

COMMUNIQUE

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Issues between facilities department and residents exasperated by pandemic, lack of communication

By Jade Lombardo and Anna Betar

Volatile winter weather, the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of clear communication have contributed to frustrations among student residents and Chatham University's facilities staff alike.

Throughout the beginning of the spring semester, as well as during the fall 2021 semester, some students have reported living with unattended problems in the residence halls, including issues with heating, smoke alarms and insects.

Robert DuBray, assistant vice president of Facilities and Public Safety, asks students for patience and collaboration; the department only has 10 staff members to oversee 64 buildings, 147 apartments SEE **FACILITIES**, PAGE 2

Cougar Den revitalization

By Carson Gates

Many know that fan spirit is high at Duke University basketball and Penn State football games.

Now add Chatham University basketball games to that list.

The Cougar Den has overgone a serious overall this sports season because members of the student body wanted to bring new energy to campus sporting events.

Mason Schwartz '24, Sam Helton '25 SEE **CHEER**, PAGE 5



Mason Schwartz '24, Sam Helton '25, Quinn Burke '25 and Dawson Morrow '25 after the men's basketball's semi-final win. Photo Credit: Carson Gates

New club to teach self-defense

By Jackie Clark

Ever wanted to give martial arts a try? There's a Chatham University club for that.

Savannah (Ava) Meyers '23 created the club to meet other students interested in martial arts – regardless of their experience level. Meyers specializes in at least five martial arts, including judo and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.

"Martial arts is an inclusive sport, so I want it to be as inclusive as possible. Then, everyone can bring out the best parts of themselves," Meyers said.

Meyers tapped her friend Tanner Kim, or Coach Tanner, to help. He has a background in martial arts, as well, and has won medals at the national level. He earned a black belt in both Judo and Taekwondo and has coaching experience from his family's gym SEE **MARTIAL**, PAGE 6

Work to be done on ‘red card’ communication system

FACILITIES, FROM PAGE 1 and approximately 40,000-plus work orders a year.

“We do not want your problems to drag on. We need to find a better way to communicate the concerns to us in a timely fashion so we can respond,” DuBray said.

On Jan. 21, Cassidy Kinney ’25 and Emi Perdan ’24 were sleeping in their Rea House room when they were abruptly woken up at 2 a.m. to the sound of the smoke alarm blaring. Water from radiators above their room was leaking down into their smoke alarm, causing it to go off. Due to the early hour, Public Safety arrived and disconnected the smoke alarm to stop the beeping.

After the incident, Kinney and Perdan said they spoke to Residence Life and Public Safety about the issue. According to the

“With the pandemic, it’s just so much harder.”
- Robert DuBray

students, officers who arrived to fix the problem said they would file a report with facilities, and Residence Life staff told them they would also submit a work order. However, the issue was not resolved by facilities for more than a week.

“Things happen at night that Residence Assistants aren’t equipped

to deal with because it’s not in their job description. Public Safety isn’t always able to deal with it, so maintenance is something that’s kind of necessary,” Kinney said.

A delay in facilities addressing student concerns can be for a multitude of reasons, including staff availability, work order prioritization and department resources.

“After hours, most of our people are gone by 3 p.m., but we always have one [tradesman]. After hours, all facility calls come into Public Safety and they assess the situation,” DuBray said. “If it’s something the officers can assist with, typically they are responsible for.”

As for prioritization of work orders, it depends on how important the issue is to student life and safety.

“It’s the only way we can do it. First, we have to define what the need is. If it jeopardizes life, safety or buildings, we have to put all other matters on hold until we correct it,” DuBray said.

Examples include the recent heating issues in the Art & Design Center and the water main break on Chatham’s Shadyside campus on March 7. Both issues were serious and placed as a top priority for the department.

Additionally, supply chain shortages due to COVID-19 can impact how quickly issues are resolved.

“With the pandemic, it’s just so much harder,” DuBray explained. “There’s so many variables involved with the pandemic and

shipping lead times. Nobody has any supplies.”

With that said, DuBray encourages students to submit work orders themselves directly to maintenance through the ChathamU app because

“I don’t know if maintenance ever made it out, but it never really got solved.”
- Jocelyn Pocernich ’25

this is the quickest way to have a problem addressed.

Other problems aren’t able to be easily solved by the facilities staff. Sometimes issues are above the staff’s experience level, but bringing in contractors can be a “big mess,” according to DuBray.

This can be the case for issues like pests. Last October, Jocelyn Pocernich ’25 and her roommates experienced a wasp infestation through their Rea House room’s air conditioning unit.

