

Phillips Exeter Academy
Exeter, New Hampshire

The Exonian

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NO KINGS

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SOTW

Meet Senior Alex Trotman: the man, the legend, 9.

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Adrian Chan / The Exonian

Academy Prepares for Experience Exeter

By ADAEZE ACHOLONU, MAGGIE KOTKOWSKI, OWEN SAFFORD, and OLIVIA WANG

Do you remember your Experience Exeter day? For many students, it was a defining moment in their decision to attend the Academy. Now, as Experience Exeter returned on March 30 and 31 and April 2 and 3, the campus once again welcomed admitted students to experience Exeter for the very first time. While visitors explored classes and community, current students took on the role of

hosts, offering an inside perspective on daily life at the Academy. Behind the scenes, the program required extensive preparation from the Admissions Office and active cooperation from the entire campus. In the weeks leading up to the event, the admissions team worked to optimize students’ and families’ on-campus experience, from setting the schedule and coordinating with different departments to pairing prospective students with current students and coordinating logistics. A new aspect that

was added to the Experience Exeter program this year is the activity fair. Students from different programs and clubs hosted booths in the Hahn Room and the wrestling center to showcase aspects of student life here at Phillips Exeter beyond academics. Class visits, as well as the student panel, remained the core of the program. Accommodating hundreds of admitted students and their families required significant coordination. In cooperation with dining services, the dining hall schedules

EXPERIENCE, 3.

Weekend Protest in Town



Exeter community protests together.

Sean Ricard / The Exonian

By KAROLINA KOZAK, SEAN RICARD, and ANNIE ZHU

Across Exeter on the morning of Saturday, March 28th, beeping, clattering, and drums were heard as “No Kings” protesters filled the roads and surrounded the Town Hall, whose striking messages and brightly colored signs made for an unignorable sight. “Democracy Dies in Silence”, a poster spelled out, the words written boldly in red and blue. “We dumped tea for less”, read another. Hosted in the Town of Exeter, this “No Kings” rally lasted approximately from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.. The demonstration drew nearly 2,200 people, including Exeter locals, other New Hampshire residents, and members of the PEA community. The rally featured four speakers, including Exeter’s Chair of the Select Board Niko Papakonstantis, State Rep. Wendy Thomas from Merrimack, New Hampshire., New Hampshire House

Democratic Leader Alexis Simpson, and New Hampshire State Senator Debra Altschiller. This event was part of the third nation-wide “No Kings” protest, complementing other mass-mobilizations on June 14th, 2025, and October 18th, 2025, which have been organized as a response to the policies and actions of the Trump administration. The demonstration also followed local victories in Merrimack and Rockingham County that have restricted ICE’s presence in the area, and speakers touted these victories to show the importance of local and state governments. The protest was organized by local representatives of the Democratic party in tandem with the nationwide organization Indivisible, which is behind many of the recent mobilization efforts against the Trump administration. Organizers such as Skip Berrien, a local member of the Democratic party, faced some challenges, as the protest, estimated

to be attended by more than 2,000 people, greatly overshot their expected 500 participants. As people started pouring in during the first hour, organizers ensured that the protesters didn’t block traffic or walkways by encouraging surplus demonstrators to move away from the Town Hall steps onto nearby streets and parking areas. Berrien explained that while the extra people “showed up with a challenge... Everyone was very cooperative, and it was a joyful event in terms of people just feeling like they were here for the right reason and they were ready to respond to any sort of direction that we gave.” Berrien explained that as the event did not block roads, they did not require a permit. He did note, however, that they notified the police of their plans, but didn’t run into any issues from counterprotesters or other disruptions that would require any police presence. Montagno, who registered the demonstra-

PROTEST, 5.

LGBTQ+ History and Rights at Exeter

By AYA SAMSON, DIYA SANDEEP, and ARISA YOSHINO

“...the Academy has taken significant steps toward recognizing and supporting queer and LGBTQIA+ students and faculty. This has come as the result of tireless work on the part of queer Exonians, both in the past and present.”

Read more on page 6.

New Swim Pool Under Construction



Blueprint for new pool.

Courtesy of Phillips Exeter Academy

By LUCYMA, OLIVIA SZCZEPANSKI, and SERENA YUE

During Assembly on Monday, March 23, the first day of spring term, Principal William Rawson announced the Academy’s plan to construct a new pool, an undertaking that has already begun. It is projected to be done by the end of the calendar year. Kate D’Ambrosio, the Academy’s Aquatics Director and assistant coach of varsity swimming & diving, described that the new pool is projected to be “four lane, 25 yards ... the same length as the Nekton Pool, but about half the width.” However, this pool

will be significantly shallower than the Nekton Pool, with a range of 3 to 7 feet as compared to 7 to 12.5 feet. She continued, explaining the purpose of these physical details, “The Nekton Pool can be very daunting to a beginner swimmer.” Meg Blitzshaw, head coach of girls water polo, pointed out that “having a shallow end will be terrific for lessons and ESSO Swim in particular.” Rawson added, “[It] will be much better for ... aquatic rehab, and also provide better swimming opportunities for faculty and staff families year-round.” Considering the size of the Exeter community, it’s often difficult for people who aren’t on the swimming and

diving team to use the pool, as there are aquatic teams that practice in the pool every season. Rawson also emphasized its impact for the athletics teams, stating, “It also will give us greater flexibility for training for our varsity and junior varsity swimming and diving programs, and make us eligible to host New England championships.” D’Ambrosio elaborated, “It will be used for warm-up and warm-down during larger meets, like New England championships.” Blitzshaw brought up another perk that the new pool brings. “[It] allows our

POOL, 4.

News

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Dexter Filkins Assembly Sparks Controversy



Students share mixed reviews.

Courtesy of Christian Harrison

By **LYDIA KUHNERT, SEAN RICARD, and ARISA YOSHINO**

As students settled down on the wooden bleachers of Love Gym on Friday, Feb. 27, assembly began like any other. Journalist Dexter Filkins discussed his experiences reporting in the Middle East and the rising tensions in the region. However, in the last few minutes, he paused to offer a stark assessment: “Chances are, we’re going to go to war with Iran pretty

soon.” That very night, the U.S. and Israeli militaries launched airstrikes that killed the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, starting the ongoing Iran war. What may have felt like a distant possibility to many Exonians became reality overnight. The Academy hosted Filkins as part of the Strickler Speaker Assembly Series. Filkins delivered around a half hour of remarks, primarily focused on the then-imminent war with Iran. The assembly gar-

nered mixed reactions across campus and ultimately led Principal Rawson to send a school-wide email expressing his expectations for and disappointments with the assembly. Filkins is an acclaimed war correspondent and journalist known for his coverage of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars for The New York Times, as well as his other work covering contemporary Middle Eastern affairs. In 2009, he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for this

work, which has led him to be described as one of the premier combat journalists and war correspondents of the time. He also authored The Forever War, an award-winning nonfiction book covering his observations and experiences during his time in the Middle East. Dexter Filkins was invited to campus as a Richard and Joan S. Strickler Exonian Speaker, a designation awarded to journalists selected and funded by The Exonian. The

Deed of Gifts states that the goal of the Strickler Speaker is to promote “an awareness of contemporary issues in journalism” and “an appreciation for standards of excellence in news writing and editing.” Instructor in English Erica Lazure, faculty advisor of The Exonian, explained that the Strickler speaker enables student journalists to engage directly with professionals in the field. “[The] Strickler Speaker is part of The Exonian’s generous endowment, which enables the club to invite a journalist to campus each year for a school-wide assembly and to meet with Exonian staff,” she said. In the past few years, this program has been expanded to include more than one speaker annually. Lazure added that the decision to invite Filkins was based on both faculty interest and the relevance of his expertise. “Our assembly coordinator, Mr. Kilinc, is a scholar of Middle East history and for some time had been interested in bringing Mr. Filkins for an assembly,” Lazure said. “The Exonian is always looking for opportunities for our staff to meet working journalists, and so

the request for funding aligned with this goal.” Filkins’s speech primarily focused on the then-current volatile situation in Iran, told through the lens of his own personal visit to Iran. Filkins briefly described the political structure of the Iranian government before dictating his own memories of Iran. He recounted two memories, the first about a party he attended while in Tehran, and the second about his experience encountering the Iranian Revolutionary Guard while attempting to pass airport security during his departure. The two stories were picked with the goal of illustrating the separation and contrast between Iran’s government and its people. Throughout the assembly, Filkins also asserted his belief that U.S. military involvement and war with Iran were imminent and unavoidable. Reactions to the assembly were mixed. Some students pointed out Filkins’ messy delivery, while others praised his insights, and yet more criticized what they considered an insensitive tone. Throughout the assembly, Filkins spoke mostly without

FILKINS, 4.

Students Return from Spring Break

By **BUCHI AKABOGU and MARYN BOWMAN**

As students arrive on campus for their final term of the year, they are welcomed by remarkable changes to the campus’s atmosphere. The grass has been uncovered, and the snow has finally melted. Although the weather is still cold enough to wear a coat, and the flowers have not quite bloomed yet, students come refreshed from break with new schedules, sports and goals for the term. For many students, break provided a much needed change in scenery. Prep Priscilla Lu spent her break both traveling and at home. She traveled to Spain before returning home to California. “Seeing my family,” she said, was the highlight of her break. While she initially felt that the time off passed too quickly, Lu ultimately described it as sufficient. “It just went by quicker than I thought,” she added. Now back on campus, she is excited to see her friends and is looking forward to one thing in particular: “the weather”. Similarly, senior Arabella Mariano, spent her break split between trav-

eling and time with family. After traveling to the Bahamas with friends, visiting her sister in Chicago, and coming home to New Hampshire, Mariano described break as “the perfect amount of time”, adding that she felt “recharged and ready for the spring.” Across campus, this sense of reset was a common theme. After the intensity of winter term, students came back feeling more ready to take on the demands of this new term. “I feel like I actually needed the break more than I realized,” lower Maggie Kotkowski said. “Coming back I just feel more motivated to get things done.” For many however, the transition back to Exeter has not felt as seamless. Students returning from long distances, face the added challenge of jet lag. This makes the first few days of classes extremely difficult. “For the first few days I was waking up at four, and then crashing in the middle of the day,” lower Penelope Ghisleni said. “It feels like my body is still on an entirely different schedule.” Even students who did not travel far found the shift difficult. “Its al-

ways weird going from having no structure to suddenly having everything scheduled again” senior Maya Shah said. “At the same time, it helps you get into the rhythm of things faster.” Other students participated in the Global Initiatives trip. Lower Faye Yang, who went to Paris and Krakow, Poland, highlighted how much fun she had. ““I didn’t know half of the people on the trip,” Yang noted, “and then we started bonding... now we’re really close.” She also emphasized how much she learned on the trip itself. Despite these varied experiences, a shared sense of anticipation defines the start of spring term. For seniors especially, the term represents a final opportunity to fully experience all of the little things at Exeter and spend time with friends before graduation. “I’m looking forward to spending time with my friends and enjoying Exeter before I graduate,” Mariano concluded, pointing to events such as prom, Senior Skip Day, dorm teas and graduation as milestones she hopes to fully embrace.

Students Affected by War in Iran

By **LOLA ACBOOLA, JOHANNA HILLMAN, and FIONA LIU**

On Feb. 28., the United States and Israel launched a war against Iran, striking sites across the country. Iran responded with strikes against Israel, US bases, and US allies in the Middle East, including the Gulf states. The war has since spread further throughout the region, implicating more countries in the area, like Lebanon. Iranian strikes have allegedly also hit Cyprus, Azerbaijan, and Turkey, and the Iranian government has taken steps to prevent oil tankers from passing through the Strait of Hormuz, strongly affecting the global economy. While the war can feel abstract and far away, it has had very real effects on many Exonians. The war has been a source of anxiety for students who have family in the Middle East, as well as for those who reside there or in East Asia. Airport closures in the Gulf states complicated travel plans for millions, including a great number of Exonians. Upper Lynnwoo

Hong, who lives in Saudi Arabia, shared that although her family has remained safe thus far, the effects of the war have not gone unnoticed. “At night, my family can hear the Saudi defense system coming into contact with missiles and drones. The debris from the missiles falls to the ground, and sometimes it starts a small fire,” shared Hong. She and her family have also observed the war’s effect on the Saudi Arabian economy, as strikes have hit oil reserves near her house and forced them to be shut down. While the war hasn’t directly affected the safety of upper Summer Mansfield’s family, who live in Dubai, her sister was forced to attend school online, and daily missile alarms have “added a level of tension even when life outwardly seems normal.” Mansfield described the life of her brother, who lives in Tel Aviv, as “much more disrupted.” “His school has gone online, and many parts of daily life have slowed or stopped,” described Mansfield, adding that her brother spends lots of time

in the bomb shelter in his apartment. Despite this, a sense of normalcy remains for him. “In Israel, there is a greater familiarity with conflict, so while it is still serious, it is experienced differently than it is in Dubai,” she explained. Both Hong and Mansfield recalled that the war had caused them anxiety. “I think that there’s a lot of uncertainty,” said Hong. “It’s not just if something actually happens to you. Part of it is not knowing if something will happen to you.” For Mansfield, the war caused her the most anxiety during Winter term finals. However, travelling back to Dubai over spring break actually helped to relieve her stress. “I was there and got a good sense of how the war really is and how it’s affecting the communities of both my brother and family. I saw it was less extreme than seen in the news in places where my family is.” “I kind of get lost in the academics,” said Hong regarding the start of the term.

IRAN, 4.

Swayam Bagaria Delivers the Human Mind to Exeter



“Every piece of your action...”

By **SOLLIE BEER, LUKE CHON, and ELLINA KIM**

Two birds sit on the same tree. One bird is busy eating the fruits, jumping from branch to branch. The other bird sits very still, watching. It doesn’t eat the fruits, or interfere with the other bird, but solely sits on the branch and observes.

On March 27., Professor Swayam Bagaria, an assistant professor of Hindu Studies at Harvard University, stood on the assembly stage and described the complexities of religion, karma, and how we individually see the world. He spoke of these two birds, and the way both of them, though different, stand as important

symbols for the human mind.

Bagaria began the assembly explaining that he doesn’t “really remember ever becoming a Hindu. There was no big moment, no ceremony where someone said, ‘Hey, you’re officially Hindu.’” For him, religion had always been a focal point of his life, but never something he paid much attention to.

