

COMMUNIQUÉ

VOL. 77 ISSUE 1

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF CHATHAM UNIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER 2020

Chatham Students Reappear On Campus

News

Opinion

Sports

Lifestyle

Visuals

Forum

Jason Christopher, a magician hired by the Office of Student Engagement for Wild Wednesdays, performs a trick for a student sitting near the Quad on Sept. 23.
Credit: Lilly Kubit

EDITOR’S NOTE

Dear Chatham Community,

The Communiqué, like most things this year, has molded itself to the circumstances we now face. As the stories in this issue will show, Chatham looks quite different this semester, and so does its student newspaper. Due to concerns over public health and safety, the Communiqué decided to focus on its online presence and publish a monthly e-edition of curated stories in the style of a news magazine.

While the format may be new, and somewhat strange for those familiar with the Communiqué’s previous work, there is something fundamental that remains unchanged about Chatham’s student newspaper: the staff’s commitment to student journalism. During this global pandemic, and as our society shifts in many other monumental ways, the need for independent student news is unwavering.

Even though the way we all interact has changed, our goal to provide critical news and promote discourse has not. And with that said, please enjoy Volume 77, Issue 1 of the Communiqué.

Sincerely,
Alice Crow
Editor-in-Chief

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RETURN TO CAMPUS

Back-to-school timeline includes plans for temperature checks, online classes and mask mandates

By Alice Crow

In the months after the end of the 2020 spring semester, it was unclear what Chatham University students could expect when they returned to campus in the fall because of safety concerns and restrictions prompted by COVID-19.

In a series of informational emails, Chatham administration laid out its plans for a return to campus, which prompted many student reactions. This is an account of some of those most pressing updates from University personnel.

May 4

President Dr. David Finegold sent an email, informing students about what to expect during the fall 2020 semester. He expressed that the Chatham experience has always been about “coming together.” He also said the Chatham administration was intent on looking into how operating on campus could work with “enhanced social distancing guidelines.”

This was the first time students were told about an assemblage of University Task Forces. Their job was to plan for different possibilities of a return to campus. President Finegold ended the email by promising the task forces would finalize and share their plans for campus operations by early June.

June 4

An email from Dr. Heather Black, Dean of Students, focused on Allegheny County’s transition to the “Green Phase,” the least restrictive phase in Gov. Tom Wolf’s tiered COVID-19 shutdown plan. Dean Black wrote, “I am happy to share that Chatham is beginning a phased plan to open offices and face-to-face operations in the coming weeks as Allegheny County transitions to the Green Phase.”

She forwarded an email President Finegold sent to faculty and staff. It explained the dates for which select departments would return to work on campus and what all campus community members should expect upon their return.

“All employees and students reporting to campus will be required to receive daily temperature checks, engage in physical distancing, wear masks and follow other Chatham, CDC and PDH guidelines,” he wrote.

President Finegold finished the email by writing, “In addition to

the Green Phase plan outlined here, the initial fall 2020 Operating Plan developed from the ongoing efforts of the Working Groups is being shared with the Board of Trustees this week. Following the Board’s feedback, the plan will be shared with the campus community the week of June 8 for review and feedback.”

June 12

President Finegold sent an email titled “Return to Campus for Fall 2020.” The message explained the reasoning behind the return to campus and the results of the University’s task forces.

President Finegold argued there is a “value of being physically present on campus.” He went on to write that, due to the increase in knowledge about the virus and how to mitigate it, Chatham was committed to reopening its campus this fall.

“Since April, a series of cross-campus working groups have been working on scenarios, considerations and plans for operations in the fall,” President Finegold wrote. He explained that Chatham consulted a variety of public health and healthcare resources to inform the decisions of the various working groups. Some of these sources included UPMC, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Pennsylvania’s Department of Health.

“It will take all of us, caring for one another and doing our part, to keep our community healthy.”

*-- Dr. Heather Black
Dean of Student Affairs*

The results of this work can be viewed on the University’s new fall 2020 website. President Finegold invited the campus community to leave questions and feedback. He noted that the website would be updated weekly and signed off with a message of solidarity.

This information was followed up by an email from Walter Fowler, Senior Vice President of Finances and Administration, about a limited reopening of Chatham’s campus, starting on June 15.

A corrections email was then sent. It explained that all build-



The Campbell Memorial Chapel is one of the sites for temperature checks on the Shadyside campus during the fall semester. Credit: Alice Crow

ings on Chatham’s campus would reopen, except the Athletic and Fitness Center and Jennie King Mellon Library, which would open at the end of the month and in July, respectively.

July 22

Dean Black introduced the Cougars Care commitment, which was to be completed by Aug. 7. Dean Black wrote in the email to students, “Cougars Care is an initiative to provide support, resources, videos and training for our ongoing collective effort toward a safe and successful fall term. It will take all

to request academic adjustments for the fall 2020 term. In order to request adjustments, medical documentation will be necessary.”

Academic Affairs further explained that, even with adjustments, not all classes would be provided virtually and may not be possible for cohort programs or specific sequential classes.

All documentation for an academic adjustment was due Aug. 14 and for review by a committee coordinated by the Office of Academic & Accessibility Resources (OAAR). The committee’s decision would be told to students by email and all decisions would be final.

July 28

A petition on Change.org was created by Audrey Bodenlos ‘22 and Emer Straw ‘21. The petition was titled “Chatham University Fall 2020, Virtual Class Option.” It was created in response to the email from Academic Affairs the previous day, and stated, “Chatham University must allow any student the option to attend classes virtually no matter the reason during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Straw also noted in the petition that “forcing students to return to in-person classes unless they have a medical condition they can prove creates a dangerous situation on campus and doesn’t follow the precedent being set by other schools such as CMU and the University of Pittsburgh. Not allowing students to choose whether to return in person or not puts students, faculty, family and the whole Pittsburgh community at greater►

of us, caring for one another and doing our part, to keep our community healthy.”

July 27

Academic Affairs sent an email with high importance. Addressed to students, it spoke about the requirements to make academic changes for students with health conditions.

