



# THE CHOATE NEWS

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# Social Justice

## CHOATE CONFRONTS RACIAL INJUSTICE

By **Adrienne Chacón '22** and **Renee Jiang '22**  
*Copy Editors*

Last spring, after George Floyd was killed by police officers in Minneapolis, Breonna Taylor by officers in Louisville, Ky., and Ahmaud Arbery by armed civilians in Georgia, protests in support of Black lives and against systemic inequality and discrimination erupted across the country. The Choate community was not immune to widespread feelings of hurt, anger, and frustration in response to these and other acts of race-based trauma, and over the

past several months, both students and faculty have responded in a variety of ways.

The School recognized that community members may need additional support and resources in the wake of these events. One of the first actions taken by the School was the reconstitution of the Current Events Resource Group (CERG), which is dedicated to providing “resources and support to the Choate community when events in our local community, nation, and world prove challenging, divisive, or especially complex,” wrote Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00 in an all-school email on June 1.

The School also acknowledged the need for action beyond conversation and reflection. On June 4, Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis announced the creation of the Choate Fund for Justice, a restricted fund supported by individual donations. At the time of the announcement, the Choate Fund for Justice had been seeded by a personal contribution from Dr. Curtis. Numerous members of the Board of Trustees have joined Dr. Curtis in donating to the fund. Donations to the Choate Fund for Justice will go exclusively to nonprofits that support racial justice initiatives.

### Choate Hosts Day of Conversation and Reflection

On Friday, June 5, Choate hosted a Day of Conversation and Reflection for students and faculty, which began with discussions and films based on the injustices long faced by Black Americans. The afternoon’s schedule focused on discussion-based workshops about topics such as social media activism, the harm in “All Lives Matter,” and art’s place in protest. In addition to these general workshops, there were affinity spaces available for students of color and Black students.

body sees eye to eye. “Let’s learn to respectfully disagree and respectfully talk to each other,” said Dr. Myers, “so that we’re not saying microaggressions or criticizing other people’s existence.” Thoughtful communication, she added, is necessary to make sure all students feel as though they belong on campus.

Despite the School’s intentions to spread awareness and encourage discussion, some felt that the Day of Conversation and Reflection did not achieve its desired goal. Allyson Alavez '22 said, “I don’t think it was effective at all because it wasn’t mandatory. The people that chose to go were those that were already informed enough about the is-

sues to really want to learn.” The School stated that the Day of Conversation and Reflection was highly encouraged but not mandatory in order to help Black community members avoid the emotional toll such conversations may take on them. “Black community members may simply need to opt out for the important work of self-care and forcing participation would be yet another example of racism that privileges white need over all others,” read an email Mr. Velez sent to the community on June 4.



Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/  
The Choate News

### School Responds to Social Media Accounts

In response to the testimonies shared on the @LifeatChoate and @QueeratChoate accounts, the School established a committee called Together at Choate. Created by Dr. Myers, Mr. Velez, and Associate Head of School Ms. Kathleen Wallace, the group addressed the Choate community through an all-school email on September 23. The email acknowledged the hurt endured by contributors to the accounts and pledged to work against problems that had been detailed. Together at Choate called on the accounts’ administrators or any contributors to engage in open dialogue with the School.

countless stories in which students felt their trust was betrayed by the administration.

“Choate really needs to understand what is causing their students to be anonymous and trust social media accounts more than the teachers or whatever ‘support system’ they have,” read one submission. “Please think about what tangible changes are needed so that these teenagers can trust someone without worrying about all the consequences.”

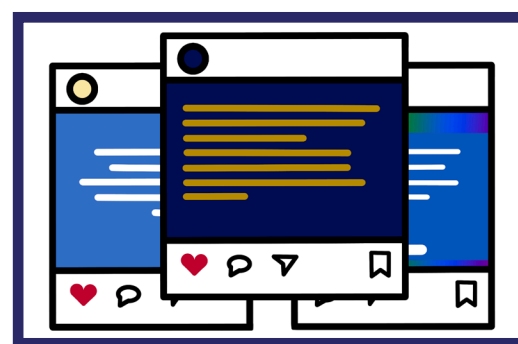
In the same post, other students expressed their concern that the School was relying on students to do the work of the administration. Another submission read: “[The administrators of @LifeatChoate] shouldn’t be expected to give up anonymity to do the administration’s job for them ... I find it so performative.”

To better analyze and tackle these issues, the School has convened faculty from the Wellness team, Department of Equity and Inclusion, and Athletics Department to address some of the problems highlighted in the accounts.

The email expressed the administration’s interest in collaborating with students to address shortcomings and improve the Choate experience for everyone.



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Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/  
The Choate News

### Social Media Accounts Highlight Pervasive Issues

Spurred by the creation of accounts such as @BlackatDeerfieldOfficial, @BlackatAndover, and @BlackatExeter, on June 22, Choate alumni created the @BlackatChoateOfficial account on Instagram. Since then, they have continuously published stories submitted by current and former Black Choate students, faculty, and parents, detailing personal accounts of racism, discrimination, and other mistreatment at the School.

On August 11, @QueeratChoate began publishing the experiences of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ students at Choate. On the same day, @LifeatChoate began detailing challenging

moments on campus that did not fall under the previous two accounts’ categories.

Recurring themes on the @LifeatChoate account in particular are body image, eating disorders, mental health issues, sexism, and sexual assault. Through a direct message on Instagram, the administrators of @LifeatChoate, who asked to remain anonymous, stated, “We as an account aren’t asking for specific changes or advocating for certain positions on issues. All we aim to do is provide a platform for people to speak about their experiences and hopefully inspire others to take action.”

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force Is Born

Over the summer, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force was established to address gaps and inequities within existing systems at Choate and address the many concerns raised by students. Spearheaded by Dr. Myers, the task force consists of 10 other faculty members: English Department Head Ms. Ellen Devine, Director of Athletics Mr. Roney Eford, Spanish teacher Mr. Charlie Fuentes, Assistant Director of Counseling Ms. Raynetta Gibbs, Fourth-form Dean and Alumni Engagement Associate Mr. Will Gilyard '98, English teacher Dr. Edrik Lopez, Assistant to the Director of the Paul Mellon Arts Center Ms. Kelly Lorraine '99, HPRSS teacher Ms. Cindy Okrah, Mr. Velez, and science teacher Ms. Yuxin Xie.

In an email sent to students on July 16, Dr. Curtis and Dr. Myers shared that the work of the Task

Force will encompass three main phases. The first phase aimed to gather feedback, sort data, and review pre-existing policies through a Task Force feedback form, phone and Zoom calls, and email correspondence with members of the Choate community.

The second phase was focused on developing and providing virtual workshops for the Choate community. Between August 18–21, the Task Force held eight workshops: three for current students; two for faculty, staff, spouses, or partners; and another three for alumni and parents. During the workshops, members of the Task Force reviewed new policies and initiatives. Workshop members went into breakout rooms to discuss each policy’s merits and potential areas for improvement.

Some ideas discussed in the workshops included a bias re-

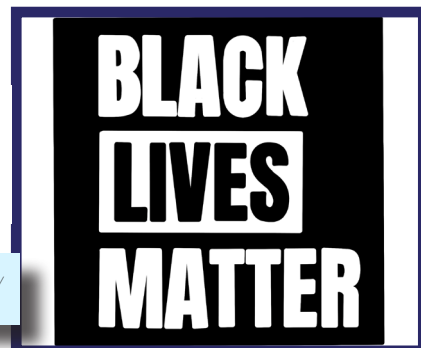
porting form that would be accessible on the portal and a new identity-based slur policy that would allow for the possibility of probation, suspension, or dismissal for students found using identity-based slurs. The identity-based slur policy has been included in the 2020–2021 Student Handbook.

The final phase will conclude next month, with a final assessment written by the DEI, analyzing the workshops and presenting a plan for implementation of their proposed policies.

However, the process won’t end there. “One big hurdle was that we had a small amount of time to get things done, and we recognized we weren’t going to get everything done in the summer,” said Ms. Gibbs. The DEI Task Force will continue operating throughout the year.

Between the global pandemic and escalating racial tensions, this summer seemed a turning point for not only the School but the world at large. “Let’s strike while the iron is hot,” said Director of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Myers. “Everyone’s paying attention now.”

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### New Year, New Choate

Learn about how Choate is adjusting to life during the pandemic.  
**School News • P2**



### Schools Adapt

Local public-school students discuss the learning curve for hybrid learning.  
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### In Memory of RBG

Hannah Wallinger '21 reflects on the passing of her role model.  
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### @ChangeatChoate

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## SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS VIRTUALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME

By **Alexis Lien '23**  
Staff Reporter

With last spring's virtual term essentially used as a trial run for this year's adaptations to the pandemic, the Choate community has developed numerous ways for the school year to continue smoothly both online and, eventually, in-person.

On September 15, the 131st Convocation took the form of a pre-recorded video featuring a message from Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis and Student Body President Ula Lucas '21, as well as videos of students sending support and advice to their peers for the upcoming school year.

The many changes to this year include the transformation of the daily academic schedule, which now comprises nine academic blocks that meet three times a week for an hour. The decision to shorten classes from 70 minutes to 60 minutes was made to accommodate more blocks. Classes are in session from 8 a.m. to 9:40 p.m. ET to allow students from different parts of the world to join classes synchronously.

Over the summer, students were asked to express their preferred time zone for classes to ease the burden of having classes at unfavorable times, which posed a challenge in the spring term. The new schedule aims to hold classes at relatively normal waking hours for each student, no matter where they are living.

The spring term proved to be a helpful pilot for virtual learning, and the community offered invaluable feedback to the team tasked with organizing the new schedule. The collaborative effort was led by the Registrar's Office, with the help of the Dean of Faculty's Office, including Director of Curricular Initiatives Mr. Deron Chang, Director of Studies Mr. Kevin Rogers, and Director of Faculty Development Mr. Tom White.

Hosting accessible synchronous classes was a foremost priority for the School. Ms. Catherine Velez, the School's registrar, said, "Having students in class synchronously was our most important goal. We wanted to be able to be sensitive to students across time zones." She said that her office thought through a variety of scenarios with the understanding that "no one system was ever going to be perfect."

The synchronous classes aim to provide new students with a means to acclimate to the classroom setting at Choate and make connections with their teachers and peers.

Mr. Rogers said, "One of the things that we benefited from last spring was the fact that we had had two terms together in many of our classes. People were pretty well enculturated into classes, or at least into the Choate academic environment. We knew that this fall, that wouldn't be the case."

In addition to synchronous classes, another priority was to



Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/The Choate News

facilitate rotation in the academic blocks throughout the schedule to make it as feasible as possible for students to participate at reasonable times. Regardless, students still faced difficulties with their schedule. "I think that there were more students who elected to be remote through the fall term," Ms. Velez said. "I do think that there are some students who had originally elected to take six classes and that some of them have found that that was too much being remote — in particular if their sixth class was outside of their time band."

Students had varying responses to the new schedule. Anika Midha '22 said, "As an interna-

tional student, I appreciate the administration's efforts in trying to be more accommodating to different time zones. The schedule has its pros and cons — now I no longer have to stay up through the night, but the amount of continuous sleep I get is limited by my morning classes." Austin Zhao '23 said, "I don't know how I feel about the break in between the day blocks and H block. It's such a weird, short but long gap. The biggest problem for me might be the disorganization of extra help."

Office hours and a School Meeting block could not be included in the schedule this year. The hope is for faculty to still find extra help time for students,

despite the lack of designated office hours in the schedule.

Mr. Rogers said, "We knew that that 10:30 in the morning [ET] slot was what we affectionately referred to as the 'golden band' in the sense that just about everybody in the world is reasonably awake [at that time]. So we knew that that 10:30 slot was going to be especially important for the advisory, college counseling, and form meetings that we wanted to incorporate."

As for school meetings, Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00 worked with faculty to ensure students receive the necessary announcements and messages through form meetings and advising, leaving more time in the schedule for academic blocks. If an announcement needs to be delivered to the community as a whole, school meetings will be pre-recorded and sent out as they were last spring.