Bagaria sympathized, “I suspect this is how a lot of young people who grew up Hindu, especially outside of India, might feel too. It was only later when I started reading and thinking more that I realized how [being Hindu] expresses an entire way of imagining the world that I now think is distinctively Hindu.” From here, he entered

Sean Ricard / *The Exonian*

into a discussion about how religion played an essential part in shaping his world view.

He described how at the very core of Hinduism is believing that each action one takes is important, and has great effects on the world. “It’s not necessarily about having the right beliefs but about imagining and acting as if every piece of your action or every movement of your mind has some weight for the happenings of the world.”

Bagaria connected this to karma, or the idea that every action you take, every thought you have, every word you speak, is recorded by the universe. “Seen this way, karma can feel intense. There’s no perfect reset button. Everything adds

up and you seem to be trapped.”

He then described two readings from the Upanishads, a sacred Hindu text, both about karma, and how to ensure you take thoughtful action. Bagaria concluded, “You don’t have to leave the world. You can act, you can care, you can fight for what’s right, but you try to act without being completely taken over by your anxiety, or your ego, or your obsession with results.”

However, as Bagaria went on to explain, this is a very difficult thing to do. To compensate for this, we must “ask what small practices can help me live in this tension without being crushed up by it. This is one way of seeing Hinduism. Not as a checklist of beliefs, but as a huge, sometimes overwhelming toolkit, for living in a world that is always a bit unstable.”

Student reflections emphasized the pen- sive nature of Bagaria’s talk. Lower Raya- an Cisse commented, “My biggest takeaway from the assembly was to stay grounded and live in the moment. He mainly talked about being able to take a step back and using mea- sures like meditating to reset yourself, espe- cially in times like today, where there is so much going on in the world

that we can’t control.”

For Cisse, this aspect of Bagaria’s advice, although perhaps more abstract in context, was nevertheless applicable to her own life. “Sometimes, especially at Exeter, it can be hard to step back and give yourself the room for a break so I think it was really great that he talked about that.” She added, “I’ll try to stop for a moment whenever I get overwhelmed or frustrated and give myself moments to step back and reflect rather than acting on impulse.”

Upper Jacqueline Lonian shared similar thoughts, underscoring how Bagaria’s unique relationship with religion was notably moving. “The importance of inner peace and its relation to spirituality really stood out to me,” she said, “the story about his childhood and not seeing elements of his religion as “religious” but rather just a part of his life resonated with me.”

“This might seem obvious,” she continued. “Obviously people may use religious ideas in non-religious ways, but the way he introduced the ways in which you can use it is what surprised me.” Lonian also intends to integrate Bagaria’s advice into her own lifestyle. “I struggle

with religion a lot to this day, but using his method of thinking of taking what I learned in religious settings and using it in non-religious ways to benefit myself and others will definitely be helpful,” she said.

Lower Will Miller concurred: “There is a big difference between the academic study of scripture and the meaning of Hinduism in one’s day to day life.” Miller further discussed his opinions on the speech; “I thought Professor Bagaria did an excellent job of explaining many complex Hindu concepts in a short amount of time, while still being engaging. I appreciated how he started his speech by talking about his Hindu life before being an academic.”

Ultimately, Bagaria reminds us of the ever-important need for thoughtfulness and adjustment in fast-moving environments, perhaps none as dynamic as the Academy. For students across campus, balancing the pressures of schoolwork, expectations, and constant activity can be daunting. Bagaria intends not to distract us from the inevitability of this cycle; rather, he encourages us to approach our day-to-day lives with clarity, calm, and joy.

Experience Exeter Cont.



Various student clubs share insight.

The Hahn Center was reserved from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for parent lunch, while Elm Street Dining Hall was available for students along with the Hahn Center after 1 p.m.

Host matching is also one of the most important steps of planning Experience Exeter. When students signed up to be an Experience Exeter host, they were required to share the language they are taking, their top academic interest, and three current extracurricular commitments. With this information, the admissions team paired admitted students with current students of similar interests and backgrounds, providing attendees with a personalized peek into their future lives at Exeter. Host matches for Monday and Tuesday were emailed out Saturday morning, and hosts for Thursday and

Friday received their matches on Tuesday.

A week prior to the program, the admissions team arranged four training sessions for current students to provide an insight into the Experience Exeter schedule, responsibilities of student hosts, and other volunteer roles, such as morning greeters and tour guides. Students packed the Forum, and the room was filled with excitement. “I decided to become a student host because I remember how influential my revisit day was,” prep Eddison Scotford shared. “I want to make sure that another student coming for the revisit day has a similar experience to me.”

Prep Lillian Newton thought it would be a fun way to get to know some of the potential new students and help them connect with the Exeter community. “[Coming to

Experience Exeter] definitely helped me envision what life was going to be like more for the next four years. I learned about the campus and just got to go into classes. It just was really helpful to give me a picture of my future.”

“I decided to be an Experience Exeter host because the person who hosted me when I was attending Experience Exeter as a prospective student was a very kind and we established a great connection,” prep Georgia Pendleton recalled. She mentioned how her host made her feel excited about coming to Exeter by showing her around campus. “She bought me a Grill cookie.” As a student host this year, Pendleton looked forward to bringing the same energy to the newly admitted students she met on campus during Experience Exeter week.

Lower Selasie Am-

emador added to this sentiment by describing how her host made her feel more comfortable and less afraid of going to school in a different state. “I’m excited to take them to my classes and show them around the campus. I really appreciate the opportunity to share my experiences ... with the student.”

“I wanted to become an Experience Exeter host because I wasn’t able to attend myself,” said prep Brooke Con- dren. She acknowledged how the revisit program helps new students build bonds with their future classmates, teammates, and schoolmates. “I wish I had had the chance to meet some familiar faces on campus before coming as a student in the fall, and give me a better feel of day-to-day life to better make my decision.”

Incoming prep Maya Dehghan arrived on



Adrian Chan / *The Exonian*

campus for the first time for Experience Exeter. Uncertain about her decision, she came to know more about the Academy’s campus and community, as well as see what it feels like to attend Harkness classes. “In English class, I was able to see the poems that they are reading and talk about them.” Participating in a Harkness discussion helped her envision the learning experience at Exeter.

She also shared that separating students and parents for the program allowed her to connect with people on campus more. “As students, we get to notice the things as we go into the classes, seeing all the different kinds of people and how everyone is collaborating in the classes. At the same time, my parents get to see what they want to see: What are all the courses? How does she get to college? I like that they

have us [students] to see what is meaningful to me, and for my parents to do the same.”

From the admissions office organizing training sessions and coordinating host matches, to Exonians welcoming prospective visitors and sharing a day in their lives, a successful Experience Exeter week takes dedication and collaboration from many different groups across campus, not just the student hosts. The day is designed for prospective students, but it also brings a sense of excitement to everyone and rekindles serves as a chance for the whole school to remember everything that Exeter is truly about

Exeter’s values and embody what our school is truly about: the excitement for learning, the Non Sibi, and most importantly, the connections we build during our time on campus.

Filkins Cont.

notes and occasionally held the mic too far from his mouth. At one point, a member of the audience shouted out, “We can’t hear you!” Some students felt Filkins was unprepared for his presentation, and that it impacted the quality of the content.

Senior Asha Masoudi described, “It felt like it was kind of poorly organized, which led to this extreme truncation of the events that have happened in Iran and an intense oversimplification of the situation.”

Upper Eliyas Koch-Manzur agreed, adding, “I think because the war in Iran was so close, [Filkins] tried to pivot and focus solely on Iran, but it almost didn’t seem like he had a game plan.”

On the other hand, some students thought Filkins was prepared well. Senior Dylan Richardson explained, “I was very engaged by Filkins’ presentation, and while poise that we’ve seen with some other speakers was perhaps not as heavily featured within Mr. Filkins’ assembly, I personally didn’t find it at all detracted from his message, his storytelling, or his analysis.”

Besides criticism about the organization, Filkins also faced comments concerning a lack of context. “The narrative he kind of shared was a bit simplistic. The whole, you know, ‘Iran is an oppressed country that needs liberation from America,’ could have used a lot more nuance that wasn’t present,” said senior Shay Kashif.

Additionally, some students thought the tone of Filkins’ chosen stories was strange or disrespectful. One

anonymous student commented, “Something that really stood out to me was [Filkins’] description of the Iranian women drinking alcohol ‘under surveillance’ with him. I found that description heavily orientalist, incredibly biased, one-sided, and very weird for him to bring up. Iran is so much more than these incredibly reductive stereotypes, and as a Muslim, I thought we deserve better.”

K o c h - M a n z u r agreed. He pointed out that “as an American, I know what he was trying to say, that oppressive governments forcing religious practices is wrong.” However, he pointed out, that for many Muslims, acts that Filkins described, such as not drinking alcohol or wearing a hijab are freeing acts. “His framing that as part of like a backwards society, seemed a bit questionable because he seemed like he was saying the whole act of covering your hair or not drinking alcohol was oppressive, and once you were able to free yourself from that, then you were a free person, which is just not true for everybody.”

Some with criticisms also noted that the assembly was reminiscent of American imperialist ideologies. Kashif mirrored this sentiment, commenting that Filkin’s lack of context “ultimately perpetuates [support for] the United States imperialist invasion of Iran,” but that many of these issues originated from Filkins’s style of speaking and disorganization, rather than his legitimate view. Kashif explained, “I don’t think that that was Mr. Filkin’s intention alto-

gether. I was at the dinner with him, and he’s actually very opposed to U.S. imperialism in a lot of ways... but ultimately I don’t think that was made clear enough in the actual assembly.”

Responding to these concerns, Principal William Rawson sent a schoolwide email on Tuesday, March 3, describing his own concerns with the assembly and apologizing to members of the community who felt hurt by Filkins’ remarks. The email began with an explanation of why Filkins was booked to speak, mirroring comments by Lazure and others in the assembly selection process. While Rawson initially emphasized Filkins’ credentials as a Pulitzer Prize winner and an experienced reporter, he also noted that the journalist’s warning of potential U.S. war with Iran was “all too accurate and prescient.”

However, Rawson drew a clear distinction between the importance of the topic and the execution of the assembly itself. “I was disappointed by the speaker’s evident lack of preparation and organization, the flip nature of several of his remarks, and his overly simplistic characterization of the Iranian people,” he wrote. He further highlighted that conversations with both Muslim and non-Muslim members of the community revealed to him the extent to which the assembly had been received as insensitive and hurtful, especially during Muslim Exonians’ observance of Ramadan.

“We will reflect on how this happened and how we can ensure that future assemblies, including talks on difficult and challenging topics, are not similarly hurtful to members of our community,” Rawson

wrote, pointing to how the Academy will re-evaluate conversations and programming that concern sensitive global issues.

The email was generally received neutrally or well by the student body. Masoudi responded, “I’m glad he said that this assembly was not what it was supposed to be, but I do wish that he specifically named things in the assembly that were misguided or that could be misinterpreted. I think acknowledging the issues directly could have helped amend some of how it might have negatively shifted consensus towards war in Iran.”

Others, like Richardson, felt that the email was “an overstatement of any sort of problem with the assembly.” He went on to explain, “Something that I’ve always valued about the assembly program is the fact that when I go into assembly, whether or not I agree with the presenter, I learn something. I think the email sends a statement that disagreeing with someone means that you’re entitled somehow to an apology for it.” Richardson went on to cite a statement from Exeter’s website on intellectual diversity.

While some community members believed Filkins’ comments on the imminence of war proved to be all too true, many discussed the impact of his language. His assembly provoked many conversations around campus, both about the nature of the war and appropriate etiquette for our speakers. Looking forward, The Exonian is hosting a second Strickler Speaker this academic year; on April 20, ABC News journalist Gloria Riviera will deliver an assembly in Love Gym.

Pool Cont.

new water polo athletes to learn some skills while also being able to stand on the bottom,” yet another way for students to benefit from the new pool.

Reactions to the new pool have been largely positive. D’Ambrosio expressed her excitement, “As an Aquatics Director, more water is always better!” The pool will be an excellent addition to our aquatics facilities, with benefits for the entire community.

Blitzshaw expanded, “As someone involved with aquatics, it’s always nice when folks are invested in aquatic programs and want to elevate our facilities ... I feel very fortunate to work at an institution that has long supported aquatic sports and aquatic athletes.”

Rawson was also in favor of the new pool. “I am pleased that we found a fairly simple solution that supports our excellent swimming and diving programs.” He emphasized the many advantages of the pool: “[It] will have significant benefits to the entire school community, and does not disrupt any other programs or require us to shut down our main pool during construction.” The new pool will be built as an addition to the existing building, connected to the current pool through a passage. This means that the Nekton Pool is still currently in use while construction is underway.

As the construction of the new pool continues, it not only represents a new Academy facility, but an interest in supporting student life, athletics and community. As D’Ambrosio highlighted, “This pool will be impactful not only to our competitive programs, but to the entire PEA Community.” The pool will create more than just a place for training, but a center of connection fos-

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Iran Cont.

“There isn’t much I can do except to constantly check on my parents.”

Although the war has been a stressor for many, it has also brought some hope to others. Lower Holden Hadidi’s father was born in Shiraz, Iran, in 1973 and fled the country with his parents during the Iranian Revolution in 1978. Though his father had since been “very Americanized”, he still retained fond childhood memories of his birth country. However, he would never be able to return, which Hadidi had hoped American intervention could change. “I was hopeful back then that he could go back to Iran and revisit these memories, like placing flowers on Cyrus the Great’s grave, which is close to Shiraz,” Hadidi expressed, although he also stated that as the war grew longer, this hope seemed less likely.

The war has also

inspired much reflection in Exonians who are deeply connected to both sides of the conflict. Mansfield shared that she had begun to think more critically about American power. “I still believe the U.S. has enormous influence and that Iran is a real threat, but I have started to question the assumption that power automatically means intervention is the best answer,” she explained. Hadidi reflected on a conversation he had with his cousins at a wedding two and a half years ago. “One of the things they said that still sticks with me, because it seemed so fantastical back then, was when we were talking about who we would root for if the US and Iran ever got into a war, like it was a sporting event or something. And I said the US, I was born in the US and lived in the US all my life, but a few of them said Iran, and just looking back on it,

now that there actually is a war going on, it’s made me have a deeper reflection on who I am as a person and my roots.”

Hadidi emphasized that although his family’s countries were at war, it had not affected their personal relationships and even brought them closer together. “It’s made me have a deeper appreciation for family relationships that can cross geopolitical borders,” he said. Hong also shared that she had begun calling her parents more frequently.