Academic Affairs wrote, “In support of individuals with medical conditions who feel that attending in-person classes may exacerbate those conditions, Chatham University is providing the opportunity

risk of illness and death as cases of COVID-19 in the city continue to rise. There is no humane reason for not giving students the option of virtual classes to protect both themselves and the community.”

The petition received 428 signatures and was signed by both students and some faculty members.

When asked about this initiative, Bodenlos said, “This petition was created by a couple of random students who just felt passionately about this. Chatham is a small school and it’s relatively easy to get into contact with the right people to at least try to make change. If you want something done, the first step to do is try.”

Straw added, “We created the petition because Chatham was not being clear at all about what their plans for the fall semester were and we felt students deserved a choice about how they attend their classes during a deadly pandemic. No one should be forced to risk their life or health to get an education.”

July 29

President Finegold released a message that another update to the “Fall Plan” would be sent to students Aug. 4. It would address the concerns raised by the petition.

This update would include “changes to the fall course schedule and instructions on finding which courses will be available in varying delivery formats, including virtual and online options for those students who do not feel comfortable returning to campus this fall for non-medical personal reasons.”

President Finegold wrote, “We realize that it was not clear from that email that additional information on available options for those with other personal reasons for not coming to campus would be forthcoming, and sincerely apologize for any confusion the email may have caused.”

Aug. 4

Academic Affairs sent a follow-up email about the course delivery options for students during fall 2020. It explained that it would not be possible to provide every class in a virtual or online format. Ultimately, it would be the decision of the course professor to decide the delivery format of the course.

Academic Affairs wrote, “If a student is registered for classroom-based courses and does not feel comfortable attending class in-person, they should search the course schedule for courses listed as an online or virtual format.”

It was advised that students work with their academic advisers to find course equivalents and substitute courses as needed, but if students could not find an alterna-

tive course, they should submit a request form to their adviser, department chair or program director to adjust their fall schedule. The official add/drop period would now end Sept. 1.

In response to Chatham’s decision, outlined in the Aug. 4 Academic Affairs email, Boden-



Masked students relax Sept. 16 on the Quad at Chatham University’s Shadyside campus. Credit: Lilly Kubit

los commented, “I think it’s also important to notice that Chatham never truly gave students a school-sanctioned virtual option. This is still something that you have to work out with each professor on an individual basis. I understand that it may not be possible to make everyone be virtual ... however, I believe that Chatham administration should have enforced all professors to come up with a completely virtual option for every single class.”

Aug. 5

In an email, Dean Black asked all students to self-isolate at home for 14 days before arriving on campus. She discouraged “goodbye gatherings” and encouraged students to limit their exposure to people.

If students couldn’t isolate for the 14-day period, they were asked to follow health guidelines and “observe all the behaviors that are part of the Cougars Care Commitment when working and avoid any other activities outside your home.”

Aug. 11

Dean Black requested all students to update their personal information on the student portal by Aug. 23. This would aid contact tracers when needing to get in contact with those exposed to COVID-19.

“As part of our efforts to protect against the spread of COVID-19,” Dean Black explained, “Chatham has trained a team of staff members to act as contact tracers in the event we have a positive case on campus. Contact tracing is a process used to contact all individuals who have been within a 6-foot radius for more than 15 minutes of the positive case.”

Aug. 14

Parkhurst Dining informed students via email on what they could expect when eating on campus. While a dining option would still be provided, there would be limited seating.

Robust take-out options would be available to compensate.

“There will also be satellite stations [Monday through Friday] for lunch at various areas on the Shadyside campus. We also have an enhanced disinfecting program, as well as, Safety Ambassadors on our teams,” Parkhurst reassured students in the email.

A list of places students could use their meal plan was provided at the bottom of the email.

Aug. 19

Chatham University Communications informed students to when they would and would not be required to wear a mask while on campus. Based upon the list in the email, masks would be required everywhere, except when alone in closed spaces and outside, if possible, to maintain social distancing.

“Chatham will provide all students and employees with masks to supplement any masks they already use. If anyone forgets their mask, or it becomes damaged, they can pick up a replacement at the Office of Student Affairs, too,” according to the email.

Aug. 20

Dean Black sent an email labeled as high importance to all students. In it, she wrote, “This week, the County had reports of college parties in Pittsburgh, and discussed with all of the local colleges the importance of our students following health and safety guidelines to avoid a repeat of what happened in June and July.”

Dean Black warned that “if parties and flouting of health and safety guidelines continue to occur, the county or city could well take steps that will greatly impact and limit your experience this academic term!”

She reminded that actions, like gathering without social distancing, are against the honor code.

Aug. 21

Dean Black provided students with information on how to receive a COVID-19 test. Students with symptoms, or informed by contact tracers that they may have been exposed, must get a test on campus.

To receive testing, students were told to first make an appointment with Student Health Services. At the time of their appointment, they should report to the two tents behind Woodland Hall. A student should know the test results in about 15 minutes after the test.

Fall 2020 semester begins

Since the beginning of the fall semester, the majority of updates about COVID-19, and Chatham’s plans to combat it, have been provided from the Cougars Care community emails that are sent to all students on Fridays. Most recently, on Sept. 11, the community update included information about Chatham’s first positive case.

A link to the website further explained that “Chatham was informed [Sept. 10] (through self-reporting) by a member of the campus community that they tested positive for COVID-19. The last time this community member was on campus was Friday, Sept. 4, and the community member is currently isolating at home off campus.”

Previously laid out protocols of contact tracing and testing were being followed. Weekly community updates will continue to inform students of Chatham University’s plan to combat COVID-19.

POLICE BLOTTER

Sept. 3 at 11 a.m. - Harassment at Eden Hall campus.

Sept. 4 at 4:55 a.m. - Medical assistance at Laughlin House.

Sept. 4 at 10:40 a.m. - Medical assistance at Jennie King Mellon Library.

Sept. 4 at 11:32 a.m. - Fire alarm at Chatham’s Eastside campus.