Although there is an afternoon slot designated for athletics and afternoon activities, adjustments were made to extracurricular activities to accommodate students and facilitate the best learning experience. Some music ensembles such as Symphony Orchestra had their rehearsals moved to take up an academic block in the schedule.

Mr. Rogers acknowledged that the School debated eliminating afternoon activities, including athletics, musical rehearsals, and the like, altogether.

er. But, he said, "the School was especially determined to make that possibility real."

Dorm life is yet another aspect to the Choate experience that continues to adapt to the virtual environment. Upon boarding students' arrival to the dorms in October, students will be quarantining in their dorms and taking classes virtually for the quarantine period. Day students, on the other hand, will be quarantining at home and will be assigned a family unit of four other day students.

Mr. Rogers, an adviser in Clinton Knight, said, "I'm hoping that the fun parts of living and working in a dorm — the casual conversations, the common room pieces — I hope that even with the restrictions those pieces. They may not look the same as they have in the past, but we don't lose that."

Most safety measures, including the placement of hand sanitizer dispensers and disinfectant sprays in classrooms and the switch from Harkness tables to individual desks in the Humanities building, were ready for the return of students to campus in September. Nevertheless, the delay of the on-campus start to October afforded faculty and staff extra time to familiarize themselves with the necessary safety measures to safeguard the wellbeing of the community.

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## Readers United Holds Virtual Classes for Students in Japan



Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/The Choate News

By **Joy Bang '22**  
Staff Reporter

On May 10, Readers United began hosting weekly online conversation classes with middle school students in Japan in response to school closures caused by Covid-19. The club, founded in 2016, was originally created to explore reading with younger students in Wallingford, but as the pandemic continues to negatively impact educational opportunities globally, Readers United took the initiative to connect with and mentor students at Katoh Gakuen Gyoshu Junior High School and Gunma Kokusai Academy in Japan. Reflecting on the club's outreach, Readers United President Sakura Hayakawa '21 said, "As Covid-19 ceased the flow of people, we felt the need to bridge nationality for cross-cultural communication."

In each weekly session, Choate tutors and their tutees from Japan discussed cultural, social, and political topics in breakout rooms for 40 minutes before reconvening as a large group for ten minutes. The discussions surrounded current events and topics suggested by the Japanese students, including the differences and similarities in the Japanese and American culture, Japan's high levels of mask use reflected by its collectivist society, and the significance of the Black Lives Matter protests.

Both the students in Japan and the tutors from Readers United have enjoyed their discussions. According to Hayakawa, the Japanese students commented that they enjoy learning about life in the U.S. They also believe that discussing societal issues provides more perspective on how they can be solved. Similarly, the tutors of Readers United provided positive feedback, especially in regards to how tackling relevant issues with students from another country allowed them to recognize their shared humanity.

In particular, the participants have felt that the open discussion sessions have provided insight into different cultures, lifestyles, and backgrounds. Hayakawa recalled, "Before such interactions, students from the two countries found it difficult to imagine each other's lives, but these weekly meetings allowed us to transcend borders to deepen mutual understanding." She added, "The discussion of culture allowed us to acknowledge how we come from the intersection of cultures and how it enriches our lives."

With the positive feedback and high interest from students and tutors alike, Readers United is planning on maintaining the connection via weekly meetings throughout the school year. "We will continue as long as there is interest and need for us to do it," Hayakawa said.

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By **Sabrina Wang '23**  
Reporter

In early August, two weeks before students were set to return to campus, the School announced that their return to in-person classes would be pushed back until the first week of October. Suddenly, many extracurricular activities that students had hoped to experience in person, such as clubs and events hosted by the Student Activities Center (SAC), turned to virtual platforms.

Last Sunday, September 20, the SAC hosted the School's first virtual Club Fair, an event usually held at the beginning of the school year for both new and returning students to sign up for clubs they are interested in. However, instead of packing themselves into booths on the Hill House quad, the representatives of each club found themselves sitting behind screens in individual Zoom meetings. After being sent a lengthy directory of Choate's clubs and organizations along with their mission statements and Zoom link, interested students were asked to join clubs' virtual meeting rooms.

For returning students attending Club Fair, it was harder to get the same sense of community and spontaneous con-

versation that they experienced at the in-person fair.

"I feel like the dynamic has changed," said Sophia Dubbelde '23. "During in-person Club Fair, everyone's behind their table, yelling at kids who are walking by them to come check out their club. But for this Club Fair, it's about everyone who reads the description of your club and thinks it's interesting."

However, she also expressed that there were benefits to having a virtual Club Fair. "It is nice to engage with people one-on-one in a much calmer setting. Sometimes you have a conversation with them and can check on what they're doing. When you're at Club Fair, people are always running," said Dubbelde.

To keep this sense of intimacy, many clubs have been trying to strategically adapt to the online platform. For Quiz Bowl, this meant creating a Discord server to continue fostering a sense of community amongst its members. Each club had a different approach, but they all made sure to establish a connection with their members.

The transition to virtual activities has also caused many other changes surrounding student activities. Notably, new club proposals are no longer being accepted by the



Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/The Choate News

Committee on Student Activities (COSA). "Their reasoning for not accepting club proposals was more led by the SAC, as we identified there were a lot of clubs struggling last spring term," said Ms. Colleen Kazar, Assistant Director of Student Activities. "Our goal in the fall is to get all the clubs that currently exist back on track and then be able to open for more clubs hopefully in the winter, although the timeline is to be determined."

Many students are reluctant to participate in online clubs, tired from long days Zoom classes or simply busy with activities at home. Though there are still weekend activities available, the level of attendance has dramatically decreased. "Zoom fatigue

is a real thing. It's hard to plan events on Fridays and Saturdays when students are tired of being on Zoom. Now they have the opportunity to be with family and possibly friends, so it's a lot different in attendance because there are more options for them outside of school and outside of Zoom," said Ms. Alex Long, Director of Student Activities.

Though student activities may have experienced some unexpected changes over the past month, the SAC is still trying its best to create ways for the Choate community to enjoy each other's company and have fun virtually.

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## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SOCIETY DISCUSSES RACISM AND MICROAGGRESSIONS

By **Annika Lee '23**  
Reporter

On Sunday, September 6, and Monday, September 14, Claire Hong '22 and Nick Visuthikosol '22, co-presidents of the International Student Society (ISS), held virtual meetings for new Korean and Thai students, respectively, allowing open discussion of racism and microaggressions in boarding school environments.

"In light of all the social justice action that has been going on over the summer, I was thinking of ways I could contribute to the movement," said Hong. "Holding certain leadership positions, I realized I have the ability and platform to

reach out and spread these discussions." As this was their first time holding these discussions for new international students, Hong and Visuthikosol started with a maximum of 12 students per meeting.

Hong and Visuthikosol found that new students initially struggled to discuss sensitive topics. Nevertheless, more people spoke up when they became more familiar with one another. "At first, it was quite awkward, and no one really talked because we barely knew each other. So, we started having conversations about school and life in general," Visuthikosol said. "After that, it was a lot easier to dive into the more sensitive topics."

In the meeting for new Korean students led by Hong, students discussed their previous exposure to racism and how Asian Americans can contribute towards promoting inclusivity at Choate. "A common theme in our call was community and how in such a diverse community like Choate, it is certainly easy to feel lost or alone," Hong said.

In the meeting for new Thai students led by Visuthikosol, students also discussed their past experiences with racism and ways to prevent or deal with difficult situations. Prim Tangkaravakoon '24, who attended the meeting, said, "At my old school, there wasn't any discussion or acknowledgment of microaggressions at all. The Thai-

land International Student Society meeting helped me understand what a microaggression is — how does it look like and sound like."

Although this is a new project for ISS, Hong and Visuthikosol are looking to expand these meetings to students from China, Japan, Canada, Mexico, and countries in Europe. They hope these meetings will not only allow international students to become more acquainted with one another but also give them the chance to dissect more complex issues surrounding the international student experience at boarding schools.

Annika Lee may be reached at [alee23@choate.edu](mailto:alee23@choate.edu)

## Greetings, New Faculty!

### Dr. Colin Mort

After ten years at St. George's School in Newport, Rhode Island, new English teacher Dr. Colin Mort was drawn to Choate by the "openness and diversity" of the community. Teaching Introduction to Literature, The Art of the Essay, and Introduction to Creative Writing this term, he appreciates how easily he can converse with students whose diverse passions reach beyond the English Department.

In the classroom, Dr. Mort looks forward to sharing different cultures with his students through literature. "It's fun when someone's reading about a place or a time they knew nothing about," he said.

Dr. Mort also hopes to help each of his students develop their own perspective and voice. Though this goal was complicated by the transition to online classes, Dr. Mort remains optimistic. The highlight of his first few weeks were moments when he was able to connect with everyone in a class.

"On Zoom, anytime I can get the entire class smiling, I feel like I've done something very significant, just because of the technological intermediate intermediary," he said.

In addition to teaching English, Dr. Mort will be advising in Mead and coaching Boys' and Girls' Squash. He lives on campus with his wife and three children.

— Kate Bailey '22



Photo courtesy of the Choate Directory

### Ms. Amanda Gilbride

Though she has yet to meet most of the Choate community in person, Ms. Amanda Gilbride, a new member of the Language Department, has seen that Choate students are "engaged and eager to learn."

She said, "There is a community among the students and also a level of respect among each other."

Ms. Gilbride's goal for her Chinese 300 class is to get her students reading signs and infographics and listening to the news in Chinese.

To contend with students' lack of textbooks, Ms. Gilbride has relied on teaching current events for her classes. One of her teaching methods is providing Chinese "in context," which has taken the form of encouraging students to discuss their passions in Chinese.

Before arriving at Choate, Ms. Gilbride was a Teaching Assistant at Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, Calif. She earned her bachelor's degree in Lin-



Photo courtesy of the Choate Directory

guistics and Chinese from Indiana University, where, as part of the Chinese Flagship program, she spent a year abroad in China.

She also has a master's degree in teaching Chinese as a foreign language from the Middlebury Institute. She will coach field hockey and advise in Nichols House.

— Pranav Pendri '22

### Dr. Rachel Myers

Joining the campus as Choate's new Director of Equity & Inclusion, Dr. Rachel Myers expressed that this year's national protests over police brutality and systemic inequality has left no doubt that now is the time to act and push for social justice, including on the Choate campus.

Though the challenges ahead are complex, Dr. Myers believes that the solution lies in upholding the School's values of compassion, integrity, and respect — even when nobody is watching.

"If you really want to be here, and you really feel like this is your place, live out the mission and values," she said. "It's that simple."

Dr. Myers wants every student to be comfortable "coming as their full selves," no matter how they identify.

It was heartbreaking for her to read the stories — she reads everything posted on student-run social media accounts such as @BlackatCho-

ate — of students' negative or painful experiences.

Dr. Myers joins Choate from The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Conn., where she was the school's Director of Diversity and Inclusion and a teacher in the English department. She currently resides on campus in McBee House with her partner and son.

— Kate Bailey '22

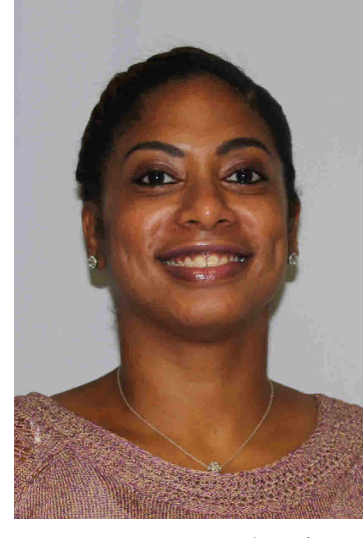


Photo courtesy of the Choate Directory

### Rev. Aaron Rathbun

Before coming to Choate, Rev. Aaron Rathbun attended Yale University, taught at Sacred Heart University, and was a pastor at Christ Presbyterian Church in New Haven. At Sacred Heart, he taught "The Catholic Intellectual Tradition," combining the works of intellectuals throughout history with the gospel.

At Choate, Rev. Rathbun will serve as both the Leader of Spiritual Life and the instructor of several courses such as World Religions and Philosophy. As an avid gamer, he is

very excited to be involved in the E-Sports and gaming clubs on campus as well.

