

# COMMUNIQUÉ

VOL. 77 ISSUE 6

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF CHATHAM UNIVERSITY

APRIL 2021

## CHATHAM FINISHES ACADEMIC YEAR IMPACTED BY PANDEMIC



News

Opinion

Sports

Lifestyle

Visuals

Forum



Students enjoy the Chatham tradition of Moonlight breakfast at the end of the semester. Photo Credit: Lilly Kubit

# EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Chatham Community,

In spring 2020, when students and faculty were sent home to complete the semester fully online, no one had any idea as to what attending Chatham would look like in a year. Now we know that attending school, juggling everything during this pandemic, has been extremely difficult for students and the rest of the Chatham Community, but it hasn't been without its small victories.

Thank you to the staff who documented this past year. You were all creative, insightful and hungry when it was needed most. Thank you to our advisor who often said that news is the first rough draft of history. Never did that feel more true than now. Without you all, the Communiqué wouldn't be possible. And thank you always to our readers. We hope you enjoy Volume 77, Issue 6 of the Communiqué.

Sincerely,  
Alice Crow  
Editor-in-Chief

---

## CONTENTS

---

### NEWS

**3 COMMENCEMENT**  
Chatham adopts hybrid model for commencement.

*By Gena Carter*

**5 EDEN HALL COUNCIL**  
Campus to establish a new student council.

*By Elena Woodworth*

**9 CHATHAM CONNECT**  
The new Chatham networking site connects students to more than 600 alumni.

*By Elena Woodworth*

---

### LIFESTYLE

**18 EDEN HALL HISTORY**  
A past vacation destination for working women.

*By Gena Carter*

**19 CHATHAM CHATS**  
Advice on helping friends without forgetting yourself.

*By the Communiqué Staff*

**20 STUDENT PROFILE**  
Michaela Soler '22 worked with Netflix.

*By Irina Bucur*

### OPINION

**12 REFLECTION LETTER**  
Before students return for the fall 2021 semester, opinion section editor reflects on this academic year.

*By Abbey Sullivan*

**13 VALUE OF WRITING**  
The managing editor of the Minor Bird speaks about the importance of Chatham's literary community.

*By Meredith Spahic*

---

### VISUALS

**23 SPRING CARNIVAL**  
A photo series about the spring carnival that happened on the quad in early April.

*By Lilly Kubit*

**24 'AHT N ABAHT**  
A photo series about traveling on public transit in Pittsburgh during the pandemic.

*By Lilly Kubit*

### SPORTS

**15 ATHLETE OPINIONS**  
Student athletes reflect on their past season affected by the pandemic.

*By Dylan Vogel & Luke Paulson*

**16 VOLLEYBALL**  
Technicalities caused by COVID-19 push the women's volleyball team out of playoffs.

*By Haley Daugherty*

---

### COMICS

**26 OUT OF LEFT FIELD**  
Doodlebug and Bird's adventures continue as they discuss vaccines, dean's hour, and college life.

*By Alexis Taranto*

## Staff List

**Editor-in-chief**  
Alice Crow

**Business manager**  
Rylee Napolitan

**Faculty advisor**  
Sara Bauknecht

**Social Media manager**  
Jorie Meil

**Digital and social media editor**  
Jennie Piotrkowski

**News editor**  
Gena Carter

**Opinion editor**  
Abbey Sullivan

**Sports editor**  
Haley Daugherty

**Lifestyle editor**  
Wyatt Cory

**Media editor, Photos**  
Lilly Kubit

**Contributing writers**  
Irina Bucur  
Michaela DeLauter  
Juliana Freeman  
Elisabeth Joint  
Jake Lach  
Charlotte Larson  
Noah Napolitano  
Luke Paulson  
Maggie Susa  
Ryan Thatcher  
Dylan Vogel  
Amaya Walker  
Elena Woodworth

**Artist**  
Alexis Taranto

**Podcast Host**  
Jeremiah Davis

**Business Team member**  
Emalie Martzall

## Chatham pursues hybrid spring commencement due to pandemic

By Gena Carter

Chatham University's 2021 graduation experience featured an in-person graduation toast and abbreviated commencement ceremony, as well as a fully virtual commencement program open to the public.

This plan differed from last year's entirely virtual spring and fall commencements.

"We didn't do this last year," Emily Fidago, director of student engagement, said, "but last year was just so different. We started planning [commencement] in February, and last year, everything hit and closed down in mid-March.

"There wasn't even the thought that we could try to do something because ... no one really understood how [COVID-19] was spreading," she continued. "Now, there is a better understanding, and that allows us to plan a few things and feel confident that we are keeping everyone safe."

While students understood the reason for the changes last year, many were still saddened to not be able to gather and celebrate the graduates.

"You felt so bad for [the students] last year," Court-

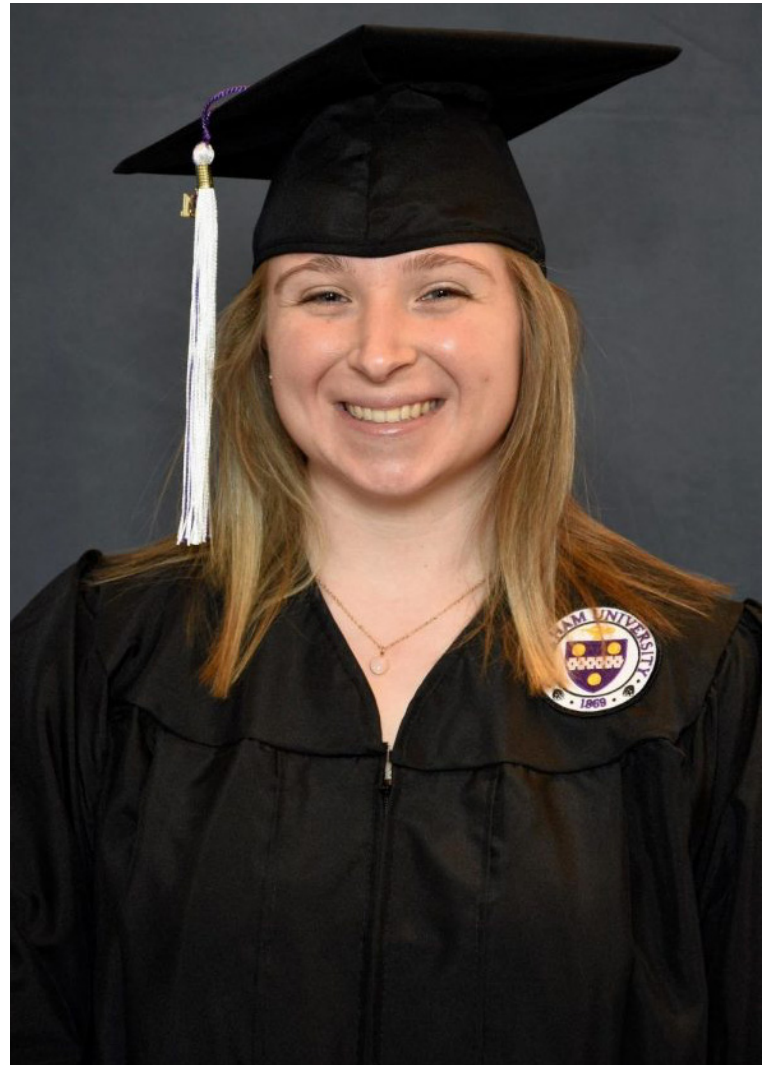
ney Hayes '21 said. "It was all just like, 'OK, you're graduated congratulations,' you know? You didn't get anything. You didn't get that celebration, to walk across the stage ..."

On April 23, the in-person commencement ceremony featured graduating students walking across the Campbell Memorial Chapel stage in their regalia and receiving their diploma. Students interested in attending were asked to select their preferred time slots to ensure social distancing.

Students were in groups of 15-30 for their time slot and were lined up in the chapel in a socially distant manner. President Dr. David Finegold made his remarks, and students walked down the Chapel aisle, received their diploma and got their picture taken.

The ceremony was livestreamed for family members, as well as recorded to be included in the virtual commencement program on April 25, but the in-person experience was not shown in its entirety.

The virtual commencement also included remarks from various guest speakers. This year, the student speakers were Tristan



Courtney Hayes, BS Environmental Science. Photo Credit: Courtney Hayes and GradImages

Palmer, bachelor of arts in biology, and Brooke Duplantier, master of arts in food studies. The guest speaker was Marita Garrett, Chatham alumna and mayor of Wilkinsburg.

### A toast to the graduates

A graduation toast was held on April 22 on the Old Quad from 4 to 6:30 p.m. It was split into two sessions, one starting at 4 p.m. and the other at 5:30 p.m. The event combined elements of the traditional senior

dinner and a graduation toast curated by the Office of Alumni Relations.