Sept. 7 at 5 p.m. - Smell of gas in the Athletic and Fitness Center.

Sept. 8 at 12:45 p.m. - Traffic dispute at Howe-Childs Gate House.

Sept. 17 at 6:30 p.m. - Medical assistance at Hicks Estate.

New federal regulations change Chatham Title IX policies

By Jorie Meil

Federal changes made by the U.S. Department of Education to Title IX regulations are being implemented at Chatham University.

The new regulations, known as the “Final Rule,” offer procedural changes and increased protections of all parties involved in sexual harassment investigations. Chatham began operating under these new policies Aug. 14, as required by the Department of Education.

The regulations change the definition of the umbrella term “sexual harassment” used in the Title IX policies. Sexual harassment is described in three ways by the Final Rule:

1. “Quid Pro Quo” -- An employee of a school conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit or service of the school on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct

2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the school’s education program or activity

3. Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence or Stalking (as defined in the Policy).

Chatham Title IX coordinator Sean Coleman said the changes to the second definition of sexual harassment (listed above) are, “one

of the first differences if you look at our policy this year.”

This definition of sexual harassment is narrower than what was used by Chatham and many other schools prior to the Final Rule. Under former Title IX policies, acts of

one “decision maker.” The decision maker presides over the hearing and determines sanctions if necessary to the specific case.

During the hearings, both parties, the complainant and respondent, are subject to cross examination

ment to Title IX.

“There is something to be said about live hearings, that they are particularly traumatic for victims because survivors often suffer from PTSD,” said Blue Strickland, a Chatham student and sexual health advocate.

Coordinator Coleman said he understands how a hearing could be daunting. He hopes that the new Title IX regulations “don’t inhibit or discourage anyone at Chatham from reporting that they’ve experienced sexual harassment, including sexual assault. Because if Chatham doesn’t know that a person has been sexually harassed, we can’t help that person, can’t help stop the sexual harassment and can’t help stop the harassment from happening again.

“The new regs leave the choice of pursuing a formal complaint, which initiates an investigation and a hearing ... in almost every circumstance ... [but] a complainant can still report sexual harassment and receive supportive measures even if they don’t choose or chose to file a formal complaint.”

Anyone who wishes to report an incident of sexual harassment can contact the Chatham Title IX office for resources and aid. The Chatham Title IX office is located on the second floor of Mellon Center, and personnel can be reached via phone or email, all of which are listed on the Chatham Title IX website.



The process after reporting an incident to Title IX under the new federal regulations. Credit: Alexis Taranto

sexual misconduct were referred to as “prohibited acts.”

These descriptions of sexual harassment limit Title IX’s jurisdiction to reports that fall directly into one of these definitions.

Chatham is now required to hold hearings regarding alleged sexual harassment. Prior to the new policies, Chatham used a two-investigator model to conduct investigations. Under the changes, there is now one investigator and

by an adviser. This adviser could be appointed by the University, or hired by the respective party. Advisers are responsible for asking questions provided by the party they are representing. This is done so there is no direct contact between the respondent and complainant during the hearing.

Critics of the Final Rule assert that its new regulations may make a complainant apprehensive to disclose an incident of sexual harass-

First-year students stand up for Black Lives Matter movement

By Jake Lach

Chatham University students are fighting for diversity and inclusion through the Black Lives Matter movement.

Although many first-year students are still adapting to college life, they also are speaking out and taking a stance on issues of racial inequity.

Protests in support of BLM have expanded rapidly in recent years in many cities. The movement began in 2013 in response to police officer George Zimmerman being acquitted from the charges related to fatally shooting Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old Black high school student.

Since then, the BLM movement has continued to highlight the inequalities in the U.S. justice system and systemic racism.

“Regarding diversity [at Chatham],” Aaliyah Thomas, class of ‘24 president, said, “I really want to start getting the conversation started.” She believes it may be hard for some to communicate

their ideas. “We want it to be an environment of inclusivity, but also a comfortable conversation for everybody.”

Thomas has first-hand experience attending BLM protests. She believes that the protests aren’t always depicted accurately by mainstream media, which causes a lot of people to be too scared to go out and show support.

“I didn’t feel in danger. ... I feel like the media specifically is quick to show a violent protest versus a non-violent protest,” Thomas said.

Black Lives Matter is very personal to Thomas. As a Black individual raised by white parents, she has experienced racist comments and stereotypes.

“It’s a hard thing to go through,” she said, “and even harder to be stereotyped.”

Thomas has struggled to understand her identity throughout her life. Growing up with both parents being white and Republican, she has experienced many hardships.

“Mostly real-life accounts like ... being called the n-word downtown

because I looked at a guy too many times,” Thomas explained. “You know, not understanding that and my mom telling me ‘well, you’re not the n-word, Aaliyah -- you’re white,’ and it not making sense.”

Thomas has also pursued activism through storytelling. Two of her pieces, “Said” and “Love isn’t skin color,” were recognized by Carnegie Mellon University in its annual Martin Luther King Jr. Writing Awards.

“This issue [of injustice] is not just going to disappear,” Thomas said. “It’s not going to just go away. ... It’s going to persist until people start listening.”

Protests aren’t the only way to contribute to the movement. Lily Slagle ‘24 has found ways to show her support from home.

“I have signed a ton of petitions and advocated for Black lives on social media,” Slagle said.

Online there are various bail and relief funds that can be donated to and petitions to sign, as well as more information on the movement for those who are interested.

“There aren’t enough people taking action within this movement yet. My advice for those afraid of joining the movement is to let go of that fear,” Slagle said. “You can be the change that needs to be seen.”

There are many events scheduled across Pittsburgh during the next month. On Oct. 9-11, SisTer’s PGH is hosting an online event to stand up for transgender Black lives. Details on other protests and events can be found at burghprotests.com.



