

C O M M U N I Q U É

VOL. 84 ISSUE 6

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF CHATHAM UNIVERSITY

DEC. 3, 2024

OPINION



A graduating editor reflects on her time at Chatham. **Page 4**

SPORTS



Follow one student's journey to making a career in hockey. **Page 5**

VISUALS



Chatham celebrates Thanksgiving with food and community. **Page 7**

FORUM



The Communiqué thanks its December graduates. **Page 8**

Faculty pause bid for union

Kyle Ferreira

Visuals editor [@k_fotog](#)

The Chatham University faculty union effort withdrew its petition for union recognition. The move was prompted by concerns about a less union-friendly federal government following the outcome of the 2024 presidential election. The withdrawal ends the 10 months of National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) hearings to determine the faculty's right to union recognition.

The NLRB regional director dismissed the case Nov. 25, effectively pausing the hearings. Nevertheless, the faculty plan to continue organizing to advocate for a role in shared governance.

Following a series of cuts and reorganization by the Chatham administration in 2023, the faculty began organizing under Chatham
SEE UNION, PAGE 2

Chatham student dancers merge with cheer team

Emily Jacobs

Contributor



Chatham cheer rallies the crowd at a home game. Photo credit: Chatham Athletics

Chatham University's dance team was disbanded this fall – coming as a surprise to the student dancers on the team. With this change, the Athletic Department announced that the University would offer competitive cheering starting in the 2025-26 academic year.

Its members were given the option to join the cheer team, without any need to audition.

“The reason for the disbanding
SEE CHEER, PAGE 3

Sakena Jwan Washington named emerging Black writer-in-residence

Madison Stokes

Contributor [@stokes.writes.stories](#)

Sakena Jwan Washington spent her first and second grade summers at Chatham University's day camp making crafts and rolling down Chapel Hill. Now, she is experiencing a full-circle moment as Cha-

tham's 2024-25 emerging Black writer-in-residence.

The Black-writers-in-residence program within the MFA Creative Writing program was created to support Black writers in Pittsburgh. Residents host readings of their work, publish their writing and are mentored by Chatham faculty.

“They are so wonderful and welcoming,” Washington said. “Everyone has been really generous with their time.”

On top of readings, writing and mentorship, all emerging Black writers-in-residence teach a class. Washington will be teaching in the
SEE WRITER, PAGE 6



NLRB cancels hearings; faculty looks toward collective action

UNION, FROM PAGE 1

Faculty United (CFU), a union effort working with the American Federation of Teachers, Pennsylvania (AFT PA) to represent the Chatham faculty.



We [the faculty], in consultation with our attorneys, felt like it was too much of a risk for us to continue



- Dr. Jennie Sweet-Cushman, associate professor of political science

After 10 months of litigation and an unfair labor practice charge, AFT PA voluntarily withdrew its petition in the pending representation case. AFT PA also requested the case be dismissed and hearings canceled, according to an email sent to the whole University by the president's office early Nov. 26.

While the decision to no longer pursue the representation case for now is a complex one that requires weighing many factors regarding the possibility of success, one factor stands out: the outcome of the 2024 presidential election.

According to Jennie Sweet-Cushman, associate professor of political science and a member of the faculty organizing committee, the possibility of a conservative-leaning NLRB under President-elect Donald Trump could prove too great an obstacle for union efforts.

"We [the faculty], in consultation with our attorneys, felt like it was too much of a risk for us to continue that way," Sweet-Cushman said.

However, the choice to withdraw the NLRB representation case does not mean the end of labor organizing for Chatham faculty. Instead, it is a delay or pause in moving toward collective bargaining, according to Sweet-Cushman.

"I think it's important to realize that what we were pursuing with this effort was collective bargaining rights and nothing about this decision precludes us from collective action," she said. "Collective action is still a very powerful tool."

While Sweet-Cushman was adamant that the faculty will continue to organize and advocate for the Chatham community, she expressed concern over the disadvantage of not having a union contract.

Despite uncertainty of what shared governance at Chatham will look like, Sweet-Cushman was hopeful that faculty participation in governance, even without a union contract, can work toward the betterment of Chatham.

"We're hopeful that there may be something down the road, but recognize that without a collective bargaining agreement, there's nothing enforceable about that," she said.

Meanwhile, the University considers the development a return to an already established system of shared governance that furthers the best interests of the entire Univer-

sity community.