Rev. Rathbun notes the role of spirituality in our lives. As students begin to explore deeper questions in high school, he suggests asking, "How can [spiritual life] be a tool in my toolbox for having these conversations?"

Rev. Rathbun is looking forward to moving to the Choate campus with his spouse and four children.

— Michael Korvyakov '23



Photo courtesy of the Choate Directory



Photo courtesy of the Choate Directory

### Dr. Jesse Gleason

Spanish teacher Dr. Jesse Gleason is no stranger to Choate, having taught at Choate Summer Programs. Alongside her husband, who also teaches Spanish, she is excited to be back with the Choate community, which she feels is "welcoming, inclusive and filled with people who are goal driven and all have a set of values."

In addition to teaching at Choate, Dr. Gleason is an Assistant Professor of World Language Education and Coordinator of the World Language Teacher Certification Program at Southern Connecticut State University.

After years spent in Chile, she has lived by the phrase "Todo con calma," which roughly translates to "all calm." Reminding her to do everything with ease and to take time for herself, the phrase is very comforting to her, especially now.

Dr. Gleason, who lives on campus, is also a yoga teacher and can be found on walks and playing with her kids. She is looking forward to meeting her students in person.

— Tobi Oyinloye '22

### Ms. Brianne Ellis

This year the Admission Office is welcoming a new Associate Director of Admissions who will have a focus on multicultural recruitment: Ms. Brianne Ellis.

Through part of her work with admissions, Ms. Ellis organizes meetings with prospective and current Choate families living in her jurisdiction of Ohio, Florida, Washington, D.C., Maryland, Puerto Rico, Africa, and the Caribbean. In Africa, she works with the Gakio-Walton Scholar Program to encourage more African students to apply to Choate. She describes her role in admissions as "looking for and actively recruiting diverse students to come to Choate." She is also working on a fly-in program to help students from underprivileged backgrounds and will serve as an adviser to the Mixed Heritage Association.

In addition to studying in South Africa, Honduras, Israel, and Argentina, Ms. Ellis received her B.A. from Williams Smith College, and her M.S.Ed from the University of Miami. She was previously an Associate Director of Admissions at Hobart and



Photo courtesy of the Choate Directory

William Smith Colleges. She feels that, at Choate, she will interact more directly with students. "I live on campus, I get to advise in Library, and be the adviser for a club on campus," she said.

Ms. Ellis said that, since the beginning of her time at Choate, everyone has been gracious in offering themselves as resources to her for adjusting to a virtual setting. She currently lives in Faculty Circle.

— Pranav Pendri '22

### Mr. Gene Wie

With more than 17 years of teaching experience, Mr. Gene Wie is Choate's new Instrumental Ensembles Director. Before coming to Choate, Mr. Wie was a vocal instructor at the University of South Florida and the University of Tampa. He was also a professional singer and voice coach.

Acknowledging the long tenure and influence of Mr. Phil Ventre, Choate's former director of the Symphony Orchestra and Jazz Ensemble,

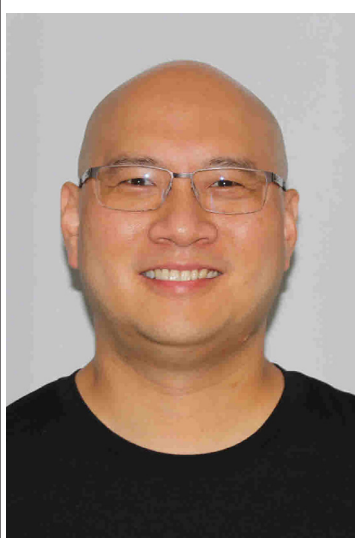


Photo courtesy of the Choate Directory

Mr. Wie noted that "these are very big shoes to fill." Still, he is full of passion and thrilled to have joined Choate. He is trying to find creative ways for his students to play together when they cannot physically gather to practice. One of his current initiatives has been a system of virtual sight reading. Before class, Mr. Wie posts the sheet music to the ensemble's Canvas page. During each rehearsal, he plays the piece's orchestral backing track over Zoom while students play along on their instruments with their microphones muted.

Mr. Wie expressed that he loves the boarding-school environment. Already feeling at home within the Choate community, he is striving to form strong bonds with his students despite the virtual nature of learning so far.

Outside of the classroom, Mr. Wie loves to bike, which he is very excited to get back to. Mr. Wie now lives on campus with his partner and two children.

— Tobi Oyinloye '22

### Mr. Patrick Durbin

Mr. Patrick Durbin, Choate's new Chief Financial Officer (CFO), has been overseeing budgets, financial transactions, the facilities office, community safety, and risk management for the School since he took over the position from Mr. Rick Saltz on July 1.

Though he often doesn't interact with Choate students during his job's day-to-day schedule, Mr. Durbin looks forward to working with students in other ways; he is a dorm adviser in Atwater and would like to help advise a club as well. Mr. Durbin played volleyball in college and expressed that he could see himself coaching in the near future. "I want to be a resource to students as I'm a resource to faculty," said Mr. Durbin.

Before Choate, Mr. Durbin was the CFO of Georgetown University's College of Arts and Sciences in Washington, D.C. Prior to that, he was the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Senior Director of Finance and Administration at Georgetown. Mr. Durbin said that "the scope of the role here, at Choate, is broader," and he more actively works with departments such as Facili-



Photo courtesy of the Choate Directory

ties and Community Safety. The renovation of Hill House and other future construction projects, for example, have all fallen under his supervision at Choate.

Mr. Durbin lives with his family in the 1956 House, and his office is in Ruutz-Rees with the rest of the financial office. He has four children, whom he loves to go on bike rides with. Mr. Durbin received both his B.S. in Human Science and his M.B.A. from Georgetown.

— Pranav Pendri '22

### Ms. Le'ah Griggs

Ms. Le'ah Griggs is a new teacher in the Language Department. She is remotely teaching Spanish 250 and 401 at Choate, while she also teaches at the East Cooper Montessori School in Charleston, S.C., where she currently resides. In the classroom, she goes by the names "Professora Le'ah" or "Senorita Le'ah."

Outside of the classroom, Ms. Griggs is an avid musician, playing the piano, ukulele, and clarinet, in addition to singing. At Choate, she will

also be teaching private piano lessons remotely.

When asked what brought her to Choate, she said, "It seems like a very nice environment — both the students and faculty. I love how diverse and global the School is and how dedicated the faculty and staff are to making sure that people feel welcome and included." Students, she said, "have been great, and they're super motivated to learn."

— Michael Korvyakov '23



Photo courtesy of Le'ah Griggs

### Mr. Will Gilyard

Think you've had a busy start to the school year? Try being a new form dean. Mr. Will Gilyard '98, who also serves as an Alumni Engagement Associate, has had individual meetings with more than 110 of his new fourth form deanees. Though it might sound overwhelming, for Mr. Gilyard, getting to know each of his students has been "awesome."

Although Mr. Gilyard is still getting to know current students, the School itself is a familiar place: he is a Choate graduate. It's something that makes

him a great fit for his ancillary role in the alumni office, where he is currently planning, an incredible reunion experience while considering the added challenge of doing it all virtually.

Mr. Gilyard returns to Choate after ten years of working at Kingswood Oxford School — a day school in West Hartford, Conn. — as the Dean of Students and a form dean. He lives in Berry House with his wife and two sons.

— Kate Bailey '22

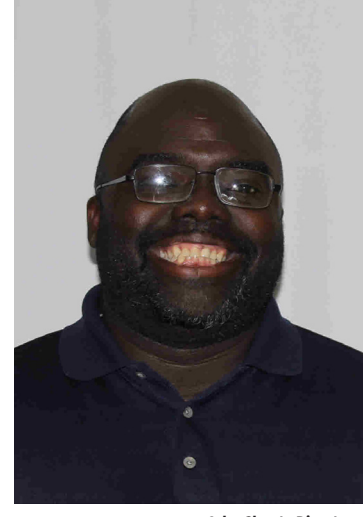


Photo courtesy of the Choate Directory

## WALLINGFORD SCHOOLS ADOPT HYBRID LEARNING PLAN



Photo courtesy of The Record-Journal

Dag Hammarskjold Middle School has reported two coronavirus cases since it reopened.

By **Trista LeBlanc-Serbyn '22**  
Reporter

Despite coronavirus concerns, Wallingford Public Schools (WPS) are now back in session with a new hybrid schedule. Students alternate between taking their classes in-person and virtually on a rotating cycle.

In order to limit the number of students inside the school building at once and accommodate for social distancing, students have been split alphabetically into two cohorts that alternate in-person class days. During the school day, students, faculty, and staff must wear masks at all times. After-school clubs and tryouts for fall sports have also been cancelled for the trimester.

Since the start of the school year, three coronavirus cases have already been reported at Dag Hammarskjold Middle School, only adding to the already stressful learning environment. After discovering that the individuals were infected, the Board of Education temporarily closed schools for a day to disinfect the building. The Board then began contact tracing the infected students to limit the spread of the virus within the community. This investigation is currently underway, and both the state and town Departments of Health are continuing to monitor the situation. Despite

the risks of more cases emerging, the Board of Education decided to keep schools open.

Hybrid learning poses a new challenge for many students who are asked to balance an intense class schedule with the effects of extended periods of screen time. Delayna Strahowski, an eighth-grader at Dag Hammarskjold, begins her day with two electives, followed by six uninterrupted core classes.

"I feel that one of the most difficult parts of the learning structure is the back-to-back meets," Strahowski said. "I can't remember any of the things that they taught me, because I have no time to process the information. It can get very overwhelming sometimes."

When Wallingford Public Schools first began online classes back in March, they provided students with laptops. Despite this implementation, many students still struggle with technical issues, including weak internet connections. Alison Connelly, a senior at Lyman Hall High School, reported that poor internet access interferes with schoolwork.

"Lots of students don't have good service in the areas that they are, so their sound and video during the Google Meets are extremely choppy and delayed," says Connelly. "It's hard to hold a conversation or ask a question during distance learning, because it becomes hard both

to understand people and to not talk when others are speaking."

Despite the unusual circumstances that come with the hybrid learning environment, teachers still strive to provide students with a thorough academic experience. "Even though we are in this pandemic, I feel that the teachers that I have are making do with what they have and just rolling with it. That alone is helpful, because they are maintaining a positive attitude, which is very important," Strahowski said.

Within the hybrid structure, teachers have had to find ways to keep students engaged with very limited physical activity, interactions, and hands-on projects that would normally occupy a day. On top of this, students are spending only half of the day attending in-person classes. Mr. George Bikakis, a teacher at Dag Hammarskjold, said, "The district is really trying to satisfy everyone. We get to see the kids everyday, but the problem is that we don't have a lot of time."

"This is the first time the district is dealing with something like this. They are just experimenting and trying to find a balance. There is really no perfect solution, but I'm optimistic they'll make adjustments," Mr. Bikakis said.

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## Local Citizens Protest for Civil Rights in "Rally Against Hate"

By **Jessica Wu '22**  
Copy Editor

On Saturday, August 15, more than 100 people gathered outside the Wallingford Town Hall for the Rally Against Hate — an event aimed to promote peace in communities by uniting against systemic racism.

Motivated by the recent police killings of George Floyd and other Black men and women and the Black Lives Matter movement, members of the Wallingford community holding homemade signs convened in solidarity against violence and discrimination toward marginalized groups.

"We were there to rally for peace and to basically shed light on the issues that are happening in society around police brutality — as I call them, the modernized lynchings of Black people — and really to organize and say that Black lives matter and that Black lives are important," said Dr. Amanda Colhoun, a psychiatry resident at Yale University and one of four guest speakers at the event. "Black Lives Matter is not about a political movement. It's about our lives."

The event was organized by three Wallingford residents: Ms. Alexa Tomassi and Ms. Farah Salam-Rahman, who both graduated from Mark T. Sheehan High School, and Ms. Tyanna Housley, a Lyman Hall High School graduate. They spread the word through invitations written in the Wallingford Patch, Instagram posts, and email. In June, they organized a similar demonstration on South Main Street.

