WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026 / VOLUME 153, ISSUE 1

Campus Times

SERVING THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER COMMUNITY SINCE 1873 / campustimes.org

Why Libraries Still Matter: New UR Librarian Timothy McGeary on the Future of Academic Libraries

BY HANNAH SMITH
FEATURES EDITOR

Since the onset of the World Wide Web and with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), students have shifted from accessing information in-person through libraries and books towards reading and conducting research online. Yet for URochester's incoming librarian Timothy McGeary, the growing demand for libraries as spaces for preservation, access, innovation, and collaboration proves they are far from obsolete.

'The growing demand for libraries as spaces for preservation, access, innovation, and collaboration proves they are far from obsolete.'

When McGeary begins his tenure in March in the role of Andrew H. and Janet Dayton Neilly Dean of URochester Libraries, he will bring with him his experience of a career shaped by the changing role of libraries in a digital world. At Duke University, where he currently works, McGeary has helped oversee the systems and services that support teaching, research, and scholarship, for example, by digitally preserving data and developing new software.

Across leadership roles at Duke, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Lehigh University, McGeary has emphasized collaboration and innovation in support of digital scholarship. Those priorities, he says, will continue to guide his approach as he steps into a leadership role at URochester.

As librarian and Neilly Dean, McGeary will serve as chief strategist and advocate for library services, from collections to digital infrastructure to research and academic partnerships. His role will also include strengthening the URochester Libraries' visibility and engagement across campus and beyond.

TEDDY ALMOND / NEWS EDITOR
Libraries are still in demand, UR Libraries' new librarian Timothy McGeary says.

For McGeary, doubts about the relevance of libraries in the digital age are nothing new. "This question is one that has likely been asked of libraries with every new major innovation over centuries," McGeary said, citing historical shifts in how information is recorded and who controls its preservation.

'For McGeary, doubts about the relevance of libraries in the digital age are nothing new.'

Rather than seeing emerging technologies as threatening libraries, McGeary sees them as an opportunity to reflect on libraries' enduring role and ability to adapt alongside change. He experienced this himself as an undergraduate in the early days of the internet, and he recalled widespread skepticism about whether libraries would remain necessary once information became accessible online. However, according to him, in the past 30 years, "libraries have continued to be in high demand."

While the visible role of libraries has shifted, McGeary emphasized that librarians' "less visible" work has also shifted. For example, librarians utilize machine learning to create search and recommendation systems, and they must license digital journals and databases in order for communities to access them. To McGeary, the modern academic library encompasses three ideas: people, place, and partnership. "The library as people, [librarians and staff,] is core to the mission of the university," he said. "The library as a place is a central grounding for intellectual and collaborative life … and the library as a partner reflects the priorities of the university for research and scholarship."

For students, McGeary hopes the library is more than a quiet place to study. He wants students to see it as a gateway to new ideas and as a space where asking for help is encouraged. "Asking the first question is the breakthrough to future success," he said, noting that library staff are eager to help students navigate research challenges, unfamiliar tools, or emerging technologies.

McGeary also sees libraries playing a critical role in helping students navigate misinformation, information overload, and the growing presence of AI in academic work. "We have a responsibility to be a trusted authority," he said. "We want students to learn skills and gain confidence as they work with information, how to test credibility, [and] use sources responsibly."

'McGeary also sees libraries playing a critical role in helping students navigate misinformation.'

That responsibility, he explained, extends across disciplines and reinforces the library's place at the center of academic life.

Looking ahead to his new role, McGeary said what drew him to URochester was a shared commitment with the school to students and scholarship, as well as the vision of a unified library system. "The goal to develop one library for one university is something I believe in," he said.

As he prepares to arrive on campus, McGeary said he is eager to learn more about both the culture in libraries and across the whole campus. "It warmed my heart to see how many students were in the library and how many different types of activities were happening," he said. He also said he looks forward to exploring how the University and city collaborate to support the broader Rochester community.

Smith is a member of the Class of 2027.

$10 Million Gift Establishes Fund for Deanship

BY TEDDY ALMOND
NEWS EDITOR

The Deanship of the Hajim School of Engineering and Applied Sciences has a new name in the wake of a $10 million donation from University Trustee Emeritus John Bruning '24 (Honorary) and Barbara Bruning. The donation is intended to establish permanent funding for the position, according to a University News release. Named Dean in 2016, Wendi Heinzelman will continue in the position, now named the John and Barbara Bruning Dean for the Hajim School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

'The donation is intended to establish permanent funding for the position, according to a University News release.'

"For generations to come, the Brunings' gift will provide stable, dedicated resources to strengthen the Hajim School's ability to attract and retain distinguished leaders — those who will uphold academic quality, steward resources, and sustain the institution's mission and culture," the University wrote.

'"The Brunings' gift will provide stable, dedicated resources to strengthen the Hajim School's ability to attract and retain distinguished leaders."'

The donation was made as part of the University's "Ever Better" campaign.

John Bruning has served as a member of the University's Board of Trustees since 2009 and was one of the 2024 recipients of

SEE **DEAN** PAGE 2

INSIDE THIS CT

CAMPUS

DEAN FROM PAGE 1

URochester's Dean's Medal, designed to recognize "extraordinary service, philanthropy, and leadership" within the School of Arts and Sciences and the Hajim School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

The Brunings have made philanthropic contributions to the school before. In addition to being awarded the George Eastman Medal in 2011, both John and Barbara Bruning had previously established the David R. Williams Director of the Center for Visual Science.

'"It is a wonderful way to honor someone who deserves it."'

"We feel very fortunate to make this [deanship] gift," said John Bruning. "For us, it is a wonderful way to honor someone who deserves it, and we are pleased to know that it will help recruit and retain the best students and faculty."

Bruning went on to praise Dean Heinzelman, describing her as a "magnificent leader" with whom he has "many personal and professional connections."

Almond is a member of the Class of 2028.

TEDDY ALMOND / NEWS EDITOR

A sculpture in the Engineering Quad near the Wegmans building.