In a place very far away from the location of the war, many misconceptions can arise surrounding it. Mansfield observed that, “US media often makes it seem like entire places are in constant destruction, and while there is very real violence and loss, that is not what daily life looks like everywhere.” Hadidi felt that many Americans did not fully recognize the scale of this conflict, especially since “in the Middle East, all

the countries kind of get lumped together.” “Iran is a very large country, both in population and economically. There are millions and millions of people there, and there are a lot of different cultures... This is very different from past Middle Eastern engagements.”

It’s still unclear when and how the war will end, and how exactly it will reverberate throughout the world. Its effects have already been felt widely throughout the Middle East, and the economic effects are likely to be felt very soon here in the US. Already, Exonians have felt its effects, whether in the lives of their families or the logistical complications it has caused. “I wish more people understood that life can exist alongside war, and that contrast is part of what makes it so unsettling,” reflected Mansfield. The war has also forced Exonians to think beyond the “Exeter bubble” and reconsider the role of the United States in worldwide conflicts.

Lion Cards

Declining

By KAYLEE GONG, ELLINA KIM, and LEVI STOLL

On Saturday March 7th, 2026, the final day of winter term, all current student badges ceased to work with the Academy’s Lion Card-scanning building and door access system. Afterwards, the PEA Information Technology Services’ (ITS) investigation revealed that the error occurred because the “Regular Session Current Student” role had been erased from the system’s data warehouse following a refresh earlier that day. All issues have now been resolved.

Finals week at Exeter comes with many stresses. Constant studying, tests, projects, and unclear travel plans make every finals week one to remember. However, the 2026 winter term fi-

nals week was marked by yet another stress: not being able to get into buildings because of declining Lion Cards. Students shared the struggle of being locked out of dorms and their final exam class buildings, leading students to wonder: what actually was the issue?

The “Regular Session Current Student” role in the Academy’s data warehouse is used for reporting and access. Thus, when the role was missing following a system refresh, all current students were made inactive. ITS’ investigation and Director of ITS Scott Heffner revealed that the role’s erasure was due to a “timing issue ahead of our March 10th acceptance letters. Two processes overlapped unexpectedly which caused the removal of

Community Remembers Max Sahinoglu

By The 148th Executive Board

We’d just departed campus for spring break when we learned about upper Max Sahinoglu’s tragic passing on Mar. 9. During our time away from the Academy, we did our best to follow Principal William Rawson’s advice, who shared the news of the loss with the PEA community and reminded us to lean on each other during these unprecedented times.

“This is a time when a strong community like ours will need to support each other, so please do not hesitate to reach out to your adviser, the CAPS team or any adult in our community who can be of help to you in this difficult time,” Rawson wrote in his school-wide email.

Max, born Dec. 20, 2008, who called Barrington, Illinois home, was a proud resident and Student Listener of Cillely Hall. He played #9 on the boys’ varsity soccer team, coached kids through ESSO Soccer, and was a member of the

STARs Council. More importantly, Max was the beloved younger brother of senior Alex Sahinoglu, and a fiercely loyal friend who, as his obituary noted, “brought fun and adventure everywhere he went.” Max is additionally survived by his parents Ethan Sahinoglu and Jennifer Sahinoglu.

Before classes commenced on Mar. 23, Principal Rawson addressed the student body, relaying moments from Max’s moving memorial service, which took place on Mar. 13 in Illinois, attended by several faculty members and Exeter students.

Rawson recalled that Mr. Sahinoglu and Alex “told stories that only a father and older brother could tell.” Upper Rhys Cunningham, who also spoke at the service, described Sahinoglu as a “glue person” who brought people together. When reflecting on the funeral during the assembly, Rawson shared Alex’s resounding message: “Max would want us to remember him in that way, and would want us to honor

his life by continuing to have laughter and joy in our own lives.”

In her assembly comments, Rev. Bonnie-Jeanne Casey invited students to offer condolences and fond memories of Max to the Sahinoglu family in the solemn, albeit warm atmosphere at the Phillips Church’s Stuckey Room. Members of the Exeter community were encouraged to share a memory or a prayer for Max and his family through handwritten notes.

Director of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Dr. Szu-hui Lee acknowledged that “grief can feel heavy and, at times, isolating,” but explained that “one of the most helpful things we can do is talk about how it feels, naming it, sharing it, and letting others sit with us in it.”

Rawson remarked, “there is no one way to grieve, and no right way, other than the way that feels right for each of us.” He encouraged the community to remember that “support starts with those with whom we are closest

— family, friends, faculty in dorms, advisors, other caring adults, classmates and teammates.”

Experiencing such a grave loss is unimaginable, especially for those for whom Max was a dormmate, teammate, and dear friend. However, it is precisely during these difficult moments in which the tenacity of our community reveals itself — that is, our ability to translate our care for each other into both organized support and small acts of kindness. At Exeter, we live in close proximity to each other, which means we witness each other in joy and mourning. This proximity amplifies grief, since it is harder to hide our deep-seated emotional struggles in plain sight. However, this visibility is precisely what enables us to better support each other as we continue to grapple with the loss of one of our own.

Dr. Lee emphasized that being present for each other and sharing stories of our lost loved ones helps to keep their memory alive and can aid each of us in



reconciling with our grief.

“Continuing to share stories of the person we lost matters too. It keeps their memories alive and reminds us that their impact continues to be felt in meaningful ways,” she noted. “We can also honor them by paying that positive impact forward, through small acts of kindness, support for others, or

living out the values they embodied within our community.”

CAPS is a free Academy resource that offers individual counseling support for students. Appointments can be made through the Lamont Health and Wellness Center (603) 777-3420.

Protest Cont.

tion with the national organization Indivisible, cited many channels by which to spread the word of the protest, including posters around town, email chains, and help from Berrien and his contacts within the local democratic party.

Attendees cited a wide range of frustrations regarding the Trump administration as their inspiration for attending. The range of attendees were wide, varying from Exeter residents to students, parents, and instructors from the Academy.

Preps Jack Manganis, James Moon, and Isiah Gibson attended the protest after seeing posters near campus. Listing reasons for their participation, Manganis described, “Generally, we had some issues with the current administration, and so we thought we might as well come to like a rally that supports what we believe.”

Being able to meet like-minded attendees was another reason Manganis and his friends chose to join the event. “As someone who just has pretty strong beliefs about Trump in the current state of the nation. It’s just nice to come see other people with the sort of opinion as me, and we could all just stand together and travel with each other’s pres-

ence,” Moon added.

Sarah Evans, a Durham resident who attended the rally, spoke similarly, saying, “I come here to get energy because I don’t know where else I can go to be in such a like minded place.” She added, it’s scary. It’s very scary. And I feel like I get some energy.”

Along with the energy, many protesters pointed to the increased visibility of the issues they care about as a reason for their attendance.

Exeter parent and candidate for U.S. Senate Karishma Manzur felt passionate about supporting the protest and spreading more awareness about its cause. “People have to come out. It’s not just about one day,” she said. Manzur emphasized the need for people of all political backgrounds to unite as a country. “It’s about educating ourselves, informing ourselves, because it is not about a Republican problem or a Democratic problem. This is an American problem. We have to fix our country,” she said.

Instructor in English Mercy Carbonell also spoke about how she felt the protest could bring greater visibility to educators’ concerns. She reflected, “I wanted to support this protest in the town

of Exeter, because I am an educator in the town of Exeter, and I think it’s important for there to be visibility of teachers,” she explained.

Carbonell also pointed out some of her concerns, about “the ways in which everybody’s energy is being reflected onto Trump when, in fact, there’s a long legacy of empire and imperialism in the country, and I think sometimes there’s a whitewashing of that” With many signs and sentiments from protesters centered specifically around Trump, to some it can seem cyclical or unproductive at attacking specific issues.

However, Carbonell shared the sentiments of the vast majority of the protesters in it’s effectiveness, saying, “Yes, I think it’s useful. I always think it’s useful... And I think for people who have felt isolated in their own experiences, it’s an opportunity for them to meet other people and to see other people. And to know that they’re not alone.

Another attendee of the protest, Dudley Dudley, a former local politician who served on the New Hampshire executive council from 1976-1984, spoke similarly about her reasons for attending, that “the world is on fire a bit,” and the protest is a way “to rally the community and how to get the information out.”

Speakers at the rally — including Exeter’s Chair of the Select Board Niko Papakonstantis, State Rep. Wendy Thomas from Merrimack, N.H., N.H. House Democratic Leader Alexis Simpson, and New Hampshire Senator Debrah Altschiller — also played a central role in raising awareness about the issues that brought many attendees to the event.

Protesters had varying views about “what’s next” for the movement. Following local victories in Merrimack and Rockingham County, few had specific issues to point to, instead speaking about retaining energy and using these protests to educate the public and draw attention to the issues they oppose.

Manzur, for one, pointed out how mounting criticism of Trump holds within it a desire for change, one away from the status quo in both political parties. This departure from the status quo, to her, can be found in fresh leadership, such as her Senate campaign. “Too many members of Congress, both Republicans and Democrats are answering to the same donors as Donald Trump. We need to get big money out of politics. We need to elect people who are grassroots, honest people. I am answering to the people of New Hampshire.”

While attendees cited a

wide range of motivations for participating in the rally, many speakers and protesters emphasized the role of civic engagement in shaping local and state political outcomes.

State Representative Wendy Thomas pointed to recent organizing efforts around the proposed ICE detention facility in Merrimack as an example of how public pressure can influence political decisions. “I absolutely think protests like this played a huge role,” Thomas said. “I also think that calling out Governor Ayott for her incompetency in dealing with this was needed,” she continued.

Thomas described how advocacy organizations across the state quickly coordinated their response once news of the proposed facility emerged. “There were about 35 advocacy groups across New Hampshire working together,” she said, adding that people stepped up to coordinate media outreach and make sure communities understood what was happening with ICE.

New Hampshire Senator Debra Altschiller similarly addressed the broader policy landscape surrounding immigration enforcement locally. According to Altschiller, some collaborations between federal immigration authorities and local law enforcement still exist through

programs like the 287(g) agreement. The program allows Immigration and Customs Enforcement to partner with state and local agencies, authorizing certain officers to carry out certain immigration enforcement functions.

Altschiller said legislation she introduced this year would require any local agency participating in the program to continue following New Hampshire policing standards, including requirements that officers wear body cameras and identify themselves while carrying out enforcement actions.

She added that continued public awareness and reporting will play an important role in shaping future policy discussions.

Saturday’s protest captured a wide, diverse range of attendees, all united under their shared disdain for the Trump administration. Building on the energy of previous demonstrations and recent local victories, participants said the gathering was both a celebration of community engagement and a reminder that political activism will continue beyond a single event. Whether through upcoming midterm elections, further debate over local ICE contracts, or other local issues, many protesters said the movement’s next steps will depend on maintaining public participation in the months ahead.

Cards Cont.

several user roles, including ‘Regular Session Current Student.’”

After receiving reports about the issue, ITS restored the missing role and re-ran a full data process, checking that the system was fully corrected and consistent. On March 25, they implemented a more permanent fix to the issue encountered. ITS’ identity management processes have breakpoints to prevent “mas-

sive, unexpected changes” to user accounts, as noted by Heffner. However, that design did not “map cleanly into the card access data interface.” As a result, student badge access was temporarily erased but access to myExeter, Canvas and other systems were unaffected. To eliminate the risk of losing badge access in the future, a new control around data uploading was implemented in

the card access data interface to prevent future processes from overlapping.

Lower Rayann Cisse explained the inconvenience of her Lion Card declining in terms of how it impacted her final day on campus. “It was frustrating because I couldn’t open any buildings to say bye to my friends or get my stuff before leaving. It was a bit confusing because it was something that hadn’t happened before when we were leaving.”

Furthermore, many students still had to go to class or attend their final exam class. Lower Evan Chen had history class in Phillips Hall, and humorously shared, “As I approached Phillips Hall, there was supposed to be a trash can holding the door open. I was pretty late and the person in front of me seemed like he had a pretty important final, so he was sprinting. But, when the person in front of me opened the door, the trash can went in with him. So, the door closed right before

me, and I was stuck outside.”

Past the negatives, the Lion Card deactivation also provided an opportunity for connection. Whilst taking out his trash, he got to bond with a dormmate. “When I was locked out, I was trying to help another guy with opening the door,” he explained. “So, it kind of made us closer in the way that we were both struggling together in the same situation.”

Moving forward to this spring, faulty Lion

Card scanning should no longer be amongst campus worries. Although some students managed to find a silver lining in the system failure, most experienced it as a bothersome delay out of their control. Now, with the diligence of ITS, the issue has not only been resolved, but also is now defended against. The role of ITS is often a quiet one, but its knowledgeable staff ensure that disruptions like these are quickly identified and resolved.

LGBTQ+ History and Rights at Exeter

By **AYA SAMSON, DIYA SANDEEP, and ARISA YOSHINO**

From the founding of the GSA in the 1990s to the decision nearly a decade later allowing same-sex faculty couples to share residential housing, the Academy has taken significant steps toward recognizing and supporting queer and LGBTQIA+ students and faculty. This has come as the result of tireless work on the part of queer Exonians, both in the past and present.

A review of archival issues of The Exonian, trustee statements, policy changes, and interviews across decades suggested a recurring pattern: institutional recognition of LGBTQ+ rights often followed student and faculty advocacy rather than preceding it.

Exeter has come a long way in recognizing and supporting LGBTQ+ students and faculty. It has grown from a campus where LGBTQ+ students and staff were largely invisible or marginalized to one where they can feel supported both institutionally and socially. Yet the Academy continues to navigate ongoing challenges such as misgendering, microaggressions, and subtle biases that impact an LGBTQ+ student's Exeter experience. The work of the Academy in fostering an inclusive, equitable community for all is an ongoing initiative.

While LGBTQ+ students had undoubtedly always existed at Exeter, discussions of homosexuality at Exeter in archival sources did not begin to surface until the late 1960s, and even then, only in limited and indirect ways. A 1968 Exonian piece described an atmosphere in which “the life of a homosexual at Exeter [was] impossible,” due to a pervasive “fear of being revealed.” In a 1971 piece, one writer more explicitly criticized the community's ignorance in casually using homophobic slurs without understanding the “utter despair, insecurity, and unhappiness of the modern homosexual.” The limits and caution taken in these discussions emphasizes that the community was aware of the presence of LGBTQ+ students, yet they were rarely acknowledged.