At the rally, the organizers provided QR codes that attendees could scan to sign petitions in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. There were also flyers containing an "anti-racism toolkit." The list offered ways to take action, such as supporting local businesses and urging the Board of Education to implement a more diverse curriculum.

Dr. Colhoun was invited to speak by Ms. Tomassi, one of her colleagues at Yale University. "The focus of my speech was really about exposing rac-

ism in the medical system and really understanding that the medical system is part of a larger system of racism in this country," said Dr. Colhoun.

"Black women who are college graduates are more likely to die from preventable childbirth complications than white women who have not completed eighth grade education. The reason that is important is, for a long time, people have explained away differences in maternal outcomes with poverty and lack of education," said Dr. Colhoun.

She began her speech wearing her white coat, only to reveal a Black Lives Matter shirt underneath. "As a physician, I know that my white coat doesn't protect me. Just because I'm a physician, it doesn't mean I'm not treated as a Black woman in America...I have to deal with racism all the time and people assuming I'm not a physician," she explained.

Dr. Colhoun also spoke about the importance of voting and the prevalence of prejudice in our country's systems that result in a heightened rate of conviction for Blacks who are then disenfranchised because of their criminal record. Racist voting barriers like this, as well as mass incar-

ceration and the defunding of the postal system, remove citizens' voices from the democratic process, Dr. Colhoun posited in her speech. Her speech was met by applause from the audience, many of whom approached her afterward and thanked her.

At one point during the rally, several supporters of President Donald Trump P'oo jeered at the protesters from across Main Street. One man repeatedly shouted, "White lives matter."

Still, Dr. Colhoun felt that the rally had a welcoming, close-knit atmosphere and was an overall empowering experience. "Black people and people of color did not create the racist system in America," she said. "I think it's really important that we have allies of all colors and from all walks of life in dismantling this system."

Following the event, on September 22, National Voter Registration Day, Ms. Tomassi and the other organizers held an event outside the gazebo on center street in Wallingford encouraging people to register to vote. "Voting doesn't solve everything," she said, "but it's the start."

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Photo courtesy of The Record-Journal

Citizens protested in front of Town Hall on August 15.

## Yale Agrees to Assist in Pfizer's Vaccine Trials

By **Linda Phan '22**  
Copy Editor

As the country continues in its struggle against the coronavirus, dozens of domestic companies have been racing to manufacture the first vaccine to be approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In the past few months, testing sites have opened around the country to support these companies as they enter the clinical testing stages for their vaccine candidate. On August 17, the Yale School of Medicine and Yale New Haven Hospital joined phase three of the vaccine trials for Pfizer's BNT162b2 vaccine.

BNT162b2 is an mRNA-based vaccine manufactured by pharmaceutical company Pfizer with mRNA technology provided by German company BioNTech SE. Seeking approval for public distribution and use of their vaccine, Pfizer opened over 100 testing sites and recruited around 30,000 volunteers across the country for the vaccine's clinical trials. As of August 26, over 400 volunteers had signed up for the study at Yale. After filling out paperwork on the Yale Center for Clinical Investigation website, volunteers begin their participation by receiving an injection and getting their blood drawn.



Photo courtesy of The Harford Courant

John Burkhardt, head of Pfizer Groton, speaks at a press conference in Groton, CT.

"You get an injection, and that injection is either the vaccine or placebo," said Dr. Thomas Balcezak, Executive Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer at Yale New Haven Health. "It's a randomized controlled trial meaning that...the patient doesn't know what they get and the person who is administering [the injection] doesn't know what [the patients] get."

Three weeks following the initial injection, participants return

for their second injection. Over the course of two years, these participants are scheduled to have four follow-up visits.

On September 12, Pfizer submitted an amended protocol to the FDA, expanding the trial to 44,000 people in order to include a more diverse population. "The proposed expansion would...include adolescents as young as 16 years of age and people with chronic, stable HIV (human immunodeficiency viruses), Hepati-

cis C, or Hepatitis B infection, as well as provide additional safety and efficacy data," Pfizer wrote in a public statement.

Pfizer's vaccine candidate utilizes groundbreaking techniques that are engineered to stimulate the body into creating coronavirus spike proteins, which the virus uses to enter cells. The immune system can then develop a defense against those proteins.

To receive approval from the FDA, the vaccine has to reach a

threshold of 50% efficacy, meaning that the vaccinated population is at least 50% less likely to contract the coronavirus. Based on the vaccine's preclinical trial profiles, Pfizer has high hopes that its vaccine will surpass this requirement. Dr. Albert Bourla, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at Pfizer, said at the JP-Morgan US All-Stars Conference, "We have a low threshold of 60% efficacy. FDA has asked [for] 50%. We're a bar higher because we are very confident."

Months into the pandemic, the coronavirus is still mutating into different strains. These constant changes have raised concerns about the potential efficacy of the vaccine. "No one really knows the answer to that question yet," said Dr. Balcezak. "But, the [coronavirus's] spike protein seems to be pretty consistent. This particular virus hasn't mutated a ton...there is the hope that [we] are not going to need the new vaccines developed and that this vaccine will remain effective against it."

The rush for an FDA-approved vaccine also generates concerns regarding the vaccine's quality. Only in January did scientists discover the virus's genome, yet in less than a year, nine vaccines worldwide are already in phase three testing. Furthermore, on September 15, Pfizer announced in an investors conference that

some participants were showing mild-to-moderate symptoms including fatigue, headache, chills, and muscle pain. Data from these phase three trials is particularly crucial because they ensure that companies are certain about the safety of the vaccine prior to public release.

Even if a viable vaccine makes it onto the market, the public may be deterred from vaccination due to concerns about safety precautions and procedures performed by the vaccine manufacturers. "Right now, [the manufacturer's] only requirement is to show the data to the FDA," said Dr. Balcezak. "There are many who are calling for transparency in these trials."

Dr. Bourla announced on September 14 that they plan on publicizing an estimated efficacy of the vaccine by late October. With 100 million doses set to be sold to the U.S. Health and Human Services Department and the U.S. Department of Defense (contingent on FDA-approval), the vaccine can potentially put an end to the pandemic. "[We] are going to have to make sure that it is safe. That's the responsibility of the FDA. It's the responsibility of the investigators, and it's the responsibility of the manufacturer," said Dr. Balcezak.

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# THE CHOATE NEWS



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## EDITORIAL

### Letter From the Editors

Dear Readers,

This summer has been a tumultuous one. Set in the backdrop of an ongoing pandemic, the U.S. presidential campaign is nearing an end. Concurrently, as Covid-19 case numbers and death tolls continue to rise, the country grapples with the decision of whether students should return to the physical classroom.

After delaying the in-person reopening to the beginning of October, Choate is now preparing to welcome students back to campus in less than one week. This year will look different: instead of dorm brunches and team dinners together in the dining hall, our meals will take place scattered across campus with our family units. In addition to being tested on the material we learn in class, students will also be tested for the coronavirus each week.

But we know all too well that Covid-19 is not the only thing weighing on Choate students' minds as we return to campus for the first time in seven months. This summer's escalation of racial tensions has shed a new light on old issues, pushing communities to take a closer look at the institutions they belong to. Choate has not been spared in this process, with the School being forced to reckon with its own history of intolerance and discrimination.

Across multiple social media platforms, the Choate community has spoken out like never before, sharing experiences that have gone unvoiced for years. These personal stories have reached a wide audience, with students, alumni, and faculty alike calling on the administration for acknowledgement and action.

The School has had a varied response to not only these stories but also the community's growing desire for the administration to bring about meaningful change and take accountability for past decisions, such as inaction in response to racist incidents perpetrated by both faculty and students. Though the creation of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force and the Choate Fund for Justice, among other measures, are certainly steps in the right direction, there is no doubt that Choate still has a long way to go before the campus environment matches the values of integrity, respect, and compassion that the School has laid out in its mission.

This isn't to say that The Choate News as an organization has done enough to provide a platform for marginalized voices in our community. Specifically, Black students, Black voices, and Black issues have historically not been featured as they should in this newspaper.

It's time we begin to remedy that. In this inaugural issue, themed articles across every section seek to highlight how this summer's events have changed the landscape of social justice movements, race, and identity both at and beyond Choate. On the front page, we detail how the administration and the broader Choate community responded to the racial trauma and subsequent calls for change that began last spring. While this article is by no means an exhaustive account of the efforts of students, alumni, faculty, and administrators to address this issue, we hope it will serve as a starting point for further discussion and attempts to understand.

We recognize that our efforts cannot stop with a single themed issue. As a newspaper must keep this dialogue going and acknowledge that even if the national conversation surrounding these issues subsides, we must continue to support our Black peers. The Choate News commits to using its platform as a means to amplify and uplift Black voices.

While sweeping institutional change will not happen overnight, we hope that this year will be a step toward a school in which all students feel supported. We know that it is not easy to see that the School one cares about has harmed many of its members, but we must remember that rarely is change born in a place of comfort.

That same sentiment applies to us as editors of The Choate News. We hope to cover the Choate community as thoughtfully as we can, and that means creating issues with a diversity of perspectives and voices. If you ever feel that The News's coverage is flawed or falls short of this, we always welcome you to write a letter to the editors or send us feedback via email at thechoatenews@choate.edu.

## To All the Pianos I've Played Before

By **Charlotte Weinstein '22**  
Opinions Writer

Earlier this year, I was searching for a new piece to learn on the piano when my teacher suggested Ludwig van Beethoven's "Piano Sonata No. 1" in light of his upcoming 250th birthday. Of course, I eagerly agreed, pouring the majority of my time into

the music. For me, music is my definition of self care — bubble baths just don't do it. As someone who struggles to talk about my emotions, music has provided me a vehicle through which I can express myself. Indeed, this past year, many a piano have felt my wrath. So, in light of this monumental year, here are a few letters to the pianos that have gotten me through it all:

Dear Yamaha upright on which I first learned to play piano,

Oh my God, have you seen a lot of tears! Thank you for being patient when I was not. I have to admit: six-year-old me had a lot of anger. I'm sorry for slamming my fists down on your keys — those performance exams seriously distressed me until I was old enough to talk my way out of them. Still, you stuck by me, and I like to think that the frustration motivated me. I don't think either of us could have anticipated that dreaded email informing me that spring term would be virtual. Still, as soon as the initial shock left my body, I rushed downstairs to play loud songs in minor keys until my fingers gave up. Throughout spring term's online classes, you tolerated hours of stress-playing as I took out my anger on you until your keys stuck. I thank you for your persistent patience and for teaching me how to play.

Peace out Girl Scout,  
Charlotte

**Charlotte Weinstein** is a fifth-former from Bermuda. She may be reached at [cweinstein22@choate.edu](mailto:cweinstein22@choate.edu)

To my beloved grand piano,

You are literally the love of my life. I'm not joking. Hearing one note from your keys could send me to happy tears. Since you live in Nantucket, I associate you with summer — when we reunite after nine months apart. When I'm with you, my favorite songs to play are showtunes, so that with your lid up, no one can hear any mistakes over the cacophony of noise. Thanks for enabling my addiction to dramatic dynamics. You taught me that if I can make someone tear up at a piece, I can get them to buy me a new songbook.

I played you, too, during quarantine. You never failed to take my mind off of the coronavirus because a Beethoven sonata requires a lot of attention. I give credit to you for my success with the first movement to Hanon's evil book of finger exercises. You're the only piano I would willingly do metronome work on.

Stay tuned,  
Charlotte

Dear old upright at my grandmother's house,

I could never think badly of you. Mostly because you're in my grandmother's house, but also because you still sound good even though you're not played nearly enough. Personally, I think your sound works best for "The Peanuts Theme Song," not classical music. Sorry, Beethoven. My heart almost stops every time a young child recklessly hits your keys (although we both know that I've done that myself). While I'm terrifying when I don't get enough sleep, I will never mind if my nap is cut short by your notes floating underneath my bedroom door. Honestly, most of the time, I can't even tell that you haven't been tuned in years. Thank you for being my piano away from home.

Until next time,  
Charlotte



Graphic by Mia Katz/The Choate News

## IT HURT TO READ *THE NICKEL BOYS*. THAT'S A GOOD THING.

By **Caitlin Whitaker '22**  
Opinions Writer

My history teacher has a classroom norm that I love. If we feel the need, we can step outside the room when the class is watching a sensitive video or discussing difficult material. She doesn't know how the subject matter might affect us.

