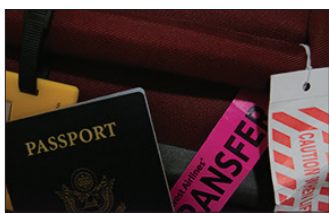


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FORMER GUARD MAKES THE PRO JUMP IN MEXICO

Activists call on local government for ceasefire



PRAKRITI PANWAR/THE ITHACAN

BY VIVIAN ROSE

ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

After more than 100 days of the Israel-Hamas war, some Ithaca College students have been pushing for more action from the college to support Muslim and Palestinian students on campus.

First-year student Aya Oulida, who is Muslim, is in the process of establishing an Ithaca College chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). Oulida said that despite the college communicating the importance of supporting Jewish, Palestinian and Gazan communities on campus, it is not following through.

“I think the college has been doing a lot for the Jewish community and very, very little for the Muslim and Palestinian students at the college,” Oulida said. “I feel like a very important step would be to recognize that there are [Muslim and Palestinian students] on campus and to just recognize those students and what they stand for and make them feel as supported as possible.”

Hillel at Ithaca College has been actively supporting Jewish students since Fall 2023 by spreading the word about services like the college’s Center for Counseling and Psychological Services, meditation at Muller Chapel and hosting a pop-up therapeutic art studio.

Sophomore Quincey Fireside, president of Ithaca College Students For Palestine (ICSFP), said it is important for the college’s Muslim Student Association (MSA) — a student organization for Muslim students on campus — to have more publicity. ICSFP plans to collaborate with the college’s MSA to celebrate Palestinian art and culture with movie nights and events.

“Hillel has so much publicity and the MSA has really none at all,” Fireside said. “I’d love to see some promotion of the school’s Instagram accounts for the MSA. I think President Cornish has alienated herself from the student body ... and I’d like to see some active effort to get back in touch.”

ICSFP is not an official organization and has been functioning on Instagram since December 2023. Fireside said ICSFP has potential plans to organize town hall meetings and organize demonstrations to put pressure on the college’s administration, especially Cornish, for their lack of communication.

Local community

The local community of Tompkins County has also pushed for more action. At the Jan. 2 and Jan. 16 Tompkins County Legislature (TCL) meetings — the two public meetings of 2024 — community members urged the legisla-

CEASEFIRE, PAGE 4

IC files motion to dismiss claims in Title IX lawsuit

BY SYD PIERRE,
PRAKRITI PANWAR

EDITOR IN CHIEF,
NEWS EDITOR

An Ithaca College student filed a civil lawsuit against the college and a former associate dean of the Roy H. Park School of Communications in November 2023. The student, known as John Doe in the case, alleged that he was sexually abused and harassed by four then-employees of the college, including the former associate dean.

The Defendants in the lawsuit, Ithaca College and Bryan Roberts, the former associate dean of the Park School, both filed motions Jan. 22 seeking to dismiss all or a majority of the claims in the original complaint from Doe.

Doe’s claims included negligence; violation of Title IX; negligent hiring, retention, taking direction and supervision; negligent infliction of emotional distress (NIED); and intentional infliction of

emotional distress (IIED).

Doe filed the lawsuit under the Adult Survivors Act and Title IX. According to the lawsuit, the student was “in an unwelcome, unsafe, threatening, and/or nonconsensual sexual relationship” from Fall 2021 to Spring 2023 with Bryan Roberts, former associate dean of the Park School of Communications.

Erin Peake, Doe’s lawyer, declined to comment about the lawsuit, citing protection of anonymity for Doe.

Roberts’ lawyer, Peter Glennon, did not reply to a request to comment about the lawsuit and declined to comment about the motions to dismiss.

The complaint alleges that “Defendants had both actual and constructive notice of the abuse, which took place in their school, in that amongst other things, Bryan Roberts was publicly using Grindr to connect with Ithaca College students as young as 19-years-old, on campus and his sexual abuse of students was common knowledge amongst

students, staff and other leadership at Ithaca College. Nonetheless, Defendants did nothing to intervene and stop and/or prevent the assault and abuse.”

According to the case, Roberts reached out to Doe on Grindr in December 2021.

The complaint alleges that Roberts and Doe had nonconsensual sexual encounters seven to nine times from Fall 2021 to early Spring 2023.

Emily Rockett — vice president, general counsel and secretary to the board of trustees at the college — said the college’s Title IX office and Office of Human Resources investigate reports of sexual harassment and violations of the college’s intimate relationship policy.

In the case, Doe claims to have reported to both Jack Bryant, associate professor and degree program director of Media Arts, Sciences and Studies, and Andrew Lamendola, administrative coordinator of the Center for Career Exploration and Development, that he “was in an

unwelcome, unsafe, threatening, and/or nonconsensual sexual relationship” with Roberts.

According to the complaint, Bryant connected with Doe on Grindr in January 2022.

Doe reported his nonconsensual sexual relationship with Roberts to Bryant during this conversation. The complaint states that “Bryant did not report this allegation to Ithaca College, nor did he ask [Doe] if he needed help; rather, he ignored and dismissed [Doe’s] complaints.”

Bryant declined to comment about the lawsuit and motions.

In Spring 2023, Doe also reported the same concerns about the relationship with Roberts to Lamendola.

Lamendola declined to comment about the lawsuit and the motions to dismiss claims in it.

The student alleges in the case that he also experienced “harmful, unwanted, unwelcome, nonconsensual and/or hostile sexual advances” by Marc Greene, former director of senior student teacher placements in

the Department of Music Education, in Fall 2022; Casey Stebbins, lead cashier of dining services, in Fall 2022; and Ron Trunzo, former associate director for residential life and student conduct and community standards, in Spring 2023.

Despite multiple attempts, Trunzo, Greene and Stebbins could not be reached for comment.

The complaint alleges that in May 2023, the college’s Title IX office received a complaint from another student that made the office aware of Doe’s nonconsensual relationship with Roberts. According to the complaint, Doe decided to officially report Roberts and an investigation commenced during summer 2023.

The complaint alleges that following the Title IX investigation, Roberts was found in violation of the college’s policy on sexual harassment (Policy 2.6) and its policy on intimate relationships (Policy 2.46).

Roberts left the college in August

TITLE IX, PAGE 4



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On the Same Page

Hosts Emma Kersting and Kaeleigh Banda drive into this week's top stories in News, Sports, and Life and Culture by interviewing the reporters to get a closer look at Ithaca College and beyond campus.

THE ITHACAN

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IC forecasts deficit decrease and more faculty hires

BY RYAN JOHNSON

ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Faculty, staff, alumni and students of Ithaca College gathered Jan. 23 in Emerson Suites to attend the Spring 2024 All-College Gathering. During the session, college leadership acknowledged the recent civil lawsuit against the college, faculty hiring, student enrollment and the budget outlook for the 2023–2024 fiscal year (FY24).

Remarks from the President

To begin the presentation, President La Jerne Cornish responded to an article by *The Ithacan* detailing a civil lawsuit an Ithaca College student filed against the college and a former associate dean of the Roy H. Park School of Communications.

Cornish said during the presentation that the college has commented all that it can at the moment.

"I know that [the article] was jarring for some," Cornish said. "I know that it was shocking, and I know that it may have evoked an emotional reaction. ... But there will be no further comment officially because this is being litigated, and the college will speak in court when allowed to do so."

Cornish's opening statements were followed by an update on faculty hirings from Melanie Stein, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at the college, and a financial update from Tim Downs,

vice president for finance and administration and chief financial officer at the college.

Faculty Hirings

Stein began the academic update with a presentation on faculty hiring. Stein said the current student-to-faculty ratio is 11:1, which is below target but what the college expected because 2024 enrollment will be lower than recent years. While Stein did not say what the target was, in Fall 2020, the student-to-faculty ratio was 9.4:1.

"Last year, we authorized the filling of 26 full-time, regular, continuing faculty [positions]," Stein said. "At this point in the year, half of those [positions] have been successfully filled."

Stein said the college is about to begin the faculty allocation process, a process in which departments submit requests for positions. The Teaching Resource Allocation Committee recommends the priorities of the requests to the provost for 2024 and that next year, the college will continue to see more faculty hiring.

Budget Outlook

Downs said the majority of the budget at the college depends on student enrollment and because of the low student enrollment, the college will have a deficit of \$12.5 million for FY24.

"We continue to be as thoughtful as we can and midway through the year, we believe that we are going to



President La Jerne Cornish said she had been elected to the board of directors for the Council of Independent Colleges and to the board of the Council of Independent Colleges and Universities.

CALEB KAUFMAN/THE ITHACAN

come in certainly favorable but still in the deficit of where we were."

Downs' presentation forecasted a decrease in the deficit from \$12.5 million in FY24 to \$7.6 million in FY25.