"This development now creates a welcome opportunity for us all to work together through the University's shared governance system for the betterment of Chatham's mission, students and employees," according to the Nov. 26 email

from the president's office.

The Communique contacted Bill Campbell, vice president of marketing and communications, for comment on the developments but did not receive a response by the time of publication.

Kyle.Ferreira@chatham.edu

UNION TIMELINE

JUNE 2023

Chatham announced that it would undergo a reorganization process and academic review to reorder its operations.

NOVEMBER 2023

Some faculty begin to discuss unionization, organizing under Chatham Faculty United (CFU).

JAN. 5

75% of faculty signed cards to show their employer their intent to unionize.

2024

FEB. 6

CFU requests voluntary recognition as a union.

FEB. 16

University President Rhonda Phillips informed faculty and students that the administration decided to not voluntarily recognize the union.

FEB. 28

First National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) hearing held.

NOV. 5

Election day

NOV. 25TH

CFU withdrew petition for union representation.



Chatham to offer competitive cheerleading



Cheerleaders hold signs spelling out Chatham's name. Photo credit: Chatham Athletics

CHEER, FROM PAGE 1

of the dance team is that it was ultimately the best decision that could have been made for everyone involved. The goal was to make cheer and dance a united effort. However, with everything being joint, it was difficult to keep organization and structure," said Head Cheer Coach Hayley Butler, who joined Chatham earlier in 2024. "The dance team was already being submerged in the cheer culture with learning the same routines, as well as staying for the entire sporting event. To save everyone from frustration and burnout, the decision was made to disband the dance team, making one team under cheer."

Athletic director Leonard Trevino

said the move will help position Chatham to offer competitive cheering – something that he hopes will help with student recruitment and retention.

"We are all working very hard to make this program something that the community is proud of, and the first step was to fully become one team where everyone is a vital piece of the puzzle," he said.

At the time of the announcement, there were eight students on the dance team; five of them decided to join the cheer team. Two of them were former dance captains. According to some of the dancers, the team generally performed a mix of jazz and hip hop, and the dance captains were tasked with leading practices and choreographing routines.

While some said they were satisfied with being given another opportunity to showcase their talents, others are still upset due to the lack of clear understanding of what prompted this change.

Dance team member Haileigh Stephens '24 said that there had been challenges with figuring out practice times and sharing space in the Athletic & Fitness Center.

"But I feel like there were other solutions to managing the time and space issue rather than just cutting a whole team," she said. "I personally don't feel like they justified eliminating the whole team. Yeah, like weeks after practices had been

happening and everything."

Sara Bouch '24 echoed her former teammate's disappointment; neither she nor Stephens will be joining the cheer team.

"It's nice that they said that anyone was automatically on the [cheer] team, but dance and cheer aren't the same," Stephens explained, "and I think for some of us, like, if we wanted to be on the dance or the cheer team, we would have tried out originally for the cheer team."

Emily.Jacobs@chatham.edu

POLICE BLOTTER

Nov. 7 - Officers responded to Fifth Avenue for a vehicle crash. Officers assisted Pittsburgh Police with traffic control and gathering information for the report.

Nov. 7 - Officers took a report for a stolen golf cart charger.

Nov. 13 - Officers assisted Residence Life with property recovered from a room search at Chung Apartments.

Nov. 13 - Officers took a report for a suspicious package at Rea House. It turned out to be a joke on a student.

Nov. 15 - Officers took a report for a stolen golf cart. After investigating, a suspect was identified and arrested.

Nov. 16 - Officers were dispatched to Pelletreau Apartments for the smell of marijuana. Officers responded but detected no odor in the building.

Nov. 24 - Officers responded to Linzer Apartments for a large tree branch that fell in the parking lot. Officers were able to move the tree branch off to the side.

Other updates: Officers did six medical transports.

Graphic by Emily Brooks



Senior reflection: the Communique ruined my life for the better

Abigail Hakas

Opinion editor @thathakas

I had it all laid out: part-time community college for four years until I turned 18, transfer to Chatham University, get a creative writing degree in two years, graduate and get a job in publishing.

I was halfway down the yellow brick road when the Communique jumped out of the shadows with a bat and bashed those hopes in.

Frankly, I was tricked. I thought I was writing one opinion story about something I was passionate about — having gender-neutral bathrooms on campus — when suddenly, I'm the next opinion editor.

I blame former opinion editor Abbey Sullivan '22 for writing "staff writer" next to my name in the story assignment list when I first pitched that opinion piece. I remember thinking, "I just joined the staff?"