This year's graduation toast included heavy appetizers, cocktails and champagne. The first 100 guests also received a gift bag.

Students interested in attending were asked to sign up for one of the two sessions. Between 5 and 5:30 p.m., the area was thoroughly sanitized to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19 to keep ▶

students safe.

Planning for commencement begins months in advance, and the decision for the upcoming fall commencement will likely be decided early next semester. The decision will depend on the state of the pandemic.

“I so hope we can be back in person [in the fall],” Dr. Jenna Templeton, vice president of Academic Affairs, said. “Commencement is my absolute favorite tradition because it’s the culmination of all the hard work of our students and their families. I certainly hope we can be back in-person. ... Even if we can’t have many guests, even if we could have just the students there for the ceremony, I would be beyond overjoyed.”

#### **Eden Hall celebration**

In addition to the school-wide commencement proceedings, specific departments had their own smaller celebrations to commemorate their students on their education.

For example, the Falk School of Sustainability & Environment (FSSE) held a celebration for its graduates at Eden Hall on April 24. The Falk School includes bachelor’s and master’s programs in sustainability, food studies and environmental science. Approximately 10 students (undergraduate and grad-

uate) graduated from the Falk School this year. The program ran from noon to 1:30 p.m. and, included a coffee bar, an ice cream bar, a photo booth and remarks from FSSE’s dean, Lou Leonard, and students.

Each student was permitted to bring one guest, and the celebration was livestreamed for family members unable to attend.

At Eden Hall, the hope is that this celebration will become a tradition, even after

the pandemic is over.

#### **A bittersweet time**

Hayes looked forward to Eden Hall’s ceremony.

“I still can’t believe I am going to graduate,” she said. “It hasn’t sunk in yet.”

While Hayes was confident that all the commencement celebrations were safe for students, there was still a sense that something was missing from the graduation experience.

“I feel like this should be a very happy time,” she said, “and I am very happy to be privileged enough to get a college education, especially at a private university, but I feel like some of the happiness has been diminished.”

Some of that happiness has been diminished by the shared pandemic experience, but Hayes has had to deal with the additional complications associated with having two immunocompromised parents. This has impacted how she could celebrate her graduation, and how she has experienced college.

Hayes’ mother was diagnosed with T-cell leukemia in 2018, during Hayes’s sophomore year of college.

Her mother is on immunosuppressants to manage her symptoms, Hayes said, increasing her risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms.

After her mom’s diagnosis, Hayes moved back home to help around the house. Most of her college experience has been from the perspective of a commuter student.

Hayes’ father was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer in October 2020, and he goes biweekly to chemotherapy treatments, she shared. His chemotherapy includes four separate drugs, and the treatment has been successful at slowing the spread of his cancer.

“You never know what other students are going through,” Hayes said. “You have no idea what’s going on in someone’s personal life. It’s so trivial to look at someone and think, ‘oh they’re young, they have everything, nothing is wrong, everything is fine.’”

Due to her father’s chemotherapy schedule, it will not be safe for him to attend Eden Hall’s graduation ceremony. This reality has been one of the most difficult parts of the commencement experience for Hayes.

“I want[ed] to see my dad see me walk across the stage because it’s so important,” Hayes said. “No one in my immediate family graduated or went to college ... and my brother isn’t thinking about going.”

Despite these familial health issues and maintaining a part-time job while in school, Hayes has managed to graduate on time and get a job. This summer, she will work for Allegheny County as a park ranger and will be tasked with leading guided hikes, environmental education, school programs and nature camps. Her career goal is to be a park manager in the Allegheny National Forest.

“Right now, and I’m here at home and I’m OK with that,” Hayes said. “I love home. I love being here with my parents. ... I got ▶

*“I want[ed] to see my dad see me walk across the stage because it’s so important.” - Courtney Hayes ‘21*

plenty of life left to travel around and see things, but, right now, I am good here.”

No matter what personal challenges students have had to navigate, Dr. Tem-

pleton hopes the commencement options were a bright spot for graduates in a challenging year.

“We do want them to have a [normal commence-

ment] experience, if they want to,” she said. “I wish them all the best. I know they have worked so hard in such a trying time, and that they are more prepared

than ever for the resilience they will need moving forward.”

## Eden Hall to establish new student council

*Stemming from past efforts to restructure the Falk School and build a Falk student government, students and faculty are hopeful for Dean Leonard’s new collaborative and co-governed councils.*

By Elena Woodworth

The Falk School of Sustainability and the Environment’s (FSSE) dean, Lou Leonard, is creating a student-centered council along with three other co-governed councils at Eden Hall to build community and bridge the gap between administration and students.

After previous attempts to form a Falk student government and create a better organizational structure for FSSE overall failed, Leonard, students and faculty hope the councils will make decision-making more efficient and cooperative and will realize the full potential of the Eden Hall campus.

Once or twice a semester, the entire Falk community will convene for an Eden Hall “town hall.” The councils will present their work and visions for the future and there will be open



The barn (right) and maintenance building (left) on Eden Hall campus. Photo credit: Elena Woodworth

space for anyone to share concerns and any additional projects or ideas. Date and details of the first town hall are to be finalized.

### **Plan and progress of Eden Hall’s new student council**

The student council, which is still in the process of being formed, will have two goals: (1) foster community and connections among Falk students and

(2) act as a bridge between students and the administration of FSSE.

The goal was to elect student representatives before the end of the semester

The official structure has yet to be determined, but the council will contain both graduate and undergraduate representatives, which will likely be from both the sustainability

(MSUS) and food studies (MFS) graduate programs and from multiple tracks within the undergraduate sustainability program.

In the planning meeting that was open to all students last month, it was suggested that student representatives be paid in order to make the positions more accessible and to encourage dedication to carrying out the responsibilities effectively.

### **The other three co-governed, place-based councils**

In addition to the student council, Leonard is forming three other place-based councils, which are each in charge of a different space at Eden Hall. The councils are a collaborative, “shared-governance,” in which faculty, staff and student representatives come together to talk about shared issues and ultimately make decisions together. These councils are a way ►

for FSSE to carry out its mission of sustainability.

Eden Hall consists of 388 acres and includes a farm with livestock and crops; forests with hiking trails and ecological research plots; buildings and facilities that run on renewable energy; and students, faculty and staff dedicated to its mission.

The Forest, Farm and Field Council (or “F3” as some have started calling it) oversees the natural spaces at Eden Hall. The

Buildings and Systems Council manages the built or human-made spaces. The last council, the Eden Hall Community Council, is in charge of the “third space” or the social spaces within FSSE.

“We’ve got something really special at Eden Hall and the Falk School, but we’re not yet realizing all of its potential,” Leonard said. “And in order to realize its potential, especially because we’re relatively small, we need to come

together. We are more than the sum of our parts.”

Each council is headed by two co-chairs and are further divided into sub-groups to manage the more specific aspects of each place.

Leonard plans to have each council present its findings to the Falk community by the end of the semester. Currently, each council is assessing assets and needs, envisioning what their spaces could look like in the future and allocating a budget from funding provided by the Falk Foundation.

### **Failed previous attempt of Falk student government due to communication issues, pandemic**

In fall 2019, Thomas Macagno, Ph.D, director of sustainability for FSSE, recruited a group of undergraduates interested in being student leaders within FSSE. Their goals were the same as the current student council: community building and student advocacy.

The students wanted to act as a governing body, similar to Chatham Student Government (CSG) because they felt that Falk students were not well represented in CSG, which mainly focuses on issues related to Shadyside campus.

“We definitely were not getting anything from the [Chatham] Student Government. Shadyside is very in-

accessible to sustainability majors,” said Goldie Seddon ‘22, an undergraduate sustainability major who was involved in the previous Falk student group.

CSG meets at Shadyside campus on Thursdays from 11:30 a.m. to noon, which is at the same time as many of the classes required for Falk students. Additionally, the limited and long shuttle rides can make it difficult for students who live at Eden Hall to travel to Shadyside campus.

“We felt kind of excluded. And we felt like if Shadyside has one [a student government], why can’t we have one that is focusing on our needs?” said Seddon.

The group initially organized some trailblazing events. They hoped the events would encourage Falk students who didn’t live at Eden Hall to utilize the trails and ultimately generate more student engagement.

The previous Falk student group wanted to create events and activities that would engage the entire Falk community.

“The student resources on Shadyside are so much larger,” said Macagno. Currently, Eden Hall has only one student engagement and residence life employee, Jess Bartko, and a few graduate resident assistants at Eden Hall. Much of the ▶



Esmee de Cortie ‘22 (left) and Elena Woodworth ‘21 hike the trails at Eden Hall to set up camera traps for a graduate student’s thesis research. Photo Credit: Silvia Nunez

programming they organize is usually catered to students living at Eden Hall's resident facility, Orchard Hall.