Students at a recent BLM protest in downtown Pittsburgh. Credit: Aaliyah Thomas

Chatham's immunocompromised struggle with student accountability

By Abbey Sullivan

Since March 2020, COVID-19 has rendered our day-to-day lives forever changed. Our culture is different now and, while this difference proves more and more exhausting each week we spend in quarantine, there has been a new surge in efforts to lift COVID-19 restrictions both informally and legislatively.

As of Sept. 14, WHTM-TV Pittsburgh reported that “Butler, Green, Fayette and Washington [counties] previously filed a lawsuit claiming that [Gov. Tom] Wolf’s closing of non-life-sustaining businesses and other restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic were unconstitutional” and that federal Judge William Stickman, a Trump appointee, ruled in their favor.

Should Gov. Wolf’s appeal fail, this ruling means that businesses such as hair salons, movie theaters and other nonessential establishments would reopen at full capacity, potentially causing another surge in COVID-19 cases.

Judge Stickman argues that the population of Pennsylvania “cannot accept the new normal” under the U.S. Constitution, yet he doesn’t seem to understand what this new normal is aimed to achieve. Throughout the discussion about the reopening of states, one subset of people is often overlooked: the immunocompromised.

The National Cancer Institute defines being immunocompromised as “having a weakened immune system ... [and] a reduced ability to fight infections and other diseases.” This state can arise via certain medications and treatments, as well as autoimmune disorders, including diabetes and arthritis.

Being immunocompromised is concerning enough without the onset of COVID-19. Yet, combined with the pandemic, people who fall into this group are forced to make even more inconvenient and consequential choices for the sake of their health. Their social interactions are even further limited, and their employment options are more harshly regulated (if not abandoned in fear of infection). Then there are groups of people like me, students whose environment demanded mass alterations.

I’m an immunocompromised person due to a rare autoimmune disorder I’ve lived with since the early 2000s. I understand the precautions I must take to stay safe. I sacrificed a socially and financially lucrative summer for my well being and the well being of others.

I am fearful for Judge Stickman’s proposed “return to normal” as I feel that my health would inevitably suffer. As a college student, I also feel that non-immunocompromised people often are not reciprocating nor understanding my efforts in an attempt to preemptively return to what life was like before the pandemic.

Chatham University especially needs to confront our collective attitude of bending the rules due to our unique circumstances. Due to our small size, there is an assumption by some that we are at a lower risk for contracting the virus. The supposition follows that compared to the University of Pittsburgh or Carnegie Mellon University, we house fewer students and, therefore, not as many chances for contamination.

This attitude is evident in some people’s passivity toward wearing masks. Frequently, students can be seen traveling across the Shadyside campus with their masks tucked underneath their chin or propped below their nose, which renders the garment ineffective. Additionally, social media is often plastered with inside looks into gatherings that seem to forget social distancing.

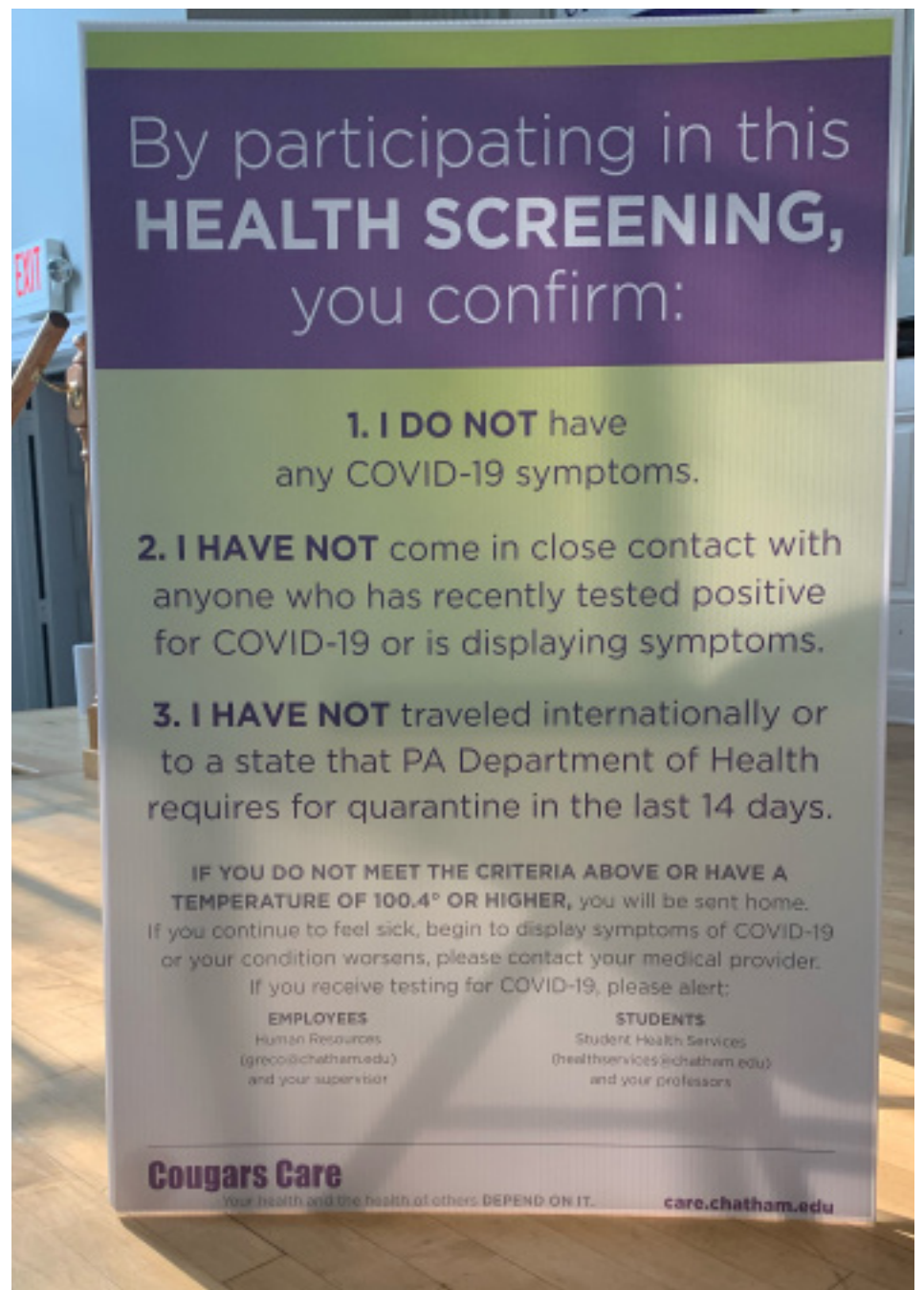
Thus, this line of thinking is both selfish and ignorant. It doesn’t account for the students, faculty and administrators who engage in the Chatham community each day as immunocompromised people.