But, what happens when a group of students can never "step outside of the room"? What happens when the material that lies in every page affects us in real time? This was the dilemma I faced as I tackled my two summer reading books, both by Colson Whitehead — *The Nickel Boys* and *The Underground Railroad*.

In the past year, every day has felt like a new tragedy, another name added to a rapidly growing list of killings: Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Elijah McClain. Black people are killed at the hands of white people who abuse their assumed or assigned authority. The words of the police were accepted as truth over those of a Black person — the victim, the innocent. In the case of George Floyd, a video captured by a girl my

age showed a chilling eight minutes and 46 seconds of a death at the hands of someone hired to protect the public. This brutality was laid bare for all to see. It's indisputable: our nation is failing Black people.

TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter gave platforms to global outrage as viral videos swept our world. Everyone I knew was plugged in and absorbing information all the time. Immediate access to videos of people who look like you getting harassed or killed is traumatizing. For some, police harassment and brutality may seem abstract when they watch it on TV or read about it in the news, but the impact becomes more real when it happens to people you know.

On May 31, I watched as the police shattered the car window of a Morehouse College student, a friend of my cousin. He was tased and dragged out of his car by a police officer. He had an epileptic seizure before he was jailed for the night. His crime? Driving home from downtown Atlanta, he got stuck in traffic during protests. The incident, recorded by a bystander, went viral on social media.

On June 8, I awoke to my mom shaking as she read an ar-

ticle about my 19-year-old friend being pulled over for no reason. The police officer, who did not identify himself, had screamed at her to put her hands on her dashboard while yelling: "Do you have a gun? Do you have a gun?" She was on her way to a picnic.

So, as I began my summer reading, I couldn't help but draw parallels between these historical narratives and my own life. Though set in different time periods, the worlds of both protagonists are dictated by white supremacy in the United States. Both books navigate the trauma that the characters experience in graphic and blunt language. *The Nickel Boys*, set at a Florida reform school in the 1960s, reads, "The leather slapped across the ceiling before it came down on your legs, to tell you it was about to come down, and the bunk springs made noise with each blow." On page four of *The Underground Railroad*, which details the harrowing plight of escaped slaves in the antebellum South, a character is sexually violated. I put the novel away for months, unable to stomach another traumatic episode against a Black person.

For Black students, the violent systems of racism depicted in these novels are not confined to those pages — they are an everyday reality. In a recent panel facilitated by the Pathways Program, clinical psychologist and professor Dr. Shawn T. Jones, gave listeners many examples of racial stress, a term he defined as, "a bevy of multifaceted ways in which racism reaches out and touches us." He said, "Racial trauma is the manifestation of

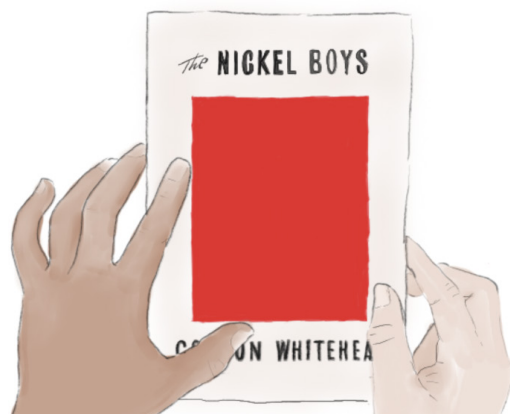
traumatic symptomatology that results from racially stressful experiences." Dr. Jones shared his experience watching someone that looks like him getting shot in the back seven times on the news, not being able to sleep, and being terrified of loud noises or sirens as a result. "Well, these symptoms start to sound a lot like a psychological disorder called PTSD." I was in a state of shock. I could hardly distinguish these symptoms from my own after the murder of Ahmaud Arbery.

I am so thankful to Choate for assigning stories that depict the reality of the racial violence our nation is built on and for giving students the option to read an alternate book. Indeed, I have learned so much from my classmates as we unpack these books through difficult discussions around the virtual Harkness table.

We must never forget that a fictional account for some students may be very real for others, and students may feel uncomfortable asking for an exemption. It's likely very isolating to be the only student in an English class who hasn't read the book as the rest of the class has a Harkness discussion.

I can't claim to know how to tread this line between practicing sensitivity and leaning into discomfort, but I do know that we must keep trying to do so. I can only hope that our community keeps giving space to uncomfortable topics. May this dialogue continue.

**Caitlin Whitaker** is a fifth-former from Chicago, IL. She may be reached at [cwhitaker22@choate.edu](mailto:cwhitaker22@choate.edu)



Graphic by Yuko Tanaka/The Choate News

### Uyghur Muslim Concentration Camps: Another Example of Trump's Negligence



Photo courtesy of World Politics Review

Uyghur Muslims protesting in Istanbul against internment programs in Xinjiang, China.

By **Wesley Boatwright '22**  
Opinions Writer

In the Chinese province of Xinjiang, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is engaged in a complete erasure of the Uyghur ethnic group. Over one million members of the Muslim minority have been forced into thinly-veiled concentration camps to endure human rights atrocities. This may be the largest religion-based imprisonment since the Holocaust.

President Donald Trump P'oo has previously voiced support for China's human rights abuses. As former National Security Adviser John Bolton wrote in *The Washington Post* in June, "Trump said that Xi [Jinping] should go ahead with building the camps, which Trump thought was exactly the right thing to do."

Instead of focusing on a TikTok and WeChat ban, the leader of the free world should take a stand against the CCP's brutal treatment of the Uyghur minority

and break his trend of negligence surrounding human rights.

President Trump routinely disregards humanitarian crises, venerates dictators, and supports corrupt regimes. For instance, President Trump is an adamant supporter and ally of Saudi Arabia — a country notorious for its many human rights abuses. Even after the Saudi government called for the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi-U.S. relations remained intact.

What's more, the Trump administration ignored a congressional resolution that imposed sanctions on Saudi Arabia for their civil rights violations. When Saudi Arabia launched a horrific military campaign in Yemen, President Trump vetoed a bipartisan resolution aimed at terminating U.S. military assistance to the Saudi government.

Continuing the trend, President Trump blocked a motion by the United Nations Security Council aimed at mitigating North Korea's numerous human

rights violations. Notwithstanding the president's sympathies toward North Korea, no deal was struck, and relations with the country worsened. The United States should be fighting to end human rights abuses, not blocking resolutions that try to stop them. President Trump's continued refusal to fight these crimes against humanity further proves his disregard for the ideals on which this nation was founded.

President Trump even seems to actively support the suppression of human rights in his own country. People in U.S. immigrant-detention facilities have virtually no access to medical treatment and are separated from their families. Recently, accusations have surfaced that women in these centers undergo forced sterilizations.

If President Trump supports the abuse of human rights in his own country, then it is no wonder that he disregards similar atrocities abroad and, in the case of the Uyghur concentration camps, supports them.

Earlier this summer, in an attempt to spur the president into action, Congress passed the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, which requires the U.S. government to report incidences of human rights abuse towards Uyghurs by the CCP. Although President Trump has the power to levy sanctions on China, he has abstained from doing so. When asked why, President Trump told *Axios*, "Well, we were in the middle of a major trade deal."

Similar to the situation with North Korea, the president willingly ignores appalling human rights violations simply "for the deal." Ultimately, President Trump should use his powers to levy sanctions on China and finally make a public statement denouncing the CCP's ethnic cleansing of the Uyghur population through concentration camps.

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### RBG: AN EXAMPLE WE'LL NEVER LIVE UP TO

By **Hannah Wallinger '21**  
Opinions Writer

Last week, on the night that former Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died, my mom and I were celebrating Rosh Hashanah with our annual serving of apples and honey: the apples to signify healing and the honey to represent our hope for a sweet year.

Just after my mom and I had finished cleaning up, I sat on the couch and read the news regarding RBG's death. Evidently, the honey we had that night did not seem to be an accurate representation of the "sweet" year to come.

The first time I heard of RBG was in fifth grade. I had just finished a short BuzzFeed-esque quiz that was supposed to help me choose my future career. I proudly flashed my results to nearby classmates; apparently, I was going to be a lawyer.

Naturally, I proceeded to google "famous lawyers." After scrolling for what felt like ages, I clicked on the first woman that I saw. I spent the next ten minutes reading about RBG's childhood and career. Immediately, I was moved by her story, and she inspired me to declare my future career as a lawyer to anyone who would listen.

My fifth grade career quiz result wasn't completely off-target. As a young woman interested in law and politics, I look up to RBG

as my role model. I passionately read her renowned dissents and watch hours of her interviews, trying to emulate her fearlessness, tenacity, and drive in everything I do. RBG's ability to command a room, unrelenting devotion to her fight for civil rights through legal action, and perseverance through the countless obstacles she faced as a lawyer and Supreme Court justice truly amaze me.

Admittedly, the time following RBG's death has felt scary and uncertain. However, similar to the honey I ate with my mom to commemorate the start of the Jewish New Year, RBG's enduring contributions might signify hope. I believe that people who feel unwelcome in places "where decisions are made" will look to RBG as an example. As these people follow her lead into "the room where it happens," they might feel motivated to alter our society in ways that are long overdue.

I will never be able to fully express how thankful I am for RBG's work and how she has inspired me to continue pursuing my passions. But here's an attempt: Thank you, RBG, for showing young women that we belong in positions of power, and for fighting for our rights and for our country. Your work will never be forgotten or underappreciated.

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Photo courtesy of The New York Times

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in 2013.

### AT 75, WILL THE U.N. FINALLY GROW UP?

By **Anika Midha '22**  
Opinions Writer

On September 21, the United Nations (U.N.) turned 75. Praised for its global peace-keeping initiatives and attention to human rights, the institution has received considerable credit for its work. However, criticism has heightened recently as people have begun more closely evaluating some of the U.N.'s practices.

While many of the U.N.'s humanitarian efforts have benefited the international community, the institution has been plagued by power politics and political biases.

Currently, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is composed of five countries — China, France, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S. — who hold permanent seats on the council.

Other members are elected to two-year terms. Many countries, such as India, Japan, and Germany, have sought membership in the past, only to be blocked by rival members.

The UNSC has the power to impose sanctions and authorize military intervention. Members of the permanent five (P5) can veto any decision — the U.S., for instance, has utilized its veto power 16 times since 1990, often concerning decisions about Israel and Palestine. Given this reality, can the world rely on the U.N. to make crucial decisions and pass important measures when rivalries between UNSC member nations can prevent proper representation?

Bitter relations between P5 countries have hindered progress of U.N. efforts on numerous pressing issues. Notably, the ongoing conflict in Syria has di-

vided the P5: Russia is a staunch supporter of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's administration, while the U.S., U.K., and France have sided with the opposition groups. Unable to reach a consensus, the UNSC took no action in Syria, despite the country's ongoing war crimes and extreme human rights violations.

Additionally, there have been instances where countries blatantly ignored U.N. prohibitions. For example, North Korea has repeatedly conducted nuclear tests, despite warnings and sanctions passed by the U.N. Such outright disregard for the U.N.'s directives undermines their authority and effectiveness.

In order for the U.N. to improve, several issues must be addressed. First, they must implement measures to ensure impartiality. The P5's unjustified veto power is a prime example of an imbalance of power within the security council, guaranteeing that the interests of China, France, Russia, the U.S., and the U.K. will always be prioritized. Additionally, internal disagreements and politics between P5 countries should not hinder the process of making crucial security decisions regarding third-party countries.

Second, the U.N. must find better ways to hold countries accountable for neglecting U.N. initiatives without infringing on a country's sovereignty.

Only after the U.N. improves in these two ways can it effectively maintain international peace and protect the human rights of citizens in all countries.

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Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/The Choate News

The United Nations celebrates its 75th anniversary this month.

### Today, Activism Comes Out Bit by Bit

By **Mealy Cronin '23**  
Opinions Writer

"We have moved from the era of civil rights to the era of human rights," said Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in May of 1967. This idea has endured across decades and is evident in today's galvanized youth, many of whom have spent the past summer demanding justice for victims of police brutality, raising awareness about human rights atrocities, and encouraging donations to nonprofits, one tweet and Instagram post at a time.