A few decades later, in the 1990s, was when institutional recognition first appeared in official records. In 1992, the Trustees issued a statement identifying homophobia, racism, and sexism as “disabling prejudices” for students who would enter the workplace of the 21st

century. Yet despite this statement, many LGBTQ+ students continued to face discrimination and hostility.

According to issues of the LGBTQ+ alumni newsletter, *alumnus* Nat Butler ‘64, who served as an LGBTQ+ alumni organizer in the 1990s, held a series of LGBTQ+ alumni meetings off campus in 1994, where he heard firsthand the extent to which homophobia had impacted alumni's experiences at Exeter. “The San Francisco meeting included some alumni/ae who had had painful, even emotionally damaging experiences at Exeter,” Butler wrote in a letter to LGBTQ+ alumni in May 1994. Butler later relayed these accounts in letters to alumni, documenting the extent to which homophobia had shaped students' lives on campus.

This was echoed in an opinion piece in the Oct. 21, 1995 issue of *The Exonian*, where the author reflected on student reactions to GSA's celebration of National Coming Out Day. “In my three years at Exeter, I have never been more aware of the intolerance that stirs beneath our politically correct facade than in the past week,” she wrote, describing that students had “destroyed, defaced, or stolen” signs, and had made blatantly homophobic remarks on the GSA assembly programming. “The hatred that these ripped signs embody scares me,” she continued. “It indicates that our student body, despite claims of harmonious diversity, remains close-minded.” Her depiction highlighted the glaring homophobia present in the community. From outright violence to harassment, PEA's history includes documented mistreatment of queer individuals.

By 1997, while institutional efforts had progressed, the broader community's attitudes lagged. Butler wrote in his October newsletter, “Non-discrimination policy can't make prejudice go away, and ... Assembly speeches can't wipe away the fears of a worried teenager. Transforming Exeter from a place that is tolerant into one that is welcoming requires participation and support from every corner of the Exeter community.” He emphasized the need for the community to not just tolerate LGBTQ+ students, but to actively welcome them.

In 1999, gay rights activist Kevin Jennings, who had been invited to speak at an assembly, conducted a school-wide “climate survey” examining Exonians' views on

LGBTQ+ life at Exeter. Perceptions of homophobia ranged from claims that it was nonexistent to assertions that it was pervasive. One clear pattern was that homophobic slurs were common in everyday language, particularly in dorms and locker rooms, and that intervention was inconsistent. While many faculty members who intervened cited this behavior as “inappropriate” (34 responses) or saw it as an opportunity to “help educate” students (32 responses), others admitted they did not step in due to “lack of courage,” uncertainty about what to say, or even a fear of appearing like “a crusader.”

Among students, this disparity between personal beliefs and actions was even clearer. Although a large portion of Exonians described Exeter as a “diverse and accepting place” (73 mixed gender, 166 female, 140 male), many students simultaneously normalized homophobic language. The most common reason for not intervening was the belief that “the words have lost offensiveness” (25 mixed gender, 58 female, 77 male), or that such remarks were just harmless jokes. Peer pressure, fear of being perceived as gay, and the idea that “it's not that big of a deal” also discouraged students from intervening. The survey exposed a contradiction in Exeter's social climate at the time: while community members described the Academy as progressive and accepting, that acceptance was often proved conditional and shifted depending on friend groups, dorm culture, or settings.

Still, every student had a different experience. Alex Myers '96 mentioned that, despite the lack of support for institutional change in the 90s, he had felt like “there was a lot of acceptance and support for individuals.” Comparing it to his local social climate, he described the Academy as “liberal, expansive, and welcoming. Being on campus opened my eyes to possibilities that didn't exist in my up-bringing and helped me understand myself.”

Regardless, the Academy has made significant progress since the 1990s in terms of welcoming LGBTQ+ students. Elle Kaplan, computer science instructor and former interim LGBTQ+ coordinator, explained that Exeter today “mirrors the country, in most regards, with queer acceptance.” Compared to the 1990s and prior, when “most queer people on campus were

closeted,” the Academy is now markedly more accepting.

However, at the same time, Kaplan noted that “it's definitely not perfect,” particularly for gender-nonconforming students who are “frequently misgendered in a way that can be distressing.” Many of these challenges are a result of “less of a misconception and more just a lack of knowledge,” Xe expressed, highlighting that there is still an ongoing need for education and reflection within the community.

While blatant hostility may be less common than in the past, many queer students continue to experience subtle microaggressions. As Kaplan said, “I personally haven't experienced a ton of overt bigotry, but I think all of the queer people on campus, to some degree or another, experience microaggressions regularly.” In a current national state that Xe described as a “hard time for queer people,” particularly for transgender students facing healthcare challenges, Exeter maintains an ongoing responsibility to foster empathy among students and faculty alike.

The Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA), or what is now called the Gender-Sexuality Alliance, was founded in 1991, but has not always had a large or accepted presence on campus. In the Jan. 18, 1994 issue of *The Exonian*, a member of the GSA addressed what he described as common “misconceptions” about the group. “The Gay/Straight Alliance is not a gay support group, nor is it a bisexual dinner club,” he said. “The Gay/Straight Alliance

is, as the E-Book says, a campus group devoted to educating the student body on issues of sexual orientation.” Despite limited institutional support in its early years, the GSA remained committed to educating the broader Exeter community.

In response to students who felt uncomfortable or hesitant to attend GSA meetings, the organization created the weekly “Gay/Straight Forum” in 1994, which featured “Either a discussion topic, a special speaker, or a movie that pertains to issues of sexual orientation,” Harlow said. By distinguishing the forum from regular GSA meetings and inviting “anyone with any viewpoint at all,” the group hoped to break down the social barriers that prevented students from involving themselves in LGBTQ+ discourse, and to counter what Harlowe described as “a lot of illusions that could easily be dissolved by a little education.”

In this way, the GSA worked to educate the broader Exeter community on LGBTQ+ issues and history. An article in the Oct. 21, 1995 issue of *The Exonian* described how “Fluorescent pink triangles have been spotted all over campus, puzzling some and inspiring many,” which signified the Academy's campus-wide celebration of National Coming Out Day on October 11. The pink triangle was a symbol used to identify LGBTQ+ people in Nazi concentration camps, and was reclaimed as a symbol of solidarity. According to Myers, who was then head of the GSA, the day “provides a chance for the

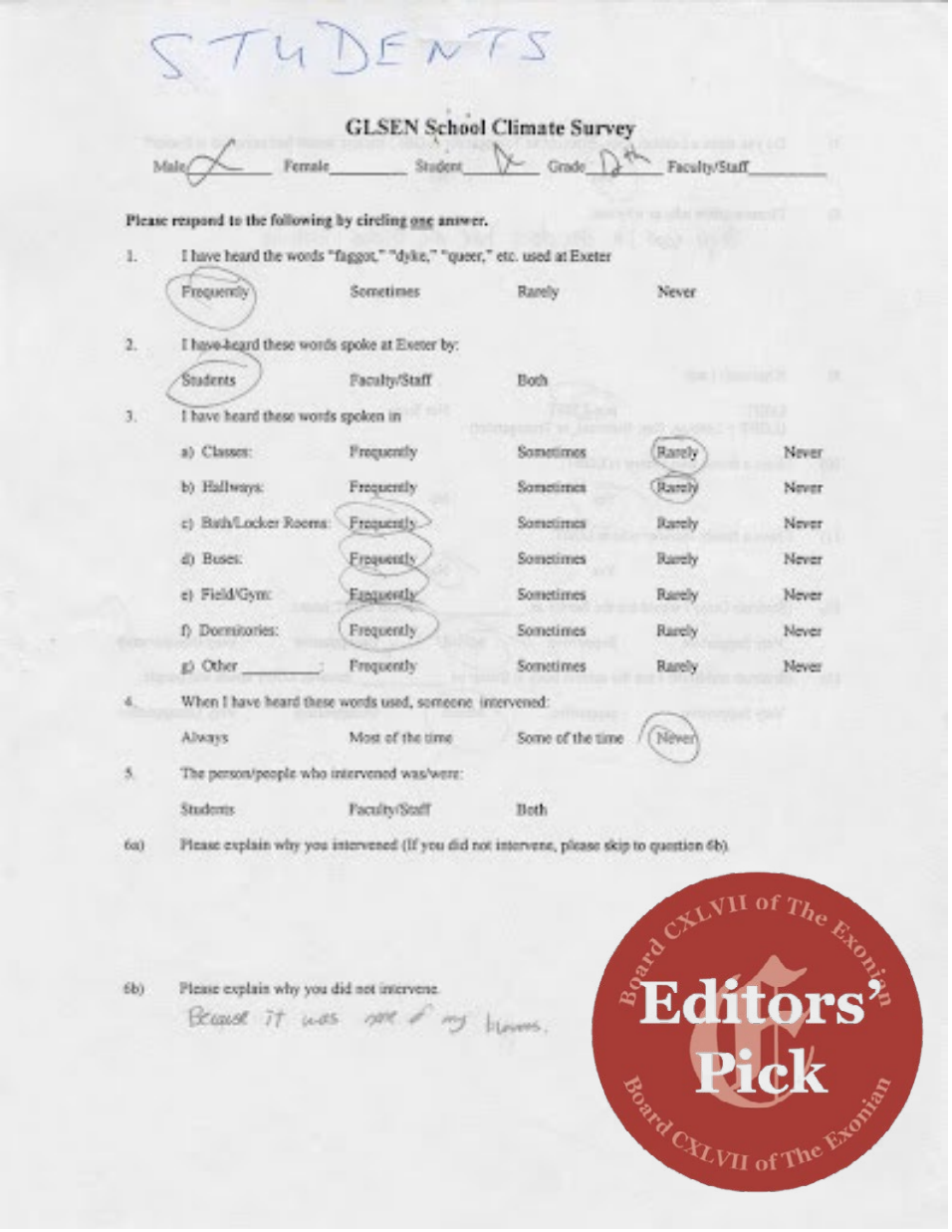


gay community at Exeter to become visible, and an opportunity for those who are straight and in support of gay rights to voice their support.”

The GSA also provided many opportunities for conversations surrounding LGBTQ+ rights. In the Nov. 21, 1996 issue of *The Exonian*, the GSA hosted a forum concerning “gay relations” featuring Academy voice teacher Brett Johnson and his partner Dave McSweeney. Speaking about coming out, their relationship, and life as a gay couple in a community “reputed to be very intolerant,” the two described feeling generally supported at Exeter despite occasional negative experiences.

Guest speakers frequently attended GSA meetings as a way to connect with and expand the perspective of LGBTQ+ Exonians. In 1998, Myers, who was by then an openly transgender man, returned to campus to speak about “the difference between sex (‘what's between your legs’) and gender (‘what's between your ears’),” as Butler recalled in the Feb. 1998 issue of the LGBTQ+ Alumni newsletter. As a result of this talk, the GSA led a faculty panel titled “Gender from the Outside, Gender Within,” reflecting a steadily increasing awareness of gender identity within LGBTQ+ advocacy.

LGBTQ+, 7.



A student response to the GLSEN School Climate Survey in 1999, which assessed the use of and perspectives on homophobic language used at Exeter.



LGBTQ+ Cont.

The GSA even worked with nearby prep schools. In May 1992, just a year after their founding, they hosted a GSA Sleepover in what was then the Day Student Center, inviting LGBTQ+ students from Andover, Northfield Mount Hermon, Milton, and Lincoln Sudbury High Schools. As reported in the May 23, 1992 issue of The Exonian, approximately 40 students gathered to discuss “issues of concern to individuals in the various groups.” The sleepover featured guest speaker Nancy Garden, the author of Annie on My Mind, who called the students “pioneers” and encouraged them as “young people standing on the verge of a new era of understanding in the arena of gay rights.”

Now, in 2026, the GSA is still very alive and far more accepted on campus. English instructor Ellen Wolff, who co-advised GSA back in 1999, emphasized that GSA’s name change from “Gay-Straight Alliance” to “Gender and Sexuality Alliance” in itself holds significance. “[The old name] is a reflection of a less nuanced understanding of gender and sexuality,” Wolff said.

GSA’s offerings include the main GSA club, as well as confidential organizations for more specific sub-identities, such as the queer umbrella group, lesbian/queer women affinity group, gay male affinity group, trans/non-binary and gender-expansive affinity group, and much more.

Senior and current co-head of GSA, Morgan Signore, emphasized how GSA remains engaged with contemporary queer issues, from a decade ago to today. “Our meeting today was about queer Olympians and queer athletes. Joanne Lembo, the LGBTQIA+ Coordinator on campus, gave an example about the 2014 Olympics. GSA had a letter-writing campaign in support of queer athletes competing in Russia who weren’t allowed to leave the Olympic village ... and we had a letter-writing campaign last year about stricter laws being enforced in public schools and their GSAs.”

Furthermore, Signore described the experiences of queer students on campus through the perspective of current politics, stressing the importance of GSA as a community where queer students would have a promise of respect. “The current climate is definitely a little bit more shaky than I think it has been the past few years. It’s [GSA’s] definitely more of a smaller, less vocal community that relies on internal support as opposed to external ... approaches.”

When asked what she would desire to see from Exonian’s supporting queer members of the Academy, Signore said, “I would love if we were at a point that [this] was implied. But the decency of respect, the decency that is attached to just respecting people and not being involved or having to be perplexed or meeting an explanation for something.”

Over three decades, GSA has existed as a small, passionate, and often misunderstood organization, becoming an entire support and education network today. Through forums, panels, events, affinity groups, and more, the GSA ensures that all LGBTQ+ students feel supported with the resources they need to succeed, while also spreading broader awareness on campus. Its history reflects and parallels the progress of LGBTQ+ acceptance at Exeter, while serving as a space for queer students to support each other in instances where that support is desired.

The Academy has invited several LGBTQ+ Assembly speakers over the years. Amongst the most memorable was the coming out assembly in Oct. 1995 of English instructors Mercy Carbonell and the late Christine Robinson, along with the now retired Dean Russell Weatherspoon serving as a “straight ally.”

At the assembly, Carbonell and Robinson both came out as sapphic, and Weatherspoon helped facilitate the discussion. An Exonian article on the assembly described their conversation about “issues of sexual orientation, and how gays and lesbians live in a primarily straight world” as “a humorous, lively conversation.”