'J-A-C-K-E-T-S, J-A-C-K-E-T-S, WHO ARE WE?!' 'JACKETS'

BY MADDIE UNRUH
SPORTS EDITOR

The Rochester Yellowjackets took on the Ithaca College Bombers Swim and Dive team Saturday, Jan. 24. The Yellowjackets had their senior night on Saturday as well, celebrating five men and eight women's careers with the team. Continuing the celebratory spirit, the women's team went home very happy with a 165-133 win, although the men's team ended the night with a 119-181 loss. The senior celebrations helped boost morale with the team after the meet, and even with the hard loss on the men's team, honoring the seniors made it all the better.

'The Yellowjackets had their senior night ..., celebrating five men and eight women's careers with the team.'

Highlights from the meet include the Jackets' A team with a 200 medley relay win, first-year Tyler Yeung won the 1000 freestyle by just over a second. Additionally, sophomore Amelia Hardiman won the 200 freestyle with a 1:59.26, the 200 freestyle with a 2:08.61, and the 400 IM (Individual Medley) with a 4:41.93; junior Sophia Dmytruk won the 100 backstroke with a 59.85; senior Max McClung won the 100/200 backstroke with times of 51.37 and 1:56.59 as well as the 100 butterfly with a 50.35; and senior Arianna Pasquella won the 100/200 breaststroke with times of 1:05.23 and 2:23.18.

'The women's swim and dive team was undefeated for their 25-26 season, through their senior night, and the team is hoping to keep that streak going for some of the upper level swimmers and divers.'

The women's Swim and Dive team was undefeated for their 25-26 season, and the team is hoping to keep that streak going for some of the upper level swimmers and divers. Their final season record was 9-0.

This meet concluded the meets for the swim team leading up to UAAs (league finals), which will take place between Feb. 11-14 at the University of Chicago with most of the team in attendance. Victory at the UAAs would allow the Jackets to send more athletes onto NCAA Championships Feb. 27 and 28.

Unruh is a member of the Class of 2029.

'Fresh. Fast. Flavorful': URochester Dining Describes New Blue Cactus Dining Option

BY JUDE MANN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A new dining option for Southwestern cuisine has come to campus, as announced in a URochester dining Instagram post at the beginning of the semester. "Fresh. Fast. Flavorful. These aren't just words; they are the standard our team is ready to set," the Instagram post read.

The establishment, named Blue Cactus, sells Southwestern quesadillas, burritos, and bowls exclusively through Grubhub.

Student Government Committee Chair for Campus Life and junior Quinten Denkenberger explained in an interview with News Editor Yenah Park that the location would no longer close at 3 p.m., instead staying open much later.

Blue Cactus is open Tuesdays to Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., according to the University's website.

Both student opinions and the University's contracts with food services have recently shaped the dining experience, and Blue Cactus is no different. This stems from the University's break from Harvest Table, a collegiate food service with which they were long-time partners.

"Because of this [break], they have a lot more latitude to make a lot of different changes to the dining locations," Denkenberger said. He said that the University spoke with "ethnic and cultural student groups on campus" and that "a lot of their new recipe development [has] been getting a lot of feedback from those ... students."

Denkenberger added that the University is making efforts to consider student opinion. The annual survey, which is scheduled to go out to students in January or February this year, will offer space for feedback on student dining. Additionally, one student government senator is planning to provide a platform for student groups to submit their own favored recipes. Denkenberger then encouraged students to follow the school's dining page on Instagram for updates.

Mann is a member of the Class of 2028.

MADDIE UNRUH / SPORTS EDITOR

An explosive sprint start for the men's teams of Ithaca and URochester.

Fay Lab Makes a Groundbreaking Discovery on *Saccharomyces* Yeasts' Heat Resistance Abilities

BY MANGO NORENBERG
STAFF WRITER

URochester Evolutionary Biologist Dr. Justin Fay conducted an investigation into how yeasts tolerate higher temperatures due to global warming in fall of 2025. The Fay Lab is a culmination of undergraduate and graduate students comparing the genomes of two different species of yeasts in the genus *Saccharomyces* — *S. cerevisiae* and *S. uvarum*. *Saccharomyces* is known for their fermenting abilities and is used in the Fay lab to understand how some organisms can tolerate heat more effectively than others. Studying model organisms such as yeasts convey a great deal of information about how life adapts to rising temperatures from global warming today.

Graduate students, including PhD candidate Nasima Akhter, played an active role in analyzing yeasts' adaptations. "My main role was to design and carry out experiments and analyze the data, combining both hands-on lab work and computational analysis," Akhter said. "By studying how different *Saccharomyces* yeast species respond to heat at the molecular level, I'm working to understand how heat tolerance has evolved."

"The big difference between these two species [*S. cerevisiae* and *S. uvarum*] is their ability to survive at different temperatures," Fay explained.

To determine which yeast species can withstand higher temperatures, they collaborated with biologist Dr. Sina Ghaemmaghami's lab and URMC biochemist Dr. Eric Phizicki's lab to perform thermal proteomic profiling on the specimens. Ghaemmaghami's lab noted how joining Fay's project was a key opportunity to expand their knowledge of protein function at the genetic level.

'They collaborated with biologist Dr. Sina Ghaemmaghami's lab and URMC biochemist Dr. Eric Phizicki's lab to perform thermal proteomic profiling on the specimens.'

The Ghaemmaghami lab centers their study on proteomics, which narrows their focus more on the detailed molecular structure and functions of protein. However, collaborating with the Fay lab gave them the opportunity to "zoom out" and think of proteins in the broader context of the whole organism. "By integrating proteomics with evolutionary and genetic analyses, we were able to see that changes in protein folding stability and degradation pathways can influence how yeast populations adapt to environmental stress, such as high temperature," Ghaemmaghami described. "The work provided new insight into how fundamental biochemical processes can evolve and, in doing so, help organisms survive and thrive in challenging conditions."

'"The work provided new insight into how fundamental biochemical processes can evolve and, in doing so, help organisms survive and thrive in challenging conditions."'