Downs also said some existing operation challenges within the budget now are a 10% average salary gap to market, an insufficient non-salary operating budget to cover inflation and an increase in investments in student

recruitment and retention.

Closing Remarks

Cornish said she had been elected to the board of directors for the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), a national organization that provides services to independent colleges and universities. Cornish also said she had been elected to the board of the Council of Independent

Colleges and Universities, an organization in New York representing public policy issues of New York's independent colleges and universities.

"I am excited about our future," Cornish said. "Do we have things that we need to correct? Yes. Do we have challenges? Yes. Can we overcome them? Yes."

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Q&A: Spiritual life director shares resources and plans

In December 2023, Austin Reid was announced as the interim director for the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life.

The position opened when Yasin Ahmed, former director for the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, resigned from the college in October 2023.

Reid spent two years working with Hillel at Ithaca College from 2018 to 2020 as a Springboard Fellow, a program started by Hillel International that connects early-career professionals to colleges to make Jewish campus life more engaging and inclusive. Bonnie Prunty, vice president of Student Affairs and Campus Life, said in a Dec. 9 Intercom post that Reid will provide direct support to students in the college community who have been impacted by the continued conflict in Israel and Gaza. Prunty also said Reid will support the launch of a new Religious and Spiritual Life-based Residential Learning Community (RLC).

Assistant News Editor Ryan Johnson spoke with Reid about what brought him back to campus, plans to assist students impacted by the ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza and what he is most excited about for Spring 2024.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Ryan Johnson: You previously worked with Hillel from 2018 to 2020; what brought you back to campus?

Austin Reid: I have told many people since working at IC that my favorite job I've ever had was working with Hillel. There were students I connected with during that time who I still stay in touch with today and [I] found the work to be really meaningful. [I] found the variety of things students are working on at Ithaca College to be really amazing. One particular memorable program we worked on during my time with Hillel was the Swipe Out Hunger Initiative, which still continues at Ithaca College today. I'm really excited to make connections

like that again, during the interim period that I'm going to be here.

RJ: How are you planning to provide support to students impacted by the Israel-Hamas war right now?

AR: I know that there are few issues going on today that are as important as the ongoing Israel-Palestinian conflict and there are two upcoming programs that center on this area. The first is Side by Side, which is going to be happening on Feb. 6 from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. ... in Muller Chapel. Side by Side is a dual narrative of Israeli and Palestinian history that's going to be done through the personal and family stories of two individuals, one Israeli and one Palestinian. Later in the semester, one program that's already being formed is 'Roots' and that's March 5 from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Emerson Suites. Roots is a program that will highlight an Israeli and Palestinian grassroots initiative for understanding non violence. Guest speakers are going to be sharing their firsthand, personal and often interconnected stories that will also highlight the ... grassroots work of this organization that's operating in Israel and Palestine. So these are two programs, and I would certainly welcome conversations with any students, too, about other ways to help make sure our campus community knows about issues like this, but these are the two programs that I already am hearing about.

RJ: Explain the plans for the new Religious and Spiritual Life Residential Learning Community and how that came about.

AR: An interfaith residential learning community existed at Ithaca College in 2015, and it continued for several years until it became inactive. The proposed religious and spiritual life-based residential learning community — [for] which a name has been put forward called 'Seekers' as a designation for this community — is a potential successor to the earlier community, and it's still in the early stages of conception. The Office of Religious and



Austin Reid, interim director for the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, will support students and launch a new Residential Learning Community at the college.

COURTESY OF RACHEL PHILIPSON

Spiritual Life [and] our partners in the Office of Residential Life, intend to host informational sessions this semester to better understand the range of student interest in this learning community and the contributions this community could make to the broader campus community. ... This is all really based on interest and feedback, so we hope this new RLC will launch in fall of 2025.

RJ: How will you work to ensure every student feels comfortable expressing their religion on the Ithaca College campus?

AR: A focus area that I will have is we have a few communities here that operate on campus without any part-time or full-time staff. So I want students in those communities to see me as their point person. If there's a question about how you're doing a particular program, [or] a question about [getting] funding for a particu-

lar effort we want to do here, I want folks to feel that my doors open, and I'm here to help with those things. We also have some fantastic work that's being done by our different affiliate communities and student organizations that are existing, and I want to support the things that are already in motion for the year, particularly coming in at the moment that I'm coming in. Another thing that I've been thinking about Muller Chapel sending an explicit invitation to all members of our campus committee that this is a space for them. Some conversations I'm already having are with folks at CAPS about how to bring more wellness activities into the chapel. ... I think Muller Chapel [is] this unique space on campus that is very conducive for ... to be [a] reflective, contemplative space.

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FROM CEASEFIRE, PAGE 1

tive body to develop a local resolution calling for a ceasefire. This was inspired by the resolution that the Tompkins County Human Rights Commission released in December 2023.

TCHRC's resolution strongly urges Tompkins County to call on President Joe Biden and the U.S. Congress for an immediate and sustainable ceasefire and for strong leadership to counteract antisemitism as well as Islamophobia.

About a dozen local residents and members from CeasefireNOW CNY gathered in front of the legislative building Jan. 16 before the TCL meeting.

Some of them spoke at the meeting, urging TCL to develop a ceasefire resolution. As of now, passing or adopting a ceasefire resolution is not on TCL's agenda. Tompkins County legislators Susan Currie of District 3 and Veronica Pillar of District 2 volunteered to work on a resolution calling for a ceasefire.

Pillar said there have been discussions within the TCL about whether the resolution would explicitly call for a ceasefire or not.

Pillar said TCL observed an overwhelming amount of public speakers asking for a resolution to call for a ceasefire during the past two meetings.

However, the number of individuals who spoke at the meetings has decreased: nearly 50 people spoke at the Jan. 2 meeting and less than 25 people spoke at the Jan. 16 meeting.

"A resolution would affirm



From left, first-year student Aya Oulida is establishing Students for Justice in Palestine at Ithaca College and sophomore Quincey Fireside is the president of IC Students for Palestine.

MADDY TANZMAN/THE ITHACAN

that we as a county value human rights," Pillar said. "A county is bigger and louder than an individual person and amplifies our constituents' voices."

Legislator Deborah Dawson of District 10 said that calling for a resolution is not a responsibility of the TCL and would not accurately describe the stances every community member has on the issue.

"My feeling is we really have no influence on what happens in the Middle East," Dawson said. "The likelihood that 14 of us are going to agree on a statement that is going to adequately represent [our constituents'] position is less than zero, in my opinion."

During the Jan. 16 meeting, Cornell University student Jeronimo Pinto said the Israel-Hamas war is a local issue because of Cornell's tie with the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. The institute uses its research and development of military technology to maintain its occupation of Palestine, according to The Nation.

"Not only is Cornell actively partnering with these companies — making it so that students can find an easy way to be siphoned into being employed by these companies who are currently profiting off genocide ... they're also actively invested in many of these companies," Pinto said.

Demands for a ceasefire have also been seen in several parts of New York, like in Monroe County and in Syracuse. A resolution to call for a ceasefire has been successfully passed in Albany.

Oulida said college students should make a stand as well and said she hopes that people at the college focus on the humanitarian aspect of the Israel-Hamas war.

"With this specific issue, a lot of people tend to say it's about religion or it's Palestinians versus Israelis," Oulida said. "But it really just comes down to humanity and human rights."

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College hires for new roles

BY PRAKRITI PANWAR

NEWS EDITOR

Paula Younger

Paula Younger, a previous lecturer and executive-in-residence at the Jeb E. Brooks School of Public Policy at Cornell University, will be rejoining Ithaca College as the executive director of government, community and constituent relations. This is a newly formed position at the college that aims to create collaborative relationships between the college and local, state and national entities.

Younger previously worked at the college as the executive director for government and community relations from 2018 to 2020.

Omar Stoute

Omar Stoute '18 joined the college Jan. 16 as director of Staff Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. This position is under the Center for Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, which was established in July 2023.

Stoute previously worked at the college as a project coordinator for the Honors Program and the Center for Civic Engagement, and as Deputy Title IX Coordinator. Before joining the college in his new position, Stoute was the Equity and Title IX Investigator at Cornell University.

Rakin "Rock" Hall

Rakin "Rock" Hall will be joining the college as the vice president of enrollment management Feb. 1. Hall will be overseeing undergraduate and graduate admissions, Student Financial Services, Constituent Engagement Strategy, the Center for Career Exploration and Development and Center for Student Success and Retention.

Hall is currently the vice president for enrollment management at Arcadia University. He has also previously worked at the University of Utah, the University of Southern California, William and Paterson State University.

Alessandra Healy

Alessandra Healy joined the college as a program counselor for New York State Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) and Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP). HEOP and CSTEP are overseen by the Office of Access, Opportunity and Achievement, which offers academic and professional support to program scholars.