The group drafted a constitution to summarize its two goals and formalize itself as an official government.

In the beginning of spring semester 2020, the Falk student group presented the constitution to Heather Black, who was the assistant dean of students at the time (currently dean of students) and the former Vice President of Student Affairs Zauyah Waite, Ph.D.

The goals of the Falk student government were unclear to Black.

"What our concern was, the group looked more programming oriented, rather than traditionally student government [which] is more advocacy based," Black said. "And so [we] was trying to understand what they were hoping to achieve."

Upon receiving Black's feedback on their constitution, Seddon said that they felt as though Black was discouraging them from forming a government. Black said that this was not her intention.

Seddon said that Black encouraged them to "narrow the focus" of their group and call themselves an "association" instead of a government.

"I think that the University has one concept of what student government does, and we had a different need that didn't completely fit that. So there was a mismatch there," said Macagno.

He explained that because Eden Hall is a secondary campus and has less resources, they needed the Falk student government to do more than what a traditional student government, like CSG, does.

Black wanted to help the

students achieve their goal. However, forming a second student government at Chatham would take time and careful planning to make sure that both groups were allocated equal resources.

Black organized a meeting with the then-CSG Executive President Alex Ferrer and the Falk students to see if they could develop a method for giving Falk students better representation in CSG.

The Falk students suggested changing the weekly CSG meeting time, but since it was already set for the semester, CSG was

unable to accommodate that request.

At the time, CSG had already been discussing the possibility of adding a Falk chairperson within its structure. However, adding a new position in CSG would involve a change to its constitution, and it would need to be approved by the entire student body. Additionally, an election process would need to take place to elect a chairperson.

Ultimately, the Falk student government was never

"With there not being a large representation [in CSG] of students who live at Eden Hall and are heavily involved in the Falk School, I think there's not a lot of [those] people in our meetings who are there to voice direct concerns," said Addakin Thomas '22, the executive vice president for student communications in CSG.

Marianna Touloumes '21, the CSG Executive President, expressed that having Falk student representation in CSG would be beneficial.

"I feel like a lot of the CSG members would agree that they want this collaboration to happen," said Touloumes.

Seddon is hopeful that the new Falk student council will be more successful than the last. "We have a little more power of what we're going to do," she said, "because ... we have the dean on our side."

As the new dean, Leonard came in with the intention of listening to students, faculty and staff at Eden Hall to learn about FSSE's assets and areas for improvement.

"What's become clear to me is that we really need to also invest in our community, internally, in order to make us as prepared and as ready and impactful as we can be to contribute outside of our community," Leon- ►

*"We felt kind of excluded. And we felt like if Shadyside has one [a student government], why can't we have one..." - Goldie Seddon '22*

formalized. When students were sent home due to the pandemic, the group did not attempt to reform.

"No matter what happens, we do want somebody on that [CSG Falk] chair," said Seddon. "We want to bridge that gap. But we also think that's not going to be enough."

### **Potential future representation of Falk students in CSG**

In a senate meeting this semester, the current CSG re-sparked the conversation about getting better representation from Falk students.

ard said. He hopes the new councils will help fulfill this need for stronger community, especially among students.

## Falk student council to build community and bridge administrative gaps

Within FSSE, there are two master's programs — food studies (MFS) and sustainability (MSUS) — and four undergraduate tracks: urban and energy systems, sustainable business, natural resource management and food studies. Students share some core classes, but the rest are specific to each track. These divisions in the program make it hard for Falk students to meet others outside of their own bubble.

Nelson DiBiase '21, a graduate student in the sustainable business program, expressed hope that the student council can bridge the divide among Falk students.

"There's so many projects where I feel like we'd benefit if we collaborated on them," said DiBiase, who is also leading the formation of the student council.

Falk students often have ideas for projects or ways to improve Eden Hall. However, there is no clear authoritative structure within FSSE from which students might gain approval for their ideas. The student council will be able



During the student council meeting, Falk students anonymously shared what they love most about Eden Hall. Photo Credit: Jam Board

to direct students on where and how they get resources for their projects.

Additionally, some students might (and do) have the same project ideas, but because there is a lack of communication, they may not even know it. At the planning meeting, students talked about creating an on-line forum or social media page where students could connect and collaborate on projects.

DiBiase also believes the student council could lead to informal mentoring experiences between graduates and undergraduates.

In addition to greater collaboration among students, the student council will elevate student voices to the FSSE administration.

As the FSSE is relatively new, students have had

many frustrations as the program has evolved and made improvements over time. Seddon, DiBiase and other students who attended the planning meeting for the student council, expressed issues in regards to academic programming, class scheduling and access to support services at Eden Hall among other things.

For undergraduate Falk students, many of the required classes are scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the same times and often only offered once a year. This makes it difficult for students, especially transfers or double-majors, to schedule all the classes they need in order to graduate on time.

Many students are concerned with the lack of racial and gender diversity

in FSSE faculty and administration. Other students expressed a need for more academic and career services at Eden Hall.

The student council will be able to bring up these problems to administration and work to collaboratively resolve them.

## Councils to change FSSE's organizational structure

Nadine Lerher, associate professor of food studies, is one of the acting co-chairs for the Forest, Farm and Field Council. She explained that, similar to what students have expressed, there has been no clear authoritative or decision-making body, which makes it difficult for things to be accomplished at Eden Hall and within FSSE.

In the past, there have ▶



been efforts to create a better organizational structure within FSSE.

“I think that one of the things that’s been a little difficult is that a lot of those [past] efforts have dead ended in various ways,” Lerher said.

While past approaches came from the “top-down” and been “rushed” for time, Lerher is hopeful that Leonard’s approach might be more successful. “I think that his approach is to try to bring lots of different parties together in the same space, and give it enough time and patience to work

on what are complicated issues in terms of how to run a school and a bunch of programs,” she said.

Students are also excited about the collaborative nature of Leonard’s approach.

“Dean Leonard’s whole view of creating these different structures, I think, once it’s in place, it’s going to be so efficient and effective,” said DiBiase. “It’s going to be amazing.”

In these initial stages, Leonard has been trying to find a balance between too many councils and too few. With too many councils, students, faculty and staff

could be overworked and there might be too much overlap. With too few councils, the structure starts to become less of a co-governance.

Ultimately, Leonard sees this as an experiment and a way to carry out the mission of FSSE.

“This is a way for us to walk our talk. I think in the process we can learn a lot, that maybe we can then apply even as we get out and do more to help the world,” Leonard said. “So I’m hopeful that this will make us even better at the sustainability part of our

mission.”

Lerher agrees, but says that it is too early to tell if these councils will be successful. However, she also believes they are worth the extra work and time.

“I think that anything like this, and anything new, has the potential to create new problems and also the potential to create new opportunities,” said Lerher. “I think the challenge, within the councils and from the community outside the councils, is to try and make these councils more useful than problematic. Because there’s no perfect system.”

## What is Chatham Connect?

### New networking site connects students to more than 600 alumni

By Elena Woodworth

Career Development’s new platform, Chatham Connect, creates a localized space where Chatham University students and alumni can build their professional networks, get personalized career advice and access mentoring opportunities.

Recent graduates and current students can join a growing network to more than 600 alum and 200 students on the site.

Chatham Connect was launched last year to build up the alumni network, and Career Development has

been recruiting students to the platform since 2020.

Students and alumni create a profile similar to how they would on other networking sites like LinkedIn, where they list their previous work experiences and educational experiences or major(s). Users take a quiz that determines their career interests and what they hope to get out of the site. Then, they are matched with other students or alumni who have similar interests and goals.