Technology and social media have revolutionized the nature of protest movements in two ways. First, protests today can rapidly acquire momentum; organizations communicate their messages online, where millions of people can easily access and share the information. Second, as King articulated, this new era of protests is not restricted to protecting the rights endowed by our institutions; activists are also fighting for human rights.

Because of social media's accessibility and speed, virtual movements are more successful at pulling together a support base. In today's world, a movement can grow overnight. Black Lives Matter (BLM) started in 2013 as a Facebook post and evolved into a globally recognized organization. With one tweet, share, or post, hundreds of youth are called to impromptu rallies and protests. By any measure, the ability to reach the world's population in a matter of minutes has made the movement an overwhelming success.



Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/The Choate News

Critics of virtual activism argue that movements have become decentralized; for instance, BLM doesn't have an official leader or president that acts as the face of the movement. However, centralized authority may not be as necessary as it was during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement — social media can carry BLM's message to all corners of the world. As a result, under the umbrella of BLM, smaller chains of Black activism have taken root, forming their own focused communities.

Princeton University Professor Omar Wasow said, "Part of what social media does is allow us to see a reality that has been entirely visible to some people and invisible to others." However, he also noted the downsides of digitized movements: "There isn't a deep well of trust among demonstrators, as there was among people who did the first sit-ins of lunch counters and all knew each other."

Since most movements today are widespread, virtual, and attracting more people by the minute, they don't have the same intimate sense of community. However, a shared purpose still exists, which has the capability to forge even stronger connections and transcend borders. After all, people are now fighting for change from living rooms and kitchens across the world.

Perhaps the most significant shift brought about by the ease of interconnectivity is a new emphasis on human rights. Before the internet and social networking, activists sought the liberties granted based on citizenship. Now, operating on a global scale, youth activists seek the rights acquired by the very nature of being alive — such as the right to education and freedom of expression.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM: BRINGING BURIED STORIES TO LIGHT

By **Linda Phan '22**  
Copy Editor

In recent months, we have increasingly read in our social-media feeds of the often traumatic experiences on campus of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and LGBTQIA+ students from the Instagram accounts @BlackatChoateOfficial, @LifeatChoate, and @QueeratChoate. Each Instagram account advocates in its own way for a more equitable and just School and society. But what, really, is “social activism?”

Associate Director of Equity and Inclusion and science teacher Mr. Filipe Camarotti said it was, “taking actionable steps to bring attention to cultural, institutional, and systemic structures that are failing a society with the intention of improving it or changing it so that it becomes equitable and just to all.”

@LifeatChoate, @QueeratChoate, and @BlackatChoateOfficial started this summer with the goal of offering students and alumni a platform to share their experiences. A representative from @QueeratChoate said, “I think students want to make their voices heard.”

A representative from @LifeatChoate added, “Some people that have had troubling experiences just want to be heard without having those closest to them look at them any differently. Others want to share their experiences without facing

backlash from administrators or the community.”

Still, the representatives from @LifeatChoate and @QueeratChoate are hesitant to label their Instagram accounts social activism. “We didn’t have any specific goals other than providing a platform for queer people to share their experiences at Choate,” said the representative from @QueeratChoate.

The representative from @LifeatChoate commented, “We, as an account, aren’t asking for specific changes or advocating for certain positions on issues. All we aim to do is provide a platform for people to speak about their experiences, and hopefully inspire oth-

ers to take action.” (A message to @BlackatChoateOfficial requesting an interview was not returned.)

With social media, users can successfully spread awareness, educate others, and call for action on a variety of topics such as climate change, gender equality, and racial injustice. A representative @LifeatChoate cautioned, however, that social media “is good for raising awareness, but it’s not the whole fight.”

Raye Osayimwese-Sisson ’23, a student activist who attended protests this summer, said, “I think there is some level of social activism that is performative, and while it is important to show other people that you care about

them and show the world that you care about them, I think you have to do more than just social media posts and more than just an Instagram story post and really go out there and get involved in multiple other things.”

Alumnus Caleb Maddox ’20 is a vocal activist on Instagram, but he is quick to point out the potential perils of social media activism: “I think we get stuck in this place of ‘I’ve done my job today. I’ve posted a few articles to read about said topic, and that’s it,’ and that isn’t going to do anything.” This points to the ornamental act of posting of black squares with hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatters or #BlackOutTuesday in solidarity of the

movement and daily re-posts of societal issues with no effective follow-up actions.

Yet, despite the possible downfalls of activism in a digital age, Maddox finds the Instagram accounts inspiring and powerful.

He said, “I think a part of activism is highlighting the experiences for the purpose of educating the community and a source of healing, and I think those are equally important. I have read so many @BlackatChoateOfficial and @LifeatChoate posts. I think they’re doing a great job of opening discussion. The most important thing is that people aren’t just glancing over it. It is causing people to ask questions

and dig deeper into [what] the real issues are.”

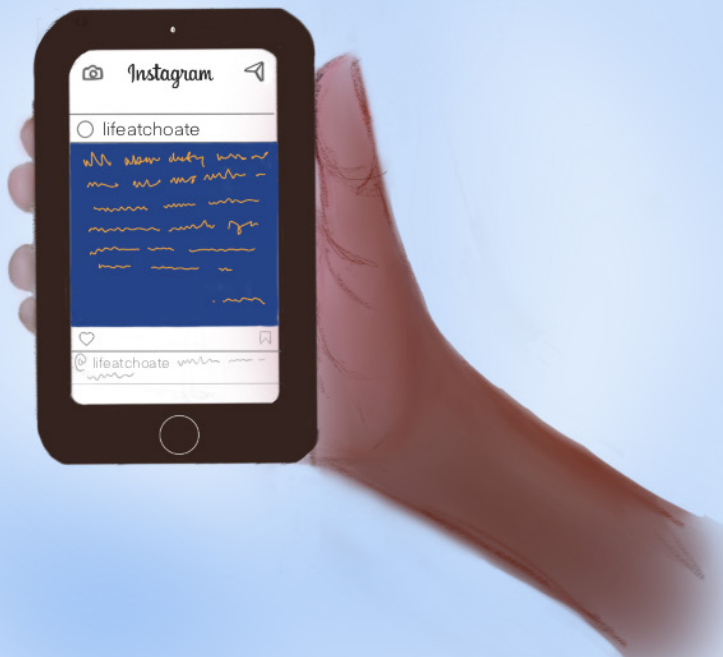
Regardless of whether these Instagram accounts are considered social activism, it is undeniable that the accounts have provided an additional outlet for the Choate community to speak out and raise awareness for change, at the School and society as a whole.

Mr. Camarotti acknowledges that those who have influence or power are responsible for implementing such structural changes. “If those in power are not meeting the necessary expectations, the next step is to hold them accountable until we have an equitable and just community,” he said.

Mr. Camarotti emphasizes a continuous effort for improvement. “Just because the bar has been raised an inch, doesn’t mean it has been raised high enough. We should certainly celebrate accomplishments, but only celebrating accomplishments is an example of privileging participation in the movement over the needs of the movement,” he said.

Maddox pointed out, “It is important to remember [the reason] why we’re having all of these discussions is that we all care about Choate, and that’s why we are doing this. It’s really because we care so much about the community, and we just want to see it be better. We can’t get to that place if we don’t acknowledge what has gone on for so long in all of the communities.”

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Graphic by Julian Hurley/The Choate News

## Conversations Arise from Summer Reading

By **Praj Chirathivat '22**  
Copy Editor

In order to help students appreciate literature and gain exposure to the works of contemporary writers, Choate’s English Department assigns a new book written by a living author every year for its required summer reading. The author then comes to campus during the school year to speak to the Choate community, prompting students to develop a more meaningful connection with the book they have read. This past summer, the English Department chose the winner of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction: *The Nickel Boys*, by Colson Whitehead.

The book is a work of historical fiction novel that depicts an abusive and violent reform school in mid-20th century Florida. The main characters, Elwood and Turner, encounter physical brutality, psychological trauma, and racial inequality. “*The Nickel Boys* is a story about how powerful people get away with abusing the powerless and are never called to account,” said Mr. Whitehead in an interview with *The Guardian* on June 21, 2020. As a Black American, Mr. Whitehead faced racism throughout his life, and the ongoing protests in America reflect the kind of police brutality and inequality *The Nickel Boys* depicted.

“In connection with the current Black Lives Matter Movement, I think *The Nickel Boys* emphasizes the need for equality and the historically Black and White divide,” Rebecca Alston ’22 said. “A school with the task of reforming contradicts [its] actions of abusing and killing children. In the same vein, a police force with the task of protecting and serving contradicts taking innocent lives. The job of the police is to enforce the law, not to be the law.”

The benefit of choosing this particular book for summer reading is the combination of its historical accuracy and entral-



Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/The Choate News

ling narration. “Not all historical fiction is exciting, and I think [Mr. Whitehead] did it in a captivating way that made you want to keep reading. [The story] felt complete. We were getting closure along with the souls of the victims at [Nickel],” noted Director of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers.

While the novel has been praised, *The Nickel Boys* also received some comments regarding its depiction of oppression and violence. “Reading about all the injustices and unfairness makes your skin prickle,” Max Zhang ’22 said.

A key goal for the required summer reading involves challenging the students to consider new thoughts and ideas. To start the conversation on the complex notion of systemic racism, the English Department chose a story that involves cruelty and trauma to better describe racial injustice. “[Elwood] never had a chance, and it didn’t matter if he was doing everything right,” Dr. Myers noted. “There’s oppression and *oppression*: that’s part of the

message. The system needs to change, not just the people.”

Dr. Myers described what she hoped the students would learn from the reading. “As somebody who has a background in Black studies, I think this historical fiction brings a voice to the marginalized sector.” To guide students’ thought process, Dr. Myers, along with young alumni and English teachers Ms. Alex Ashford, Ms. Ellen Devine, Ms. Victoria Pierotti, and Ms. Megan Shea, created and curated a resource guide for *The Nickel Boys*. The guide was written to emphasize issues of racial injustice in the United States, advocate and empower the Black American culture represented in the book, and explain the history the novel is based on. Currently, many English classes are using the resource to unpack the themes and messages of the story.

“The guide helped me understand the author’s thoughts when he was describing certain characters and scenes. After finishing the book and reading through the guide, I achieved a newer un-

derstanding of systemic racism,” Ethan Chapman ’22 commented.

When asked what he took away from the novel, James Njoroge ’21 said, “The book reflects our society today. Even though it was set in the past, issues like racism and sexism actually change our lives much more than we think they do. I think that it will hopefully change people’s perspective on life as a whole [and] make them more empathetic, especially if they are privileged.”

Literature is a powerful tool that can raise the voice of marginalized populations and acknowledge ongoing problems in society today. Choosing *The Nickel Boys* as the summer reading challenges the readers to not only further their analytical skills and appreciate contemporary literature but also find deeper connections and understanding about Black Americans and their experience.

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## NEW YEAR, NEW GOALS

By **Brian Harder '23**  
Staff Reporter

By now, we’ve all heard in countless emails about how “unprecedented and uncertain” this year has become. Students and teachers have endured months of online learning, and when we do eventually return to campus, it will still be far from the quintessential Choate experience we have come to know and love. Nevertheless, students are hopeful of the untapped possibilities in this school year and dream of what they may accomplish. Some students shared the items on their bucket list for this year. When those featured in this article are interviewed again next May, hopefully they will have accomplished their goals and more!

**Noah McBride '23:** “Make it to 2021. I want to finish a couple chapters of my book. With so much time on my hands, it’s probably the best time for me to work.”

**Bruce Dubel '22:** “This year, I have three goals. 1: Learn to ride a unicycle. 2: Solve a Rubik’s cube in under 10 seconds. 3: Build my own PC.”

**Shawn Yang '24:** “Three goals I have for this year are to work on my time management and procrastination, not stress myself out too much, and to focus on my mental health more.”

**Celine Pirard '21:** “Ride my knee scooter down the steepest hill on campus. Go on a spur-of-the-moment long weekend trip to NYC (like totally unplanned – I just go). Watch the stars from the science center roof.”