Pocernich said she filed multiple work orders to remedy the issue but did not receive the help she needed. Eventually, the problem became overwhelming with 30-plus wasps, and the students attempted to solve the problem themselves with a can of Raid insect killer and sealing off the air conditioner with plastic and duct tape.

“It was a health hazard to have

stinging wasps flying around you while you’re trying to study or while you’re asleep. They’d fall on the ground, and we’d almost step on them all the time,” Pocernich said. “We filed multiple work orders, at least three of them, if not four. I don’t know if maintenance ever made it out, but it never really got solved.”

For pest and insect control, the facilities staff sometimes needs to contract outside support to address these problems, DuBray said.

Currently, the maintenance department is trying to improve what it calls its “red card” system to help communication with residents. When members of the facilities staff enter a student’s room to address an issue, they are supposed to leave a red card detailing what they fixed to notify the resident that the problem was addressed.

“We’re working on making that better,” DuBray said, admitting that the cards are not always left behind for students. Consequently, sometimes students think that facilities never came and checked out a problem, when in fact someone did.

To submit work orders

Go to the “Resources” tab on the ChathamU app. Select “Request Maintenance” and fill out the form accordingly.

ChathamU App offers resources; new updates in the works

By Chelsea Perello

The ChathamU app exists to help students in a variety of ways – more than they may even realize.

Dr. Chris Purcell, Chatham University's Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students, said the app is an effective way to communicate with the Chatham community.

"The ChathamU app has been particularly helpful for us to have a sustainable way to display the orientation schedule, promote events and make our resources available more easily for students," he said in an email interview.

The app has been around for many years and changes are regularly made to improve the student experience.

"I particularly want to emphasize the 'resources' tab," Purcell said. "Many of the resources students need in residence life, safety or involvement are there for students to access. Some departments also use the 'events' feature to promote their events to students. We also notify students of events happening on campus to drive engagement."

By going into the resource tab in the ChathamU app, students also can reserve laundry time slots. By clicking on "residence life" and scrolling down to "laundry sign ups," students are able to reserve a time slot for themselves.

New updates are in the works for the ChathamU app, according to Purcell.



"While the app has helped in many ways, we have learned a lot from this version and will be transitioning to a new app vendor," Purcell said. "The Office of Student Engagement, along with University communications and Information Technology (IT), have been attending presentations by new app vendors. Specifically, we are hoping to find an app with a friendlier interface, a more robust system to organize student groups, clearer ways to access resources and an app that syncs more seamlessly with MyChatham Happenings (or could even replace it)."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ChathamU app introduced a new feature for completing required health screenings, among other health-related resources.

"Throughout 2020, the app was used for students to take a daily health screening for COVID-19 symptoms. Students had to show their screening to get into dining locations or the gym. We've also added links to the Talk Campus and Thriving Campus mental health resources," Purcell said.

The ChathamU app is available to be downloaded on any mobile device. Students will need to put in their Chatham username and password to access the app. The University welcomes feedback on the app and their user experiences.

Purcell explained that "when we

have had issues, typically our app vendor has been able to solve them if we notify them."

If students notice something wrong with the app, they should contact the Office of Student Affairs at OSA@chatham.edu.

POLICE BLOTTER

All information is provided by Chatham University's Public Safety

6 p.m. Feb. 18 – Officers spoke to a student about an incident that occurred off campus. The student reported the incident to the Pittsburgh Police and wanted no further action from the Chatham University Police. The incident involved a suspicious vehicle at Shady and Highland avenues.

8:15 p.m. Feb. 18 – Officers received a call for shots fired near Graham Field. A team practicing could hear what sounded like shots being fired in the area. The team moved into the locker room, and the gate was secured. Chatham Police, along with Wilkinsburg Police, checked the area with nothing found.

1:30 a.m. Feb. 19 – Officers noticed a vehicle crash on Woodland Road Bridge. Drivers exchanged information, and no one was injured.

7 p.m. Feb. 19 – Officers noticed damage to the driving gate at Graham Field. A report was taken.

2:25 p.m. Feb. 20 – Officers received a call for what sounded like shots being fired near Graham Field. Players were in the locker room, and the gate was locked. Chatham and Wilkinsburg police responded, with nothing found.

2:55 p.m. Feb. 21 – Officers received a call for a student who fell on the side of Buhl Hall. The student was injured and transported to the hospital by Pittsburgh medics.

1 p.m. Feb. 22 – Officers assisted other police departments with serving documents on campus.