Users can message their matches or search for other connections that they think

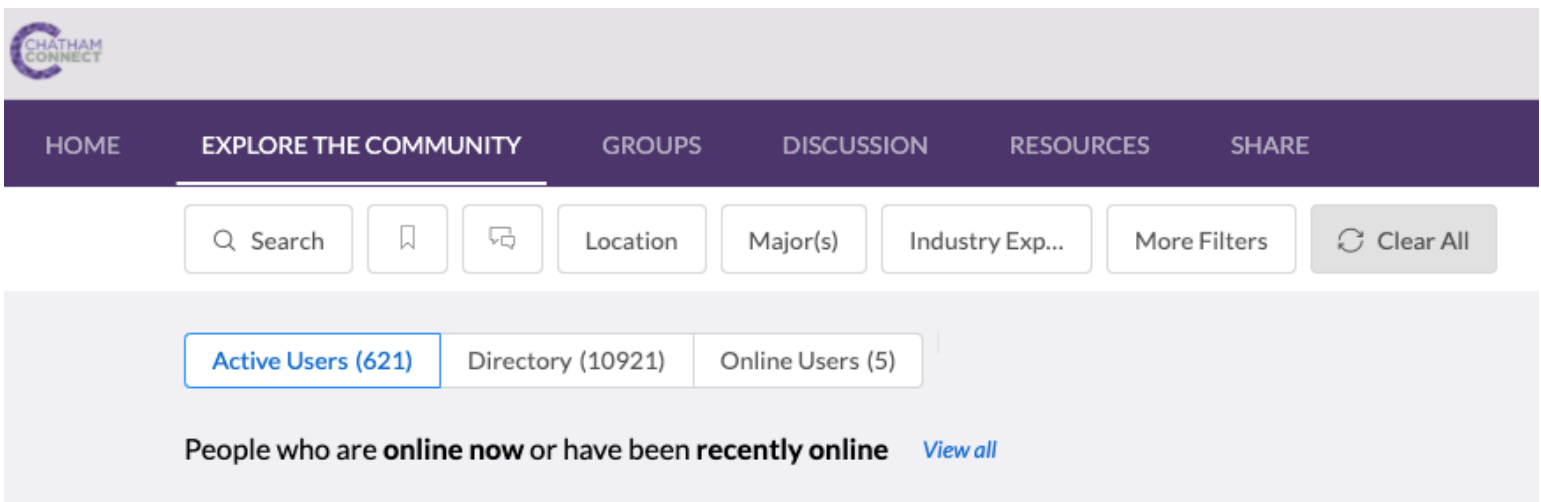


might be useful or advantageous. They can search for connections by location, industry, major or different types of career advice (i.e., choosing a major, resume/CV critique, graduate or professional school, etc.). When crafting messages to potential connections, the platform will make suggestions on how to improve the

writing or what information should be added.

Those who have connected can set up a phone or video call within the platform to speak with alumni all over the world.

Differing from mainstream networking platforms like LinkedIn, Chatham Connect is a smaller community, which allows ►



A screenshot of the Explore the Community tab on Chatham Connect, where users can discover other students and alumni. Photo Credit: Elena Woodworth

for deeper, higher quality connections to be formed, according to Lauren Tudor, director of alumni relations.

“The alumni who join [Chatham Connect] are joining to help students and to help their other alumni, so you have more of a guarantee of interest,” said Tudor. “This really gives you a little bit more reassurance that when you reach out to an alumni you will get a response.”

In addition to being a more niche environment, Chatham Connect is also focused on general professional development rather than self-promotion like on LinkedIn. Students and alumni can post general questions they have to different discussion boards.

Chatham has over 15,000 alumni, and Tudor hopes this new platform will help students and new alumni gain easier access to this resource.

“[Alumni] want to help students. They’ve been in your shoes,” said Tudor. “It’s just a really great way to have access to the alumni community that’s direct.”

For alumni, the platform offers mentoring opportunities, the ability to reconnect with former classmates and guidance for those who might be going through a career transition.

Ashley Pesarsick, a first-year student, found Chatham Connect to be very useful. During her senior year of high school, she gained early acceptance into Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) to become an Osteopathic Doctor (OD). Being new at Chatham and wanting to learn more about the LECOM and becoming an OD, she turned to Chatham Connect.

“I found a wonderful girl... on there and she’s in medical school at LE-

COM,” said Pesarsick. “I talked for probably about two hours one day on Zoom. We just really hit it off well and she gave me some of the resources.”

Pesarsick was also able to connect to a physician and another alumni who was in his last year of residency at a UPMC Hospital.

All these conversations helped her learn about what a future medical career could look like for her. Pesarsick believes this resource is especially useful for first-year students who don’t have any experience or knowledge in profession-

*“[Alumni] want to help students. They’ve been in your shoes.”*  
- Lauren Tudor

al development or setting up a profile on a networking site.

“I feel like you kind of

get thrown in the ocean at first...I had never done anything like [Chatham Connect] before,” said Pesarsick. “So Chatham Connect really helped me get up on my feet. They walk you through the process of how to get set up and navigate your profile, which was so nice.”

Pesarsick stated that it would be helpful to introduce first-year students to Chatham Connect and other professional development resources right when they come to Chatham to give them a head start. She had a lot of unstructured, free time during orientation week, which she speculated might have been because of the pandemic. However, that time would have been a great opportunity to introduce students to Chatham Connect.

Pesarsick also wishes there were more people on the platform. For her, there ▶

were only a limited number of doctors she could connect with.

Tudor also hopes that more students and alumni will join Chatham Connect. The pandemic has prevented Career Development from carrying out its traditional recruiting techniques, such as hosting a table with food out on the quad to talk to students in person.

Career Development had to use posters and social media to raise awareness of the new platform and share the stories of students and alumni who made fruitful

connections. They also worked to make sure faculty and staff were aware of the site so they could refer students to it if someone came to them asking for career advice.

With more students and alumni on Chatham Connect, the more useful the site will become in the future.

Students can make their profile and start connecting with alumni on Chatham Connect through the tools tab on the MyChatham website.

## Story tips?

*The Communiqué is always looking for story ideas! The staff is also invested in answering questions from the Chatham community.*

*Send your story tips and questions to  
Communique@chatham.edu  
or  
Alice.crow@chatham.edu*



## POLICE BLOTTER

*All information is provided by Chatham University's Public Safety*

**March 1** – A community member gave an officer a student ID and credit card that was found on Woodland Road. The items were placed in lost and found at the police station.

**April 8** – Officers responded to the Patio in front of the Athletic & Fitness Center for a student who passed out. Pittsburgh medics responded and the student refused medical treatment.

**April 12** – An officer responded to Dilworth Hall for a student who fell and had an injured ankle. Pittsburgh medics were called, but the student refused treatment.

**April 14** – Officers were called to Woodland Hall for a loud noise disturbance. On arrival officers could here loud music. Once inside officers spoke to students, who turned the music down upon request.

**April 17** – An officer was dispatched to Chatham Apartments Tower A for a stolen bike report. The bike is described as a mountain bike, silver with pink details. A report was taken and is on file at the police station.

# A letter to the Chatham community

By Abbey Sullivan

*Reflecting on the spring 2021 semester before students return in the fall*

The abrupt end of last year's spring semester and the following summer drastically changed our collective every-day. Combined with the prior presidential administration's incessant disregard for public safety, communities throughout the United States have endured, struggling on an unprecedented scale for well over a year now. Vaccination efforts indicate a distant light at the end of the tunnel, but the need for intensive health and safety measures still remains.

United States college students are a community that endured much of this change in a rapid amount of time. Chatham, specifically, underwent a sharp switch to a strictly online learning format in March 2020, which came with both social and academic challenges. Decreased sociability magnified feelings of isolation during an already lonesome world event; online learning is often a medium deemed inaccessible to a broad intersection of individuals, whether due to resource inequality or disability.

Still, as the reality of fall and spring semesters set in, students were hopeful that

the necessary adjustments were not to be made in vain. Yet in many crucial ways, Chatham University failed to facilitate an adequate school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an immunocompromised person, I understand, empathize with and appreciate the safety protocols instituted by Chatham during the 2020-21 school year. I was heavily reliant on those measures for my own well-being as I navigated the last two semesters. But there were still several aspects of both

on a personal level. As a small school, community forums are more than feasible, and decisions on part of the University should be proactive, not reactionary.

The policy of singular respite days scattered throughout the spring semester is not unique to Chatham, but a detriment to students, nonetheless. When the respite days were in the middle of the week, students couldn't use them as mental/physical health breaks because the rest of the week's responsibilities still loomed. Furthermore,

*The expectation of some students to perform fully online without accomodation can be ableist.*

campus life and administrative decisions that, in my opinion, harmed students at large during an already traumatic time.

Chatham exhibited a distant attitude throughout the pandemic. While the mental health resources frequently offered via email and the COVID-19 dashboard both proved to be useful tools, there seemed to be a lack of engagement with the student community in order to understand what we needed

missing the same class on these respite days put unfair constraints on certain courses since they did not yield the same amount of class time that week as the other courses that did not fall on respite days.

Another hindrance to students' academic performance was the lack of changes made to academic expectations across the board, as well as the process of receiving academic accommodations on a



A sign about mask and social distancing policies on Chatham's campus on Sept. 9. Photo credit: Alice Crow

case-by-case basis. There should have been community discussion regarding the potential for Pass/Fail options for certain student populations and/or certain classes as they apply to an individual's major progress. Additionally, while the Office of Academic & Accessibility Resources (OOAR) provides resources for medical accommodations, the process of garnering the required medical documentation could exclude some students without access to adequate healthcare. The process of obtaining medical accommodations should have been made more readily available at the start of the fall 2020 semester, as the online format presented many unprecedented challenges to students unaccustomed to (in some cases) entirely online learning.