Beth O'Neill

Beth O'Neill, former assistant director of Staff and Programs, Residential Life and Student Conduct and Community Standards, was named the new associate director of the Office of Residential life. O'Neill will be taking over Ron Trunzo's role, who departed the college in November 2023.

O'Neill has been at the college since 2007 and as associate director, she will be collaborating with the director of the Office of Residential Life to lead the department.

Dan Rogers

Dan Rogers '20 was named the associate director of student involvement in the Office of Student Engagement. Rogers was previously the administrative assistant for OSE.

As associate director, Rogers will be in charge of advising the college's Students Governance Council; collaborating with student organizations and clubs and assisting in the re-recognition process; and managing the Student Activities Center.

In memoriam: Bill Bergmark

Bill Bergmark, professor in the Department of Chemistry, died Dec. 24, 2023. The campus community was informed of his death Jan. 3 in an Intercom post by Mike Haff, professor in the Department of Chemistry.

"Bill was a professor in the chemistry department at IC for 30 years and to his students, his colleagues, and to the scientific community at large, he was one of the all-time greats," Haff said in the Intercom post.

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FROM TITLE IX, PAGE 1

2023 and is listed as a visiting faculty member and director of the Championship Labs at the University of Connecticut.

The lawsuit also alleges that Stebbins, Greene, Bryant and Trunzo were subject to human resources investigations.

Rockett declined to comment about the allegations that involved human resource investigations.

The complaint alleges that in August 2023, Stebbins was found in violation of both Policy 2.6 and Policy 2.46, but the college did not terminate Stebbins. In the college's Jan. 22 motion, they state that Stebbins is still employed at the college.

According to the case, in October 2023, Greene was terminated from his position for violating Policy 2.46 and Trunzo resigned from his position in November 2023 after being found in violation of Policy 2.46.

Doe filed a Summons and Complaint in the Supreme Court of the State of New York, Tompkins County in November 2023.

On Dec. 18, 2023, Defendants removed the case from state court to the United States District Court for the Northern District of New York. According to the Notice of Removal document, the case "involves questions arising under the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States," including the claims that the college violated Title IX.

In his motion, Roberts filed to dismiss the Title IX claims. Roberts' memorandum states that Doe clarified he is not alleging this cause of action against Roberts.

In its motion, the college is not seeking to have the Title IX claim dismissed at this time.

"The College is not at this juncture moving against plaintiff's claims brought under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq., asserted as his second purported claim for relief. However, the referenced proof deficits, among other reasons, will doom

Timeline

- **Nov. 20, 2023:**
John Doe files Summons and Complaint in the Supreme Court of the State of New York
- **Dec. 18, 2023:**
Defendants move case to United States District Court for the Northern District of New York
- **Jan. 22, 2024:**
Defendants file motion to dismiss all or most of the claims in complaint
- **Feb. 12, 2024:**
Doe's deadline to respond to motions
- **Feb. 20, 2024:**
Defendants' deadline to file replies

Defendants: Ithaca College and Bryan Roberts
Plaintiff: John Doe

ILLUSTRATION BY MOLLY TESKA/THE ITHACAN

those claims to dismissal at a subsequent stage of this case," the college's motion states.

For the four remaining claims, Roberts and the college each argue that Doe failed to state claims upon which relief can be granted, including that he did not allege sufficient facts in his complaint to support his causes of action. As a result, Roberts and the college have requested that the court dismiss these claims.

According to court rules, Doe has until Feb. 12 to respond to the motions and then Roberts and the college may file any replies by Feb. 20.

The Office of the Provost sent an email Jan. 22 outlining resources available to members of the campus community in light of the lawsuit.

The email was sent on behalf of President La Jerne Cornish; Melanie Stein, provost and senior vice president of academic affairs; Bonnie Prunty, vice president of Student Affairs and Campus Life; and Kirra Franzese, associate vice president and chief Human Resources officer.

Some of the resources mentioned in the email were the college's Center for Counseling and Psychological Services, the Title IX office and the college's Sexual Harassment and Assault Response & Education website.

At the All-College Gathering Jan. 23, Cornish said the college has commented all that it can at the moment about the lawsuit.

"I know that it was shocking, and I know that it may have evoked an emotional reaction," Cornish said. "We don't comment on things that are going to be litigated, and we certainly don't comment on personal matters. We sent a message yesterday ... just saying there are resources available for [the campus community] and for our students, if you need to have a further conversation. But there will be no further comment officially because this is being litigated, and the college will speak in court when allowed to do so."

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ILLUSTRATION BY JOSHUA PANTANO/THE ITHACAN

EDITORIALS

Break housing is essential for international students

It is essential that Ithaca College provides proper accommodations for international students over break. Ensuring students adequate housing, meals and overall support is the bare minimum for maintaining the well-being of international students.

There is an unfair expectation that all students will be able to return home when classes are not in session. For many international students, that is not a reality. The cost of an international flight alone is financially inaccessible to many. A CNBC article from May 2023 found that the consumer price index for airline tickets increased by 25% from 2022 to 2023. While the dramatic increase of airline costs is set to stabilize more in 2024, one report predicted an additional 3-7% increase in cost of global airfare.

On top of these astronomical costs, the logistics of planning the trip, taking long flights, dealing with jet lag and then having to do it all again to return to school are exhausting.

For international students who stay on

campus over breaks, there are not adequate accommodations set in place. Only Eastman, Terrace 6 and Tallcott allow students to live on campus over break, in addition to Circle and Garden apartments. While it is understandable that not all residence halls can remain open over break, students should still have sufficient housing options.

This winter break there were also extremely limited dining options. Dining halls were closed from Dec. 18 to Jan. 3. Upon re-opening, only the Terrace Dining Hall was open until Jan. 8. These limited hours require students to find alternative dining options that are often more costly and may require additional transportation to get to a store or restaurant. Students should never have to struggle to find accessible food on campus.

Providing adequate housing and dining options for international students is a necessity. Students do not disappear just because classes are not in session. It is up to the college to ensure they are taken care of, especially during breaks.

College must work with students to promote peace

The Tompkins County Human Rights Commission shared a resolution Dec. 18, 2023, calling for the community to promote peace by advocating for a federal ceasefire and supporting local Jewish and Muslim community members. At Ithaca College, this call for peace is happening just as fervently among students. Now, it is the responsibility of the college to hear these calls for peace from students and provide the community with genuine action and support.

Students have been organizing against the Israel-Hamas war through already established student organizations, like Ithaca College Students For Palestine. Hillel has also hosted events and shared resources in an effort to support the mental health of students who may be affected by the conflict. Additionally, some students are working to create new organizing groups, like Students for Justice for Palestine (SJP). While it is excellent that students are ready to take action and promote peace, they should not be alone in their efforts.

President La Jerne Cornish has previously

commented on the Israel-Hamas war, publishing a statement Oct. 10, 2023, urging the campus community to support both Jewish as well as Palestinian and Gazan community members. Cornish also sent an email Dec. 8 in response to acts of anti-semitism. While this communication is a start, it is essential to keep the conversation going among students, faculty and administrators. It is one thing to send out an email and another to actively support students by creating safe spaces and providing necessary resources to student groups.

One of the best parts of being a student on a college campus is being surrounded by other passionate young people who are also invested in advocating for what they believe in. It is essential that administrators express that same level of care. While the Israel-Hamas war is an international conflict, it is an issue that not only affects the student body as a whole, but has the potential to make students feel unsafe in their own identities. The college must do everything they can to advocate for students and, furthermore, for peace.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Send to ithacan@ithaca.edu.

ALL LETTERS MUST:

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- Be emailed or dropped off by 5 p.m. Monday in Park 220.

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ALL COMMENTARIES MUST:

- Convey a clear message.
- Be written by an individual or group who has an educated opinion or is an authority on a specific subject.
- Be between 650–750 words. Whether more or less space is allotted is at the discretion of the editor.



AMINATTA IMRANA JALLOW/THE ITHACAN

PENCILS DOWN

GABE HENDERSHOT

Childcare must be affordable

The cost of education is a frequently discussed topic and rightfully so. It is disheartening that so many students are discouraged from expanding their life and knowledge base because of their economic status. In the U.S., this problem begins before our children are even out of diapers.

The problem starts with a lack of maternity and paternity leave for expecting parents. Many parents don't take extra time off to care for their babies, fearing they might lose their jobs as a result. The United States provides no national paid leave for expecting parents, one of only six countries in the world that does not. Even with a year's paid maternity leave — something extremely uncommon in the U.S. — there is still a gap. Between the ages of one and five, the latter being when a child can enroll in public kindergarten, there is no designated childcare.

The environment that children are in during this time is important. Parents should know that while they are at work, their children are well cared for and unquestionably safe. Approaching this issue from an education standpoint, however, illuminates another key aspect.