In fact, I blame the entire staff for being friendly, approaching me after classes and around campus and inviting me to hang out and go to parties, making it entirely too awkward to quit.

And let's not forget the Communique's adviser Sara Bauknecht, who helped me change my major to journalism after I foolishly fell in love with the work I was doing.

Really, journalism ruined everything for me. Being a journalist is inconsistent with everything I've ever wanted in life. I'm an intro-

vert, a homebody, I like sleeping eight hours a day and being paid a living wage. Journalism often conflicts with all of that.

Journalists and editors I respect and admire have told me to pick a more forgiving career. You may be wondering why I still want to be a journalist.



Abigail Hakas '24 with a copy of the Communique. Abigail Hakas/Communique

There's no better way of illustrating it than to paint a picture for you: my second summer in college, I interned with the Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle. One of my earliest assignments was to go to the home of a 99-year-old Holocaust survivor — just a few weeks shy of his 100th birthday — and write his story of survival.

I stayed composed during the interview, but as soon as I went home to write, I broke down crying. There were many moments like that over that summer. I worked

with a team of reporters covering the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting trial, and I spent most mornings before trial days sleep-deprived and suppressing nausea. I rarely slept the nights before.

If I could do anything else on Earth and be happy, I would. But that summer is the reason I know

with absolute certainty that I couldn't do anything else.

Working with the Chronicle showed me the importance of journalism. Many of the Chronicle's readers had a direct connection to the shooting; friends and family of victims, even survivors, were reading those stories.

These were stories that mattered to them.

Being able to tell someone's story is an honor I would not trade for anything, not for eight hours of sleep and certainly not for money.

Truly, I have seen the worst journalism has to offer. I've had back-to-back 12-hour days. I've had to get up at 4 a.m. to write stories. I've been chewed out by prospective sources and have probably made myself an enemy of most of the scabs still working at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette despite the ongoing unfair labor practice strike.

But every day I get to write a story, I am overcome with the significance of what that means.

And without the Communique, I never would have had the opportunity to tell any stories. As I prepare to graduate this semester, I find it a little difficult to fathom a life without this newspaper, but I know I owe my happiness to it.

So, thank you. Thank you to my wonderful staff for trusting me with editing their stories, thank you to my editors for editing mine and thank you, the Chatham community, for letting me tell your stories.

It was the greatest gift.

Abigail.Hakas@chatham.edu


Scan here to read about Abby's most impactful editor





Ryan Miller '25 makes dream a reality, builds hockey career

Carson Gates

Editor-in-chief emeritus  gatesy35

Ryan Miller '25 came to Chatham University hoping to continue his lifelong dream of playing hockey, but after his on-ice career ended, he found a path to keep hockey in his life forever.

Miller is the hockey operations intern for the Chatham men's ice hockey team. The soon-to-be graduate is working on parlaying his work with the Cougars into a job in hockey after graduation.

Miller spends about eight hours working on game days, and his presence on staff is a huge advantage and luxury for the team.

"Having a dedicated hockey operations and video coach is a rarity at the Division III level — only a handful of programs can claim this advantage," head coach Michael Gershon said via text message. "When I took over at Chatham, developing players was a top priority, but I also recognized the importance of investing in our coaches and support staff. My goal has been to equip them with the tools and experience needed to build successful careers beyond their time at Chatham."

Hockey has always been at the forefront of Miller's life. He has been on skates since he was 3 years old and has traveled the country playing hockey. Like most members of the hockey team, he spent three years after graduating high school playing junior hockey be-

fore arriving at Chatham.

"Hockey has been my entire life," Miller said. "I played from the time I was three until the time I was 21, countless hours at the rink. ... I feel like I always knew I wanted to have a career in hockey."

Miller chose Chatham for his love of Pittsburgh and for the opportunity to walk on to the hockey team. But after not making the team on the ice, an opportunity to be the hockey operations intern kept hockey at the center of his life. While he wanted to be a hockey player, Miller realized taking the position could give him the career in hockey he always wanted.

"I made the decision to do it because I'm going to have three years of on-the-job experience when I'm applying for anything in the spring this year," he said. "It's just kind of my quickest route to the top and my way to give back to the game."



From left: Men's ice hockey equipment manager Ryan Preston '25, Ryan Miller '25, head coach Michael Gershon and athletic trainer Rebecca Kayda at UPMC Lemieux Sports Complex. Photo provided by Ryan Preston

All of Miller's day-to-day duties revolve around preparing the hockey team for its next opponent. His work for games begins long before the puck drops. Miller scouts the Cougars' matchup a week in advance and shares clips with the coaching staff, who then shared it with the players.