The expectation of some students to perform fully online without an accom- ►

modation – or with an accommodation that does not apply retroactively – can be ableist. I encountered this issue head-on with the onset of total online learning, which brought an uptick in my epilepsy symptoms due to the increase in my daily screen time. Despite my accommodation, my symptoms were unpredictable, and I found myself instead relying on the help of my friends and the grace of my professors to get me through. My heart aches for students who were not afforded this same level of understanding.

The combination of symptoms, medication adjustments, isolation and the shared stress of undergoing

the pandemic resulted in a draining junior year for me. I was often embarrassed to express my need for an assignment extension, especially if it violated the terms of my accommodation, and struggled with the decision whether or not to disclose my condition the more and more I asked for special circumstances.

Looking back, I am eternally grateful to the faculty members I worked with this school year for supporting me, despite the challenges they faced teaching in an online format. Fostering a welcoming and engaging environment through a computer screen is no easy feat. I hope that Chatham provided all faculty mem-

bers ample resources and support to make online teaching as accessible as possible and that they continue those efforts into the 2021-22 school year. I also hope that the aid of the faculty was granted impartially to all of my peers.

Even more so, I am grateful to Chatham's student body for following the prescribed COVID-19 measures and bearing through the strangest of times. I felt a powerful sense of togetherness, even during the lowest lows, because of our dedication to inclusivity and compassion for one another. I hope that my fellow students found the same support I did in each other, and I will continue to

extend that same support to you going forward.

Now, as we conclude the school year, I hold a lot of sympathy and hope for Chatham in the fall. I understand that the decision-making process heading into an online format was beyond stressful due to the time constraints and the mass of people involved, and I can't claim to have the proper answers to the problems that the student body has raised. I hope that the takeaway from our collective experience is that community engagement is crucial; we have a small, close-knit environment, and we ought to put that to good use, starting from the top down.

## GUEST VOICES

*Guest Voices is an occasional series that invites students and staff to share their views on a topic of importance and interest to them on campus.*

### The value of Chatham's literary community

By Merdith Spahic '22

Minor Bird will always be an important club for Chatham University. It is a way for artists, writers and creatives to express their individuality and artistic capabilities. However, Minor Bird is primarily virtual this semester, and we were fearful that our operations would not happen this year, but luckily, that was not the

case. The organization has continued to be a unique niche arts club within the University.

Over the past years, Minor Bird has maintained its status as platform for creative students both majoring in the arts and in other fields. Without creative students, the magazine would not be what it is today. Minor Bird has made

contributions to Chatham University, but this year has been the most significant yet because of the ongoing pandemic.

Thus, my team and I were both amazed and felt a great deal of gratitude for the submissions we received this year. Half of the artworks were related to the ongoing pandemic, and the different artworks touched

on various topics such as COVID-19 hardships, love and hope, giving a light at the end of the tunnel.

Minor Bird literary magazine accepts prose, poetry and works of art across all sorts of mediums. What makes Minor Bird truly unique is our ability to create a safe space for anyone who wants to be a part of it. Our team is not only an advocate for the arts on campus but also cares about ethical issues and showcas- ►

es those issues through art and literature. The Minor Bird team strongly believes that our publication contributes a great deal to Chatham, as our school is a liberal arts institution.

At times, creatives here at Chatham are often glossed over because of the popularity of sports, which can be extremely frustrating for us creatives. That's why the Minor Bird team takes pride in maintaining this club because we believe artists and writers deserve the same recognition and respect as the sports teams receive. With this in mind, we strive to create a safe, creative and open environment. In this same vein, we do not tolerate hatred or discrimination.

Expressing creativity and individuality is vital for all students, but even more so in today's world wherein we are dealing with an ongoing pandemic. One submission, for example, that stuck out that is related to this pandemic is by Adriana Jurado's '21 titled "bAD aRT: Pandemic Hobby Edition 2."

Jurado stated that her works of art have been a "therapeutic escape from reality and CoCOVID-19," as sometimes "it's all too much handle."

Jurado advocates that art has helped her through hardships during the lockdown and handling her



The cover of the Minor Bird 2021 issue. Photo Credit: Minor Bird

tough schedule that is all virtual.

The Minor Bird team believes that creativity through art and literature is just your soul confessing. With this in mind, we maintain that the arts have and will always be a way to express emotions, stories, politics and, most importantly, independence for which Minor Bird continues to advocate. We are excited to finally release the literary magazine this spring and showcase the talent, while alleviating the anxiety of this pandemic.



**Merdith Spahic '22** is a junior double majoring in arts management (concentration in art history and graphic design) and international business, with minors in museum studies and marketing. Outside of her academics, she has worked with the Carnegie Museum of Art for two years. Working at CMOA has helped hone her skills and advance her experience into becoming an international art curator. She works as Minor Bird's managing editor.

## Athlete opinions on the pandemic sports season

By Dylan Vogel  
Luke Paulson

Sports this year at Chatham University have been different compared to previous years. Restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic have limited athletes with what they are allowed to do to play a full season.

Athletes have had to abide by guidelines such as random sample testing for COVID-19, limited interactions with friends and family and quarantine due to waves of COVID-19 spikes that caused increased risk of spreading the virus.

While many athletes around campus have expressed their willingness to abide by these guidelines, some still find it tough to follow all these restrictions to play sports. Chatham has done a relatively good job of keeping cases of COVID-19 down on campus, but this comes with many safety measures.

There were outbreaks on a few athletic teams during the fall, which caused a full team quarantine -- even if one player tested positive. The University was adamant about getting a full season in this year, after some of last year's cancellations.

When it comes to testing student athletes and following guidelines, Chatham



has been consistent about administering tests when athletes travel to away games. This makes athletes follow all protocols to be able to compete in games. Getting a negative test is what clears a student to play. Some athletes think that showing a negative test should mean more than just being able to play.

"Chatham should let us hang out in other team-

what's the harm in hanging out with one another if everyone gets a negative test," said Andrew Clark '21.

There were several other athletes who expressed this concern as they were adjusting to the new norms.

Many athletes have also stated that they feel there are pieces missing from the season. One of the biggest of these is the lack of fans.

During this season,

*"If we all practice and play together, then what's the harm in hanging out with one another if everyone gets a negative test?"*

*- Andrew Clark '21.*

mates' apartments if we all test negative. If we all practice and play together, then

Chatham has only allowed a small number of fans to attend outdoor events.

The PACs also does not allow fans to attend away events. This puts the parents who may be closer to an away field than to Chatham's home field at a disadvantage. Many athletes have not been able to have loved ones attend games because of these restrictions. Many athletes wonder why this is when there is plenty of space to spread out. This has especially taken a toll on seniors, whose family and friends are restricted from attending games.

Seniors wait several years before they get their time to shine and for them to graduate from the University like this is truly unfortunate. Many athletes at Chatham didn't think it would take too long for the school to loosen the restrictions of only 20 fans per game, but even as the semester ended, the rule still remained.

Another big thing that athletes missed out on was the ability to travel.

"Everything we had to do would be socially distant. We didn't play any non-conference teams, so I lost out on traveling," said Emily Nay '23. "We also didn't get to go to spring training [in Florida], at the beginning of the season, which was a huge loss."

This was difficult for athletes because the playing ▶

schedule was a heavier load on the weekends. It also was a missed opportunity to play different teams around Pennsylvania. Athletes asked, if all teams had to test negative to travel, why couldn't Chatham play out-of-conference opponents?

Another thing that athletes have had issues with is the food that is served at the University. Some believe campus has not provided athletes with the ability to

get meals needed for their proper diet. Many athletes are trying to build muscle, and Chatham has not been able to provide food that can help athletes compete at their best. They also have not been flexible with their dining hours.

With the limited places that serve food, athletes who have practices and games sometimes come home to cold food or closed shops. Many student athletes depend on the dining

hall for a quick late-night bite. It not being open after practice causes these athletes to spend money that they don't have, whether it's on extra groceries or fast food.

"We have practice until late at night, and we miss dinner more often than not," said Dominic Costello '23. "Sometimes when we go to the dining hall the food is cold or it's just leftovers. Chatham needs to have better options for us

after practices because we cannot sacrifice our health and eating habits during the season."

Overall, Chatham has done a good job at keeping athletes safe from COVID-19 for them to play their respective sports, but many athletes at the University have expressed that the school could have done a better job with fan attendance, travel restrictions and dining services.

## Women's volleyball team misses out on playoffs due to new rules

By Haley Daugherty

Chatham University's women's volleyball team made history this season. Or at least it thought it did.

On the night of its last game, the last win against Thiel College, the Presidents' Athletic Conference website showed Chatham University ranked in sixth place out of the eight teams in the conference. Not only did sixth place mean a spot in the playoffs, it meant that the volleyball team had accomplished a feat that had not been seen at Chatham University since 2003.