**Reagan Bajus '22:** “Stargaze on the PMAC roof. Eat everything on the menu at Half Moon. Take a polar plunge in the waterfall.”

**Matt Syms '21:** “I’d like to ring the chapel bells, visit the School’s ar-

chives and see the oldest records, walk to the KEC, swim at the waterfall, write an article for *The Choate News*, and participate in someone’s Last Hurrah ask.”

**Zoe Tray '21:** “I’d like to build a snowman with my friends on Mem field! I’ve never been able to do that. Bake and decorate cookies in the St. John Hall Kitchen with friends. Find the supposed dark room that exists somewhere on campus to develop photos. Go stargazing with the astronomy club and see planets with the telescope.”

**Cassatt Boatwright '24:** “I’m really going to work on going to bed earlier, as I definitely do not sleep enough. Also, I plan to organize my belongings better to improve time management. I want to try and finish a book every week or two this year, improve my drawing skills, and try out for volleyball.”

**Joy An '23:** “My goals for this year are to branch out and try different kinds of dance, meet some of the new students, and make the most of all my classes. I’m also going to try not to let the whole pandemic get me down.”

**Claire Fu '22:** “My goal is to be that one person who can walk past any tree or plant and be able to state the Latin name of the species without giving it so much as a second thought.”

In spite of the challenges this year will bring, Choate students will continue to push themselves to achieve their goals. Many of these will be different than normal given the reduced number of feasible extracurriculars and other activities. As our return to campus approaches, the students interviewed all remain committed to achieving their goals, despite the pandemic.

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## ARTS FAMILY TREE SPROUTS CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NEW ARTISTS AND MENTORS



Graphic by Tony Lee/The Choate News

By **Rebecca Alston '22**  
Reporter

This year, students seeking guidance from veteran artists can find it through the new Arts Family Tree, a networking and mentorship program started by Sabrina Carlier '21 that connects artists from different disciplines and backgrounds.

The program aims to provide a close-knit support system for artists, where experienced upperclassmen can provide knowledge to arts greenhorns, ranging from

advice about arts courses to opportunities in their specific concentrations. Carlier explained, "Having a connection to another student in the same discipline but different grade and experience level will allow students to get mentorship in whatever their journey as an artist may be."

The idea for the program blossomed from Carlier's concern that new students would not be able to receive the same heart-warming, in-person welcome and experience on campus that cemented her love

for the Choate Arts Department. Although she initially focused on ballet before Choate, Carlier found a home in the theater program and would like to encourage other young artists to branch out and explore different art fields.

Interested students can join the Family Tree by filling out a short form posted on the student portal, in which they identify their form, time zone, and art discipline(s). Prior experience is not a prerequisite to join; anyone interested in the arts is welcome. Each student is then placed into a "branch" of the tree, determined by their primary field of study.

Carlier clarified that multidisciplinary artists, such as a visual artist who wants to venture into dance, are also welcome. According to Carlier, the program embraces how interconnected the arts are and hopes members of the Family Tree will frequently collaborate across disciplines. In fact, she chose to call the program a "Family Tree" in order to emphasize her goal of connecting artists of all

different fields and levels of experience and mastery.

Fifth and sixth form mentors in the family tree will plan several meetings throughout each term. "Within the coming weeks, each branch will have their first gathering and start getting to know each other," said Carlier, and assured that all safety guidelines will be followed for in-person meetings.

In order to foster and preserve long-lasting connections, students will remain in the program even after graduating and will transition to being an alumni mentor in their designated branch. Currently, the Arts Family Tree only consists of current Choate students, but Carlier hopes to invite alumni into the program within a few months.

Although the initial deadline of September 13 has passed, Carlier still encourages anyone interested in being involved in the Arts Family Tree to join through the form on the student portal.

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## "Choate Creates" Showcases Student Art

By **Reagan Bajus '22**  
Reporter

The social isolation of the last six months has given Choate students across the globe time to find a new interest or pick up an old hobby. When virtual learning began this past spring term, Joy An '23 worried that without access to campus and the physical sense of community, many Choate students would lose the inspiration and motivation to explore their creative side. Her solution was to launch Choate Creates, a prompt-based, monthly art showcase displayed on the Choate Student Council Instagram account and in all-school emails.

An credited Inktober as her main inspiration for the initiative. Started in 2009 and a popular tradition to this day, Inktober challenges artists to create one ink drawing per day for the month of October, each day lining up with a single word from the official prompt list.

"It struck me that it was maybe harder to find inspiration for art in quarantine," An said. "I created this Choate Creates program in an effort to encourage people to continue creating artwork, even when we were all stuck at home."

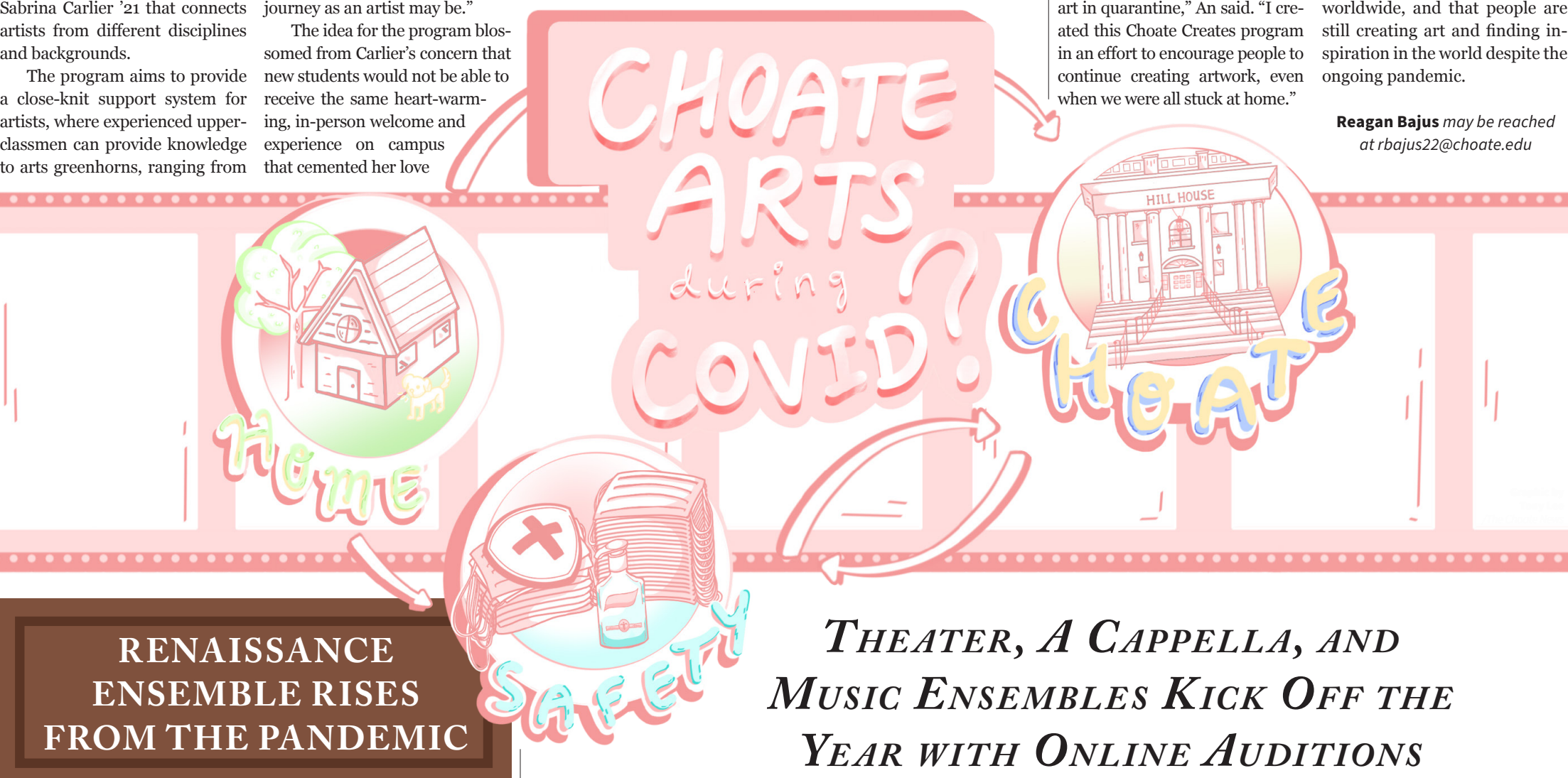
Celeste van Dokkum '23, who has been drawing since middle school, is a frequent participant in Choate Creates. "It gives me a chance to be creative," van Dokkum said. "It's nice to have something that forces you to do art because with classes and everything, it's kind of hard to prioritize that."

"If there's a good prompt, then I'm like, 'I have an idea for this! I'm going to draw it!'" van Dokkum continued. "Sometimes it doesn't work out, but you get excited about it. It's fun."

A dancer and violinist, An admitted that she is not very good at drawing but appreciates the art nonetheless. According to An, being in orchestra developed her love of how music, visual art, and dance can melt together and become one. She cites art as a powerful reminder of the universal languages that connect us, transcending time, distance, and cultural barriers.

An's goal is for Choate Creates to become a monthly reminder both that art has the ability to connect students worldwide, and that people are still creating art and finding inspiration in the world despite the ongoing pandemic.

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## RENAISSANCE ENSEMBLE RISES FROM THE PANDEMIC

By **Adrienne Chacón '22**  
Copy Editor

Art can often be a response to current events and changes in culture or a reflection of people's emotions during tumultuous times. Galvanized by the recent calls for racial and social justice, as well as the ongoing pandemic, students at Choate joined students from five other New England schools — Kingswood Oxford School, The Loomis Chaffee School, Deerfield Academy, The Hotchkiss School, and Phillips Exeter Academy — to form the Renaissance Ensemble and create art inspired by the current moment.

On August 30, as a fundraiser for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDEF), the Renaissance Ensemble debuted their concert "The Key to Change" via YouTube.

Hotchkiss student Benjamin Weiss '21 gave a statement on the formation and tenets of the Ensemble: "A group of eleven strangers with the connection of being high school students, of having love and passion for musical theater ... got together on Zoom to open their hearts and do what they love. From that, the Renaissance Ensemble was born." Since the original Renaissance era was born from the bubonic plague, the Renaissance Ensemble was fittingly born from the coronavirus pandemic.

Choate students contributed a rendition of "Wait For It" from *Hamilton: An American Musi-*

cal. The video featured soloists Maxwell Brown '21, Lucas Eggers '21, Eliza Marovitz '21, Dominic Thomas '21, Cristian Castro '22, and Skye Figueroa '22; the ensemble was comprised of Sabrina Carlier '21, Will Flamm '21, Emily Goodwin '21, Matthew Syms '21, and Ava Maha '23.

"The Ensemble provided a sense of unity in a lonely time," Maha said. "Virtual rehearsal was a great way to rekindle friendships with familiar faces."

The Ensemble has a focus on social justice; as part of "The Key of Change" performance, the Ensemble started a GoFundMe campaign to raise money for the LDEF. The group expressed that their beliefs center on progress and equality, voicing their support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Furthermore, they stated that systemic change is necessary to bring about equality, and the arts have the power to open hearts and minds and inspire change.

"In our schools, institutions that pride themselves as learning communities of diverse and supportive members, we've heard countless stories on how that hasn't been and still is not the case," Weiss said. "Your voice has an impact. You have an impact. What you learn, what you do with that knowledge has an impact," he continued. "So share it, find others, speak out, make change, because your voice matters."

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By **Angel Guo '22**  
Staff Reporter

Since last year's virtual spring term, Choate's theater, music ensembles, and a cappella groups have adapted to the School's "new normal" and are ready to embark upon the 2020-2021 school year with innovative ideas to solve the difficulties imposed by distance learning — starting with auditions.

Given the current circumstances, theater cannot exist in its traditional form of stage productions attended by a physical audience. Adapting to this unprecedented situation, Mrs. Kate Doak, English teacher and director of this term's main production, co-wrote the fall play *Take-Away* with a group of students — Ethan Bardoe '21, Maxwell Brown '21, Eliza Marovitz '21, and Audrey Lim '23 — over Zoom this summer.