On game days, he arrives at the arena three hours early to set up video equipment. Once the game begins, he watches and organizes plays in real-time on his laptop. Miller cuts clips in as they happen to share with the coaching staff during intermission. After the game concludes, he sits down with the staff for hours, often not leaving until midnight, to go over the video and find areas for improvement.

The 23-year-old graduates in the spring and is aiming to use his countless hours of work to get a job in professional hockey.

"I always knew I wanted to have a career in hockey and getting this opportunity has kind of gotten a jumpstart [on] my path to the top, to the NHL," he said. "It kind of puts me a step ahead of guys who are playing right now. And that was also something I thought about when I made the decision to do it."

He is aiming to follow in the footsteps of Pittsburgh Penguins general manager Kyle Dubas, who started working in the hockey world young and climbed the ranks from junior hockey to the NHL.

Carson.Gates@chatham.edu

Upcoming Home Games

Men's hockey

Games played at the Hunt Armory

7 p.m. Dec. 6 vs. Manhattanville

3 p.m. Dec. 7 vs. Manhattanville

Women's hockey

Games played at the Hunt Armory

3 p.m. Dec. 6 vs. Hilbert

Women's basketball

Games played at the Athletic and Fitness Center

6 p.m. Dec. 4 vs. Waynesburg

Noon Dec. 7 vs. Grove City

Men's basketball

Games played at the Athletic and Fitness Center

8 p.m. Dec. 4 vs. Waynesburg

3 p.m. Dec. 7 vs. Grove City

Washington to teach creative writing class, hold workshops

WRITER, FROM PAGE 1

spring a class about writing nonfiction for undergraduate students.

“It’s like being a student with them in a sense,” Washington said. “I’m having to prepare in advance and then provide insight.”

Anjali Sachdeva, assistant professor of creative writing and one of the coordinator’s of the Black writer-in-residence program, is Washington’s mentor.

Washington meets with Sachdeva to receive feedback on a rough draft of her chapbook, a booklet usually containing poetry or short stories, which will be published by the end of her term as the emerging Black writer-in-residence. Washington teased her chapbook, which includes memories from her life, during a reading on Nov. 13 in the Laughlin Hall Welker Room.

“It’s like the most generative I’ve ever been, and it’s in large part because I have this person, who’s my advocate, mentor and likes encouraging me,” Washington said about

Sachdeva.

To ease the transition into this role, she also met with former emerging Black writer-in-residence Cameron Barnett.

“He was really generous and paid it forward, like previous writers had in that role,” Washington said. “He guided me through the syllabus process and what to expect.”

Washington shared that the most rewarding part of being a professor is seeing students find their voices.

“A number of my students were reticent in the beginning to share how they felt about a certain piece,” Washington said. “I’m seeing more of [them] connecting with their work and inspired by certain craft elements.”

Washington was born in Harrisburg, but her family moved to North Hills two months later. Washington recalls her love for writing blossoming at 10 years old. In fifth grade, her homeroom teacher held a creative writing hour after lunch.

“We would just let loose on the

page and write,” Washington said. “I wish I still had them to kind of see how my brain worked then.”

In high school, Washington participated in a Black journalism workshop led by local media pioneer Chris Moore, where she gained first-hand experience in newspaper writing, broadcast and radio. She interviewed local leaders and celebrities, introduced new music and held roundtable discussions on “Teen Talk” with WAMO, which was the only local Black radio station at the time.

Washington then went to earn her bachelor’s degree from Clark Atlanta University and her master’s degree from Antioch University in Los Angeles, focusing on writing fiction.

“It was mostly because just the idea of writing a memoir or nonfiction at the time terrified me,” Washington said. “When I wrote fiction, people [could] see through this thinly veiled nonfiction.”

Washington’s perspective changed when she read an article published in 2019 that was written by a group of sociologists detailing an index report on cities and their livability. The report determined that Pittsburgh was the worst place for Black women to thrive.

Washington wrote an op-ed about the article and sent it to multiple outlets. The Huffington Post accepted her work on the same day.

“That was sort of the turning point for me and I thought, ‘Maybe I have more to say about my life and how I see the world,’” Wash-



Sakena Jwan Washington poses for a picture. Photo credit: Mick Stinelli/Pulse

ington said.