Some students’ nonchalance regarding COVID-19 on campus is enforced by Chatham’s past and current policy decisions about social distancing and virus transmission. Chatham denied students the guaranteed option for all virtual or online courses without medical documentation that would subsequently be sent to Office of Academic & Accessibility Resources for approval. This policy ignores students who may come in contact with peers who are immunocompromised either at school, work or their home environment.

With this decision, Chatham potentially opened the door for an increased number of asymptomatic carriers to enter our community.

Additionally, on Sept. 21 Residence Life issued a survey via email to all students living on campus asking about the current guest policy. As the policy currently stands, only residents living in the same building may visit one another. The survey, however, addressed a potential change that would allow for residents of other campus housing locations to intermingle.

This change could possibly be di-



Signs around campus remind students, faculty and staff to be mindful of their health and the well being of others. Credit: Abbey Sullivan

sastrous, not only for immunocompromised folks residing in on-campus housing, as we rely on this strict policy for guaranteed safety, but also for the entire student body as contact tracing measures would only grow more difficult due to increased inter-housing traffic.

Chatham University is in a unique situation following the onset of COVID-19. The circumstances of our campus and student body are different when compared to neighboring schools. However, giving in to students’ displeasure

regarding strict social policies only furthers a culture of passivity and lenience, which in turn neglects Chatham’s most vulnerable groups.

The school and its students should remember that the less seriously we take COVID-19 and its accompanying struggles, the longer it’s here to stay.

GUEST VOICES



*Guest Voices is an occasional series that invites students to share their views about a topic of importance and interest to them on campus. In this first installment, **Kayla Bracey** reflects on her experience as a Black student at Chatham University.*

In an open letter to President Dr. David Finegold and Chatham University’s administration, the Black Student Union and other Black, Brown and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) expressed their grievances with the University’s poor response to the racial violence that’s made Chatham in their views an undesirable environment.

They also voiced their demands for how to make Chatham a more inclusive community. These demands included actively recruiting more Black and Brown faculty, making racial sensitivity and racial bystander training mandatory (similar to GreenDot and Title IX) and improving the dynamic between Public Safety officers and students who disproportionately experience negative interactions with them. These demands, however, are only the beginning of Chatham University’s racial justice journey. This is a journey that requires coming to grips with the suffocating racism that affects a lot of individuals of color on this campus.

As a Black student attending a predominantly White university, I never thought an opportunity would be presented for me to share some of the racially traumatic experiences several Black members of the Chatham University “community” have had. As many students of color may know, navigating overwhelmingly White spaces that advertise themselves as “diverse” and “inclusive” while continuously excusing racist behavior and benefitting from their privilege can be extremely tiresome, frustrating and even downright infuriating.

Such emotions unfortunately grow stronger when paired with witnessing the nonstop violence against Black bodies on a national scale. With the horrifying deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and countless others, I can only assume this opportunity was granted to us because there are some changes happening within the Chatham community. That, however, does not excuse the years of racial and systemic oppression that Chatham has fostered and the abuse of White privilege that has been ingrained in the University from the beginning.

Micro- and macro-aggressions have taken many forms at Chatham and have been committed by individuals of all University affiliations, including professors, office faculty and students. The yearly exposure to cultural misappropriation and blatant stereotypes in the form of our White peers’ “inno-

cent” Halloween costumes (yes, wearing a dreadlock wig and gold teeth or a prison jumpsuit with an eyeliner teardrop drawn under your eye is offensive to Black and Brown people) causes Black students to feel like our personhood and value are being denied. Even things that seem relatively small scale to non-Black people can be some of the most traumatizing and upsetting experiences of all.

As a high school athlete entering college, I had to make the tough decision to not play a sport at Chatham because of the potentially dangerous predicaments I could run into due to my racial identity. The thought of taking trips into rural towns with a bus full of White students and coaches who possibly did not respect my Blackness and would-be bystanders if anything happened to me made me sick.

I have been locked out of my dorm hall and surveilled to ensure I was not living on campus because I owed a measly amount on my meal plan, but later listened to a White student brag about being on academic suspension and sneakily living in a friend’s dorm for the entire semester.

Throughout the four years of my undergraduate studies, I had one professor of color and saw little-to-no faculty and staff of color. But I did see dozens of Black and Brown maintenance and food service workers.

I have listened to some White students argue that having a lecture hall named after a birth control

activist who advocated for eugenics and other bigoted scientific theories/techniques “is not a big deal because she founded Planned Parenthood.” (Editor’s note: Chatham’s Board of Trustees voted in February to rename the hall on unofficial documents, remove a bust and treat this experience as a learning opportunity.)

I’ve had an administrative office employee tell me that I should not return for a semester after missing the first week because there was no way I would be able to catch up.

I have had several White professors tell me to “calm down” as I calmly engaged in class discussions. In a class with a professor who I considered to be one of the more “socially aware” faculty members, I was provoked by a few of my White classmates when introducing my project about the

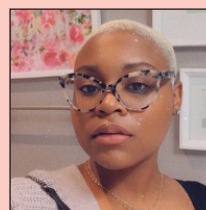
history of gentrification in East Liberty and my relatively negative experience as a Black transplant in Pittsburgh. The professor sat and watched as I was bombarded with questions that doubted if I knew what gentrification was and how I could feel this way about living in “the most livable city in America.”