The procedure included proteins being extracted from yeast exposed to high temperatures. Their stability was assessed by measuring whether they remained soluble and properly folded. *S. cerevisiae* tolerated temperatures of about 8°C higher than *S. uvarum*. About 85% of proteins involved in determining heat resistance, also known as thermotolerance, in *S. cerevisiae* stayed stable and continued folding under heat stress, while the corresponding proteins in *S. uvarum* degraded.

'This finding shed light on how yeast did not rely on solely proteins to achieve thermotolerance.'

Furthermore, the biologists determined that factors besides protein structure, such as other proteins and molecules in the local cellular environment, influence thermotolerance in these yeasts. The researchers discovered this by breeding individual *S. cerevisiae* and *S. uvarum* specimens to create a hybrid yeast. After exposing the hybrid sample to high temperatures of 70°C, they determined that the heat-sensitive proteins in hybrid yeast were more resistant to higher temperatures. This finding shed light on how yeast did not rely on solely proteins to achieve thermotolerance, but recruited other molecules and "heat shock chaperone" proteins to adjust chemical conditions to withstand these higher temperatures.

"If an organism wants to increase its thermal tolerance, you want to be able to survive at two degrees higher or three degrees higher," Fay said.

'This study is a major advancement in Fay's studies and was supported by a $1.8 million grant from the National Institute of Health.'

The results from the project show that organisms must change the entirety of the proteins they encode in their genomes to increase their tolerance. This promotes heat resistance so they can survive in their environments as efficiently as possible, also described as having "a strong evolutionary constraint."

This study is a major advancement in Fay's studies and was supported by a $1.8 million grant from the National Institute of Health. Fay and his fellow researchers will continue investigating heat resistance in different organisms, studying both genetic and protein analysis to understand the genetic changes that allow for heat resistance.

'The results from the project show that organisms must change the entirety of the proteins they encode in their genomes to increase their tolerance.'

For students such as Akhter, the most rewarding aspects of taking on this project were developing their skills in laboratory research itself and solving complicated problems, along with a deeper understanding of the biologies of model organisms such as yeasts.

"I learned ... how to explore multiple ways to approach a research problem [instead of being stuck on one idea]," Akhter said. "I also learned how to narrow down possibilities and decide the best next steps in research. ... Being part of a collaborative lab and getting helpful feedback from Justin [Fay] and the team has greatly guided the direction of my [role in this] project."

Norenberg is a member of the Class of 2028.

OPINIONS

State of the Campus Times

BY MAYA BROSNICK
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As is tradition for the University of Rochester *Campus Times*, I'm going to take advantage of this Spring's first print edition to introduce myself and to update all of you on our goals for this coming semester.

'A larger, more diverse body of writers will inevitably lead to a wider range of topics, viewpoints, and coverage.'

First and foremost, our primary goal is always to offer our readers a source for accurate and well-reported information. Our management team, no matter who is a part of it, is always working to meet that goal, week after week, production after production. Given how much goes into creating a sound newspaper, and the unfortunately finite amount of hours in the week, each successive team has worked to meet that goal from different angles. This semester, as our angle, this management team will work to increase recruitment, because a larger, more diverse body of writers will inevitably lead to a wider range of topics, viewpoints, and coverage.

'If you want to write for us, do not let any preconceived notions of ability level stop you.'

The first venue to start progress? The Spring Activities Fair. Though we were mildly thwarted by our placement in the back of the GAC, some of our readers hopefully heard our calling out to passing students, asking them to check out our crosswords, grab a branded pen, listen to our spiel, and overall consider becoming a part of the *CT*. The most common response from passing students was something along the lines of "you don't want me, I can't write." As all of our editors responded then, and as I'll relay to you now, there is absolutely no such thing. If you want to write for us, do not let any preconceived notions of ability level stop you. We offer journalism trainings ranging from the art of the interview to crafting opinions, and can pair you with a more experienced writer to help.

Even if "I can't write" is really code for "I don't like writing," a newspaper involves much more than just writing articles. We always need photographers, illustrators, editors, people to help with layout, finances, or managing advertisements. Our newspaper is better with more contributors, and not to steal Uncle Sam's classic saying, but we want you.

For those who'd rather stick with being readers — and don't get me wrong, we appreciate you very much — more contributors will greatly improve your reading experience. While our current writers and editors do everything they can to minimize bias (each article is looked at by at least four different people), authors generally write about topics that interest them. More authors mean a wider range of interests, and therefore a wider range of topics of articles for our readers to consume.

'Our newspaper is better with more contributors.'

Obviously, increasing our recruitment efforts isn't all we're trying to do. Our website can always use improvement, the production process can always be further optimized, and our training for both new and experienced writers can always be more comprehensive. I'm looking forward to continuing the efforts to produce a newspaper that serves as an accurate source of information for our community. Our team will do all we can to achieve that goal.

'I'm looking forward to continuing the efforts to produce a newspaper that serves as an accurate source of information for our community.'

Brosnick is a member of the Class of 2027.

The United States' AI Dominance Starts with a Dominant Clean Energy Supply Chain

EDITORIAL OBSERVER

BY CYRUS KUESTER-HA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The global clean energy race is often framed by its participants as a collective fight against climate change, but it has quietly evolved into a central battleground in the trade war between the U.S. and China. Much like the Cold War-era fixation on nuclear supremacy, this current rivalry is defined by a struggle for ultimate control over the technologies of the future: artificial intelligence (AI) and clean energy. While the U.S., supported by an attractive start-up environment, access to advanced computing chips, and leading LLM models, holds a narrow lead in AI development, China dominates clean energy deployment, production, and export numbers. This imbalance represents a major strategic risk: Without an independent, clean, scalable, and economically viable energy scheme of its own, the U.S.' lead in energy-intense AI tech will be short-lived.

Clean energy is the only feasible way to cut greenhouse gas emissions while meeting the rising energy demands necessitated by the rapidly expanding AI economy. Simultaneously, in the long run, clean energy sources produce consistently lower and more stable energy prices than volatile fossil fuel market cycles. An AI sector built on the back of the fossil fuel supply chain and its constantly fluctuating prices can only ultimately be outshone by one built on clean, reliable, sustainable energy. And so, the U.S. must refocus its foreign and domestic policy towards building a clean energy supply chain independent of China's economic influence.

The Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is the most crucial domestic component to securing the U.S.'s dominance in clean energy and AI. By phasing in tax credits such as the Advanced Manufacturing Production Tax Credit, which incentivizes the domestic production of clean energy technologies, the IRA was poised to significantly narrow the price gap with Chinese competitors, which currently manufacture critical green energy components like batteries, solar modules, and wind turbines at a fraction of American prices. Tragically, President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act has narrowed the scope of this critical tax credit, partially eliminating the credit for components related to wind energy. It is paramount that the U.S. not only maintains the original scope of this tax credit, but ideally extends the credit, along with many other politically endangered components of the IRA's green transition incentives, past 2030 to solidify a strong domestic manufacturing environment.

Domestic manufacturing is a key component to securing America's dominance in clean energy and AI. However, as it is neither practical nor cost-effective to build the entire supply chain for the U.S.'s AI and renewable power efforts domestically, strong industrial support to and from our international allies is critical to the construction of a clean tech economy. Despite largely unfavorable European attitudes towards China, Europe

Campus Times

SERVING THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER COMMUNITY SINCE 1873

Wilson Commons 103A
University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627
Office: (585) 275-5942
campustimes.org / ct _ editor@u.rochester.edu

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF MAYA BROSNICK
MANAGING EDITOR EMILY ENGLISH
PUBLISHER ELENA BACHMANN
MANAGING EDITOR SUBAAH SYED

NEWS EDITORS TEDDY ALMOND, YENAH PARK
FEATURES EDITOR HANNAH SMITH, CHLOE YOKITIS
OPINIONS EDITORS ADDISON BAKER, FRANKIE BRERETON
CULTURE EDITOR KATE STOUT
HUMOR EDITORS GABRIEL JIANG, LEN LAN
SPORTS EDITOR MADDIE UNRUH
PHOTO EDITOR HARRY LI
ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR ELIANA THOMPSON
PRESENTATIONS CHIEF LAUREN BIGLEY
COPY CHIEF BELLA NAVE
COLUMNISTS FRANKIE BRERETON, KATIE JARVIS
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR BRENNAN PRICE
ENGAGEMENT COORDINATORS ALEX HOLLY, MIU NGUYEN
PRESENTATIONS STAFF KAYLIN HAN, CHLOE YOKITIS

STAFF WRITERS KSHIRIN ANANDKUMAR, BUG CARTWRIGHT, ISABEL DOSHI, ALEX GLIEDMAN, RILEY HOWE, METOK KOGYAL, MIRANDA KOVATCH, JOANNA LEE, MANGO NORENBERG, ALEENA RESSAS, JOSHUA SCHIAVI, LUKE SHERMAN, JOHNPAUL SLEIMAN
STAFF ILLUSTRATORS QUINLAN CARETTI, CINCY CHENG, HUDSON GINOCCHIO, ARIANA LIM, JOY LU, KAITLYN WONG, ANGELINA YANG
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER AIDAN SCIORTINO
STAFF PUZZLER CALEB OSHINSKY

imported roughly 57 billion USD of key clean energy technologies from China in 2023, compared to North America's 7 billion.

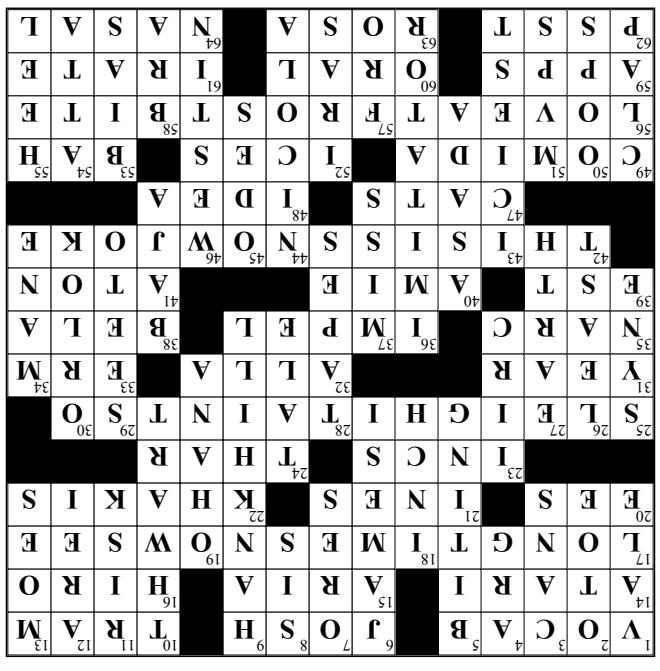
To secure green growth in the American sphere, I propose a two-pronged strategy: First, negotiate trade agreements with our allies in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe to remove barriers to the trade of clean energy technologies; second, establish partnerships with allies to reciprocally invest in manufacturing in their countries. This concept has already been explored in the Jan. 15 U.S.-Taiwan agreement, wherein the U.S. eased tariff rates on Taiwan, and Taiwan pledged to make a $500 billion USD investment in U.S. semiconductor, energy, and AI manufacturing and innovation. However, bilateral agreements providing for contributions from both sides will secure longer-term investment and growth. Similar agreements across the world will set the stage for a new clean energy supply chain that maintains the U.S.'s sphere of influence, builds goodwill with allies, and creates a scheme that is able to compete with China's supply chain.

By balancing economic feasibility with environmental urgency, this policy proposal provides an opportunity to eliminate several of the most pressing domestic and global challenges facing the United States. If we focus on building a clean energy supply chain domestically and with our allies, the U.S. will be able to accelerate its clean energy development and deployment, develop better relations with our allies, meet rising energy demands, lower our greenhouse gas emissions, and secure its position as the world leader in artificial intelligence.

Kuester-Ha is a member of the Class of 2028.

Crossword Answers

BY CALEB OSHINSKY
STAFF PUZZLER



This crossword can be found on page 7.

What My Journey Reveals About International Students in America

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

BY MANSI RAI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I did not leave home with a dramatic goodbye on my way to the United States.