When a child is ages one to five, they undergo an incredible amount of development. This is a crucial time for children to build an understanding of how to learn and interact with both teachers and peers. As the curriculum becomes more complex and rigid in later years, students who have not worked on these skills will pose a serious threat to both their own learning and that of their peers. When said students have a shaky foundation for classroom etiquette and learning techniques, a teacher's attention is diverted to solving these problems rather than focusing on the curriculum.

When factoring in that many parents do not have family members or friends who can care for their children before they are school age, the need for accessible childcare becomes evident. The problem is that childcare has become astronomically expensive. In New York state, the average yearly cost for childcare is \$17,040 for children ages three to five and \$18,240 for children under two. This is comparable to the cost of in-state college tuition.

Looking at those numbers, it becomes clear why parents are struggling to afford childcare. There are many families who have decided that one parent will put a complete pause on their career until their children are old enough to attend school. Childcare can account for as much as 50% of a parent's yearly salary. Though staying at home with your children should be an option for any parent who desires it, it shouldn't be the only way that a family can make ends meet.

Bringing down the cost of childcare, possibly even creating a universal form of it, should be a top priority. The U.S. should care about the children that grow up here and should do its best to set them up for success. This support needs to start when children are born, not when they are halfway through the education system.

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Editor's Note: The opinions in this commentary do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board.

Being an RA is the best on-campus job

BY VIOLET VAN BUREN

SENIOR

My name is Violet Van Buren, and I'm a lover of good company, crazy stories, quiet relaxation and Terrace 12, where I have been a resident assistant the past three years. This is my last semester living in the best room on campus, and with all of the sadness that comes with leaving the position, so too comes the gratefulness that I was ever an RA at all. It's impossible to convince me there is a single better job to take as an Ithaca College student.

The very best part of being an RA is the friends you make. What continues to shock me is how a large group of like-minded individuals can be so comforting and challenging to be around at the same time.

RAs are a strange batch, but we all share the same genuine care for the community around us. With so many passionate and talented people in close proximity, it feels as though your skills and unique perspective truly have a place they can belong to and be utilized. At the same time, they can be challenged and transformed because everyone has their own ideas about how to create change in the greater community.

It's not only other RAs that you bond with, though. It's your residents, too. The sense of community one nurtures through their building can be so strong by the end of a year that I have found myself sad to see folks move out and move on. I am more empathetic, more grounded and in a thousand other smaller ways, I can say I have grown.

Being an RA is not a difficult job ... until it is. I have encountered so many seemingly impossible and crazy situations — from little



Senior Violet Van Buren writes about her positive experiences as an RA and tells students to take advantage of the benefits that come with the position.

KAELEIGH BANDA/THE ITHACAN

things, like unjamming a dryer, to big ones, like making a call to save someone's life. It's a thankless job — and often not a pretty one. But I am filled with an enormous sense of well-being to serve my community in this way.

With any job comes benefits, and this position has some great ones. Namely: pay and the single room. Room and board are covered 80% if you've been an RA for less than two semesters and 100% after two semesters. For the amount you work, the reliable hours and the convenience of the job, the pay is fair.

Though most apply for the money, that's just not what the job is really about. It's

about the friends you make, the skills you take away, the community and the benefits, small and large.

My younger brother is a first-year student in college this year and the first thing I told him when he started school was "You're literally stupid if you don't apply to be an RA." I get to tease him, but I won't be so rude to all of you. I'll leave you by instead saying — it doesn't get better than this.

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Editor's Note: The opinions in this commentary do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board.

Opera is an art form for all performers

BY EMMA COMMISSO

SENIOR

The first time I went to the opera, everything sounded the same to me: loud, orchestral music with singers who used copious amounts of vibrato. The most interesting part was watching two college-aged students in front of me, discreetly — illegally — film the entire show. How could anyone care that much about opera? I could understand wanting to film a musical. I had always been a huge fan of musical theater. I was — and still am — in awe of what musical theater performers can accomplish.

Opera finally caught my attention when I realized how skilled the performers have to be, like in musical theater. Both art forms are similar, but opera lives in this world where the characters must express a single emotion, a single moment, entirely in music. Opera challenges its performers to connect to the music and discover what each measure means to their character. Performers of many different skill sets are up for this challenge and could revitalize the opera industry.

I believe that students in the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance can work together to build a vibrant opera community at the college. Now that the

departments have merged into the MTD program, it's time for more collaboration between the Whalen Center for Music and the Dillingham Center for Theatre and Dance.

As a Whalen student, I could strongly benefit from the acting and movement technique Dillingham students learn. I was privileged to watch junior Walker Risser's hilarious, meticulous performance as a featured ensemble member in "The Pirates of Penzance" last February. Observing Risser helped me better understand how to make suitable acting choices within my own work. I have also heard from many Dillingham students how they would love to be a part of vocal ensembles on campus. Their singing and ensemble skills would be strengthened through these classes.

The college's next opera, "Le Dernier Scierier," running March 1 to 6, will showcase some Whalen/Dillingham collaboration, creating a unique performance environment. I will be taking on the role of Stella, opposite sophomore musical theater major Wyatt McDaniel's Lelio.

For Stella, I plan on using a variety of performance skills, including what I've learned from the college's Opera Studio



Senior Emma Commisso writes about how MTD students can enhance the field of opera through more collaboration.

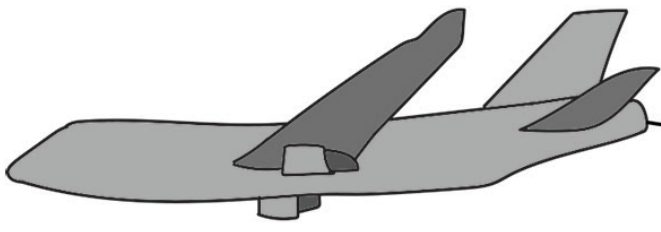
KAELEIGH BANDA/THE ITHACAN

Program. This program, founded by Dawn Pierce, associate professor of Music Performance and Voice, gave me the opportunity to learn how to use movement and acting to strengthen my singing. Opera Studio's master director Chuck Hudson has trained and worked as a Shakespearean actor, mime and stage director. He has helped me focus on movement and awareness of space. This program taught me how exciting the operatic stage can be when you challenge yourself to build skills and make discoveries every day.

Your experience is necessary

to the advancement of opera, whether you're trained in musical theater, Shakespeare or rock and roll. Performers from various backgrounds are what makes opera exciting to watch and participate in. As long as each and every member of the company is willing to commit to the challenge of opera with their own skill sets and strengthen new skills, opera will change for the better.

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Far From Home: International Students Over Break

BY MARIANA CONTRERAS
ASST. LIFE & CULTURE EDITOR

While many of their peers embark on journeys home for the holidays, some international students often find themselves grappling with the complexities of staying behind. In what is usually a campus buzzing with busy energy, the quiet campus and the hushed corridors of residence halls become the backdrop for a different narrative. Navigating the winter break as an international student at Ithaca College presents a unique set of challenges that often go unnoticed.

Money, time and jet lag are a few of the reasons why international students may find themselves staying on campus for winter break. Sophomore Undarmaa Tserenkhuu, who stayed on campus winter '23, said the long flights home and back were just not worth it.

"I would just have to experience jet lag twice during winters," Tserenkhuu said.

There was no extra fee charged for students who stay over winter break. They could remain in their dorm until Dec. 22 at 10:00 a.m. and return Jan. 1 at 1:00 p.m. when the campus opened again. The only residences that remain open all year round are Eastman Hall, Talcott Hall and Terrace 6, as well as Circle and Garden Apartments.

Amanda Walrad, assistant director of Housing Services & Communications, said students could reach out to the Residential Life office to inquire about available spaces in the residence halls and apartments that are open year long. However, she emphasized that availability is not guaranteed, as it depends on the quick turnover of spaces.

"If a student is not in that area, and they need to stay, we ask that they try to find someone in an apartment that they could stay with as a guest or try to find others off campus," Walrad said. "If they can't find someone, we will try our best to house them based on availability. We don't want to leave anyone out in the cold."

Walrad said these residencies are assigned with the goal of making it easier to provide services like facility maintenance because of the reduced staff on campus over break.

"We purposely choose buildings, the Terraces 6 and Talcott that have bigger kitchens, so students can take advantage of the kitchen in those areas to cook their meals," Walrad said.

Tserenkhuu said on-campus jobs allow students the ability to work full-time over break and provide them with the opportunity to connect with people more often during break.

"I would recommend [students who are planning to stay over future winter breaks] to connect with more students who are staying on campus," Tserenkhuu said. "I don't think it's that uncommon to stay on campus during winter, but from what I know, people just don't connect to each other."

Other students, such as sophomore Zara Makkaoui, an international student from Morocco who stayed with a friend in San Francisco for the winter, said they prefer finding alternatives to staying on campus because of the lack of students on campus.