After becoming overwhelmed with rage and leaving the classroom, I was approached by this professor, who asked if I had something else going on that could have caused me to become so upset. It became clear to me that he was either blind to the attack on my identity or simply didn’t care.

Some of my Black peers have been followed on campus or in academic buildings by Public Safety officers. If they weren’t followed, they were watched intently while doing things like studying upstairs in the Athletic and Fitness Center or relaxing in their dorm hall common area. Several other Black students and I have watched White and non-Black students of color thrash around and unapologetically scream lyrics laced with the N-word at almost every Chatham dance. These instances are only a fraction of the racially influenced occurrences that Black students have experienced during their time at Chatham that, even when brought to the attention of higher faculty and staff, seem as though they’re forgotten or brazenly ignored because they don’t affect a widely represented population within Chatham University’s community.

Lately, Chatham appears to be taking steps to be more intentional with its efforts to challenge the existing systemic oppression. We can only hope that our voices are finally loud enough for our rightful feelings of anger and anguish to be heard.

About the writer



Kayla Bracey (Bracey.kayla@chatham.edu) is a Chatham University ‘20 alum (Bachelor of Communication, with a journalism concentration) and current Chatham graduate student in the Master of Science in Counseling Psychology (MSCP) program. Kayla is a graduate assistant for the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, R.I.S.E

Program Mentor, trained Intergroup Dialogue facilitator and Black Student Union affiliate.

Her passion for journalism, Black mental health and wellness and racial justice work appears in many of her academic works, including *The Effects of Police Brutality and Police Killings Against African Americans on Their Mental, Physical, and Emotional Health* and *the Intersectionality of Police Brutality and Public Health*, which can be accessed via the Jennie King Mellon Library website.

Where have all the players gone?

Practice, recruitment and stands look drastically different this year due to COVID-19



Workout equipment sits abandoned on the Shadyside campus field. Credit: Haley Daugherty

By Haley Daugherty

There are some obvious changes to Chatham University's Shadyside campus in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the most noticeable things is the lack of sporting events and activities taking place this semester.

"All sports are moved to the spring semester," says Leonard Trevino, the University's athletic director. In order to protect students from unnecessary exposure, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and the universities associated with the program, have decided that later seasons would be the safest for athletes, while also still giving them a chance to play.

One of the biggest challenges of this, he says, is finding ways to keep student-athletes safe while also giving them a chance to participate in their sport.

"While we aren't playing, we do want to allow student-athletes a chance to develop their athletic abilities and engage with their teammates in their respective sports," he says. "The challenges remain in finding the safest way for that to happen."

With competitive seasons moved back, coaches and their teams have had to adjust to the new regulations enacted by Chatham and NCAA.

"We are waiting to get all of our athletes COVID tested [before the team begins working out together].

Then, once everyone is cleared to play, we'll get rolling with practices a bit later this fall," explains Joe Bortak, Chatham's women's volleyball coach. "Our season [will] still be a few months away, but we'll be focusing on individual skill and team development this fall."

Volleyball is typically a fall sport. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team would have moved on campus in August (before the majority of the student body) in order to begin preseason workouts. The first official match would have taken place sometime in September. Preseason for all fall sports was canceled, and teams are still awaiting their official start date to be released. It is predicted that they will be able to compete in March, depending upon the state of the pandemic at that time.

Once student-athletes begin actively competing with other teams, the possibility of spectators being allowed at the games will depend on the status of the pandemic.

"I would expect that spectators would be limited or not allowed at all. That may change, of course," Trevino says. "Allegheny County Health sets the number of people allowed at both inside and outside events, and we will need to abide by that."

Rethinking recruitment

Recruitment for first-year and transfer students commonly takes place with in-person interaction.

That's another thing coaches had to adapt because of COVID-19.

"Specifically, for volleyball, the spring is a huge recruiting period for us. That's typically when coaches travel to club tournaments and watch the student-athletes compete in person," Bortak says, "but unfortunately a majority of the club season was canceled this spring, so we had to watch a lot of match play through film. I also relied heavily on phone/Zoom calls with the athlete's families and their club coaches."

First-year and transfer players at Chatham have come into a new school at a challenging time. With seasons pushed back, players are finding themselves with more free time as they await the development of their seasons.

"Well, it's not been the best experience so far. I know I'm not the only one playing a sport. There are many athletes going through the same thing. It's awful having your season postponed or possibly canceled," says first-year volleyball player Gabrielle Alekson '24. "I know that when I first came to campus I had so much free time on my hands that I started getting homesick and wanting to leave because all I did was sit in my room. Normally, though, I would have a season right now and be playing, hanging out, doing things with my team."

The social restrictions, while necessary, are taking a toll, too.

"I knew coming into this year and, when I came onto campus, that things were going to be very different ... but I understand that Chatham is doing its very best to keep us safe," Alekson says. "I just wish they didn't have the rule that says we're not allowed to hang out with students in other dorms."

The University is offering options for scheduled gym and workout times in the Athletic and Fitness Center for athletes, as well as other students. There also are workout classes being held on the varsity field that are available to all who want to participate.

Recreational sports in the AFC are continuing, but much like everything else, they are modified and students are required to wear a mask to participate.

All students are able to schedule workout times and reserve spots in the strength and conditioning classes by going to picktime.cuafe.com. They also can keep up with the latest news in athletics by visiting gochathamcougars.com and by following the Instagram page @chathamcougar.

Chatham welcomes Dean Lou Leonard to Falk School of Sustainability & Environment

By Gena Carter

If you were to ask Lou Leonard a year ago where he would be today, he would have never dreamed of being named the dean of the Falk School of Sustainability & Environment at Chatham University.

“I don’t have a background in higher-ed administration,” Leonard said. “This ... this was a little bit of a leap for me.”

Nevertheless, Leonard’s professional experience ties directly into Chatham’s emphasis on sustainability. He was hired this summer and was preceded in the role by Dr. Peter Walker, who left the position as part of the University’s reorganization plan that was announced in early 2020.