There were no airport hugs, no family photos, and no one waiting at the gate. My parents — both lifelong public servants in India — could not accompany me. Not because they didn't care, but because sometimes families hold their heartbreak quietly so their children can walk forward without hesitation.

I boarded my flight alone.

When I reached London, my connecting flight was delayed. I spent the night on the airport floor with $1,300 in my account — money meant to last until I found work in a country whose systems I did not yet understand. I was afraid. But I also knew I could not go back.

That moment is not unique to me. It is the unspoken starting point for thousands of international students who arrive in the United States every year carrying ambition, responsibility, and the weight of families who have invested everything in their success.

Survival Is an Unofficial Curriculum

My first job in America began at 6:00 a.m. at Starbucks. I arrived by 5:30 a.m. every morning, walking alone through snow-covered streets in Rochester's winter darkness. I cooked every meal because buying take-out regularly was not an option. I worked before exams, between classes, and on days when exhaustion outweighed motivation.

International students learn quickly that the classroom is only part of the education. The rest is survival: navigating immigration rules, managing finances under work-hour limits, adapting to unfamiliar systems, and living with the constant awareness that one mistake can undo years of effort.

Some semesters, my grades reflected that reality. Not because I lacked ability, but because I did not have the luxury of being only a student. Many international students don't. We are workers, students, immigrants, and emotional anchors for families across time zones — all at once.

Resilience is often romanticized. In practice, it looks like cooking meals at midnight, doing laundry at 2 a.m., editing assignments or work on the bus, and showing up the next day pretending you are fine.

Leadership Without a Safety Net

Despite financial pressure, I stepped into leadership roles at Simon Business School. I served as Vice President of Events and later President of the Accounting Society. I attended every event I could, even when I had not slept properly for days.

At one point, a peer told me I should not hold leadership positions; "that if people had a choice, they would never choose me."

That night, I cried. And then I made a decision many international students quietly make: Instead of shrinking, I would outgrow every version of myself that other people found acceptable.

International students lead differently. We lead with responsibility because failure is never just emotional. It affects visas, families, futures. There is no safety net beneath us.

'Failure is never just emotional. It affects visas, families, futures.'

When One System Says You Belong and Another Says You Don't

Just as my career began to stabilize, I encountered the contradiction that defines the international student experience.

One system told me I belonged.

I earned a STEM-designated degree. I entered public service. I began working with the New York State Department of Taxation & Finance in a role built on trust, accountability, and long-term investment. My supervisors valued my work. My responsibilities grew. I was treated as someone worth retaining.

And yet, another system told me I might not be allowed to stay.

While my employer recognized my contribution, the immigration framework surrounding STEM OPT reminded me how conditional that recognition was.

STEM OPT is a temporary extension of work authorization that allows certain international graduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to remain employed in the United States for a limited period after completing their degrees. Eligibility does not guarantee continuity. Compliance does not ensure clarity. Even when you do everything "right," the system can still pause your life, delay your plans, or quietly signal that your presence is provisional.

This is the paradox international students live with every day.

You can be qualified enough to be hired, but not secure enough to plan ahead. Trusted with responsibility, but not with permanence. Valued by one institution and questioned by another.

STEM OPT is often described as an opportunity. It is also a test of endurance. It asks international students to perform at the highest level while living with the constant awareness that approval, extension, or continuation can depend on factors far outside their control.

When one system says "*you deserve to be here*" and another says "*you might not stay*," it creates a quiet psychological toll. You delay joy. You hesitate to celebrate milestones. You work harder, stay quieter, and hope excellence will eventually outweigh uncertainty.

Even ordinary questions begin to feel complicated. When asked about a five-year plan, many international students hesitate, not because they lack ambition, but because imagining a future requires stability the system does not always provide.

Many international students do not speak openly about this — not because it is insignificant, but because vulnerability feels risky when your status already is.

Choosing Purpose Over Prestige

During recruiting season, many of my peers celebrated offers from Big Four firms and high-profile legal and consulting roles. I received similar opportunities — roles that carried recognizable titles, higher immediate visibility, and clearer paths to prestige.

One of those opportunities was in fraud examination within medicine. Another came from the private sector, backed by a global name and a familiar promise of advancement.

I chose not to accept them, not because I lacked merit, but because I had stopped chasing prestige for validation. I was choosing purpose.

When I interviewed with New York State, I expected a routine panel. Instead, I encountered something rare: people who listened, not just to polished answers, but to lived experience, discipline, and perspective.

At the end of the interview, one of them said something I will never forget:

"We might not be the right fit for her. But for us, she is exactly what we need."

That moment was not about me alone. It was proof that international students bring something essential to public service: resilience shaped by uncertainty, perspective shaped by displacement, and work ethic forged without guarantees.

Choosing that path meant walking away from certainty on paper in favor of work that felt honest — work shaped by accountability, public trust, and a commitment to systems that serve beyond the self.

This Is Bigger Than One Story

My journey is not exceptional. It is representative.

International students live with immigration pressure, financial strain, cultural disorientation, isolation, academic expectations layered with survival, and the constant fear of losing status. And yet, we contribute — to classrooms, research labs, student organizations, and public institutions — often while being asked to justify our presence repeatedly.

'I did not come to the United States to chase the American Dream.'

If this story resonates, it is because it mirrors thousands of others who wake up before sunrise, walk alone through winters — literal and metaphorical — and keep going quietly.

Why This Story Matters

I did not come to the United States to chase the American Dream.

I came to honor my family's legacy of public service, discipline, and integrity.

If someone can arrive with $1,300, sleep on an airport floor, work before sunrise, lead on campus, and serve the State of New York, then the conversation about international students needs to change.

We are not temporary.

We are not fragile.

We are not here by accident.

We are here because we have more than survived a system that wasn't designed for us.

And we are ready, not just to succeed, but to serve.

Mansi S. Rai is an alumna of the University of Rochester's Simon Business School.