"I wouldn't want to stay here," Makkaoui said. "Especially when there's no one around; like, my friends are all gone. And then there's no food. And there's nothing to do even like downtown Ithaca, everything's pretty much closed."

First-year student Oscar Jimenez Rodriguez said he enjoyed staying on campus this past winter break. He said he wanted to get a chance to relax and that was exactly what happened.

"For me, it was a good experience, but I wanted a particular peace," Jimenez said. "For other people, beware that it's pretty lonely."

Staying on campus is not always the student's first choice, but for some students, choosing to go home over break



International students at Ithaca College face a difficult decision before every break: Should they take the long journey home or spend time on campus where there are limited facilities and interaction?

MADDY TANZMAN/THE ITHACAN

comes with its own set of challenges.

Sophomore Ruth Ayambem, who traveled back home to Nigeria last winter and spent the past break with their sibling in Pennsylvania, said that as an international student, she is constantly forced to take into consideration multiple factors that others might not.

"I'm possibly going home this summer and it's something that we started talking about in December," Ayambem said. "When going to Pennsylvania, I booked a ticket like two weeks before."

Senior Inbaayini Anbarasan, who traveled back home to India this break, said that traveling usually ends up with her taking over 40 hours to get from one place to another or paying more money for a few hours less of travel.

Anbarasan said most of these hours are spent waiting at the

airport or bus stop for hours on end. At one point, she said she spent 11 hours at the airport waiting for connecting flights.

"It's usually just a gambling game of, 'Oh, am I spending more money? Or am I spending more time?'" Anbarasan said.

For international students, preparation is essential when traveling, as conversion rates and ticket prices can vary heavily depending on when students are buying them or for what dates. In most cases, students must arrange their own itinerary and match times with different airlines and buses to get to their final destination.

Ayambem said that traveling back home was not an option this year, as prices were too expensive.

"There could be like a \$500 difference between a flight on Monday and a flight on Friday," Ayambem said. "Then, I have to pick the one on Monday even though classes start the next week."

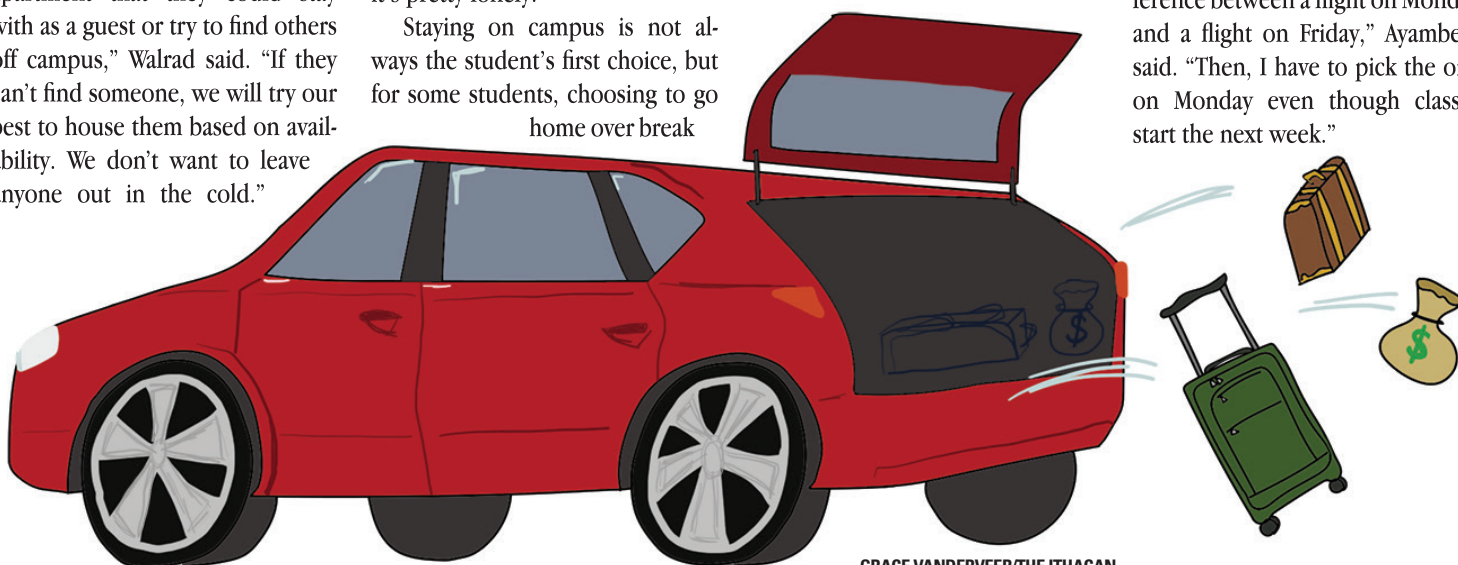
On top of all these, winter break presents a unique challenge because of New York's unpredictable weather. International students and their families check, hoping that the flights they bought months in advance do not get canceled or delayed, derailing the itinerary that has been planned.

Anbarasan said her experiences during breaks have improved thanks to her own proactiveness, reaching out to people for rides and any other sort of help.

"I think being very proactive, and doing your research, and knowing all the options available to you, and asking your fellow international students how they travel, and how they find the flights that they are able to find, stuff like that, is really, really helpful," Anbarasan said.

Makkaoui said she has asked for funds for traveling previously and gave up on her attempts to get any financial support when the school told her they did not have enough funds to give out to students.

"You can't bring home here. No matter what you do, it's never going to be like that," Makkaoui said. "Like I said, I never stayed here because I stayed a couple of breaks on campus, and it was not a good experience. That's why I just would never ever want to stay here. I just wish they were a little bit more aware that there are international students that home is not even an option to go back to."



GRACE VANDERVEER/THE ITHACAN

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**WINTER RELEASES
REVIEWED**

“Iron Claw”

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

BY MATT MINTON
SENIOR WRITER

There’s an unshakable feeling set in stone right from the opening sequence of director Sean Durkin’s heart-wrenching new drama, “The Iron Claw.” It’s the sense that fate has something peculiar and unnatural in store for the Von Erich family. This riveting and emotionally charged drama allows the audience to fully feel the loss of brotherhood, dreams and passion without manipulating them. While the facade of a wrestling drama may deter audiences who aren’t interested in sports, the heart of the film is found in the bond among the brothers. The film is truly an ensemble piece with great turns from Harris Dickinson, Jeremy Allen White and Lily James. But really it’s Efron’s lead performance as Kevin that brings the story beats home. One of the most effective themes that Durkin’s screenplay touches is fragile masculinity. All of the men in the family struggle to naturally process their emotions. We feel how it’s all tied back to Fritz’s deep-rooted fears and the values he instilled in his boys from such a young age to never externalize their emotions. “The Iron Claw” is one of the most compelling wrestling dramas in recent years. It asks the viewer to consider how far a person is willing to push themselves physically when they are fighting a losing battle.

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“Mean Girls”

★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

BY RAY MILBURN
VIDEO EDITOR

The Plastics are back for round three in a film adaptation of the Broadway adaptation of the 2004 classic “Mean Girls.” This time, North Shore High is ruled by Renée Rapp as Regina George. Rapp gives a powerhouse performance, ensuring Regina’s effortless and commanding vocals are the center of attention on the cast album. Angourie Rice plays an authentic and charming Cady Heron, but her vocals are timid and lack energy. Auli’i Cravalho, Jaquel Spivey and Avantika Vandanapu each deliver strong vocals as Janice, Damian and Karen, respectively. The emotion and heart of Gretchen Wieners are brought to life by Bebe Wood during a quiet, heart-breaking rendition of “What’s Wrong With Me?” Unfortunately, the ensemble vocalists often sound lifeless, as if they don’t actually care what the magnetic and lionized Regina is wearing. They earn their stripes as dancers, acing the choreography of Kyle Haganami. “Mean Girls” (2024) delights in all the expected ways and doesn’t try to reinvent the wheel. It occasionally lacks energy, and only Rapp’s solos are capable of going toe-to-toe with the Broadway cast recording, but it doesn’t disappoint as a happy median between its predecessors. It’s fetch!

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“Poor Things”

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

BY SARAH PAYNE
STAFF WRITER

“Poor Things,” a masterpiece directed by Yorgos Lantimos and released Dec. 8, is inspired by the Alasdair Gray novel of the same name and is one of the most funky, refreshing movies to be made this decade. The film’s star, Bella Baxter (Emma Stone), is a woman who finds herself with a new life after falling onto an unorthodox path. Initially, pseudo-father Dr. Godwin Baxter (Willem Dafoe) helps raise her, but by the end of the film, Baxter is her own person, full of desires, questions and dreams. Every element of the film was meticulously utilized to enhance the audience’s viewing experience. The ultra-hyper, colorful and subversive world design of the film juxtapose and heighten the sometimes gruesome reality that the protagonist faces. The differing lenses and techniques brings the movie to life; the film is built from a large array of wide and intense, close-up shots with a variety of movement in each shot. The story, despite its minuscule flaws, feels well-earned and heartfelt. All parties involved in the film’s creation evidently cared about the themes of the story. “Poor Things” is a bold movie that not everyone will vibe with, but the story doesn’t dull itself in any capacity to make the audience more self-assured.