Before coming to Chatham, Leonard was senior vice president for climate and energy at the World Wildlife Fund, an organization dedicated to conservation and reducing threats to biodiversity.

Leonard joined the WWF in 2008 with the goal of making transformative change in the climate movement at a governmental level after former President Barack Obama was elected. Previously, he joined Obama on the campaign



Lou Leonard speaks about climate change for the Obama campaign in 2007. Credit: Pete Wells

trail in 2007.

Leonard is also co-founder of One Earth Sangha, an organization that uses Buddhist traditions and wisdom to build a community that mindfully and compassionately pursues climate activism.

Leonard has found similarities so

far between his work for WWF and his new role at Chatham.

“I don’t feel like I am leaving the climate movement,” he said. “I want to be here because I think higher education, research and student activism [are important facets] in the movement.”

Part of his job at the WWF was “to help tell a story about the future that we want,” he added. “I think that is a very important part of my job here, too. My job ... is to see the future ... and tell stories about what the future can be and how Chatham students, faculty and campus can contribute to that.”

One of his goals for his new job is to try to address the lack of diversity at Chatham and within the sustainability movement.

“As a white, cisgender, male leader at an institution that has this long history of social justice ... I know that I have to be extra vigilant that I am showing up as a leader that does justice to justice,” Leonard said. “I want to work with others in the administration and ask them the hard questions, like ‘Why is what we consider the mainstream sustainability movement so white?’ and ‘Why is our faculty and student body so white?’

“We have blind spots collectively [at Chatham] despite our history of social justice for women. What [do] we need to do to create a culture where this is a place where a more diverse set of faculty and students can come together?”

Leonard is unsure as to what his goals for the Eden Hall campus itself are at the moment.

“I’m really trying in these first few months, maybe [even] this first

term, to not know the answer ... I don’t know enough yet to say ... what our priorities should be,” he said. “I need to listen first. I need to listen to students, I need to listen to faculty, I need to listen to the partners that ... the Falk School is already engaging with.”

Leonard was drawn to the images he saw of Eden Hall campus and recognizes its potential.

“I feel like [the land at Eden Hall] ... has to have a seat at the table in this conversation about what we are, what we are becoming and what we want to be.”



Lou Leonard marches in the People’s Climate March in April 2017 in Washington, D.C. Credit: WWF

Student clubs try to find their footing in the time of social distancing

By Michaela DeLauter

The return to Chatham University’s campus during the COVID-19 pandemic has been marked with many changes. Classes went on-line, or to a hybrid style. Capacity limits were set in common areas, and clubs that focused on community gatherings were tasked with working through social distancing guidelines.

For a club, like the Community Service Club, this showed to be difficult as its main focus is to get the Chatham community involved by hosting community service events on and off campus.

This year, the plan is to hold some of the same events as last year, like one with Beverly’s Birthdays, an organization that spreads birthday cheer to children experiencing homelessness. This time, however, there will be social distancing guidelines in place. The group also plans to do a virtual collection jar for charity donations

through GoFundMe.

This semester, the Community Service Club now meets online via Microsoft Teams the third Tuesday of each month at 4 p.m. and the third Thursday at 1 p.m.

Another student-run organization is the Knitting Club, dedicated to making knitting and crochet accessible on campus by providing all materials to learn how to do it. However, similarly to the Community Service Club, this proved to be tricky this year because of COVID-19 restrictions.

To combat this, members are now asked to sign out materials for the whole semester and keep them instead of bringing them back for each meeting.

“We’re devastated we can’t be together,” Megan Minto, president of the Knitting Club, says. “We understand and still want people to join us. Our goal is to provide a relaxing and safe space for everyone to forget about the stressors of school and life.”

The Knitting Club meets in person from 4 to 4:45 p.m. on the first Monday of each month in the main lounge in the Carriage House. It also holds bi-weekly meetings on Zoom.

Chatham Student Government (CSG) is one of the most influential organizations on campus. It includes the elected representatives for each class. Normally, they would hold in-person town halls where they would hand out food and ask students their feedback on what should be addressed on campus.

Due to social distancing, the meetings are now virtual, with some events held in person on the quad. They meet every Thursdays on Zoom from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and anyone is welcome to attend.

The Chatham Activities Board (CAB) is responsible for planning events on campus.

For CAB, social distancing is the biggest challenge they face.

Typically, they are responsible for hosting campus traditions, like the welcome dance, but this year that isn’t possible. However, for other traditions, like Drag Queen Bingo, CAB has found ways to still safely continue these events with social distancing strategies in place.


Although a limited number of people can attend in-person events indoors, there’s more room for people to safely gather together outside. Adjustments also have been made to some campus events so that people can participate through windows.

Even with social distancing in place, the Chatham community is finding ways to still be together.

Mars Touloumes, CSG’s executive president, says that in these unusual times it’s important for students to “keep fighting for what you believe in. If we all stand up and fight for what we believe we can get it how we want it.”




Students play a socially distanced game of Drag Queen bingo in the James Laughlin Music Center in early September. Credit: Lilly Kubit



Story tips?

▶ If you have a story tip, please let us know!

▶ Email the Communiqué (communiqué@chatham.edu) or the Editor-in-Chief (alice.crow@chatham.edu)



Photographer Lilly Kubit shares a glimpse of how life has changed at Chatham University because of COVID-19. Despite the pandemic, students are still finding ways to make memories and continue traditions on campus.

BEFORE



Painting with a Twist is a live painting event company who hosts events nationwide. On Nov. 26, 2019, Chatham students registered to paint a Pittsburgh-themed canvas in Rea Coffeehouse. Photo courtesy of Chatham Tandemvault. Credit: Helena Slaczka

AFTER



Painting with a Twist still happened at Chatham on Aug. 30, 2020, but with more safety measures. Students were spaced out with only three per table and were required to wear masks during the event. The painting session was also held outside, on the AFC patio, allowing more students to come and paint but also stay distant.