"Everything on the website indicated that we were

in the playoffs...obviously we were very excited," said Shaelah Pepperman, the team's court captain.

The team was ecstatic until it was informed less than 24 hours later that it did not make it to the playoffs, and Franciscan University had beat Chatham out for the sixth-place spot. After reading a heartfelt message from their coach, players were understandably confused.

"We immediately got very upset and rumors started flying...the story ended up being that Franciscan complained to the PACs and got us kicked out of the playoffs," said Pepperman.



So what happened, and why didn't the Lady Cougars get to go to the playoff tournament?

At the beginning of their competitive seasons, the athletic directors of every school in the PAC

got together to predetermine rules. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both directors and coaches recognized that there would be inconsistencies throughout each team's respective seasons. This could be due ►



to missed games, extended quarantines or any difficulties that could arise due to the rushed season.

“Each team knew that there could possibly be consequences from playing this year. Unfortunately this situation was one of them,” said Leonard Trevino, Chatham University’s athletic director.

The volleyball team was one of very few teams in Chatham’s athletic program that did not have a single COVID-19 case during its season. However, it did miss a game. Geneva College’s team tested positive and had to cancel its match against Chatham.

After multiple attempts on the Cougars’ part, there was no make up game. This caused Chatham to end with a record of three conference wins and five losses while Franciscan ended with three conference wins and six losses. This meant that Chatham played fewer games and this called into question the validity of its statistics.

Due to the uneven record, Chatham was put under the microscope as it and Franciscan were both on the cusp of playoffs. To settle the dispute, the athletic directors from other schools looked at Chatham and Franciscan’s head-to-head match during their regular season. Franciscan had won.

“Volleyball usually plays everybody twice...but this year, they only played everybody once because of the shortened season,” said Trevino

Both Trevino and volleyball coach Joseph Bortak were given a chance to argue their side at a meeting between all conference athletic directors. During their time to speak, both men referenced the fact that Chatham had beat more challenging teams in the conference (ones that Franciscan had lost to) and the fact that the Cougars had

what was supposed to be the playoff game between Franciscan and Geneva College, Trevino received a call from the PAC’s head chair.

“He called as a courtesy to tell us that Franciscan was dropping out of the playoffs,” said Trevino.

Due to positive results from a 24 hour test, Franciscan was unable to play and was out of the playoffs.

“Some of us [on the team] saw it coming because their other teams were getting shut down as we were getting the news about not

student player Macy King.

While their season felt rushed and came to an abrupt end, the players are still being recognized for their accomplishments and hard work.

“I think this season we really made everything work with bonding and working as a team,” said King.

Being one of the few teams at Chatham that had zero positive COVID-19 cases, volleyball has been praised by multiple people for doing their job as representatives of Chatham University.

“They worked so hard throughout the season. Whether it was lifting, practices or games, the team was always ready to work and do their jobs,” said Bortak. “When it comes down to it, we just need to win more games and get prepared for fall.”

“It really is a shame to see a team having to end their season when they are playing their best ball,” said Trevino.

Students can cheer on the Lady Cougars during their season this coming fall.

*“It really is a shame to see a team having to end their season when they are playing their best ball.” - Leonard Trevino*

better statistics and record than Franciscan. These arguments did not change the fact that Chatham had technically played fewer games.

Because the games were one and done, and due to COVID-19 restrictions, a second head-to-head game would be out of the question. Franciscan beating Chatham during the regular season was the deciding factor in the vote.

“Their AD spoke for maybe 30 seconds and said ‘we won’ and that was it,” said Trevino.

The story did not end there. On the morning of

being in the playoffs anymore,” said Pepperman.

Rather than let Chatham play, the PACs decided that it was too late for the Cougars to step in and awarded Geneva with a first-round bye into the tournament.

“Letting us play would have meant the entire tournament gets pushed back,” said Bortak. The further rejection from the PACs felt even more like a blow to the players.

“I am so happy that we got to play but the fact that our season ended right when we were getting into the groove of things is so unfortunate,” said graduate



## Eden Hall's unique history: A vacation destination for working women

By Gena Carter

Physically disconnected from main campus by a 45-minute drive, Chatham University's 388-acre Eden Hall campus is located in the rural woodlands of Richland Township. Eden Hall is home to the Falk School of Sustainability and is outfitted with Earth-conscious amenities such as an onsite wastewater treatment operation, geothermal heating systems, 400 solar panels and a certified organic farm.

But, it hasn't always been that way.

Stacey Enck, facilities manager at Eden Hall, has been there for 13 years.

"When I started, none of the new buildings were here at all," she said. "Other buildings in bad condition were taken down. There was a blacksmith shop, poultry processing building, a shed row with stables, a house," all in dilapidated conditions.

Eden Hall's history, like Chatham's, is one that is centered around a commitment toward women. Prior to being a satellite campus of Chatham, Eden Hall was a vacation destination for the working women of western Pennsylvania.

The idea of creating a destination for working wom-

en came from the original owner of Eden Hall, Sebastian Mueller. Mueller had travelled to America from Germany to help his cousin, Henry J. Heinz, with his food processing business in 1884.

While working at The H.J. Heinz Company, Mueller fell in love with Heinz's sister, Elizabeth, and was married in 1888, according to the Eden Hall Foundation. The couple had three children together: Elsa, Alma and Stanford. Elsa and Alma died as infants from a bacterial infection, and Stanford died at 18 from scarlet fever.

Beginning in 1912, Mueller began to purchase land in Richland Township to create this eventual vacation destination. At the time of his death in 1938, Mueller had acquired more than 400 acres of land, according to resources in Chatham's Archives.

Mueller wanted "to maintain a vacation home where working girls and women of proper character may go from time to time for the purpose of enjoying a vacation and obtaining rest and recreation," as outlined in his will. To operate this home, Mueller appointed trustees and created the Eden Hall Foundation.

Vacation at Eden Hall was



Sebastian Mueller, founder of Eden Hall Farm. Photo courtesy of Chatham Archives. Original source for photo unknown

originally only offered to female Heinz employees, but, after attendance dropped off, working women from other companies could be invited and accompany Heinz employees.

Former Chatham president Esther Barazzone, Ph.D., heard a rumor that the Eden Hall Foundation was thinking of selling its land in 2007. As luck would have it, the Eden Hall Foundation was simultaneously looking to Chatham as a suitable buyer.

Chatham received Eden Hall during the 2008 Reces-

sion, according to Barazzone.

"We viewed it as a chance to turn Chatham from a regional institution to a national institution," she said.

"I was extremely proud of the Board [of Trustees]," she continued, "because they decided, as the U.S. economy crashed, as our endowment dropped by 3-some percent, and as we bought Eastside, they decided that ... we would create an exemplary school for sustainability."

Eden Hall campus opened to students in 2015. The ►

addition of 388 acres has made Chatham the largest academic landowner in Allegheny County, larger than schools like Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, according to Barazzone.

Lois Claus, 85, stayed at Eden Hall for the first time in 1953 when she worked as a secretary at H.J. Heinz Company. "I thought it was fabulous at that time. In those days growing up, we didn't travel very far," Claus said. "I had never been anywhere like that ... it was like a resort."

Heinz employees would reserve a weekend to go up to Eden Hall, and they spent the weekend riding horses, playing ping pong, enjoying the jukebox and bowling in the Lodge's basement.

"It didn't cost anything," Claus said. "The bus came after quitting time on Friday, and the bus would bring us back on Sunday afternoon."



Female Heinz employees enjoy a meal within the lodge's cafeteria in the 1960s. Photo courtesy of Chatham Archives. Original source for photo unknown

Women could also stay at Eden Hall if they were healing from operations, free of charge, and the cost of their surgeries paid for by the foundation.

Aspects of Eden Hall's history are still evident on campus. The road that travels through campus, Ridge Road, serves as a line between the old and the new. Across the street from the dining hall, students can visit Sebastian Mueller's old house and the Lodge. At the

Lodge, students can visit the swimming pool and bowling alley once used by guests.

Further down the road, students can visit Chatham's organic farm, Elsama, that was named after Mueller's daughters.

"There is history with this land," Eden Hall resident Annon Ball '23 said. In order to pursue sustainability and maintain Eden Hall's history, Annon believes that there needs to

be more community engagement, and that students and professors need more resources.

According to Enck, the historical buildings are here to stay. While there are no definite plans, she believes that Chatham would prefer to renovate the buildings rather than get rid of them.

"I had this fantasy that one room in the Lodge could be made into a working women's museum for Pittsburgh, which... I still think would be a great idea," Barazzone said. "I don't think that part of [Eden Hall] has been preserved, except in the retelling of its story, and that's too bad.