Though Washington began her writing career as a journalist, she believes that it helped her transition to creative writing.

“There’s hard news, then there’s narrative journalism, and I feel like creative nonfiction is somewhere in that,” Washington said. “Creative nonfiction blows out the narrative even more and creates more scenes and storytelling.”

Washington draws inspiration for her writing in many ways, such as recording herself speaking and completing writing exercises.

“If I’m feeling something really deeply, like the op-ed piece, it’s almost a response,” Washington said.

She also gets inspiration from reading work by other authors.

“Often I see that by reading other authors, I’m not going deep enough in my own writing,” Washington said. “It allows me to reapproach a story and tell it.”

Madison.Stokes@chatham.edu



Washington leads a reading and Q&A on Nov. 13. Madison Stokes/Communique

VISUALS



@Communique_CU



chathamcommunique.com

FROM FELLOWSHIP TO FEAST

A snapshot of harvest events at Chatham

Chatham celebrated a cornucopia of friendship and community leading up to Thanksgiving break with several events on campus.

The University held its annual Harvest Dinner in Anderson Dining Hall on Nov. 19. Community members were welcome to attend

and enjoy a plethora of Thanksgiving food and festivities.

The Asian Student Association (ASA), Black Student Union (BSU) and Latine Student Association (LSA) also celebrated the season with a Friendsgiving event on Nov. 21 in the Carriage House.



Members of the ASA, LSA and BSU gather for a photo during Friendsgiving. Photo credit: Victoria Streeton



Academic Success Center staff enjoys Harvest Dinner. Ava Daugherty/Communique



Students partake in Harvest Dinner favorites with friends. Ava Daugherty/Communique



ASA, BSU and LSA members share a Friendsgiving meal on Nov. 21. Photo credit: Victoria Streeton



Keyonna White '27 and Lillian Dacre '27 at Harvest Dinner. Ava Daugherty/Communique



Celebrating our graduating seniors

Thanking Jade Lombardo and Abigail Hakas



A fun and spirited member of our staff, Jade Lombardo always brought her best to every effort she completed for the Communique. Jade joined the staff in spring 2022 and took on the role of social media manager fall of that year. While in that position, she has worked to revolutionize the Communique's use of social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook and TikTok. Her infectious attitude brought a smile to many faces during pitch meetings, and her presence will be missed greatly by our staff. We wish Jade the best of luck.



The Communique's self-described unofficial copy editor, Abigail "Abby" Hakas joined our staff in fall 2021 and took on the role of opinion editor a year later. Abby has written many of the opinion stories for print in the position, edited most of the stories that run in print and mentored staff. Her empathy, smarts and humor have been a staple in our newsroom. Beyond us, she has been nominated for a Golden Quill, has won two Women's Press Club scholarships and an award with the College Media Association. Abby will be missed by our newsroom.

Staff List

Editor-in-chief

Bella White

Faculty advisor

Sara Bauknecht

Editor-in-chief emeritus

Carson Gates

Digital editor

Sarah Naccarato

News editor

Sarah Gallogly

Opinion editor

Abigail Hakas

Lifestyle editor

Leyna Laurent

Visuals editor

Kyle Ferreira

Social media manager

Jade Lombardo

Layout editor

Emily Brooks

Social media

Jada Jenkins

Maura Laird


Libby Rubenstein


Contributing Writers

Evan Atwood	Marley McFarland
Gage Bertovich	Mia Orrico
Eva Blair-Lutz	Bex Romer
Madison Butina	Olivia Rossi
Ava Daugherty	Madison Stokes
Tiana Eicher	Carmen Shuru
Emily Jacobs	Mackenzie Simon
Elora Johnson	Anoushka Sinha
Benji Keeler	Shannon Wack
Ireland Kennedy	Paige Watson
Ronan Krissoff	Steph Weiland
Arlo MacFarland	Denison Weller

Check us out online

 chathamcommunique.com

 @Communique_CU

 @Communique_CU

 @ChathamCommunique

Letters to the editor

The Communique welcomes readers to submit letters to be considered for publication. Send your reactions to stories, thoughts on Chatham University and whatever else is on your mind to opinion editor Abigail Hakas (abigail.hakas@chatham.edu)

Correction:

In Print Issue 5 published on Nov. 12, a student's name was misspelled and graduation year was incorrect in a cutline in the story in the opinion section. The spelling of the student's name is Anna Mack and the grad year is '27.