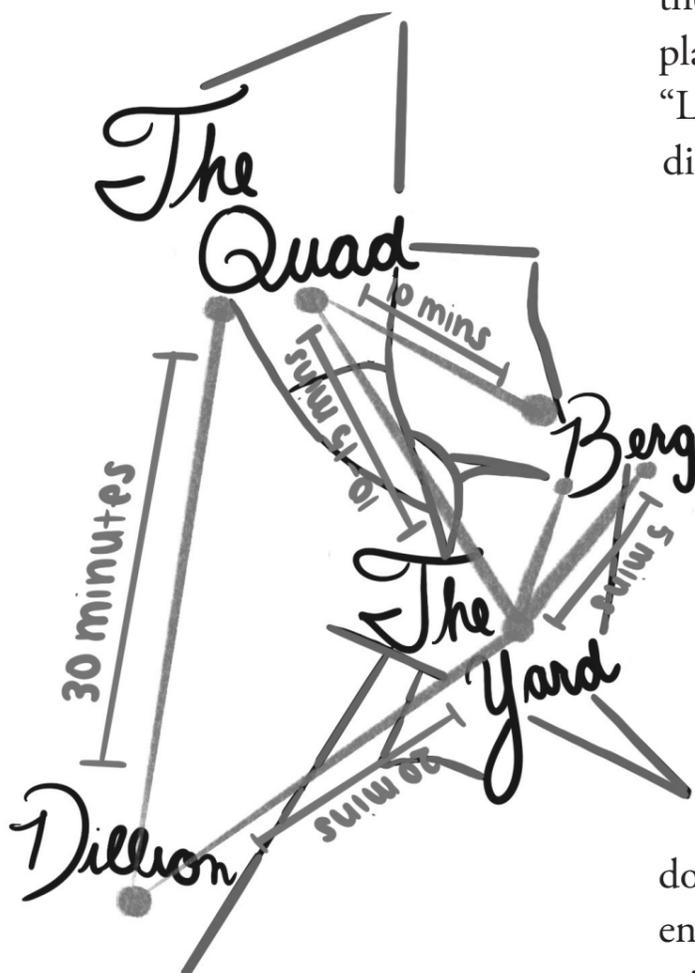
Yet, both athletes acknowledged that perspective matters. "Compared to most other college campuses, the distance to athletics from the Quad is not too far," Willen said. "But the lack of cars and density of students closer to facilities makes it more frustrating than it would be elsewhere." Guo has found ways to enjoy the experience. "After Currier dining reopened, my volleyball teammates began holding Quad dinners, and the three Quad residents on my team bonded over ice cream trips and evenings on the lawn," she explained.

Quad houses will never be the most convenient places to live during preseason. The commute costs sleep and recovery. But it also builds community and strengthens organizational skills, while offering, as Willen put it, "a nice break from the intensity of preseason."

For Guo, that lesson extends beyond the walk from Cabot to the River. She knows that good preparation matters just as much off the court as it does on it. Or, in her words: "It's not the situation I've been given, but rather how I respond."

**PAIGE CORNELIUS '28  
(PAIGECORNELIUS@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU) WILL LIKELY  
TRY TO TRANSFER OUT OF  
CABOT NEXT YEAR.**