F*ck AI

BY QUIN CARETTI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I have a distinct hatred for generative artificial intelligence (AI). As a creative person who loves the process of writing essays and deeply cares about the environment and humanity of the world, generative AI is one of the worst things you can do with technology. I stand by the idea that technology can be helpful, but it is ultimately making us dumber, with this being especially true for AI. In a class I took last semester about Child Development, one of our extra credit assignments was to take an essay we had previously written for the class, run the prompt through ChatGPT, and critically analyze the differences between the two. However, instead of generating an essay to write up a comparison about, I did the write up on my dislike of and refusal to use AI. My favorite generative system is my own brain, and the following argument is an adaptation of my response to the aforementioned extra credit.

'Generative AI is one of the worst things you can do with technology.'

First and foremost, it's not that hard to tell when something is created by AI. Sure, you can customize the prompt, fine-tune the wording, and use a variety of programs, but it ultimately lacks the human aspect. I've had students for classes where I am a Teaching Assistant turn in AI-generated essay responses which I can immediately recognize, especially as I had prior examples of their writing. It's not just the em dash that shouts "ChatGPT," AI is stiff and loves to list things in threes, citations are rarely correct and it uses weak sources that are detrimental to analytic papers. Furthermore, AI bots have trouble analyzing evidence. Ironically, analysis is the most important part of academic papers. Most empirical articles won't just straight up say: "The point you're trying to prove can be proven by x-y-z," so analysis shows how you think in terms of the ways in which the evidence you choose ties into the point you're proving. It is important for your own learning and formation of ideas in a broader context."

'It's not that hard to tell when something is created by AI.'

Another example: Returning home for this past break meant an uptick in the amount of cable TV that I consume. In joining my family's channel surfing, I, for the first time, watched that infamous AI Coca-Cola advertisement in full. I had heard tales of the atrocious AI slop they'd created, but I wasn't motivated to seek it out. Thus, in my vulnerable state as a casual viewer of afternoon television, I was exposed to what I can only describe as disappointing. A multi-billion dollar company as iconic as Coca-Cola has the money to come up with something creative, but instead they chose a train, squirrels, Santa, and snow, all of which looked different from frame to frame. Additionally, this endeavor was ultimately more expensive and painstaking than hiring a team of artists to animate rather than to supervise the prompts and make sure Santa's hands have a normal-looking number of fingers. In conversations with my pro-ChatGPT friends, they bring up some valid points about using ChatGPT for studying, learning new things, etc. However, AI is never 100% correct as it draws from wider sources and is not particularly discriminate about discerning truth from things that are in the style of the truth.

'AI is never 100% correct as it draws from wider sources and is not particularly discriminate about discerning truth from things that are in the style of the truth.'

A while back, I was speaking with a friend about the calculus homework we were both working on. One problem in particular had us both stumped and searching the web for help yielded nothing. I said something along the lines of, "I wish I wouldn't feel so guilty if I ChatGPT-ed this question." And my friend responded, "I would rather use ChatGPT than not get a 100% on my homework." This gave me pause. My friend would rather be academically dishonest than accept failure or attend office hours. Yes, technically googling "answer + steps" is cheating, but it's more dishonest in the traditional sense of having your friend write a paper for you, or failing to cite or paraphrase sources. Cheating through AI is so normalized that many students don't even realize what they're doing is dishonest. To cheat, AI requires no creativity, no deep internet searching, no tracking down someone extremely good (or at least mildly better than you) at a certain subject and paying them $40 for a B-level essay. Of course, I'm not advocating for cheating in any form, but I lose respect anytime someone talks about using AI to generate a study guide when it would be much more beneficial to their learning to create their own study guide. Even when they say it's "more efficient" or "saving them time," that just emphasizes the laziness displayed by many prolific AI users.

'Cheating through AI is so normalized that many students don't even realize what they're doing is dishonest.'

Ultimately, I am not against computational AI, but rather, generative. My calculator is my lifeline, even though I am a natural science major. As mentioned prior, I do have an aversion to math, and it comforts me to make sure that four plus five is actually equal to nine. In addition, it's helpful that computational AI can help computers adapt and learn to better serve their purpose. Sure, generative AI does this too, but it must take pre-existing human materials (art, writing, music, etc.) to learn from, often causing issues with plagiarism and stolen works as many artists do not consent to having their works used to train AI models. AI taking jobs (rather than aiding in them) is definitely another aspect people should be concerned about, but most importantly, AI is taking over the most fundamentally human parts of our cultures.

'Most importantly, AI is taking over the most fundamentally human parts of our cultures.'

Even before such modern-day world pillars as short form content, sucky pop artists, and hockey yaoi, we as a society have had the same three basic expressions of emotion and communication: art, music, and writing. Now, AI is actively seeking to destroy the environment and these methods of creation at the same time. Sure, eventually it'll get good enough to be, in theory, indistinguishable from "real" art forms, but there's one very obvious tell: a lack of humanity.

'Even before such modern-day world pillars as short form content, sucky pop artists, and hockey yaoi, we as a society have had the same three basic emotion and communication: art, music, and writing.'

So I urge you, pause before you ChatGPT that study guide and maybe consider how finding a better study method will be just as, if not more, beneficial. AI can be used for good, but until then, we must make sure it's not first overriding our humanity.

Caretti is a member of the Class of 2028.

CULTURE

The Second Story of Fantasy Worlds

ELIANA THOMPSON/ ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

BY MILES MCCORTNEY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In my childhood, I became quickly fascinated in reading what now, as a Creative Writing major and author, I know as "secondary-world" fantasy and science fiction. Broadly, this is defined as literature that exists in a totally imagined setting (instead of Earth's past, present, or future). It is one thing to find oneself captivated and transported by these works of speculative literature, and another to discuss their writing quality or literary significance, or even their handling of racism or violence. However, at least for me, there is another part of secondary-world literature that often feels unaddressed: how beyond the basic plot of a literary work, the world-building and course of imagined "history" also tells an important narrative.

'Beyond the basic plot of a literary work, the world-building and course of imagined "history" also tells an important narrative.'