"I'm very happy to see that President Finegold has embraced and continues the main missions of [Chatham]," Barazzone continued. "The commitment to sustainability, to globalism, to women's leadership, to civic engagement ... I do hope that continues."

## Supporting others while handling adversity

*Chatham Chats is the advice column by the Communi-qué staff. This series is a safe space for students to ask questions regarding any problems they may be facing.*

**I have friends who continue to come to me for help and support when they are having a bad day**

**or struggling with something in their life. I love the fact that they feel safe coming to me and want to ►**



Chatham Chats

WITH THE COMMUNIQUÉ

**talk to me about things, but sometimes I have a lot on my plate and can't handle trying to solve the problems of others while still focusing on my own well-being. Do you have any recommendations on how to be a supportive and caring friend while still maintaining your boundaries and making sure to prioritize your own mental health?**

– Concerned Friend

Dear Concerned Friend,  
I would first like to say

that it's great that you have created a safe and welcoming environment for your friends. I'm sure that they appreciate having a support system that they can rely on in tough times.

Helping friends and supporting others is a great act of kindness. However, you need to prioritize your own mental health. Odds are, if you're not in the right headspace, you won't be able to fully be there for those who are seeking your help.

Whenever you need a mental break (or just a

break in general), I would suggest logging off your phone and computer for a while. Going off grid is a great way to destress and get some distance from other people's problems. Without the constant presence of technology, you have a bit of a break from those messaging you, and it will establish the understanding that you will answer their messages when you're ready to talk.

If people are seeking you out in person, there is nothing wrong with asking to

talk about their troubles later or another time. Boundaries are needed in every relationship. Establishing them does not make you a bad friend. Oftentimes, boundaries are what's best for both parties to thrive.

It is incredibly easy to become wrapped up in other people's struggles and lose focus on your own well-being. Make sure to check in with yourself as we head into finals week!

Sincerely,

A Helping Hand

## In the Frame with Michaela Soler '21

*Chatham film graduate talks working for Netflix's 'The Chair,' her passion for visual effects*

By Irina Bucur

Michaela Soler '21 hangs up flickering fairy lights, taping them methodically to a wall in contrast to the blue light she fixed above the windowsill moments earlier. The room glows with shades of balmy yellow and piercing blues. "Let's try another lens," she says.

Soler and I are filming her short capstone film, "Lucid," in her dorm. Her set-up - a camera with a tripod, monitor and multiple lenses of varying sizes, changes periodically as she rearranges props, modifies camera angles, and adjusts lighting. When her mem-

ory card stopped working, rendering five hours' worth of footage unusable, Soler swiftly changed direction, explaining what shots we could scrap, and which ones she would retake "even better than the first time."

As she directs me with her camera, explaining the special effects she wants to insert and edit in each shot, it's hard not to notice the gleam in her eye that she gets whenever she talks about film.

If you ever pulled a late night at the Art and Design Center on campus, Soler may already be a familiar



Portrait of Michaela Soler '21. Photo Credit: Michaela Soler

face. Before the pandemic, you could catch her poring over videos and photos for hours in the computer lab, often editing projects that were not required for class.

"She can sit and envision things before she's even put pen to paper and drawn out," Soler's friend since

high school and collaborator, Victoria Davidio, says.

Tucked in her backpack, Soler carries a little black notebook in which she logs all of her special effect ideas and project outlines.

"If I listen to a new song I like, I start coming up with an idea. I see something ►

on TV where I'm like, 'oh man, they could have done this better,' I make up a story," she says.

Soler's style is dark, mysterious and a little spooky. "Lucid," her capstone film, is a special effects statement piece about being unable to escape a dream that turns into a nightmare.

"I love creepy. Like, 'oh snap, what's that in the background?' kind of creepy, 'there's something following her' kind of creepy. I also love anything '80s and anything that looks a little older," she says.

Her family was hesitant -- at first -- when she decided to pursue film rather than a more traditional major. Then she showed them her first completed project. Her father is one of her biggest supporters, and Soler, a first-generation college student, often refers to him for feedback. The movies they watched together when Soler was growing up, from Stephen King adaptations to Brat Pack flicks, inspire her today.

"What definitely got me into film, especially my style, is my dad. I got into horror, especially '80s horror retro-style filmmaking because of him," Soler says.

"He's the biggest voice in my head," she continues.

The summer after her sophomore year, Soler



"What Was Once Mine," a photo series by Michaela Soler.



A Netflix pass for "The Chair" production. Photo Credit: Michaela Soler.



Michaela Soler works with her camera for a project. Photo Credit: Irina Bucur

worked 13-hour days at a café to save up for her own camera to build her professional portfolio.

Davidio, a dancer based in Philadelphia, appears in many of the pieces as a model and actress.

"It's easy to collab with her because she's very open minded. I can balance off exactly what she needs at that moment," Davidio says.

Together, Soler and Davidio are a tag-team. While current collaborations are at a standstill due to the virus, they are planning to film a project in New York City when travel restrictions and mask-wearing ease up.

During her time as a film student at Chatham University, she seized any opportunity to work in film in and outside of her courses.

This semester, Soler got involved in the Netflix production of "The Chair" as a COVID-19 monitor, ensuring that health and safety protocols were being followed by extras. She would wake up every day at 4 a.m., then quickly freshen up and head to the crew's "base camp" location with several other working Chatham students. The crew would meet with their gear and get tested for the virus before heading to set. For virtual classes, Soler would walk with her computer into a spare room, wherever she could find one, return- ►

ing to set when her class was over.

At one point, one of the producers for “The Chair” referred to her by name.

Soler had no idea the producer even knew who she was.

Soler says the experience was stressful, exhausting

and exhilarating all the same. Parallel to taking 18 credits, she was making connections and industry friends.

“It was so cool. How many people can say they got a job at Netflix while in college?” she says.

Recently, she received an informal offer to work at Showtime once it begins shooting “Rust” in the Pittsburgh region. She’s excited for the possibilities that await her.

Soler is unsure if she will move to Pittsburgh permanently after she graduates, to Los Angeles -- where other Chatham media students, including James Garvin ‘19, Yundian Jing ‘20 and Fanghao Tien ‘20 have relocated -- or elsewhere.

Wherever she ends up, she says she wants to work as a special or visual effects editor.

“Seeing the effects that look amazing and cinema being broken down to simple alternative solutions that look great, I think that’s what drives me.”

To get a glimpse of Soler’s work, you can follow her on Instagram (@lux\_evisions).



“What Was Once Mine,” a photo series by Michaela Soler.

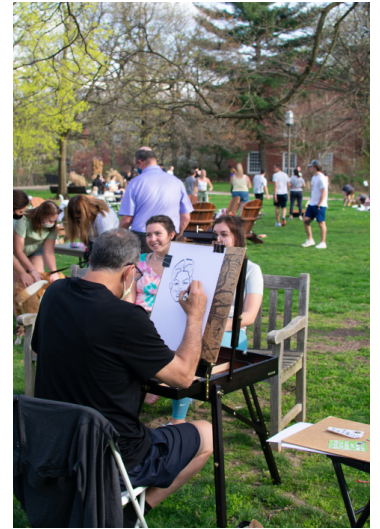
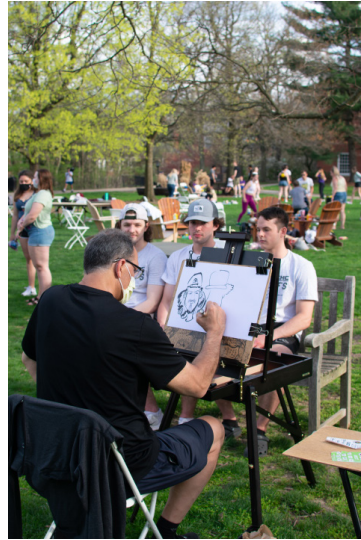


Pictured Shravani Charyulu in Michaela Soler’s documentary assignment.