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“Saviors”

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

BY JADYN DAVIS
SENIOR WRITER

Since 1987, the popular American punk-rock band Green Day has graced the ears of many listeners throughout the years. Now, in 2024, the trio has released their 14th studio album, “Saviors,” bringing a generation of old and new fans together. In “Saviors,” released Jan. 19, the band encourages fans to speak up about important issues in the media like gun violence, the opioid epidemic and homelessness in the United States. To Green Day, staying silent solves nothing, and everything said in “Saviors” is loud and proud. Even though “Saviors” is filled with fast-paced, upbeat songs like “Look Ma, No Brains!”, “1981” and “Coma City” — which is expected from the trio — there are a few slow jams that nicely balance out the album and “Bobby Sox” is one of them. In this powerful rock love song, Armstrong celebrates his bisexuality as he sings to both women and men. The song’s simplicity makes it enjoyable and easy on the ears. Overall, “Saviors” can be described as a lively album. Despite Green Day being around for almost 40 years, the band is still able to capture the sound and essence that made them popular in their latest album. Filled with powerful messages, captivating lyrics and mesmerizing melodies, “Saviors” has the perfect mix of nostalgic and modern elements, which is why fans across multiple generations enjoy them.

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FORMER GUARD GOES PRO IN MEXICO

BY AUGUSTINE DAUDU
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Making a career in professional football is something only 1.6% of all collegiate football players will achieve. It can be even more difficult for athletes who did not go to Division I schools, which normally offer better training resources and more exposure to scouts.

For Jacob Villanueva '22, a two-time All-American offensive lineman, that has not prevented him from reaching the pros and signing a contract with Los Gallos Negros de Querétaro, an American football team in Mexico.

Originally from Chino Hills, California, Villanueva grew up playing basketball. It was not until moving to Philadelphia that he was drawn to football.

Villanueva played for fun, and it was not until high school that he said he realized he had the talent and ability to play football in college.

"Sophomore, junior year, the recruitment started to pick up," Villanueva said. "Then my high school football coach was like, 'If you really work hard and put your mind to it, you can play football at the next level.'"

Villanueva joined the Bombers in 2018 as an offensive lineman (OL). Being on the OL is a physically taxing position to play, as noted by senior lineman and former teammate Anselmo Farrell.

"Every play you're getting hit in the head, you're getting hit in the body, and it does wear you out a bit," Farrell said.

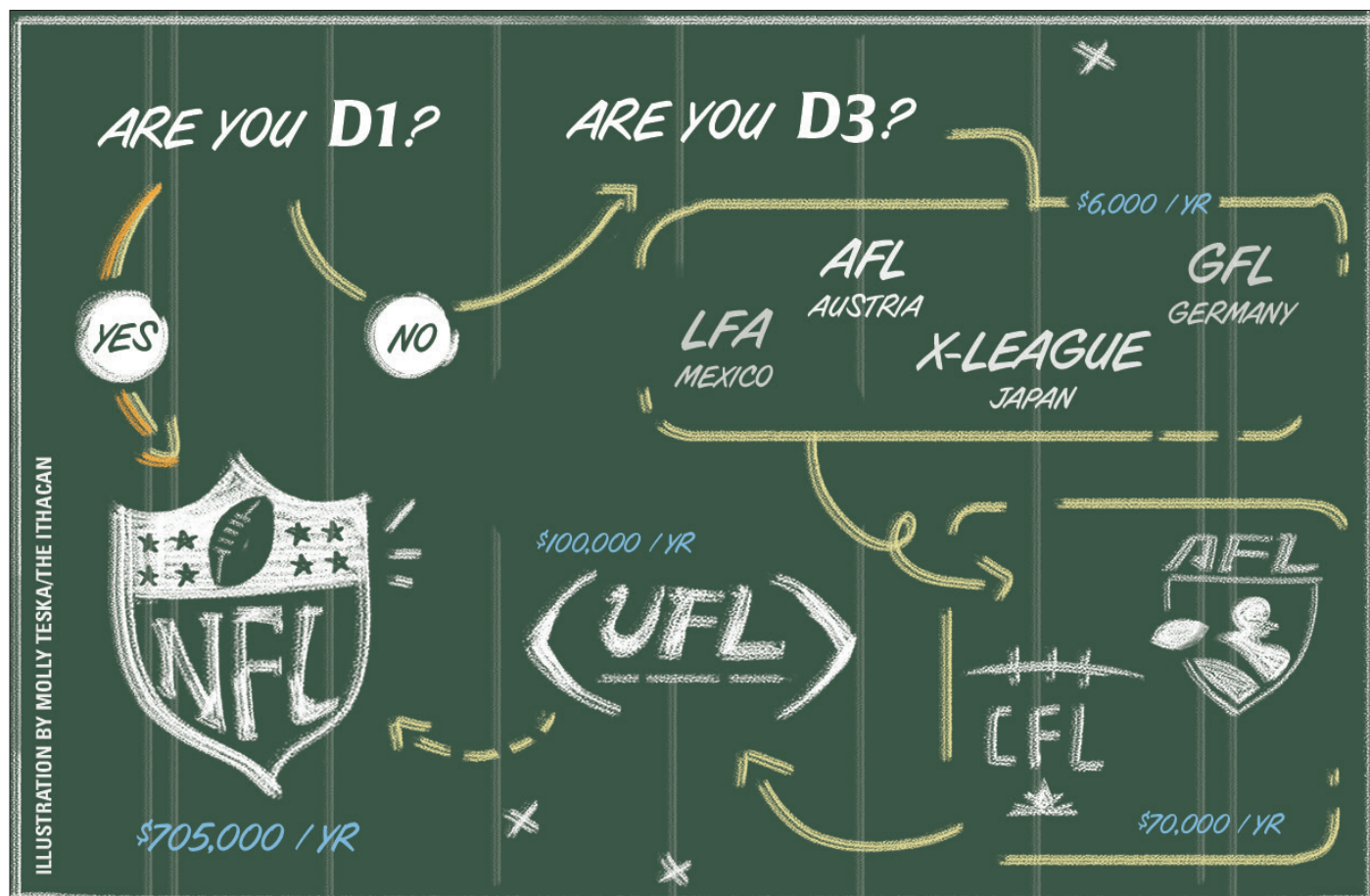
This was not a deterrent for Villanueva and by his sophomore year, he was a starter.

When Villanueva finished the 2021 season, he was named to the Liberty League offensive first team. He also earned All-American Honors from both the Associated Press and the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA).

It was around this time that Villanueva began getting offers from professional teams to play for them. Teams from all across Europe, including from Germany, the Czech Republic and Switzerland, reached out to him, which he said he was not expecting.

"I did not really have any idea that I was going to be able to play at that next level," Villanueva said. "Once teams started reaching out to me, I gained more confidence and a realization that, like, 'Wow, I could play at the next level.'"

Before the season begins in the spring, Villanueva said he has been preparing every day



to start training with the team and to be away from home.

"These last couple of weeks, I've just been saying bye to a lot of friends and family ... because I'm going to be down in Mexico for the next six to seven months," Villanueva said. "So that's going to be a little bit of a change, but I'm definitely very excited for it."

Villanueva noted how grateful he is for the support of his family in his decision to go professional.

"My parents are ... very positive about everything. ... They have shown me nothing but support. ... I'll never take that for granted that they are allowing me this opportunity," Villanueva said. "They are telling me to go for my dreams."

When most people around the world hear "football," they probably think of association football, or as Americans call it, soccer. However, fans, coaches and investors have been working to raise awareness of American football globally, and one country that has seen a large increase in interest is Mexico.

The Liga de Fútbol Americano (LFA) is the top professional football league in Mexico,

founded in 2016 after the shutdown of the previous Liga Master. It started with four teams, but today, there are 10. The season goes from March to April and culminates in the Tazón México (Mexico Bowl), similar to the NFL's Super Bowl. The growth of the LFA and American football in general in Mexico has been aided by the existing Mexican collegiate football system and affiliations with the NFL and Canadian Football League.

Teams in the LFA are allowed to have up to 16 foreign players, an increase from last season where teams could only have 12.

Felipe Cruz is the offensive line coach for Los Gallos Negros. Before joining Los Gallos, he played football at college for Tecnológico de Monterrey and coached multiple schools.