Carbonell explained during an interview what drove her to come out, saying, “The co-heads of GSA at the time asked us to come out. They felt like they needed some visibility. We came out to offer the visibility students wanted and to honor our personal experiences.”

The assembly touched on what it meant to be closeted and how coming out impacted the way others perceived you. The article explained, “Weatherspoon mentioned that when people come out, their whole life is reduced to a single dimension ... Carbonell more recently added that ‘At that time in the cultural climate at PEA, we were aware that the word, “gay,” was used negatively. We believed it was crucial to celebrate the word, “gay,” to give the word voices in the community, to laugh, to offer joy too.’”

According to the article, the responses from the community

GLSEN School Climate Survey

Male ☒ Female ☐ Student ☐ Grade 12 Faculty/Staff ☐

Please respond to the following by circling one answer.

1. I have heard the words “faggot,” “dyke,” “queer,” etc. used at Exeter
Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

2. I have heard these words spoke at Exeter by:
Students Faculty/Staff Both

3. I have heard these words spoken in

a) Classes:	Frequently	Sometimes	<u>Rarely</u>	Never
b) Hallways:	Frequently	<u>Sometimes</u>	Rarely	Never
c) Bath/Locker Rooms:	Frequently	<u>Sometimes</u>	Rarely	Never
d) Buses:	Frequently	<u>Sometimes</u>	Rarely	Never
e) Field/Gym:	Frequently	<u>Sometimes</u>	Rarely	Never
f) Dormitories:	<u>Frequently</u>	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
g) Other _____:	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

4. When I have heard these words used, someone intervened:
Always Most of the time Some of the time Never

5. The person/people who intervened was/were:
Students Faculty/Staff Both

6a) Please explain why you intervened (If you did not intervene, please skip to question 6b).

6b) Please explain why you did not intervene.
No one really cares when you use those terms in the absence of a homosexual. Rarely do I see it spoke to a homosexual, and when it is, someone usually come else, but sometimes no, they always intervenes. I think people use the words for either lack of better insults or they have get used to saying them

7) Do you think a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) student would feel accepted at Exeter?
Yes No

8) Please explain why or why not.
It's considered ok or interesting to be bi. Homosexuals are considered too weird.

9) (Optional) I am:
LGBT (LGBT = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender) non-LGBT Not Sure

10) I have a friend who I know is LGBT:
Yes No

11) I have a family member who is LGBT:
Yes No

12) (Students Only) I would see the faculty as _____ toward LGBT issues: I will follow
Very Supportive Supportive Mixed Unsupportive Very Unsupportive

13) (Students and Staff) I see the student body at Exeter as _____ towards LGBT issues and people:
Very Supportive supportive Mixed Unsupportive Very Unsupportive

A student response to the GLSEN School Climate Survey in 1999, which assessed the use of and perspectives on homophobic language used at Exeter.

concerning the assembly were mixed. Many believed the Academy was overemphasizing sexuality, while others were inspired. “[I still] hear from students from that time period who are either just awakening into their own queerness in whatever ways that may be or who have been living as out queer folks in the world and [I’m] struck always in those

correspondences by the ways in which visibility really matters for students,” Carbonell said recently. “I’ve heard from people who didn’t have me in class or in athletics or who did not even know who I was.” There have been other assemblies targeted towards fostering inclusion in queer communities. In May 1998, Kevin Murphy, a member and speaker

from the AIDS Service Organization, spoke about his battle with the disease. Kevin Jennings, Executive Director of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), a New York-based activist group that promoted equality and safety for gay and lesbian students, visited campus to give an assembly in October of 1999. Alumni of Exeter have

also revisited the campus to discuss what it was like being a Queer student. Kelly Durmody ‘85 gave an assembly on being Queer in modern society in May of 2001, an opportunity which had been offered to her in 1989 as well, but she had faced backlash from the community. Perhaps one of LGBTQ+, 8.

LGBTQ+ Cont. 2

the most significant LGBTQ+ institutional policies enacted by the Academy has been its same-sex couple faculty housing policy. Until 2000, same-sex faculty couples could not live together in faculty housing. Academy policy prohibited faculty from living in dorms with anyone other than legal family members. Because New Hampshire law (1987 statute) at the time did not recognize same-sex marriage, same-sex faculty couples—even those in long-term committed relationships—were unable to live together in Academy housing.

This issue was especially important because Exeter, unlike many other prep schools, required full-time faculty to serve as dorm-faculty for at least 10 years. An article in The Exonian by the then head of GSA in 2000 as well as the president of The Exonian, wrote that this gave LGBTQ+ faculty “two choices: their partners can live in separate housing off campus, or they can forgo employment at the Academy.”

On May 20, 2000, the Trustees voted unanimously to “allow faculty in committed same-gender relationships to live in Academy housing with their partners beginning in the fall of 2001,” shared the Trustees in its “Domestic Partners Statement.” “The decision to grant gay and lesbian faculty members the full benefits and privileges of Academy housing grew out of a consideration of basic equity,” they stated. “This unequal treatment of committed gay and lesbian faculty members, who have no way of obtaining a legal marriage in the state of New Hampshire, has been an anomaly in a community that has historically respected diversity and striven to be free of discrimination.”

This new policy drew mixed reactions from both the campus and broader community. On Nov. 21, 2000, an anti-LGBTQ church group stood outside the Academy protesting the policy. The Associated Press reported that the group, roughly a dozen followers of the Rev. Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas, specifically opposed “allowing homosexuals to be dorm parents,” holding up signs with messages such as “Thank God for AIDS,” or “Repent or perish.”

According to the Associated Press, Sam Phelps-Roper, the Rev. Phelps’ grandson, said that “[The policy is] destroying the fabric of this nation, the morals that this nation does have. It’s a slippery slope straight to hell and that’s where this country is headed. This

is a message that they need.”

Despite the protest, “The school chose to boycott this protest and instead held a celebration of diversity in the gym,” Butler wrote in his Jan. 2001 LGBTQ+ alumni newsletter. “From what I heard from those who were there, it sounded like a quite heartfelt event.”

Butler added that alumni reactions to the policy ranged anywhere from “disgruntlement in the older classes to more enthusiastic reactions in more recent classes, and even, I venture to say, some yawns in the youngest classes.”

In 2009, this policy was changed as a result of New Hampshire’s legalization of gay marriage in January. The Trustees voted to allow only married heterosexual and same-sex couples to receive benefits and housing. While this change served to make the policy equal for faculty couples of all sexual orientations, it was controversial. In the Oct. 2009 issue of The Exonian, staff writers interviewed Carbonell and Robinson regarding the policy. “The fragility of the current legal status of gay marriage and the illusion of ‘equality’ [undermine] the rationale for the Academy’s requirement that all couples be married to receive benefits and housing,” they shared.

However, the Academy stood by its decision, as the trustees granted same-sex couples a year to decide whether to marry or move out.

The Academy has also made significant efforts to offer courses that seek to provide an accurate representation of the Queer community, on and off campus. These courses have spanned departments and adapted to the needs of students taking them. Carbonell spoke about a course that she teaches: ENG577, currently called Between-ity: Belonging Beyond Binaries.

The course was originally called Gay Voices in Literature and was started by one of the GSA advisors at the time. Eventually, it morphed into Queer Literature, a course that sought to empower Queer voices and authors. While a variety of influences led to the series of changes the course has undergone, one major concern was that it would negatively affect students’ transcripts or that it may not be received well with a particularly obvious name. According to Carbonell, the core ideas of the class and the questions that guide their discussions are typically “what is queerness and what does it mean to be in a world always feeling like you’re in between? And what are the bor-

ders around gender and sexuality and identity?”

The Betweenity course teaches works such as Sister Outsider by Audre Lorde and Giovanni’s Room by James Baldwin, and authors including Alison Bechdel, Jeanette Winterson, June Jordan, Chen Chen, and Fran-ny Choi, but the curriculum is flexible and shifts from year to year. Carbonell mentioned that she is dedicated to Lorde’s foundation of intersectionality and how that fits into the Academy’s programming surrounding MLK Day and Black History Month when choosing works to teach.

Carbonell referenced a history course that was taught centered on LGBTQIA+ history, which can now be found as HIS502: Global Topics in Women, Gender, Sexuality, and Society. There are also currently Health courses available that integrate themes of gender and sexuality and seek to interrogate the way that society shapes our understandings of human sexuality, such as HHD502, A Study of Human Sexuality.

Current faculty Carbonell and Kaplan shared with Exonian writers some struggles they have faced and seen queer students face while at Exeter. In the fall of 2017, Carbonell wrote a poem for a Lamont Art Gallery Opening describing the immense depth of her queer experience, and having that depth crudely simplified by the administration in her decision to come out with Robinson in 1995. In the poem, Carbonell weaves in synonyms for “queer” as part of the reclamation of language historically used against queer folks. She writes ...

“It must have been 1994 or 1995. I was 26, in my second year at PEA. Christine had been here since, had come out in a Meditation in 1986, had published that meditation in a book called One Teacher in Ten. ... Together we would “Come Out of the Closet” in an Assembly.

And yet.

I remember the singular concern within the Administration,

how we met in the quaint Gillespie House one evening,

how many were doubtful & worried about ‘student fall out,’

how some wondered , with puzzling voices, if this would be ‘pre-mature,’

how someone asked if we should make sure there are extra counselors on hand.”

As a gender non-conforming faculty member, Kaplan shared this perspective, providing a perspective on the still-existing disparities between queer experiences and the assumptions of a pre-

dominantly cisgender, heterosexual culture. Xe stated, “We live in a culture that is primarily cisgender and heterosexual. This means that many people who belong to those categories don’t have to think deeply about their gender or sexuality, if at all. Because of that, it can be much harder for them to relate to other members of the community who do have to spend a significant amount of time thinking about, and often worrying about, those aspects of themselves.”

Xe concluded xyr statement with a message to the PEA community, stating, “My message to the Exeter community, and especially to the non-queer community, is to take the time to unpack your perceptions about gender and sexuality.”

Lembo, the first and current LGBTQIA+ Coordinator at the Academy, mentioned that the Academy’s position has always been the same: “to support LGBTQIA+ students at every level of their Exeter experience—academically, socially, and emotionally. Each [policy] contributes to a broader ecosystem of care that communicates: You belong here exactly as you are.”

As the Academy’s policies have evolved over her almost 30 years at the Academy, so has her work on campus. Her stance is that she aims to “reflect the needs, questions, and lived experiences of the students we serve. As our understanding of gender and sexuality has expanded, so too has the scope of the role—moving from offering basic support to helping shape community-wide education, institutional policies, and systems of care that better reflect who our students are today.”

This work is constantly in progress, as the administration and Academy adapt to changing student needs. Lembo commented that her “current focus is making interscholastic sports more inclusive, supportive, and safe for queer and trans athletes. Creating affirming spaces in athletics requires collaboration across many departments, and I’m grateful to have dedicated partners in this work.”

The tension between public commitments to inclusion and moments of institutional controversy resurfaced in 2018, when a former associate director of admissions Hal Lynch III filed a lawsuit against the Academy. Lynch alleged unlawful termination in regards to his sexual orientation and for “cooperating in a criminal investigation of a former Academy instructor who went to prison on child pornography convictions in the 1990s,” reported Alex LaCasse in the Exeter News-Letter on Sep. 20, 2018. The Academy denied the

allegations, stating that Lynch was fired “for valid, non-discriminatory reasons having nothing to do with his sexual orientation,” and promised to “vigorously defend against this action.”

Some community members reacted with skepticism about the selectivity of the Academy’s response. Carl Lindemann, a former religion instructor and drama sports coach from 1991-1993, told The Exonian in the Oct. 4, 2018 issue, “The only faculty or administration member singled out in the wake of the investigations were Rev. [Robert] Thompson and Mr. Lynch—an African-American and a gay man...I find it hard to believe that Exeter could engage in blatant racism and homophobia. That being said, I look forward to PEA’s response to the suit—it raises questions that require clear, definitive answers.”

The Rockingham County Superior Court ruled in favor of the Academy, citing insufficient proof provided by Lynch. Nevertheless, the case highlights the Academy’s ongoing responsibility to balance accountability with awareness of how identity can shape institutional responses.

Before the creation of all-gender housing in 2017, gender non-conforming students were required to reside in traditional single-sex dormitories that aligned with their sex assigned at birth. In practice, this often resulted in the marginalization of transgender students within their dormitories. As Myers recalled, “When I arrived, PEA had housed a number of transgender students (all trans boys) in girls’ dorms, in single rooms and often in basements.” Such arrangements not only physically isolated LGBTQ+ students, but also discouraged others from coming out as gender non-conforming. “I found that trans and [Non-binary] students were hesitant to come out because they would be pushed towards these rooms and felt marginalized,” he explained.

Starting in the fall of 2017, the Academy introduced its first all-gender dorms, Kirtland and Williams House. The dorms were put into place following the work of Myers, Christina Breen, and Dean Cahalane. “I wanted to help the school come up with a solution that would be good not just for trans kids but for all students,” Myers explained. After a long process of navigating concerns from the administration, and even working with faculty from Andover, the Academy eventually implemented this residential option.

Courtney Marshall, dorm head of Kirtland House, affirmed

that while all students are welcome and encouraged to consider all-gender housing, as it is not an option exclusively reserved for LGBTQ+ students, the dorms were “created for a specific demographic of students who don’t feel that the gendered housing...adequately reflects the way they understand their gender and they feel like they want a space that doesn’t have those same markers on them.”

Marshall went further to describe the dorm’s unique, tight-knit community, commenting, “What I really enjoy is watching students really thrive, particularly in the early years of the dorm—watching students who really wanted that space, who really felt like they needed it. It’s just beautiful to see. The dorm is such a place where students learn about themselves and who they are.”

She concluded by observing that “Kirtland and Will House have woven their way into the school. And because we’re on this four-year cycle here, people who’ve been here have always known an all-gender dorm.”

The 240+ year history of Exeter and its LGBTQ+ community reflects both the obstacles and successes of enacting significant institutional and cultural change. As noted by Signore, “The school is generally supportive. More so than public schools in Exeter, more so than the average public schools across the country, more so than most places you’d find within 20 miles of us.” This progress is the result of sustained efforts by students, the GSA, and faculty alike, who have worked to expand the rights of the queer community at Exeter even in the face of ignorance, reluctance, and prejudice on part of the establishment.