11:15 p.m. Feb. 24 – Officers received a call to assist with a sick student returning to campus on a bus from an athletic event. Officers notified Pittsburgh medics, who responded and transported the student to the hospital.

8:20 p.m. Feb. 26 – Officers responded to Fickes Hall for a sick student. The student was transported to the hospital by Pittsburgh medics.

7:40 a.m. March 3 – Officers responded to the Athletic and Fitness Center for a minor vehicle and golf cart accident. A Chatham golf cart bumped another vehicle, causing minor damage. Officers took a report.

Chatham's updated mask policy seems poorly timed

By Abigail Hakas

Chatham University announced in an email on Feb. 25 that the campus mask policy would change as of Monday, Feb. 28.

“Chatham is mask optional on campus, except in campus shuttles, healthcare settings and instructional settings where they will still be required,” the email stated. The change would be enacted on the first official day of spring break; those who would remain on campus during that break would be the first population to be able to unmask if they'd like to in many locations on campus.

Days later, the University further updated its mask policy, based on the declining number of recent positive cases and other guidance, to also make face masks optional on campus shuttles.

Chatham declared this change came as a result of the new CDC guidelines, which state that low-risk and medium-risk areas of the country can relax their mask requirements. Allegheny County is one of the areas declared as low-risk, according to the CDC. (Also, Chatham's current vaccination rate stands at 95% of the community being fully vaccinated, according to a campus COVID-19 update on March 11, and 27% of the Chatham community has reported receiving a booster shot.)

The CDC guidelines were released on Feb. 25, the same day that Chatham announced over

email that the mask policy would change. According to Associate Professor Michael Boyd, the co-chair of the University Committee, the faculty were polled during a recent meeting on whether to keep the mask requirement in place. About two-thirds of the faculty were in favor. Although this vote did not determine the decision, it was taken into consideration



Photo Credit: Unsplash

when the University reviewed its COVID-19 mask policies.

The University's mask policy changes are among the early steps toward a return to a pre-pandemic normal. Unfortunately, it seems like it's poorly timed.

Spring break, for many students, means returning to families – potentially out of state or country – or going on vacations. Students often use spring break as a time to rest from academics and focus on their social lives. Although Allegheny County is considered low-risk, the areas some students traveled to may not have been.

Although students are still required to wear masks in health-care and instructional settings on campus, COVID-19 does not stop spreading when students move into the hallways, library or lounges, which have been populated in recent days by students just back from spring break.

This could possibly cause a post-spring break COVID-19 surge,

similar to the surge seen as students returned in January for the spring semester when the Omicron variant was more widespread, and it raises this question: Why was this policy change enacted during spring break instead of the week prior or two weeks after to avoid a possible uptick in post-travel cases?

In recent campus emails, the University wrote that it “will monitor case trends over the coming weeks, and then revisit campus health and safety protocols in light of any post-spring break case trends and the new updated CDC guidance

that places Allegheny County in the low COVID-19 community level.”

If the University would have waited a couple weeks until after spring break to instate the new masking guidelines, that would have allowed time for any potential exposures to be tested. Plus, any students and faculty who were unknowingly exposed over the break and may be asymptomatic would have remained masked up on campus a while longer.

Another option could have been to wait until the summer semester classes started to test the new masking policy. The summer semester is a perfect opportunity to try out the policy change because fewer students will be on campus, meaning that if the revised masking policy fails or Allegheny County sees a strong resurgence of cases, there will be less exposure among students.

Understandably, students and faculty are eager to take masks off inside buildings, but careful thought and consideration must be given to the risks and rewards of doing so right after spring break.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Communiqué welcomes readers to submit letters to be considered for publication. Send your reactions to stories, thoughts on Chatham University and whatever else is on your mind to opinion editor Abbey Sullivan (abbey.sullivan@chatham.edu).

Students cheer on team to semi-final success

CHEER, FROM PAGE 1

'25, Quinn Burke '25 and Dawson Morrow '25 wanted to find ways to encourage more attendance at Chatham athletic events.

"We wanted that [poor attendance] to change so we got together [and] we started getting creative and we started bringing people together," Helton said.

The four are all members of Chatham's baseball team and can be recognized at games by their outlandish wardrobe and whiteboard. Their outfits usually consist of an aspect of that night's theme, no shirt and, in Helton's case, his signature Lucha Libre mask.

We want to "have as much fun as possible, look as dumb as possible ... something that the fans are going to enjoy," Burke said.

"We got something and stuck with it," Helton added.