**GRAPHIC BY AMELIE LIMA '27**



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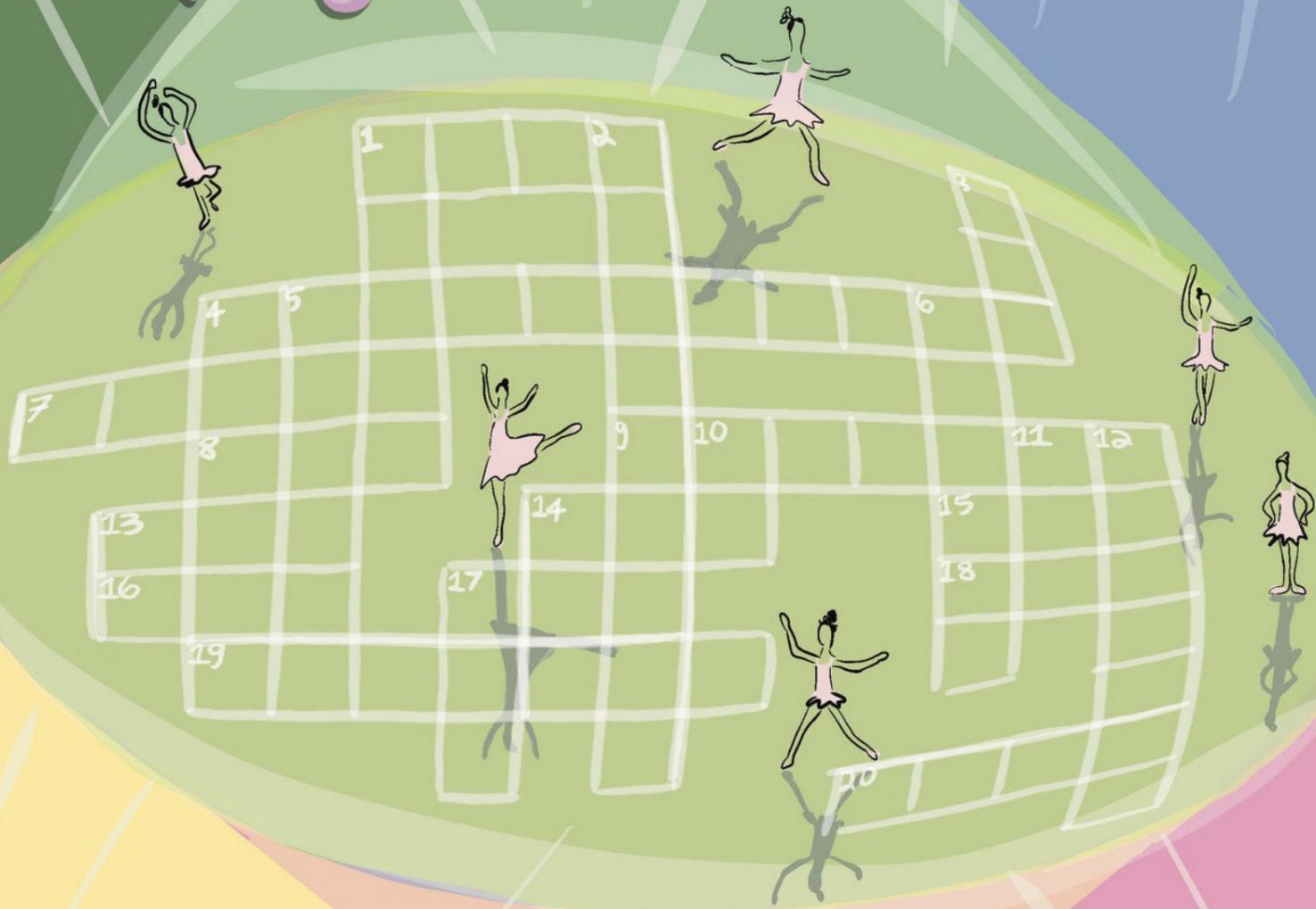
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## ACROSS

1. Cousins of Sweet Potatoes
4. Scandal
7. Disdain
8. Vote Against
9. Trump's Common Threat To Harvard
13. QB's Mistake
14. Band's Booking
15. Text Shorthand For Anger
16. Google AI Video Maker
17. Playground Game
18. Alley \_\_\_\_
19. Prolonged Dry Spell
20. Bubble Tea

# Under the Lights

by FRED KLEIN '28  
design by CLARA LAKE '27



## DOWN

1. Laurel Counterpart
2. This Issue's Theme
3. "\_\_\_\_ Something, I'm Giving Up On You"
4. Swindled
5. Eloquent Speaker
6. Daze
10. Chief Government Prosecutor Shorthand
11. Texter's "I Think ..."
12. Current
13. Port For Liquids In A Hospital
14. Practical Joke
17. Egyptian Boy King

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