Simultaneously, the archives and the stories of alumni, faculty, and students remind us that progress is never complete. As Lembo emphasized, “The moment we decide we are ‘finished’ growing is the moment we fail the community. Our responsibility is to continually reflect on both policy and lived experience—listening deeply and adjusting where needed.” Exeter’s past cannot be changed, but we can control its present and future. Ultimately, what stands out in the history of LGBTQ+ rights at Exeter is the commitment of the community and their willingness to listen and adapt. “I am most proud that—despite increasingly challenging political and social climates—Exeter has never backed away from its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice,” Lembo reflected.

Life

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Read about senior Alex Trotman and his leadership on campus, 9.

» FOTW JORGGE

Nahin Jorge really believes that you belong here, 9.

» THE OSCARS

Read about what Exeter students think about the 2026 Oscars, 10.

Leading with Compassion: SOTW Alex Trotman



Trotman sits in Main Street Dormitory’s common room.

Sean Ricard / *The Exonian*

By LUKE CHON, GARY GUO, and CAROL LEE

Raucous cheers reverberate from the stands at Phelps Stadium. Draped in red, the varsity football team marches out from the tunnel, greeted by whoops, shouts, and a particular drone zipping above their

helmets, recording. From a distance, senior Alex Trotman stands close to the bench, piloting the drone. As a talented student of the STEM fields, the controls might as well be second nature to him. Players and friends of Trotman’s approach him with fist-bumps before

lining up on the turf. Trotman is a four-year senior and resident of Main Street Dormitory. Off-campus, he lives in the South Jersey area with his family, but spent most of his childhood in Brooklyn, N.Y. At Exeter, Trotman is broadly viewed as a student of eclectic

interests, someone who engages with all pockets of school life and pursues each to the fullest. Trotman is a Main Street proctor, Chair of the Elections Committee in Student Council, Head Manager of varsity football, and a member of the junior varsity lacrosse team. Per-

haps most prominently, though, Trotman is recognized for his contributions to the cultural community at Exeter. In addition to his other commitments, he is also president of the Afro-Latinx Exonian Society (ALES), cohead of the Students of Caribbean and African Ancestry group

(SOCAA), and co-founder and Senior Advisor to the Black Advisory Group (BAG). As is the case for many Exonians, Trotman’s decision to apply to boarding school was influenced by his family, particularly his

SOTW, 11

You Belong at Exeter: FOTW Nahin Jorge



Jorge in front of the Experience Exeter booth.

Sean Ricard / *The Exonian*

By TIAGO BILYK, ADRIAN CHAN, JUNE KOH, and LEVI STOLL

On a warm, spring afternoon in the Admissions Office, families filter in and out. Excitement buzzes among the students, but some faces are tinged with nervousness. In the middle of it all is Associate Director of Admissions and Director of Multicultural Outreach Nahin Jorge ‘07. He’s greeting each visitor with a warm smile, easing nerves with conversation, and making the charged Bissell House feel more welcoming with each word and every hug. For more than a decade, Jorge has built his role around these moments of connection. As a former Exonian himself, he understands the challenge of finding one’s place here. Now, through his work in admissions,

advising, and dorm life, he helps students and families find their footing. Known by colleagues and students for his attention to detail and deep care for others, Jorge doesn’t just introduce people to Exeter, he helps them feel like they belong. “He is passionate, approachable and detailed. He is always welcoming and thoughtful,” said Admissions Adviser Jennifer Schlenker. Before Exeter, Jorge’s work was already centered on helping students find the right path. “I was working as an educational consultant working with international families who were looking at not only boarding schools, but also looking at colleges,” he said. Guiding students through applications and helping them think about the “right” fit and opportunity was meaningful, but over time, he realized

something was missing. “I really wanted to be on the school side,” he explained, “in a position to provide access.” Earlier still, Jorge spent a summer teaching at St. Andrew’s School in Delaware through a community based program. This was an experience that stretched far outside of classrooms. “Not only was I teaching, but I was also coaching soccer and crew and teaching karate and salsa,” he said. Building relationships with students in different spaces became central to his sense of what education should look like. This desire to connect more directly and to expand access led him back to Exeter this time not as a student, but as an educator. Jorge’s passionate spirit was felt at the Academy before he even began his prep year. Former ad-

FOTW, 12.

The Edit: Katherine Luo

Jacket: Lukin
Top: American Eagle
Shorts: Hollister
Tights: Amazon

Socks: Amazon
Shoes: Puma Cat
Speed Wedges

Bangles: Nordstrom
Rack & Trendy (In Exeter!)
Style Shoutout: Athena Creigh



Lydia Kuhnert / *The Exonian*

By LYDIA KUHNERT ‘28

Upper Katherine Luo sits on her bed, a blue bull shark plushy politely resting on her lap. In classic Luo style, she’s wearing a pair of intricate lace socks over thermal tights, styled under her olive-green poplin shorts. “I like layering,” she explains. “It makes things interesting. It gives me the chance to wear a lot

more things because if I don’t layer, I wear like what? My pants and my shirt. That’s all I got.” Her silver bracelets and bangles jingle slightly as she speaks. Inspired by Pinterest, and very occasionally by Instagram reels, Luo has been cultivating her closet for years. She cites the staples of her outfits as leg warmers, lace, and lots of different textures. “I feel like most things you can

style to look good with layering, just messing around until it works. You also don’t have to wear the piece the way it was supposed to be worn.” Her advice to us less fashionable plebs? “I feel like people just need to layer more or just mess around more. I feel like it’s good to be comfortable, but sometimes you have to sacrifice comfort for being cool, you know?”



Uppers Sebastian Tranpham and Ryan Wang play spikeball on the Library Lawn.

Grace Yang / *The Exonian*

By **DIYA SANDEEP, OLIVIA WANG, ANNA YANG, and ANNIE ZHU**

Favorite activity:

“The spring is always a good time to take a walk, especially near the observatory and into the trails because the weather is just really nice.” — Urania Shi ‘28

“Going to Stillwell’s nonstop and playing Spike Ball.” — Anne Wang ‘26

“I like studying on one of the quads with my friends when it gets warmer. Then, you can lay down a blanket and sit in the grass.” — Raylea Richmond ‘26

“Visiting the beach for a while. Going to the beach is a big thing on Principal’s Day, and even just on weekends.” — Amani Shetty ‘27

“My favorite spring term activity is either Holi or Dorm Tea, the weather is super nice and they’re very community-centered.” — Veda Nayar ‘28

How spring term stands out:

“Fall term is when you just get into things and you’re really excited, so it’s kind of a rush. And then winter is just about trying to stay alive. There’s snow, it’s cold, and the days get dark really quickly. The spring is a great break from the winter and is really chill.” — Urania Shi ‘28

“Contrary to the fall, where you’re still meeting everybody, spring is the one term where you [finally] know most people in your grade, so you can all hang out and connect with each other. In the spring, I feel like everyone really comes together.” — Naomi Moskovich ‘27

“In terms of competing in tournaments, you feel a little more accomplished in the spring because it’s when all of your work culminates into a final competition.” — Larry Lyu ‘28

“It feels calmer because the weather is getting better: it’s sunnier and warmer. And since the year is ending, people start winding down in a way. Lying in the grass or in the red chairs just feels different in the spring—it’s so rejuvenating.” — Veda Nayar ‘28

Sports or clubs:

“I think you should look into cycling because we have a wonderful and close team. We all love the sport, and the community’s really great. The trees and grass are all green, the sky is blue, and just cycling, feeling the wind on your face, and laughing with your teammates is really fun.” — Urania Shi ‘28

“I think everyone should join a sport in the spring. I’m part of the tennis team. It’s the best team ever. We’re small but we’re mighty.” — Naomi Moskovich ‘27

“You should definitely think about joining extra girls field hockey [practice]. We have captain’s practices in the spring which is super fun to get really close-knit with the team before the sport starts.” — Amani Shetty ‘27

Words of the Wise:

Spring is the time for renewal, growth and new beginnings. As trees turn a lush green and flowers blossom, Exonians recover from the dreadful New England blizzards and winter term schedules. With extra daylight, we are ready to embark on new adventures. And of course, we are more than excited to enjoy the sun and some quality time with friends on the quads.

Exonians on the Oscars

By **VALMIK DANGAYACH, KAYLEE GONG, PEARL HARA YAMAZAKI, and NICOLE SUBKHANBERDINA**

On the evening of March 15, in the gilded glamour of Los Angeles, this year’s Oscar Nominees gathered in celebration of the most critically acclaimed films, each hoping to hear their name called on the world’s most famous stage. As celebrities took their seats, viewers from around the world tuned in, eagerly awaiting the first of the winners. Among the audience, cinephile Exonians followed the ceremony closely, forming opinions and sharing reactions to the eventful night.

The 98th Academy Awards kicked off with a playful monologue by host Conan O’Brien, who discussed recent social media scandals, lighthearted jokes, and politics. He concluded his speech applauding the event’s

diversity, highlighting the 31 countries across six continents that were represented in this year’s nominations. New additions to the program such as awards for Best Casting and Best Short Documentaries were also appreciated by the crowd. Politics continued to be mentioned throughout the ceremony, with a blow at President Donald Trump by Jimmy Kimmel and a call to say “no to war and free Palestine” by Spanish actor Javier Bardem.

Notable wins included Paul Thomas Anderson’s *One Battle After Another* winning six awards, including Best Picture and Best Director; Michael B. Jordan received Best Actor for *Sinners*; and Autumn Durald Arkapaw made history as the first woman and woman of color to win the Best Cinematography award for her work for *Sinners*.

Inspiring performances by the cast of *Sinners* and the main singers of *K-Pop Demon Hunters* also

garnered high hopes. However, the event didn’t run perfectly, as technical issues inevitably arose. EJAE, a singer and co-writer of *K-Pop Demon Hunters*, was cut off while delivering a beautiful speech about resilience and gratitude.

The Exeter community was quick to share their thoughts on the night’s highlights. Lower Catherine Chen criticized the Academy Awards and the Oscars as a whole. “I feel like [the Oscars] are very performative. I don’t think that winning an Oscar does much to advance the careers of women or POC (People of Color) because after Halle Berry won her Oscar, it didn’t mean she landed more roles or anything. The movies that get nominated are ones that usually have really big budgets, yet there’s been many smaller, lower budget films that deserved to be nominated.”

When *The Exonian* published an anonymous poll to the PEA community on Insta-

gram, 63 percent of responses noted that they don’t care about the Oscars (the poll was viewed by 600 people).

Lower Faye Yang, who engaged with the Oscars only through Instagram short form content, pointed to the busyness of being an Exonian as an explanation. “Watching movies and entertainment in general are a rare luxury when I’m at school because I have to work really hard. I have to be extremely efficient if I want to watch a movie at night, and then I’m more conscious about what movie I’m choosing to watch.”

However, even past the Exeter bubble, movies and thus the Oscars’ viewership have been declining in recent years. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the 2026 Oscars viewership fell by 9 percent from 2025; and in 2024, it was reported by CNBC that box-office results were down 23 percent from 2019’s \$11.4 billion. When asked why they believe movies are declining, many students pointed to the rise of short form media.

Lower Rayann Cisse explained, “short, accessible, quick dopamine releasing videos are easier than watching a whole movie.”

“It’s sometimes hard to watch long form content because you’re not being constantly bombarded by crazy sounds and visuals,” agreed lower Catherine Chen. “In a movie, the silence and stillness is important, but some people can’t deal with that anymore.”

To Film Club advisor Humberto Delgado, who has been watching the Oscars for over 30 years, “*Silence of the Lambs*” in 1992 was the last exceptional ceremony. “The Oscars have been in crisis since the nineties,” he reflected. “[It] used to be a good guide for appreciating quality films,” and currently does not reflect that standard.

Although Delgado agreed with the film world’s opinion that this year’s Oscars were better than recents, he still raised the issue of the Oscar’s Eurocentric perspective, citing the quality of other international movies, such as “*The Secret Agent*,” and how they

often go underappreciated compared to films that cater to Western audiences.

Even within the Western sphere, lower Altay Bayraktar pointed out how European movies go undervalued compared to American ones. “Though Hollywood has many exceptions with the 90s and plenty others, the movies that make you truly think are always European movies; they focus more on the art form of cinema, like an oil painting. In this way, European movies have consistently performed, while American movies have a direct focus on pure entertainment and revenue.”

For specific movies, Paul Thomas Anderson’s “*One Battle After Another*,” which won Best Picture, Director, and Adapted Screenplay, raised a lot of backlash around its portrayal of a central Black female character Perfidia, played by Teyana Taylor. “As a mixed Black woman, I was quite offended by “*One Battle After Another*’s” hyper sexualiza-

Oscars Cont.

tion of Black women and misrepresentation of mixed people,” emphasized upper Jacquie Lonian. “For example, one of the only comments DiCaprio’s character makes about his daughter being mixed is how hard it is to do her hair. I remember being so disappointed seeing and hearing those representations of my identity in that

movie, especially for how hyped up it was.” Lower Max Loghinov agreed and analyzed the harmful stereotypes depicted in One Battle After Another as a criticism of what the Oscars and the Academy represent. “Movies are an art, and art is supposed to represent the ideas of the creator or the ideas of the people. It’s meant to reflect

real life, so, in times of political strife like we have now, it’s better to prioritize movies showing what is actually needed in the world.” In comparison, Lonian highlighted “Sinners,” which won Best Actor, Best Original Screenplay, Best Cinematography, and Best Original Score. “[It] embraces Black culture in a way not commonly seen in movies, focusing on our struggle and search to be free and

embrace ourselves and our roots... Everything in Sinners — the score, plot, conversations, setting — all made me feel heard and represented. Seeing it win Best Director and Best Motion Picture would have been a win not just for me, but also for the African American community as a whole: we finally had a movie made by us for us instead of about us for others.” Other controversies that night involved

“Golden,” the first-ever K-Pop song to win the Best Song category. International student and prep Hanna Zhang critiqued the win, remarking, “[The award win] is such a step backward because ‘Golden’ is extremely Americanized. There’s basically no meaningful Korean lyrics whatsoever within it.” However, prep Emma Lee offered a different perspective, arguing that “‘Golden’ was an important song

in spreading South Korean culture to the world,” highlighting the significance of the win despite its Westernized style. Though sometimes divisive, the Oscars are an opportunity to bond over and celebrate the beauty of film. Many Exonians are still eager to tune in each year and see the award winners. The spotlight is on the actors, producers, and musicians who put unending work into the things they love.

SOTW Cont.



Trotman reads a book in Main Street Dormitory’s common room.