Dressing fun is all good, but creating an atmosphere relies on more

than just having a large closet. The recent creation of the Instagram account @chatham.cougar.den has united fans of Chatham Athletics. This page keeps students informed on games happening and of any themes for the fans in attendance.

The men's basketball President Athletic Conference (PAC) semi-final matchup saw such a theme in effect with a blackout. Students showed up at the Athletic and Fitness Center (AFC) dressed in all-black garb.

The students in attendance did more than just dress up, though. They brought life to the previously dormant Cougar Den.

We want to "bring the loudest atmosphere, make it as hard as possible for the other team," Burke said.

This energy does more than rattle the bleachers; it impacts the game. The student section stands the entire game and can be heard cheer-



The men's basketball team celebrates with the Cougar Den. Photo Credit: Lauren Haak

ing, booing and chanting in unison.

Chants can be anything from "defense" to the lyrics of Lady Gaga's acclaimed song "Bad Romance."

Most chants are led by the shirtless duo of Helton and Burke.

Helton, donning his mask, brings energy and passion to the front row. He can often be seen belly rolling, flexing or doing his best impression of a goat scream during the opposing team's free throws.

Burke can be recognized by his whiteboard, which he uses to tell the Chatham faithful to get loud or to call players on the other team ugly.

The semi-final matchup for men's basketball saw Chatham host Westminster. The Cougars took a commanding lead early, motivated by the energy in the stands.

However, Westminster clawed its way back into the contest with timely shots. Chatham only held a one-point lead late into the second half, and momentum favored the visiting Titans.

That's when the Cougar Den stepped in and willed their team to victory.

"Our students provide so much energy for our guys. They are by far the best student section in the PAC," said Chatham men's basketball head coach David Richards. "Thank you to all the students that come. It was truly amazing."

With the spring sports season in full swing now, there are plenty of opportunities for students to continue the growth of the Cougar Den. For updates and schedules, visit gochathamcougars.com.



The student section cheers at a recent game. Photo Credit: Lauren Haak

Martial arts club wants to give students chance to try something new

MARTIAL, FROM PAGE 1
in Brentwood.

Meyers said that Kim seemed excited to introduce martial arts to a new group of people.

“I want to spread the real spirit of martial arts. By making martial arts more accessible to people, I hope students will take the opportunity to try something new that they have never attempted before,” Meyers said.

Within this inclusive environment, she wants students to feel good about who they are and what they are accomplishing. Officers of this club include co-captain Makenzie Galley ‘24 and treasurer Regis Wintermantel ‘23. Dr. John Stakeley, a business professor, veteran and highly skilled martial arts practitioner, is the club’s faculty adviser.

“I was immediately impressed

with Ava’s energy and drive. She has stepped up to the plate,” Stakeley said about his first impressions of Meyers.

In his 33 years of training, Stakeley earned two black belts in American Freestyle Karate and Isshin-Ryu Karate, one brown belt in Kenpo Jiu-Jitsu, two green belts in Judo and has experience in mixed martial arts (MMA). Additionally, at his former university, he was able to create a similar martial arts organization with more than 50 students.

“This is one of our eventual goals for the club,” Stakeley said. “Currently, we are focused on attracting more students and promoting the club in a future event.”

Galley added that “martial arts is an even playing field. No matter who you are and where you begin, you can still participate in this fun



Member of the martial arts club include students, a martial arts instructor and the club’s faculty adviser. Photo Credit: Chatham Martial Arts Club



Co-captain Makenzie Galley does a hip-throw on captain Ava Meyers. Photo Credit: Chatham Martial Arts Club

experience. So, it was a natural progression to join this club and meet others like me.”

Stakeley hopes the martial arts club will encourage “servant leadership.”

“A dojo can be any place – from a gym to the lawn in the park. An important aspect of martial arts are people coming together in their individual journeys,” he said. “People need help in gaining these skills, and by learning and teaching each other, then there is progress for each person’s journey.”

For students interested in gaining self-defense skills or bonding with others over this shared interest, the martial arts club has practices from 3-4 p.m. Fridays in the Athletic and Fitness Center dance studio.



Chatham Chats

WITH THE COMMUNIQUE

Submit a question

For more information on how to submit a question, go to

chathamcommunique.com

or DM our Instagram

@Communique_CU

The Radar

A series featuring Chatham artists

By Lilly Kubit



Katelyn Nee '23 is studying for a major in media arts with a concentration in photography and a minor in art history. She is a fine art photographer. Nee's work focuses on street and landscape photography, specifically from her hometown and Pittsburgh. "I have been really interested in how different spaces can evoke emotions. In most of my work, I'm trying to find ways to express these emotions through scenes that can be almost mundane," Nee said. Her other hobbies include going to museums with friends, going for walks and making soup. For more art from Nee, check out her Instagram account @katelynanee.