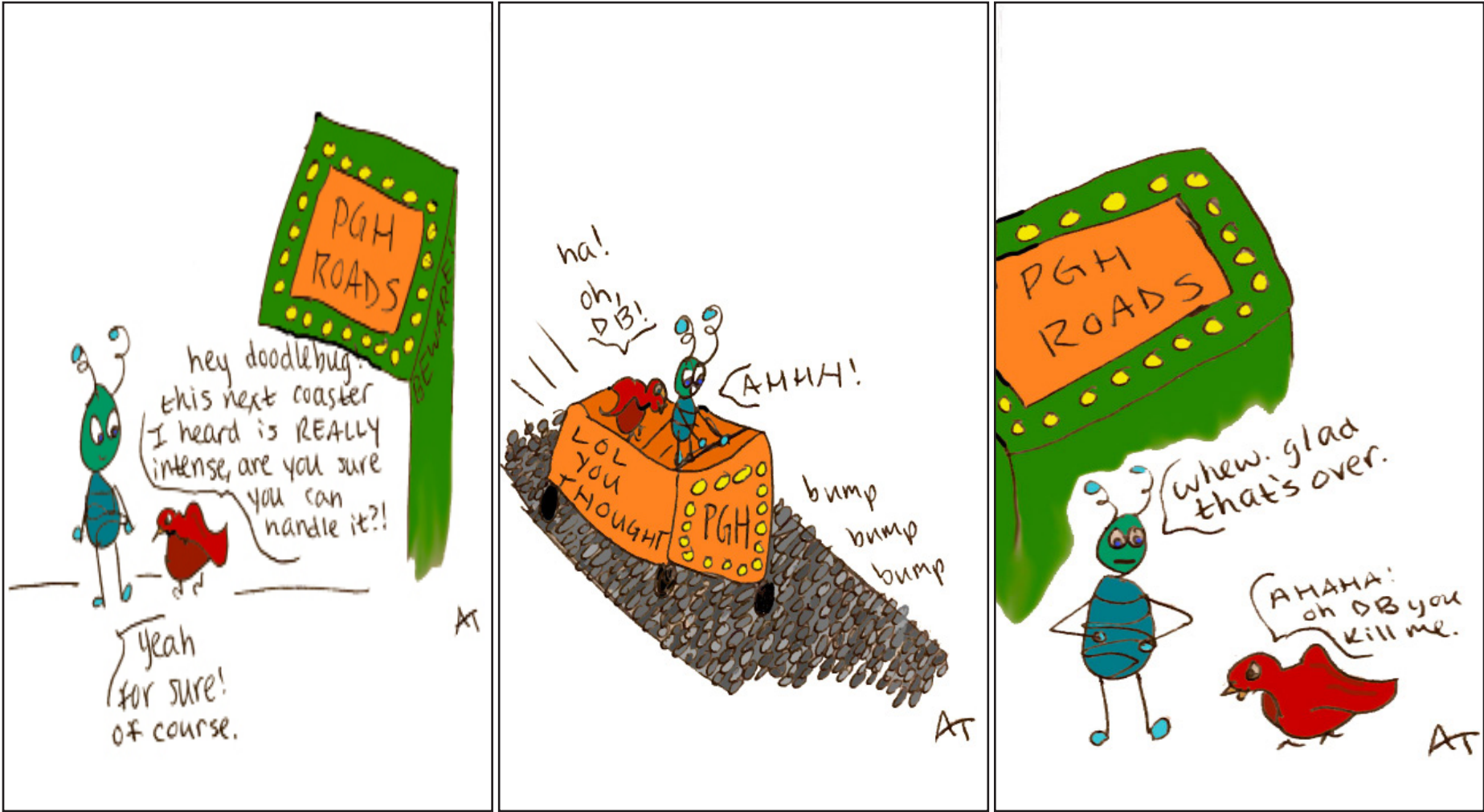
Drag queen bingo, organized by the Campus Activity Board, was held in the Welker Room Aug. 29, 2019 and heavily attended by Chatham University students. A variety of prizes such as Target gift cards and Brita filters were given to the winners. Photo courtesy of Chatham Tandemvault. Credit: Emelia Zandier.



Drag queen bingo occurred Sept. 11, 2020 in two sessions, each 45-minutes long. Twenty students played inside the Welker Room, while everyone else who wanted to join listened for the numbers being called through open windows. Participants were required to wear masks, even the drag queens. The winners got gift cards.

The Adventures of Doodlebug

Follow along as Doodlebug navigates life in Pittsburgh in a comic series by Alexis Taranto '24.



Looking ahead

Here's a preview of what's in the works for the October e-edition of the *Communique*.

- **News:** More updates on how Chatham University is responding to COVID-19.
- **Lifestyle:** A new series about musicians to watch and live music in Pittsburgh.
- **Opinion:** More guest commentaries from Chatham students.
- **Sports:** Get to know Chatham's coaches and trainers.
- **Visuals:** Take a look at what student life is like on campus during the pandemic.
- **Forum:** Another installment of "The Adventures of Doodlebug"

Keep in touch





Letters to the editor: The *Communique* welcomes readers to submit letters to be considered for publication in print and/or online. Send your reactions to stories, thoughts on Chatham University and whatever else is on your mind to opinion editor Abbey Sullivan (abbey.sullivan@chatham.edu).

Corrections/clarifications: The *Communique* strives to report the news accurately and fairly. If we've made a mistake, please let us know so we can correct it and learn from it. Email alice.crow@chatham.edu or communique@chatham.edu.

Advertising: Contact business manager Rylee Napolitan (rylee.napolitan@chatham.edu) to learn more about digital advertising opportunities.

Join the staff: The *Communique* is always excited to have talented, passionate students join our team. We welcome writers, photographers, videographers, graphic designers, website and social media editors, artists, and students with interest in marketing and advertising. Staff meetings are held from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays via Zoom. Email Editor-in-Chief Alice Crow (alice.crow@chatham.edu) to access the link to see what working for a student media outlet is all about.

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