J. R. R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" is among the most famous examples of a secondary world, with Tolkien himself having coined the term. But beyond providing a backdrop for his books, Tolkien's vast library of encyclopedic appendices presents a continuous narrative of Middle Earth's fictional history. This "second story," so to speak, after the primary story surrounding Tolkien's characters, tells of the rise and fall of great powers, the transformation of people groups, and culmination of history into the plot seen in "The Lord of the Rings" proper.

This phenomenon, though, is perhaps clearer in its importance when seen in the works of George R. R. Martin. Despite relying on real-world history for much of its political plot, "A Song of Ice and Fire" nevertheless illustrates how the overarching lore narratives of a fantasy world can add to the story of its characters. While the novels (and their television adaptations) focus primarily on characters engaging in political schemes, the fantastical nature of these schemes gives them broader meaning that might not be possible in a strictly historical story. For example, Daenerys' sympathetic dream of "breaking the wheel" to end a bloody cycle of monarchic power struggles would sound to me like nothing more than the wholly naive and unrealistic pinings of an overentitled princess were it on the backdrop of real history (where, to this day, bloody wars for imperial power endlessly continue). This is in part because secondary worlds allow readers to transport themselves to a place where they have no way to know which characters and forces will prevail, unlike with real-world history where readers may have previous knowledge of the people or events.

Further, many fictionalized political forces and desires feel little different from today's tiring news cycle in the context of a realistic setting. But with these forces hidden within a wholly imagined world, as a reader I feel encouraged to engage with them differently: not as strict representations of real-world movements and all their attached biases, but as something to be invested in and followed, like characters. In this way, any political and philosophical debates in secondary worlds stand a chance to slip by my (admittedly strong) real-world political biases. On a large scale, this might even help people think more critically about traditionally highly biased issues.

While less common, secondary worlds in genres other than strict fantasy also exist: In the last several decades, science fiction media has also started to embrace secondary worlds outside of strict predictions of Earth's and humanity's future.

Despite being among the most famous examples of a secondary world in science fiction, the original "Star Wars" film trilogy felt rather oversimplified in its portrayal of politics and big-picture forces. However, I haven't seen the same oversimplification in that franchise's tie-in literature, particularly when it comes to the relatively recent "Ascendancy" trilogy by Timothy Zahn. This trilogy, focused on a character's rise through a reclusive alien nation's military ranks, features a primarily nonhuman cast. Zahn's alien nations have differing cultures and guiding political ideologies; together, these create the shadow of a greater narrative looming large over Zahn's characters — a story of the lengths countries will go to deceive each other, how pragmatism and realpolitik ideology dominate governments faced with difficult choices, and the complex results when new developments upset old systems.

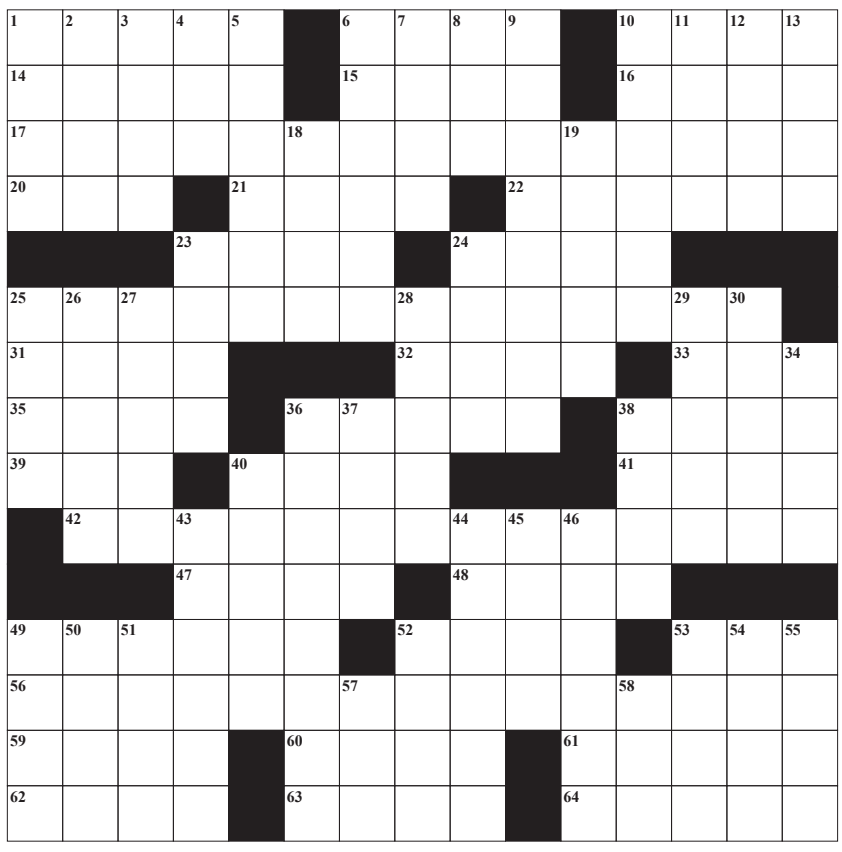
Outside of franchises, the recent trilogy "The Kindom" by debut author Bethany Jacobs is also secondary-world, to a degree. While there are vague suggestions that the setting's human civilization originates from a distant homeworld (possibly Earth), the setting is built from the ground up with fictional planets, politics, languages, ethno-religious groups, and even conceptions of gender. Thanks to this imaginatively detailed world, I find "The Kindom" avoids both the oversimplified politics and violence found in the original "Star Wars" trilogy and the tiresome preaching sometimes found in stories about real-world politics and events — all while presenting narratives about the consequences of ethno-religious discrimination, capitalism, and genocide.

Arguably, secondary worlds have grown via somewhat less prominent young-adult fantasy books like "Red Tigress" (Amélie Wen Zhao) and "Skyhunter" (Marie Lu), and Essa Hansen's space opera "Nophek Gloss." Either way, with websites like World Anvil emerging in part to cater to people building secondary worlds, these imagined universes are doubtlessly here to stay.

McCortney is a member of the Class of 2028.