## The Spring Carnival

By Lilly Kubit

*Many traditional events were not possible due to the pandemic this academic year, but in early April students and faculty enjoyed the spring carnival on the quad.*



*Students play games such as giant Connect 4-in-a-row and mini golf.*

*A professional artist draws students' portraits.*



*Students and faculty bond at the spring carnival by petting President Dr. David Finegold's dog and making balloon animals.*



*Students play cornhole at the carnival and have fun with friends.*

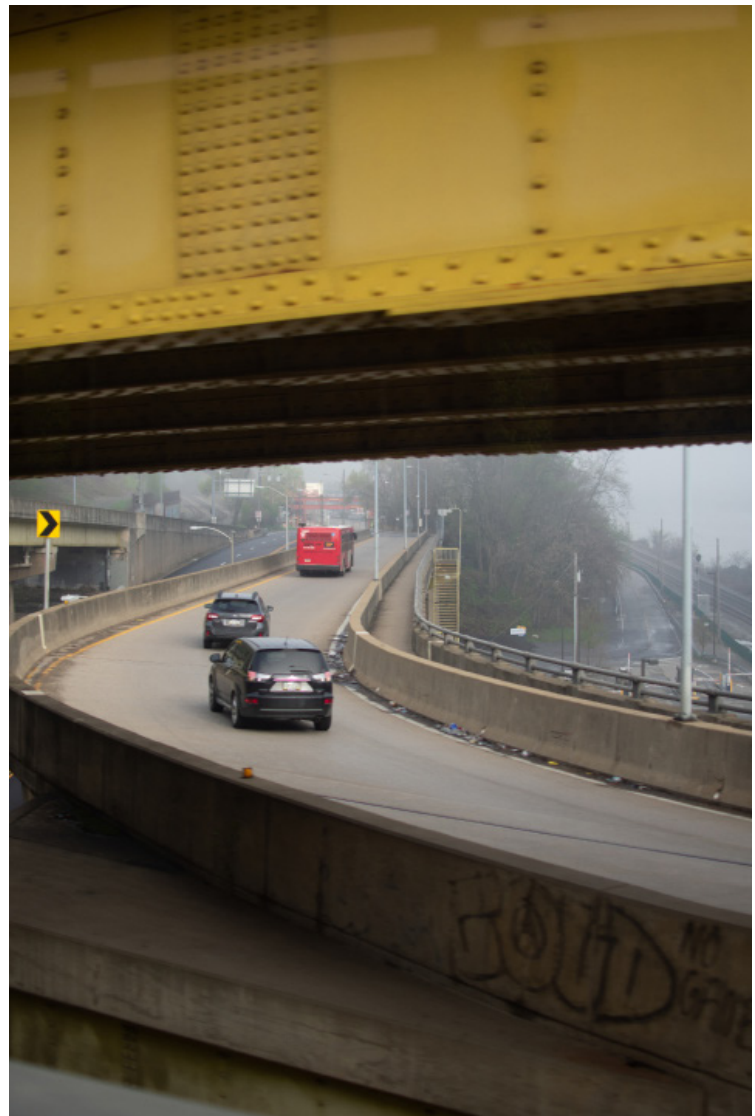
## ‘Aht N Abaht

By Lilly Kubit

*Even though the semester has ended at Chatham University, life is still hustling and bustling in Pittsburgh, unlike this time last year. We may still be plagued by the virus, but many of us are able to get ‘aht n abaht more safely these days.*









## *Doodlebug and Bird talk about it all*

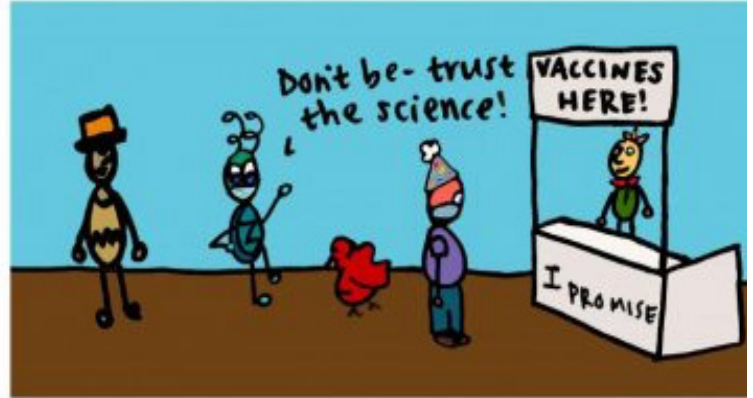
*Out of Left Field — that's how Doodlebug has been feeling lately. Everything seems like it's happening so fast! He's rebranding with the help of his friends. New experiences, new locations and new ideas! Stay tuned to see how Doodlebug continues his journey through Pittsburgh's and the world's current events.*

Alexis Taranto '24

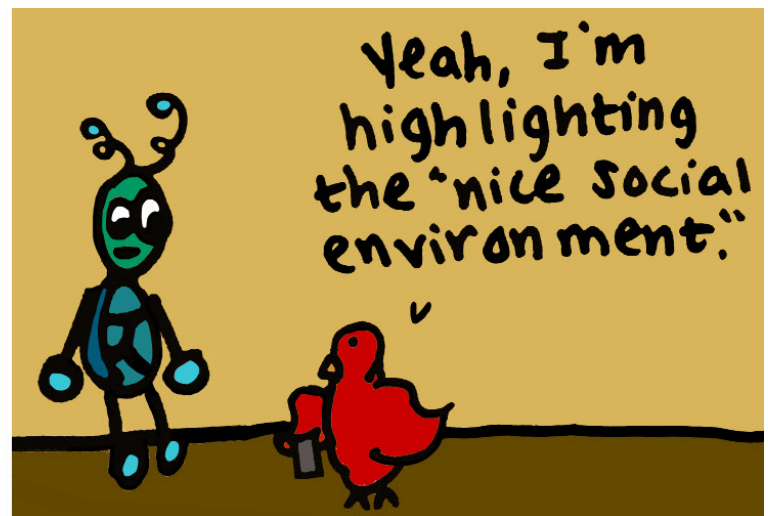
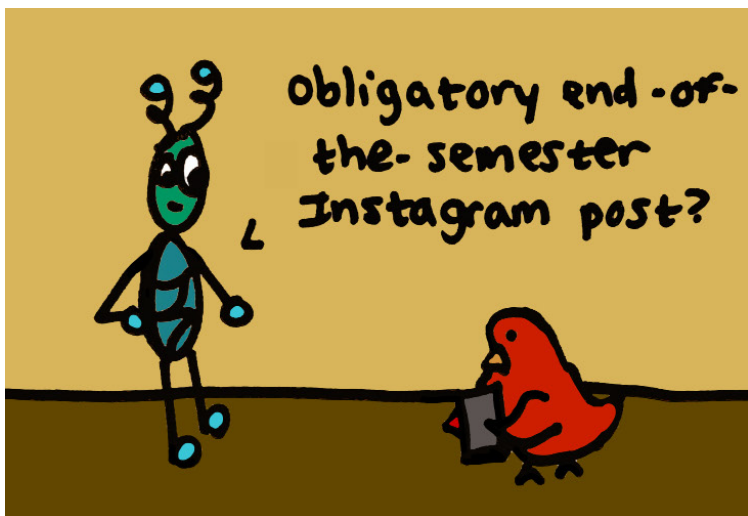
## Dean's Hour



## Get the Vaccine



## ‘Nice Social Environment’



**Letters to the editor**

The Communiqué 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).

## Keep in touch

**Corrections**

The Communiqué 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 (communiqué@chatham.edu).

**Advertising**

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

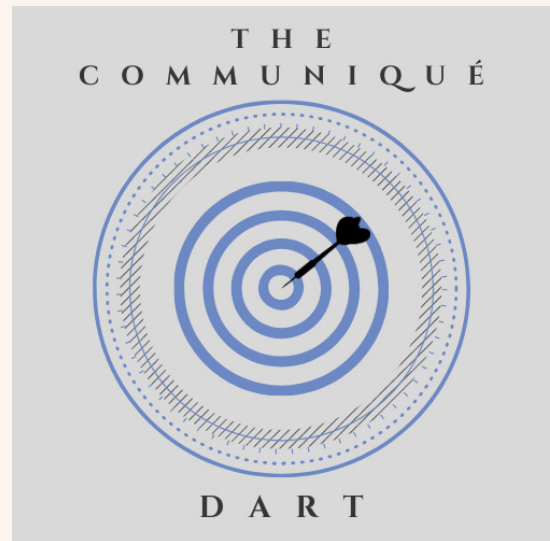
**Join the staff**

The Communiqué welcomes writers, photographers, videographers, graphic designers, website and social media editors, artists, and students with interest in marketing and advertising. Email Editor-in-Chief Alice Crow (alice.crow@chatham.edu) for access to the Zoom link.



**Submit a question**

Be part of our advice column! Submit a question by sending it to [communiqué@chatham.edu](mailto:communiqué@chatham.edu). For more information on how to submit a question go to our website [chathamcommuniqué.com](http://chathamcommuniqué.com).



**Take a listen**

The Communiqué is publishing podcast episodes! "The Communiqué Dart" will focus on diving deeper into the important stories at Chatham. Follow our social media for more information.

Check us  
out  
online



[chathamcommuniqué.com](http://chathamcommuniqué.com)



@Communique\_CU



@Communique\_CU



@ChathamCommunique

Interested in advertising with the Communiqué?



Email [rylee.napolitan@chatham.edu](mailto:rylee.napolitan@chatham.edu) to learn more!