Sean Ricard / *The Exonian*

older brother, who was a student at Governors Academy in Byfield, MA. “My older brother looks like me, and growing up, I wanted to be just like him. So in eighth grade, I knew I wanted to go to boarding school. Exeter was the number one school, so I shot for the stars and found myself here.” His first few days at the Academy took place under the Equitable Exeter Experience program, or E³. There, Trotman was instantly embraced by the community, forging powerful friendships that have endured to this day. Words of advice and wisdom were passed on to him from his peers and mentors, among them encouragement to engage with the vibrant OMA community. “When I was a prep, a lot of the Black proctors and student leaders emphasized the importance of going to OMA clubs,” he said. Trotman was quick to highlight the importance and impact such clubs have had on his Exeter experience. “OMA clubs are the place where new students can really come and meet each other and connect with the older students,” he remarked. “My closest friends and fondest memories were created here. These clubs are my home away from home and a constant reminder of how beautiful my culture is.” Over the next four years, equipped with an appreciation for the OMA communi-

ty, Trotman pursued a number of opportunities to lead these spaces and groups in the way his own mentors did for himself. “During my upper year, which was my first year as ALES President and on SOCAA, I focused on bringing new students in and having fun and robust meetings,” he said. “However, this year I took a different approach... I’ve given the upper co-heads more opportunity to plan the games and conversations that they were interested in.” He continued, “This shift in responsibility gave me the opportunity to focus on topics that interested me more. Specifically, I’ve spent this year working with faculty to acknowledge where Exeter can do a better job supporting our Black and Brown students, and how our Black and Brown students can better thrive at Exeter.” In this newfound capacity, Trotman has championed a number of important initiatives, including but not limited to holding talks with Principal Rawson about his assembly address following the conflict in Iran, continuing conversations about Black students who feel uncomfortable in their classes, and inspiring students to petition trustees to charge a peaceful anti-ICE protest. “I’m focused on asking hard questions and inspiring the next wave of Exonians to ask harder questions,” he said.

The leadership with which Trotman conducts weekly club meetings is similarly visible in his contributions to athletics, particularly in his role as head manager for varsity football. For Trotman, his journey with sports really began at PEA. “In my prep fall, I played JV football. This was my first sport ever, and it really introduced me to some lifelong friends,” he said, “I did football for two years, before I switched to being the manager for the team.” Whimsically, he added, “I am Coach Voulgaris’ favorite head manager!” For the next two years, Trotman would show up to practice with an eagerness to support the team in whatever way possible. He recounted an amusing memory: “Exeter Athletics gives out The Rock Award to an athlete who demonstrates some level of grit or skill or leadership,” he mentioned. “When I saw it being given out to athletes whom I didn’t recognize at all, I thought ‘oh, this must be easy to get, I want one!’” He added, “The whole team knew about my ‘Rock Desire,’ but it never came. Yet, one day, after our win against Andover, the guys on the team surprised me with this huge rock spray-painted in red. They called it the ‘Boulder Award,’ a symbol of my own grit. As they said, a boulder is better than a rock anyway. I still have the boulder in my room.”

This award, while emblematic of Trotman’s efforts throughout the season, is equally symbolic of how dearly his friends and teammates think of him. Senior Kyle Kennedy’s, one of Trotman’s best friends who has known him since eighth grade, described Trotman as “very hard-working, funny, and caring.” Kennedy’s said Trotman is never afraid to challenge himself, pointing to the rigorous physics and math courses he takes at Exeter. Outside of the classroom, Kennedy’s added, Trotman brings the same energy to his friendships. “Alex knows how to joke around. He knows how to get the crowd going and have fun with the boys. Especially for me, Alex has been someone I’ve been able to talk to about anything and hang out with. He’s really been an important friend to me.” One of the best memories Kennedy’s has with Trotman is the Outkast rehearsal time every Sunday morning. “Seeing rehearsals together translates to the performance, whether it’s an E/a pep assembly, pep rally performance, or student showcase performance,” Kennedy’s said. “Sharing the hobby with Alex gives us a weekly ritual, a place to stay in sync and build our friendship.” “Alex is a very kind, thoughtful, caring, and inclusive individual,” Tim Whittemore, Instructor in Mathematics and Trot-

man’s advisor, commented. “As one member of the advisory, he always reaches out to help the new students and make sure they are taken care of.” While many know Trotman as outspoken and charismatic, Senior Gwendolyn Eagle noted an unseen side of him that is quieter and more cognizant. “He’s a really good listener,” she stated. According to Eagle, his attentiveness is often shown in subtle ways. “There are always these little moments where I find that he remembers a detail that I don’t even remember telling him, or I don’t remember myself. And I think he does that with a lot of people, of being able to remember that small, like, drink order that they like, or being able to remember an event they went to and asking about that,” Eagle expanded. Trotman is always generous with his knowledge and is dedicated to helping younger students. During advisory sessions, he offers guidance on when to take U.S. History and what electives to choose. “He is also mindful of quieter students during discussions and often encourages them to share their thoughts to ensure that everyone’s voice is heard,” Whittemore said. In the four years Trotman spent at Exeter, he became a more mature, responsible leader. “To me, he is still the same Alex that I met back in 2022, but he has done a lot of work in terms

of becoming a strong ALES president, SOCCA co-head, and an important part of the leadership of the Black advisory group,” Kennedy’s reflected. As the leadership roles grew, Trotman’s core stayed consistent: outgoing, caring, and passionate about the communities he’s part of. When things get stressful, Trotman has the magic of staying positive and finding the bright side. Kennedy’s said that when he is stuck in a problem and can’t see a positive outcome, Trotman is always the perfect person to talk it through and pull out the silver lining. Trotman’s contribution at the Harkness table is described as the glue that brings everyone together to foster a comfortable and inclusive environment. “Sometimes, his vibe can be so casual that it almost makes you miss the insight and complexity of his thought! But he can make a strong analysis of a text feel accessible and approachable, and that is a gift,” Tyler Caldwell, Trotman’s English teacher, stated. “I’m certain that in the future, whether in the advisory group or in the dorm, whenever people mention Alex’s name, a smile will appear on everyone’s faces,” Whittemore said. “The joy he brought to the community will be one of the qualities people remember most about him.”

FOTW Cont.



Jorge poses on the Academy Building’s Bell Tower.

Courtesy of Nahin Jorge

missions officer and Regional Director of Major Gifts Jay Tilton remarked on this impact. “In one of my first years working in Exeter Admissions, I interviewed Mr. Jorge as an eighth grader applying to enter as a prep,” he recalled. “We met at the Yale Club in New York City, and in my 19 years in Admissions, his interview still stands out as one of the very best.” The young Jorge had come all the way from Newark and arrived “genuinely excited about the possibility of becoming an Exonian.” Tilton found immediately that the young Jorge was “kind, resilient, and hardworking—and he had a great sense of humor as well.”

As a student in the class of 2007, Jorge resided in Main Street Hall. He recalled his early career at Exeter to be a challenging one: “We didn’t have the learning center back then. And so that additional help came by finding time one on one with instructors.

But my advisor was so incredibly supportive. He said ‘you’re going to find

time in your schedule to meet with your teachers... and get the support you need.’ And I ended up following his advice.”

This skill of improvement through personal meeting has stuck with Jorge through the years. As a fellow colleague, Assistant Director of Admissions Eleanor Down found Jorge to be a warm and welcoming figure when she first met him. “I think just how approachable he was was really striking to me,” she said. In her opinion, Jorge’s experience around the Harkness table shaped how he was during hard decisions such as committee where he represented “the kind of that Exonian who might not be the loudest at the table, not a Harkness warrior, but when he speaks, his voice is deeply respected because of his care and consideration.”

Assistant Director of Admissions Alex Braile commented on Jorge’s ability to speak with freshly admitted students. “When Mr. Jorge interviews prospective students, he has

a way of connecting with them that immediately makes them feel comfortable in the conversation,” he described, emphasizing that “this is not an easy thing to do!”

Jorge has found both the talent of talking with students and the commitment to continue supporting them far past the admissions season. “What I admire most... is that his support doesn’t end on April 10 each year, the day admitted students officially enroll to the Academy,” Tilton explained. “You can always count on Mr. Jorge to stand by you throughout your time at Exeter and well beyond.”

Aside from his typical duties in the admissions office, Jorge also specializes in outreach to communities that are usually underrepresented at boarding schools like Exeter. “He’s been a big, big partner in E³, the Equitable Exeter Experience. He also heads up the underrepresented student of color fly-in programs,” described Down. She shared the responsibilities of this leadership: “con-

necting with the families, coordinating travel, and paying for transportation and hotels while they’re here. He also has done a lot of demographic research into parts of the U.S. that might not have as many educational resources.”

Whether reaching out to underrepresented areas, interviewing nervous applicants, or assisting students at any time, Jorge puts a painstaking effort into improving the lives of past, current, and future Exonians. “I wish that more people were able to see just how much care Mr. Jorge puts into his work because it is nothing short of inspirational,” Braile said. “He thinks through every last detail when it comes to special programs or visit days for prospective students.”

Aside from his duties in the Admissions Office, Jorge also serves as dorm head of Soule Hall and club adviser of La Alianza Latina (LAL). On Jorge’s presence in LAL, senior Andrew Brown said “he’s nice at salsa.” His frequent appearances often bring the

club together through his respected music taste and insightful comments that encourage discussion.

Senior and co-head of La Alianza Latina Nicolas Fernandez found Jorge’s support of the club to be invaluable. “He’s always asking what we need. He’s always suggesting new ideas. He’s not the kind that reacts. He’s the kind that suggests ideas beforehand,” he described.

One memorable event that the club held was a Día de los Muertos festival. Fernandez recalled the support that Jorge brought to the festival: “It was a big event and he was there for us throughout the night. He has a lot of experience running this event from his years of advising the club, so he was able to help a lot.”

Within Soule Hall, Jorge has similarly cultivated a welcoming environment. During his first year as dorm head, Jorge has pushed for intentional communication and growth through his motto of Safety, Openness, Unity, Love and Excellence

(S.O.U.L.E). “He’s very happy. Whenever I see him, [I’m] like, yeah!

It gives me a lot of positivity,” said prep Matthew Hao, Jorge’s advisee.

Hao recalled Jorge’s close guidance during their weekly meetings: “He wants to individually meet every single student and make sure that every single person is doing well,” he described. “[Jorge] was very open to conversations with new families, like new preps, in the dorm as well.”

In each of Jorge’s complex roles across campus, he is sure to represent the very best of Exeter, bringing with him a deep goodness and knowledge that have been practiced over time. “There are so many admirable things about Mr. Jorge! He is a true Exonian, mixing intelligence and kindness,” said Schlenker. Exeter’s Deed of Gift holds that the school must be equally open to youth from every quarter. Jorge was a beneficiary of that promise. He has spent 14 years working to extend it to others.



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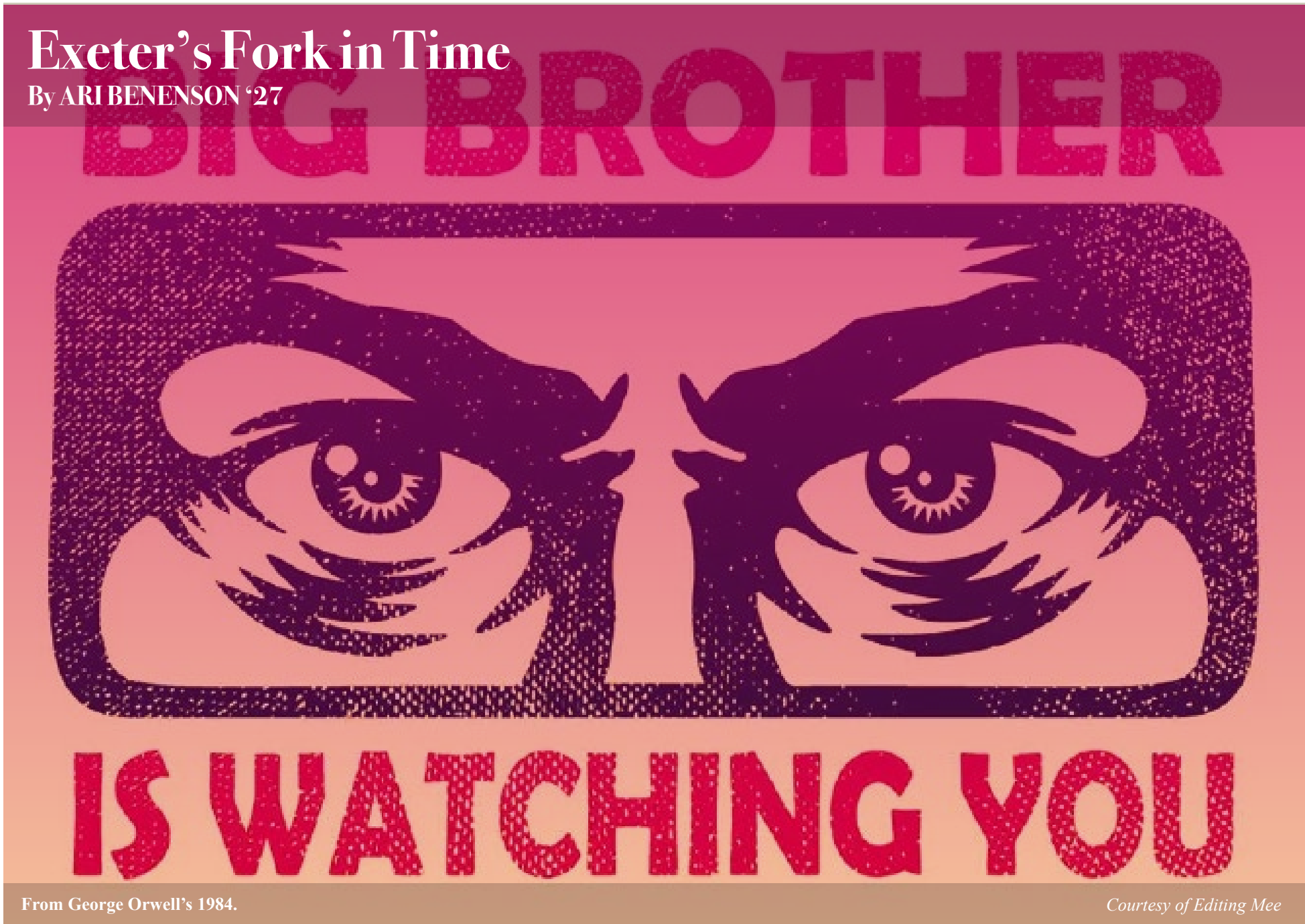
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Exeter’s Fork in Time

By ARI BENENSON ‘27



From George Orwell’s 1984.