During the recruiting process, Cruz said Villanueva's technique stood out to him and the other coaches. He believes that Villanueva has the potential to be a great asset to the team.

"He needs to be a starter, for me," Cruz said. "We saw the videos. He had the interview with Carlos Strevel, the head coach, and the performance that we want from [Villanueva] is to be one of the best athletes on the line."

Cruz explained that LFA teams usually search for DII and DIII athletes rather than DI because the cost of necessities, like getting scouts out, arranging travel and offering contracts, are generally higher for DI athletes. According to Mexican newspaper La Jornada, the average payment players receive per game is 5,000 Mexican pesos, which is approximately \$300.

The NCAA calculated in 2019 that of the 254 NFL Draft picks that year, 249 of them (98%) came from DI schools, five (1.9%) came from DII schools, and zero from DIII schools, meaning that the LFA and other leagues have abundant talent to choose from.

Some athletes who play in the LFA do jump to different leagues, like the United Football League (UFL). Conversely, athletes from the NFL have joined LFA teams, like former Dallas Cowboys receiver Terrance Williams, who joined the Tijuana Galgos in 2023.

In Mexico, American football has seen a large surge in popularity over the last decade, which has increased demand for football programs catering to young athletes. La Academia Gallos Negros, operated by Los Gallos, has around 100 youths between the ages of 8–15 registered to play flag and tackle football. According to Cruz,

there are more flag football teams than soccer teams in Querétaro City.

On the other side of the world in Germany, Joe Germinerio '19, former quarterback, played for the Kiel Baltic Hurricanes and Berlin Thunder. Germinerio figured the NFL was out of the cards for him, which is why he looked to the European League of Football.

He said his network of coaches from both Ithaca and Brockport were invaluable to him finding the right team.

"You have to just connect with your network," Germinerio said. "That's all it is in this life. ... You have to network and then really just bother coaches and tailor messages, copy and paste because you're going to get a ton of no's."

Knowing Germinerio had successfully taken the leap to pro football, Villanueva asked Germinerio for advice about trying to get into the field.

"[Villanueva] was asking me about some tips of what he wanted to do with Europe and where he wanted to go," Germinerio said. "And it's tough with an O-Lineman because they only want to bring, like QB, receiver over to Germany as the two Americans for offense."

Germinerio believes that Germany is one of the fastest growing markets for football.

"You've got to be over there, they love their football," Germinerio said. "You'll walk around Berlin, and there's just a bunch of people with NFL Jerseys on just hanging out. So it's probably the fastest growing country in terms of popularity."

Germinerio retired in 2023 but said football is temporary, so work can wait for Villanueva.

"[Villanueva] wants to continue," Germinerio said. "He was not done playing. If he's got the rest of his life to work, then go play football and have fun."

Villanueva said he is eager to start training with the team and fully embraces the role of being a representative for football.

"American football is a very fun game and I want to spread the game as well, so when I'm down there, I'm going to try my best to try and get people to come out to games, just to watch a couple plays or a couple quarters," Villanueva said. "I love the game of football and I think that all people should have access and be able to play."



Jacob Villanueva '22 will join the Los Gallos Negros of the LFA in late January to start training for the team's 2024 campaign. Villanueva will play offensive line for the team.

NOLAN SAUNDERS/THE ITHACAN

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Defensive play embraced by women's squad

BY ALLIEY MAGISTRO

STAFF WRITER

The Ithaca College women's basketball team is now holding a record of 13-3 and have been dominating Liberty League play. Through that run, the Bombers' staunch defensive effort has been on full display.

The Bombers came out of their winter break on a three-game winning streak but caught fire as they joined back into Liberty League action. Through the South Hill squads' last seven games, they compiled a 6-1 record, led the league in turnover margin and have recorded 13 or more steals in five of those games.

After their Liberty League Championship loss last season against Skidmore College, there is now an added drive to the team. As important as offense is, teams cannot win without having a strong defensive. Head coach Dan Raymond said the team has that defensive mindset in spades.

"[Coach Mullins] and I talked about how there are going to be games where the offense is going to struggle," Raymond said. "When you know it's going to be hard to put the ball in the basket for some unknown reason. But defense and rebounding, they are all based on attitude and effort."

Raymond has emphasized the importance of having not only a positive attitude but a healthy one. Junior forward Anya Watkins explained how having a hard-nosed drive to play factors in the team's recent dominance

over their opponents.

"I think the biggest part is our attitude when we go onto the court," Watkins said. "During practice, our focus is on effort and attitude; that is where we make adjustments."

Whether the team is on the court for a practice or a game, they always bring their all, proving that they are making a comeback and are striving for a title this season. Senior guard Hannah Polce said she believes the team has the potential to be at the top of the Liberty League when all is said and done.

"We are capable of being very good this year," Polce said. "I think we just need to put the pieces together and stay together. Good things can come from this."

Raymond and his volunteer assistant, Jim Mullins, who used to coach for the men's basketball team, sat down before preseason started and carefully crafted defensive-based drills that would make the Bombers not only stronger but smarter.

Raymond revealed a drill that has helped the defense this season. In the drill, there is a player on the perimeter and a player in the post. The players pressure the ball and go between the ball and the post, with the main goal to keep the ball from the middle of the court, so the opposing team cannot take advantage.

Polce said the upperclassmen are a driving force, making the team lean into the fast, gritty play style they have embraced this season.

"I think, as a team, we also try to



The Ithaca College women's basketball team has had 13 or more steals in five of their last seven games and in that time have compiled a 6-1 record behind fast and gritty defense.

MADDY TANZMAN/THE ITHACAN

push the ball and run the court fast, so I think it's always on the veterans to try and teach that push to the younger girls," Polce said.

Raymond said that having this sturdy veteran leadership has built closer bonds and relationships among the team, which in turn helps their game.

"Hannah [Polce], [senior guard] Graycen [Dubin] and [graduate student guard] Camryn [Coffey], our upperclassmen, are doing a really great job with holding themselves accountable and holding their teammates accountable, which is

something I am a firm believer of," Raymond said.

The Bombers gained a new player this year, graduate student guard June Dickson. Dickson has played a vital role this season, especially on defense, leading the team with 2.1 steals per game. Coming from D1 California Polytechnic State University, she said that while the divisions are different, defense still holds a similar value.

"There's a difference in the level of play of DI and D3," Dickson said. "But defense is one of those universal things. Girls differ in height and tend to be taller, but besides that, defense

is always crucial."

Raymond hit home what his veterans were expressing, and it seems that the team is now in lockstep about how they want to play against their opponents. Raymond said the Bomber's identity is defined by their defense.

"So that's the kind of emphasis that we made with this group, that yeah, everybody loves offense, everybody loves to score, but defense is something you can count on every game," Raymond said.

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Young blood acts as the heart of new play style

BY FLYNN HYNES

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Last season, the Ithaca College men's basketball team heavily relied on their upperclassmen, with four out of five starters being seniors or graduate students. However, this year, much has changed, with many underclassmen shining for the Bombers.

This year's squad consists of 15 players on the roster, with five being first-year students and three being sophomores. Of the eight underclassmen, five have played all 16 games.

Junior guard Logan Wendell talked about the talent and camaraderie that this new first-year class holds, both on and off the court.

"I think they've brought us all closer together, even just being [first-year students] as well," Wendell said. "And then in terms of on the court, they're just super capable players. Integrating them was no problem, just because of how talented they are really."

First-year forward Alex Penders has played a significant role for the team this season, winning Liberty League Rookie of the Week for his performance against Rochester on Dec. 6. Penders attributes the team's success to the leadership of the upperclassmen. The more they learn from them, the better they get.

"We have a really good group of captains and leaders on the squad," Penders said. "I think you see that in the way that we play [and] the record that we have, especially when it comes to the fact that we have three guys in most of the rotation as first-years. We're all learning things from those upperclassmen [and] trying to pick up as much as we can in practices and film sessions and games."

So far, Penders and first-year guards Jaylon O'Neal and Evan Cabral have seen the court

every single game. Cabral said he appreciated being able to get a shot so early.

"We have benefited tremendously," Cabral said. "As underclassmen, we're just taking all knowledge and soaking it up like a sponge and just trying to have an open mind and hearing everything, so when it translates to the game, we understand what they're trying to get to."

So far this season, Cabral has started every game, leading the team in steals and fourth in scoring. He spoke about the accelerated track into a more prominent role and how his support system has helped him thrive in it.

"I've definitely had to mature quicker than usual [first-year students] have to do," Cabral said. "Stepping into that role with definitely filling big shoes from upperclassmen last year was definitely hard at first, but I've definitely had a bunch of leadership and knowledge from upperclassmen and the coaching staff that helped me get to where I'm at right now."

Penders talked about having to change his role on a team once he got here.