A Snow-Brainer

BY CALEB OSHINKY
STAFF PUZZLER



ACROSS

1 Words on flash cards, for short
6 Actor Hutcherson of "Five Nights at Freddy's"
10 Cable car
14 Pong producer
15 Tenor track?
16 "Big Hero 6" hero Hamada
17 *A snowman's expression after having been out in the blizzard for a while
20 Some RIT grads
21 Poet Juana ___ de la Cruz
22 Attire donned by Jake from State Farm
23 Abbrs. in company names
24 "____ she blows!"
25 *A snowman's exclamation in disbelief at the arrival of Santa Claus
31 Junior or senior, e.g.
32 ____ breve
33 "___, what the sigma?"
35 Deal breaker?
36 Urge forward
38 Composer Bartók
39 ROC time setting
40 Gallic girlfriend
41 Loads
42 *The very same snowman's description of 17A, perhaps
47 Purring pets
48 Thought
49 La Casa's food
52 Freezes (over), as an unsalted sidewalk
53 "___, humbug!"
56 *A snowman's chilly feeling of instant attraction
59 Phone fillers
60 Spoken
61 Seeing red
62 "You there!"
63 Parks of civil rights fame
64 Snooty?

DOWN

1 Low-lying area
2 Native Nebraskan
3 Axes
4 Bol. neighbor
5 Like a winter wind
6 Earliest Stuart king of England
7 Mine finds
8 Bro's sib
9 Texan toon who's a manager at Strickland Propane
10 Foil the plans of
11 Gamble
12 "Whose woods these ___ _ think I know": Frost
13 "The Simpsons" bar
18 Snowfall unit
19 Word that means "family"
23 Texter's "Unless my memory deceives me"
24 Story
25 "Auld Lang ___"
26 Bare minimum
27 You are here
28 Records for later
29 Get done
30 Count ___, a.k.a. Nosferatu
34 Lion's pride
36 Copycat
37 Whiff
38 On-campus ATV racing team
40 Carne _____
43 Most slippery, as the roads
44 San _____, Christmas figure in Italy
45 Praiseful poetry
46 Marriott subsidiary
49 Thunderous noise?
50 "My bad!"
51 Sports standouts, for short
52 401(k) alternatives
53 Slant
54 "___ girl!"
55 Canine command
57 To and ___
58 Two-piece piece

The answers to this crossword can be found on page 5.

HUMOR

Calls for Female Celebrity to be Publicly Decapitated Ring Out

BY MIRANDA KOVATCH
STAFF WRITER

In what some are calling a misogyny-driven overreaction, netizens are calling for the public decapitation of Lisa Young, an American singer-songwriter who rose to prominence earlier this year, for having called a group of photographers "weird."

A video, released last weekend on TMZ, featured a distressed Young telling ten photographers gathered by her residence, "Why are you in front of my house? You guys are so f**king weird."

"Ungrateful b**ch," one netizen wrote. "She deserves to be violently murdered in a grainy video that gets disseminated across the dark web."

"The photographers are just doing their job," another netizen commented. "I think Lisa should be forced on her knees and decapitated with a samurai sword in front of a popcorn-chewing audience for what she has done. Her head shall clunk against the floor with the thud of a book being closed in a silent library."

Another stated, "If Lisa isn't punished for what she's done to the paparazzi, I'm going to kill myself."

In a public apology, Young said, "While I am sorry for the hostility of my language, I do feel that I am entitled to my own privacy, and I hope that people can respect that more in the future."

'"I do feel that I am entitled to my own privacy."'

Since then, a petition for the public decapitation of Young has garnered 10 million signatures. In light of the overwhelming outcry, we at the *Campus Times* decided to ask for some legal insight from Misha Jonisch, JD. "Yeah, once you're famous, you release your right to privacy," he stated. "Like, it would be totally okay to peek through someone's bathroom stall and secretly put cameras in their house if they're famous."

'"Once you're famous, you release your right to privacy."'

When asked for his thoughts on the possibility of misogyny motivating calls for the public decapitation of Young, Jonisch said, "It's just human knowledge that if women want to be treated with basic respect, they should stay out of the public sphere. Mind you, there's a lot of male public figures that get critiqued too, for example, Benito Mussolini."

The Supreme Court has decided that, should the petition get 5 million more signatures, the execution of Young shall take place in Times Square in Manhattan, NY.

Kovatch is a member of the Class of 2027.

Woman with 'My Other Car is a Cat' Bumper Sticker Terrorizes Gun-Wielding ICE Agent

BY MIRANDA KOVATCH
STAFF WRITER

At a Walmart parking lot in Portland, OR, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent Landon Smith suffered a severe panic attack at the sight of a local woman driving in his general direction as she listened to "Get Back Up Again," sung by Anna Kendrick in the movie, "Trolls."

Wearing only his projectile-proof body armor, Smith was almost plowed down by the local mother's 2018 Chevrolet Traverse, which had been moving at a lethal speed of 6 MPH.

"It would have been really scary if her car was pointed at me," Smith stated.

While Smith sustained ruinous injuries, such as a scratch on his hand from slipping on the ice, he was able to save his life by shooting at a line of shopping carts.

A nearby witness recounted the incident: "Yeah, he was, like, hyperventilating as she was starting to drive past him, and then, he stepped right in front of her moving car for some reason. I think the car grazed him, and he just started writhing on the ground and screaming, 'She hit me!' He, like, fired ten bullets at those shopping carts while he did that."

As concerned individuals share the Walmart security footage of this incident online, calling it further evidence of ICE posing as a threat to communities, expert video analyst Donald Trump defended Smith, stating that "cars are scary."

In a following press conference, Kristi Noem also spoke on the incident, noting that the woman's car had all kinds of threatening bumper stickers plastered on, such as ones that read "I <3 My Spoiled American Shorthair" and "My Child is an Honors Student."

Noem, serving as a reminder that beautiful people can be stupid too, elaborated, "Militarized agents, wearing identity-concealing masks and abducting and victimizing community members, are not a danger to American life. It's the other people ... you know who."

Kovatch is a member of the Class of 2027.

Papercuts: Helpful

BY JOSHUA SCHIAVI
STAFF WRITER

The Sundae Scoop

BY BUG CARTWRIGHT
STAFF WRITER