"I decided to write a play because we were having problems getting rights to shows for Zoom, and they all felt like they would be a lesser version of themselves if staged in Zoom," Mrs. Doak said. "So we wrote something towards Zoom and screens. We wanted to craft something that could be staged no matter the circumstances of Choate's term."

As *Take-Away* explores an unconventional form of theater that is staged virtually, Mrs. Doak and the students who co-wrote the play decided that it was essential to hold the auditions through Zoom to see how different parts played out on camera and on the online platform.

## THEATER, A CAPPELLA, AND MUSIC ENSEMBLES KICK OFF THE YEAR WITH ONLINE AUDITIONS



Graphic by Tony Lee/The Choate News

Whereas *Take-Away* conducted its auditions through Zoom, a cappella groups on campus received their auditions through Google Forms and Dropbox files. Auditioning students each submitted an audio recording showing off their vocal skills through Dropbox, and select students will be further interviewed in callbacks. Although the deadline for auditions and the announcement date for callbacks were initially set for September 16 and 21, respectively, a shortage of auditioning students forced the groups to tentatively extend the dates to October 4 and 11.

Chloe Brink '21, co-president of Lilith, one of two all-female a cappella groups on campus, acknowledged the difficulty of assessing some aspects of students' abilities through recordings. However, since a cappella's main focus is on the members' voices, Brink was confident about the efficacy of online auditions. "Recordings don't change your voice too much, and through them we can have a general idea about the singer," said Brink.

The fall play held auditions through video call; a cappella through recording files; instrumental ensembles approached auditions with a hybrid of both. Returning ensemble members were only required to submit a recording while new students had to each schedule a live Zoom call with Mr. Gene Wie, Instrumental Ensembles Director.

Mr. Wie said he was more generous in assessing students' abilities during real-time Zoom auditions than via recordings. Since self-taped videos could be recorded multiple times, artists have the freedom to record an unlimited number of times until they capture their best attempt. In contrast, video call meetings, similar to in-person auditions, are one-shot opportunities that can cause stress and anxiety, affecting musicians' performances.

Instead of focusing on catching minor mistakes during auditions, Mr. Wie said he evaluates students mainly on their ability to play the symphony pieces and

their rhythmic integrity, as this indicates if students can play cohesively with other members in an ensemble. As Mr. Wie said, "The deciding factor is rhythm, rhythm, rhythm!"

Lauren Kee '24, a third-former in the Symphony Orchestra, preferred auditioning through recording to performing in person. Although she is a new student, Kee submitted a recording since she was unable to schedule a meeting due to time zone differences.

"Recordings were better for me because I didn't need to compare my performance to other people. I was just trying to outcompete myself," Kee said. However, she noted that recorded auditions lacked interactions with the conductor, which is essential in understanding the conductor's expectations.

Whether future auditions will be online for certain theater, a cappella, or instrumental groups after the pandemic remains unknown.

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## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION ON THE FIELD

By **Naomi Fleisch '22**  
Reporter

This summer, inspired by nationwide protests against police violence and systemic inequality, Choate students turned to social media to share their accounts of racism at Choate. An often overlooked aspect of these stories is the role that race and inclusion play in sports on campus.

Mr. Charlie Fuentes, one of the 11 faculty members that make up the School's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force formed earlier this year, is also a Boys' Varsity Soccer coach. When asked how racism affects the athletic world, Mr. Fuentes said, "Racism and anti-Blackness do not differentiate between everyday life and a game field. Oftentimes, many of the same issues that persist throughout society can be seen inside of sports. Just the other day, Neymar, one of the most popular and influential soccer figures in the game right now, was called a racist term by an opposing player during a match."

This incident is hardly the first of its kind. So, if racism is such a widespread issue in sports, how should the Athlet-



Graphic by Senching Hsia/The Choate News

ic Department at Choate condemn injustice and create an inclusive environment?

One of the ways Choate does this is by appointing a diverse coaching staff. Frequently, students' greatest role models at school are coaches with whom they have cultivated a mentor-mentee relationship. During the countless

hours spent in the gym or on the field, coaches are there to push athletes when they feel defeated and help them when they need guidance.

In order for an athlete to truly feel inspired by their coach, they often need to see a part of their identity in the coach. "Representation is one way in which an individual can see themselves re-

flected in society," said Mr. Filipe Camarotti, Associate Director of Equity and Inclusion and a Boys' and Girls' Varsity Volleyball coach. "At Choate Rosemary Hall, a coach is a position of power. If there isn't equitable representation amongst a collective coaching staff, then the message the institution sends to its community is that they do not believe

in the collective group of people in power should be diverse. Thus, a consequence of that message is that the institution does not value an individual seeing themselves reflected in society."

While appointing a diverse coaching staff does serve as an important foundation, it does not necessarily mean that the team will cre-

ate an accepting and inclusive environment. According to Mr. Roney Eford, Director of Athletics and a member of the DEI Task Force, "It is very important for a team to have a culture of inclusion and not just be diverse."

One of the most significant parts of sports culture at Choate is the sense of togetherness and family inspired by the team setting. Students at Choate come from an array of backgrounds and cultures. If there is any place on campus where these paths cross, it is in the Athletics Department. According to Bo Goergen '22, co-captain of Boys' Varsity Baseball, "Racism and exclusion have no place on sports teams. Players are unified under the auspices of hard work and bond over their shared love of the game. Teams are open communities for all who put the work in."

Sports often reflect, on a smaller scale, issues of injustice that are prevalent in society. They also have the ability to act as a uniting force for people from various backgrounds. Accordingly, sports at Choate are an essential part of creating an inclusive and equitable community.

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## Training Together from Afar with CoachMePlus

By **Sam Anastasio '23**  
Staff Reporter

After the Founders League's July 15 announcement canceling all interscholastic play for the 2020 fall season, along with the School's August 20 decision to delay the reopening of school until October, prospects for the fall season of Choate athletics were grim. Sports are an integral part of the Choate experience, and, for athletes, often a deciding factor when applying to high school and college.

Choate's Athletics Department is now working hard to adapt to remote athletics. In lieu of physical practices, Choate sports have gone virtual, incor-

porating Zoom practices and the use of the app CoachMePlus.

"The CoachMePlus app has been around for a number of years, serving the needs of over 250 professional and Division I programs," said Head Athletic Trainer Mr. Brian Holloway.

Mr. Holloway, along with Boys' Varsity Lacrosse Coach Mr. Ethan McDonnell, has been looking at potential use of the software since 2019, when the two were working on a player developmental model before the lacrosse season. The sudden necessity for remote athletics accelerated this plan. The coaches "elevated the product from 'would like to have' to 'must have' in order to

best serve our student athletes given the circumstances," Mr. Holloway said.

The app has a wide variety of uses, including allowing coaches and players to interact with each other through an in-app messaging feature and share important documents, photos, and videos. The app also tracks and analyzes performance metrics and players' wellness by having students fill out surveys and add their statistics. The app enables coaches to "make better informed decisions regarding team and individual athlete preparation," said Mr. Holloway.

Highlighted features include training plans that are

designed for athletes with or without access to weights, and macronutrient and weight management trackers designed to help players either gain or lose weight. Another feature of practicing remotely is that athletes can participate in workouts at any point in their day, from any location.

When players open the app, a detailed outline of their workout plan with specific instructions from their coaches appears. Athletes can then check off exercises as they go, and will get credit for that day.

Varsity and JV Football have taken full advantage of the CoachMePlus app. The football team, although sidelined for the 2020 season, is determined to maintain and improve their skills. The CoachMePlus app has helped to maintain aspects of the typical football season, like letting players weigh in and weigh out before and after sessions. In some ways the app has also enhanced their ability to prepare for a unique season. Offensive Line Guard Oliver Howard '23 said, "The app is good because it has a lot of aspects of the athletic experience. It has nutrition, workouts, individualized stats, and more."

Page Wildridge '21, co-captain of Varsity Field Hockey, added, "I love the app! It offers great workouts and it will be super helpful for me to stay in shape, even while I'm not out on the turf."

The responses from players and coaches thus far have been promising. Lacrosse player Zephyr Simus '23 lauded the lacrosse team's ability to integrate the program into their training, saying, "I've found it's a really great way to communicate with teammates and coaches."

The integration of CoachMePlus is the next step towards enriching athletic performance both remotely and in-person. Mr. Holloway said, "We are planning to utilize the program to its full potential when we return to sporting competitions."

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Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/The Choate News

## Athletes Zoom Through Workouts

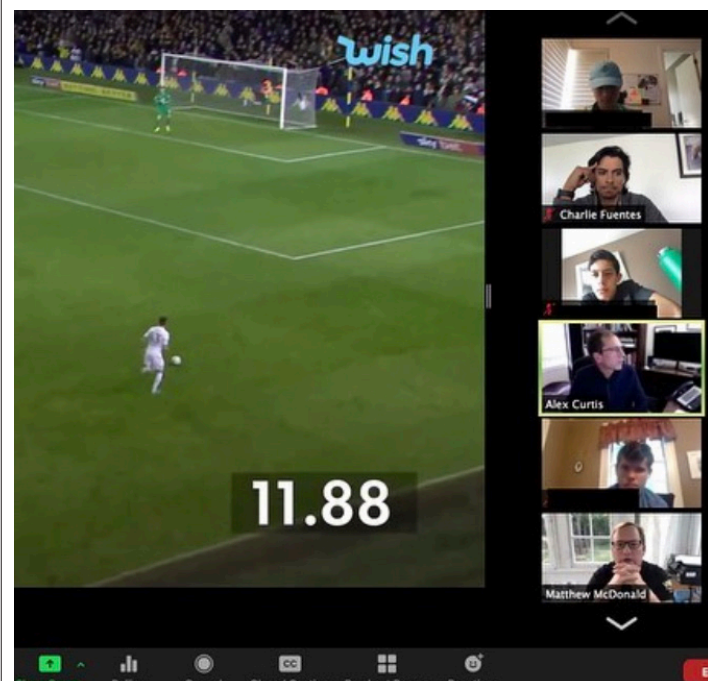


Photo courtesy of Boys' Varsity Soccer Instagram

Boys' Varsity Soccer hosts practice over Zoom

By **Renee Jiang '22**  
Copy Editor

During this remote period in September, sports teams have found innovative ways to stay connected and maintain fitness, whether through Zoom or CoachMePlus — an app offering sport-specific training programs. To welcome new students joining teams, captains have also hosted introductory meetings to imitate the start of a normal season.

For the past few weeks, Girls' Varsity Volleyball has been convening over Zoom for group workouts every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, as well as organizing weekend calls for team bonding activities. Co-captain Morgann Skoda '22 said, "I'm devastated that we can't get together and meet each other. However, virtual calls keep us on our toes. We are constantly trying to discover new ways to best engage everyone through Zoom."

In order to increase fitness levels to those of a normal season, the team's captains have held everyone accountable by hosting mandatory workouts. Without being physically together, the team tried to develop workouts that specifically target the muscles used in volleyball. Their workout last week, for example, included intense HIIT intervals, core-focused exercises, and a team wall-sit. By developing their own

workouts, the team can imitate the normal training plan. In spite of these successes, "it's definitely been a challenge to maintain high energy while staring at your teammates through a computer screen during group workouts and calls," said co-captain Ella Sklar '22.

Boys' Varsity Soccer has also remained determined to bond as a team and train rigorously. Similar to girls' volleyball, "We do workouts on Zoom two to three times a week, with some asynchronous workouts mixed in," said co-captain Allen Zheng '21. To keep things interesting, Zheng said, "Our coaches have done a good job mixing [the workouts] up. For example, we just did one where we were split up into three breakout rooms and had a competition to see what group could do the most reps in 30 minutes." In order to integrate new athletes into the team, Boys' Soccer has also hosted "team bonding meetings led by the captains, where we talk and watch film to help everybody get to know each other a little better even though we aren't on campus," according to Zheng.

Though many students will be back on campus in October and sport teams will finally be able to meet in person, student athletes will still have to adapt to social-distancing requirements.

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