"I've had to adjust the way that I play from high school where you get a lot of shots [and] you play a lot of minutes, to now where it's more of a reserved role," Penders said. "The biggest adjustment for me is becoming more shooting-oriented ... making sure that when I get my opportunities, I'm making plays."

Sophomore guard Cole Wissink and sophomore forward Gavin Schauder both only saw the court in 11 games last season, compared to playing in all 16 games this season so far.

Schauder has started 14 of 16 games and Wissink has started the last two games for the team. Schauder talked about his and Wissink's roles changing from past seasons.

"Last season, we were more expected to help our team prepare and practice for



First-year forward Alex Penders, sophomore guard Cole Wissink, first-year guard Evan Cabral and sophomore forward Gavin Schauder have had a quality start this season.

KAELEIGH BANDA/THE ITHACAN

games," Schauder said. "This year, we kind of have to lock in more on actually executing on the court when we do these things in practice to prepare. It's completely different, obviously. It is a big step up, but that's why we're here in the first place."

Wissink described the overall play style of the smaller team, with this year's squad relying on guards more than forwards and centers.

"We have a whole different set of players," Wissink said. "This year, we only really have two bigs. So we're running a lot more through our guard actions. ... I think our play style is a lot more different than it was last year and more players are able to excel in this playing system."

Wendell gave them high praise, explaining

that these players' work ethic is hard to match.

"I really admire the way they looked at it," Wendell said. "They didn't see it like, 'Oh, these guys are gone, like I'm going to play.' You look at these underclassmen, and they're in the gym all the time working on their game. I love just seeing kids in the gym trying to get better and literally all of them are that way."

Penders said the team's top goal for the rest of the season is to win the Liberty League.

"Number one [goal] is to win the Liberty League Championship," Penders said. "We want to bring that title back to Ithaca [College], but [it's] a long way to go [and] a lot of good teams this year."

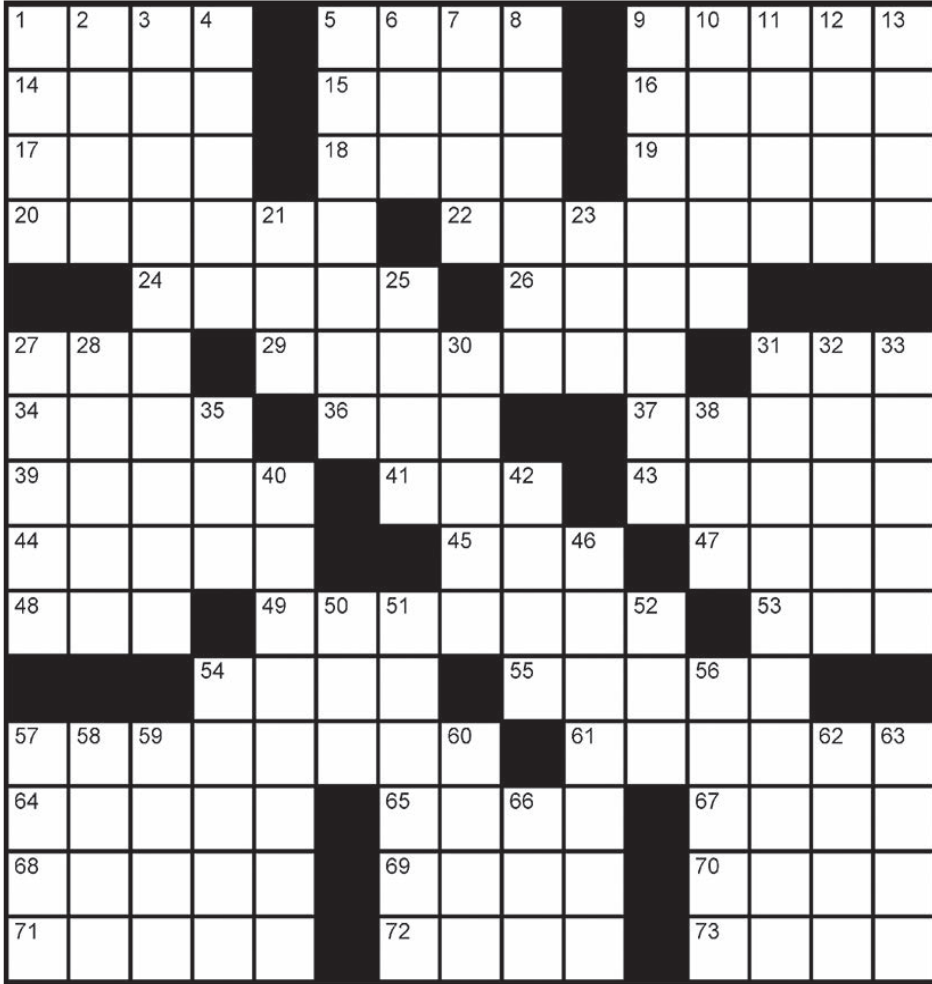
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DIVERSIONS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024

crossword

By Quill Driver Books



ACROSS

- 1 "Ali- and the Forty Thieves"
- 5 Moore or Lovato
- 9 Gorge
- 14 Notable times past
- 15 - the Terrible
- 16 Creature in Greek myth
- 17 ATM user's need
- 18 Snakelike fish
- 19 Rye disease
- 20 Devil-may-care
- 22 Winged insect (2 wds.)
- 24 Creaking sound
- 26 Knocks
- 27 Seaside resort
- 29 Mentor's work in progress
- 31 Follower
- 34 Fighting force
- 36 - Jones Industrial Average
- 37 Goo
- 39 Stopwatch
- 41 Pester in fun
- 43 Keep busy (2 wds.)
- 44 Give an over-the-top performance
- 45 Director Jean-Goddard

47 "Born free" lioness

- 48 - Quixote
- 49 Atomic
- 53 PC key
- 54 Santa -, California
- 55 Cook a certain way
- 57 "Look -, Angel"
- 61 Approach and speak to
- 64 UFO pilot
- 65 Calf meat
- 67 Expressive dance
- 68 Perceive
- 69 "Sesame Street" regular
- 70 Jacob's twin
- 71 Much disliked
- 72 Refuse
- 73 Agcy.

DOWN

- 1 Wall Street pessimist
- 2 Old strongbox
- 3 Board game for two
- 4 In motion
- 5 Bruce willis hit (2 wds.)
- 6 Genesis name
- 7 Public area

8 Underwrite

- 9 Most affordable
- 10 Does damage to
- 11 Jason's ship
- 12 Place
- 13 Traditional story
- 21 Soak up
- 23 Pester
- 25 Recess
- 27 Fully filled
- 28 Best in class
- 30 Fabric weave
- 31 Small rodent (2 wds.)
- 32 Entertain
- 33 Where Kathmandu is
- 35 Nevertheless
- 38 False account

40 Famous

- 42 Membership cost
- 46 Publisher's offerings
- 50 Neighbor of Mex.
- 51 Whittles
- 52 DVR button
- 54 Actress - Witherspoon
- 56 Felt sore
- 57 Diner fare
- 58 Genus of olives
- 59 Green shade
- 60 Computer maker
- 62 Rebuff
- 63 Tense
- 66 "I -- woman in love ..."

last issue's crossword answers



THE ITHACAN

RECRUITMENT NIGHT

6 P.M. THURS. JAN. 25

PARK AUDITORIUM

Create and solve your Sudoku puzzles for FREE.
 Play Sudoku and win prizes at: PRIZESUDOKU.COM
 The Sudoku Source of "The Ithacan".

answers to last issue's sudoku:

easy

3	1	8	9	4	5	2	7	6
9	4	5	2	7	6	1	8	3
2	7	6	1	8	3	9	4	5
6	9	2	4	5	7	8	3	1
7	8	4	3	2	1	6	5	9
5	3	1	8	6	9	4	2	7
4	6	3	5	1	8	7	9	2
8	5	7	6	9	2	3	1	4
1	2	9	7	3	4	5	6	8

hard

5	8	4	9	6	7	2	1	3
9	1	7	2	4	3	8	5	6
2	3	6	1	5	8	9	7	4
1	9	5	6	8	4	3	2	7
7	4	3	5	9	2	1	6	8
8	6	2	3	7	1	4	9	5
4	2	1	7	3	6	5	8	9
6	5	8	4	1	9	7	3	2
3	7	9	8	2	5	6	4	1

sudoku

medium

			8				4
					6		
6			5		1	2	8
4		9	3		5		
7			6				
3	5		2	7		1	
	3		1				9
9		1		7	8		
2	4			5			

hard

	6		5				
	5		6	8			1
	7		1		9		
5			3	7		4	2
4							9
		2	9				6
1							
			4			8	
6	3			9	5		

ON WEDNESDAYS WE MAKE DEADLINE



THE ITHACAN RECRUITMENT NIGHT

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