"A man sits by the misty water"

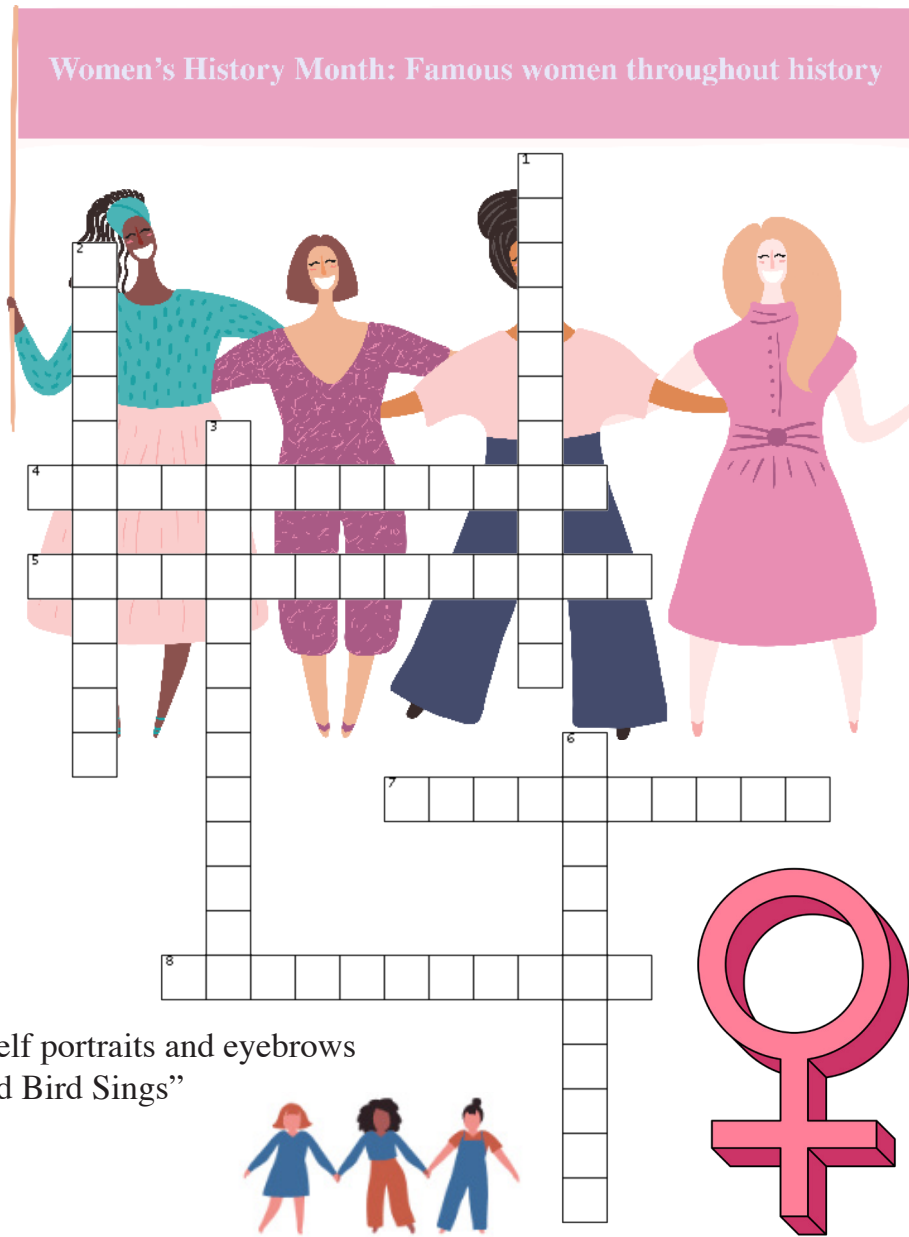


"Lights illuminate empty streets at night"



"A hilly street in Pittsburgh"

Happy Women's History Month from the Communiqué



Down:

- 1. The namesake of Chatham's cafe
- 2. "Joe Biden and _____ 2020!"
- 3. Former U.S. first lady
- 6. Famous primatologist

Across:

- 4. The next face on the \$20 bill
- 5. Queer activist at Stonewall riots
- 7. Mexican painter famous for her self portraits and eyebrows
- 8. Writer of "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"

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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 (communique@chatham.edu).