Courtesy of Editing Mee

My favorite movie of all time is “Back To The Future II.” After being transported to a terrifying future, Marty McFly is compelled to rectify it by fixing the past blunders that led to it. The haunting cinematography of that movie made me realize how seemingly simple choices made in the present can spiral into dystopia if not taken with thought and foresight. It was Marty McFly who inspired me to run for Student Council President.

My fellow Exonians, I have seen the future. It doesn’t take an exploding DeLorean to know that the possibility of phone bans has brought our community to a fateful fork

in the road. Before us, one path leads toward an erosion of trust and a failure of leadership. It is a road many other schools have already taken. However, I believe that we must take the road less traveled, one that will strengthen our community bonds, assert our values as Exonians, and set the example for others to follow.

With foresight, we can still prevent the dystopian outcome that is already taking hold in many schools. Picture it: plastic bins filled with phones everywhere; teachers, administrators – even campus safety – check names and collect phones; most of the faculty look embar-

rassed, but for some, enforcing the ritual of submission is a power trip. Students defy oppression by brazenly running phone apps on their tablets and laptops right under teachers’ noses. To draw attention away from themselves, students snitch on one another. It is a vicious game that trains students to submit, to evade, and to distrust authority. This dreadful script is a predictable consequence of misguided confiscatory policies.

To choose the right policy, we must first define the problem. Seizing phones cannot work because addictive apps are the real problem, and they run just as easily on tablets and lap-

tops. A policy intended to sharpen our minds will end up sharpening evasive instincts and force teachers to waste time on low-level surveillance instead of engaging in intellectual mentorship. Do we really want to turn our teachers into ‘device wardens’?

When rules are arbitrary and overly punitive, students won’t think about responsible choice but instead will try to figure out how to avoid getting caught. Such an atmosphere will create a culture of paranoia, where students feel pressured to report on one another, either to deflect scrutiny from their own screens or to spite and overwhelm the punitive

system. What happens to the Harkness table when trust and integrity are replaced by suspicion and anxiety?

Confiscation gives the illusion of control, but it lets destructive habits fester. Sustainable change in behavior begins with awareness and requires a supportive environment. First, students must recognize and become aware of their addictive habits; then, tools like the Brick will enable student-directed control. When students consciously choose to block compulsive apps, they transform objects of temptation into instruments for developing self-discipline. How can you practice *non sibi* without awareness

and self-discipline?

Phones aren’t going away after graduation, but collection boxes will. What policies will prepare us to navigate the digital age responsibly? The choices are clear: coerce desired behavior through confiscation and surveillance, or foster responsibility through self-awareness and a more evolved phone culture.

It took time travel to compel Marty McFly to act. I hope my vision of the future is enough to convince you to take the right path as well. Exeter’s tradition of excellence demands that we lead and set an example by choosing growth over control, and trust over compulsion.

Art Beyond the Visual: Creative Writing

By DIYA SANDEEP ‘28

When we think of art, we think of the visual arts: painting, drawing, sculpture, maybe even photography or fashion. After, or perhaps first, depending on your own extracurriculars, we think of the performing arts — dance, theatre, music. And last, if at all, we jump to writing. And yet, writing is among the most common of the arts. It is omnipresent in our society, our primary form of communication.

And perhaps that diminishes our appreciation of the art form. If we use it for everything, from scribbling hasty to-do lists to texting our friends complaints about our homework, we begin to take it for granted. Writing is just a thing people do. So often, we write without any actual thought being placed in it. Writing

is right there. It is so ingrained in humanity that without writing, we would not exist as we do.

And art always appears far off and distant. We look at artists practicing their craft and marvel, “How do you do that? I’ve always wanted to learn how to draw, but I struggled with this and that.” We look back with awe at the images produced by the greats, landmarks of their times. We stare at modern art and attempt to place meaning in every stroke, every color choice. Because the assumption is that art is not something that the layman creates; no, it is reserved for the talented.

And writing is not that. Writing takes so many forms and has so many forums for use that I could not describe them all if I tried. We handwrite, we type, we even etch

words or symbols into clay tablets. We text our friends, compose emails, construct essays, type comments, etc. Nearly everyone can write; even many people classified as illiterate can write short phrases.

So, can all of those really be classified as art? While maybe a controversial opinion, I firmly believe that yes, all forms of writing count as art. Even though we may not consider them as such. Of course, that does not mean they all deserve a spot in a museum. No one wants to read and analyze what I texted my friends, especially not with all the spelling errors. But if sketches in the margins of your notebook count as art — and they do, even when they are nothing more than a few lines roughly overlaid — then the smallest bits and phrases of writing deserve the same label.

The word ‘art’ is defined differently by everyone, as we all perceive the world differently and place weight on things based on separate criteria. Oxford Languages describes it as “the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.”

And yet this definition fails to account for varying views of beauty. After all, not everyone will find Picasso’s work to be beautiful, and yet no one can deny it the title of art. Most of what we write will not be considered a literary masterpiece, and yet it captures the essence of what we were thinking, doing, or experiencing in a given moment.

‘Human creative skill’ is then an equally challenging portion of this definition. It does take skill to write, after all. Even disregarding the title of ‘art,’ writing is widely considered a craft, which by definition holds the requisite of skill. So then what constitutes creativity? Must work be entirely original, innovative, and unique just to be considered creative work?

In that case, almost half of what is considered to be art would lose its qualification. Even the best of artists pull from other sources to create works that they are proud of. People use references, experiences, and prior knowledge when creating. The only difference is the artist’s own perception of those, and even then, that is formed by a collection of prior experiences.

An exceptional-

ly talented artist can recreate other works easily. Is a recreation of “Starry Night” not still art, simply because it is not the original? It still requires skill, effort, and time. No recreation will ever be a masterpiece, it will never be the peak of human capabilities because it has already been done. But are they really denied the name of art? Despite all that went into these works?

In the same way, we all fall back on prior experiences when we write anything, even just a grocery list. Much of the time, thought still goes into whatever we come up with. We may not be the only ones who would arrive upon the same conclusion, the same words, but we are still using our minds, no matter how small they are.

And in a world

Stay Long Enough to Care

By GARY GUO ‘29

When I walk into the Forum on a weeknight for a club meeting, the front rows are filled with people, but half of them are scrolling on their phones or doing homework on their laptops, instead of participating in the meeting. When the meeting ends, they put their phone in their pocket, shove their computer into their backpack, go up front, grab a piece of pizza or a donut, and sign their names on the attendance sheet. “Active member of the [name] club/association/society” appears on their activity sheet. The meeting becomes a transaction: show up, be seen, get the line on the resume, leave.

At Exeter, much of what is considered “good” starts as performance. People volunteer because it gives them a sense of pride. People attend meetings to be seen. People stay kind because recommendation letters are valued currency here. The accomplishments turn into the perfect col-

lege resume, and the shame around “Oh, you are doing it for college” implies that none of it counts if the motive is not pure. But the actions don’t automatically make it worthless just because college is part of the motivation. Pursuing my dream college is an important part of my life here, and it’s the next step toward my future — of course, I am thinking about what comes next. The real difference between doing the right thing for the wrong reason and doing it genuinely is whether you keep showing up until the work becomes part of your daily routine.

After attending eight or nine meetings, one of the topics or games always turns out to be truly interesting. We were talking about break-even points and pricing, and I realized it was the exact logic behind decisions I make every week, like whether it’s worth walking farther to a cheaper supermarket or paying more for convenience. I started calculating how much I’d save, how

many trips it would take to make the extra walk “worth it.” I get the chance to put down my phone, look away from my laptop, and be present and focused for a few minutes. When the material overlaps with a class I’m currently taking or the discussion I had with my friends over lunch, participation turns into passion. I want to keep building on this, I think.

I arrive at the meeting five minutes early, afraid of being late. I set up chairs before and clean up after. Every week, I set aside time to write, email, research, and practice. Somewhere along the way, “for college” stops being the reason I’m there. It became the reason I stayed long enough to care, long enough for it to stop being performance.

That change shows up in small moments, like the night I caught myself still thinking about the club long after the meeting ended. It was past midnight when I realized I’d been working on the club material with my homework tab



Courtesy of centerbrook.com

closed for once. My room was dark except for my desk lamp, and I kept thinking about what else I should do to be more prepared for the next meeting. When I finally looked at the clock and decided to do my homework, I felt stupid. However, when I brought up what I had found and changed the discussion during the weekend meeting, I knew I had shifted from just attending to actually caring.

Purpose changes when we get more involved. We see better outcomes and develop a love for the activity. Sometimes people never change, and the space becomes hollow. They never move past being seen. They never run into a story or moment that catches their attention. The participation proved to them that the subject won’t be one of their future pursuits, and that is fine. They move on and find

where they belong.

So walking into a club meeting shouldn’t raise the question, “Are your reasons pure?” Maybe it’s, “Are you willing to be changed?” Because the people who end up building the community aren’t always the ones who started with the purest motives — they’re the ones who kept coming back, put their phones down, and let the work matter.



A Split Soul

By SEAN MAHDAVIAN ‘27

A 14-year-old boy, alone at an airport. He has been running for weeks at this point, but now, there are only a few flights left. His feet hurt, but he must keep his shoes on. His mother put some money in their soles. It’s the only thing he has left. His country is broken, its government in tatters, and his freedom ripped away from him. It’s the second-to-last plane out; he gets on, and his entire life is left behind, a life he will never see again. A life his son has never seen but only heard of, through story, through tradition, and through

love.

This story is the story of my father and me. My father escaped Iran in 1980 following the revolution. He was a student whose mother helped organize protests. A mother I have never met. Today, for a third time, the Persian Gulf is at war, and today, for the first time, my grandmother’s livelihood is threatened by U.S. strikes.

I cannot speak with her at this moment, as the Iranian regime has blocked all outside access. The only conversations we have ever had have been in her broken English and my even more broken Farsi. Because of this, we

have never been able to have the deepest of conversations, yet we have had the most important: “I love you,” a phrase that transcends even the most broken of language.

When it came to their origins, my mother’s and father’s stories couldn’t have been more different. My mother is DC-born and raised. Her life has been dedicated to two things besides her family: her science and her country. Her country has dictated many of the decisions she has made. Many times late at night, I was unable to be with her because of the work she had to do to protect our fellow citizens. She has sacrificed so much, and this country has provided so many opportunities for not just her but also

my father. My father had made something of himself by the time he met my mother because he believed in the “American Dream.” My mother and father are both incredibly proud of their citizenship, and for good reason, the United States has been amazing to them. Sometimes I wonder, though, how different life would be if I were just from one culture or another. I am someone from two cultures united under one flag. A flag that is flown across the world; a flag that means something different for both cultures

I loathe the Iranian regime; I really do, and both sides of my family agree on that. This oppressive government has caused my grandmother to refuse to go

out and buy groceries for fear that an IRGC sniper would mistakenly take her out instead of a targeted student leader. A valid fear, as now more than thirty thousand protesters have been executed for speaking out, according to Iranian officials. But I’m scared. The United States military is the most lethal fighting force in the world, a force that can muddle the lines between friend and foe. My grandmother lives next to a police station: a police station that has been announced will soon be a target for potential IRGC holdouts. My family in Iran is hopeful that the strikes will lead to regime change. My family in America is fearful for our troops and our livelihood. Two

Courtesy of wikimedia.org

of my cousins were recently deployed with the Marines to the Middle East. My family holds fear over potential terrorist attacks on the homeland, yet my father and I are the very same people who are profiled in airports. I am both scared and excited about what this country holds for me. A country that can do so much good and yet commit so much harm.

Though I may be split on the inside at times, I know I am always loved, loved by people who have seen me since the day I was born and loved by people who have only heard my voice. The only thing we can do now is love and hope for the best.

Nowruz Pirouz and God Bless America.

What the Masthead Tells Us: A Research-Based Approach to Examining Social Dynamics, Diversity, and Representation in Select Academic Extracurriculars at Exeter

By SHAYAAN KASHIF ‘26

A little over a year ago, I wrote an article for The Exonian titled “Clubs at Exeter are Broken”, exploring a culture of exclusion that I believed had taken root in PEA’s major “academic” student-run clubs (*The Exonian*, Debate, Model UN, etc.) and created a fundamental institutional failure in the system. Expressing my conviction and frustration as a new upper eager to get involved in all Exeter had to offer, I had little to rely on then besides my own experiences within Exeter’s club culture. Over a year later, I’m no longer just an “outsider” criticizing the system — I’m a part of it. That shift has allowed me to approach the problem with a fresh perspective and analyze the structural obstacles Exeter faces in its pursuit of a truly equitable club environment.

Hoping to gain some more insights into how student perception of fairness within Exeter’s club system has changed, I recently contacted the administrator of the @exiepolls Instagram account, asking them to conduct an informal poll of Exonians on academic clubs and the culture surrounding them for reference. According to the account administrator, the poll had over 150 respondents — compared to PEA’s student body of 1100, this is more than a sufficient sample size for an exploratory survey of this type. The general margin of error for rigorous polling is +5 percent — here it was 7.29 percent. When asked if nepotism played a “major role” in the club turnover process, 91% of respondents answered “Yes”. When asked if “academic clubs” such as *The Exonian*, Debate, Model UN, and Mock

Trial had a “toxic turnover culture,” 73 percent of respondents answered yes. When asked if these clubs were “cliquey” or “hard to mesh into”, 79% answered yes.

The results of this poll are clear. A resounding majority of respondents still believe that nepotism plays a major role in club turnovers, with vast majorities also believing the clubs generally possess a toxic turnover culture and are hard to mesh into.

These numbers have persisted despite significant, commendable efforts from the administrative side to acknowledge and address the roots of Exeter’s club problem, as perceived in the poll — circular qualification criteria that gatekeep access to club experiences (tournaments, competitions, advanced teams), and selection for familiarity over merit in turnovers, keeping control of clubs deeply centralized and predetermined. PEA StuAct and faculty advisors in certain clubs have, through increased involvement in the turnover process, created an external check on purely student-led decision-making that encourages thoughtful deliberation on equity and accessibility in academic clubs. Credit should be given where credit is due — these are meaningful steps. And yet, over 90 percent of respondents still perceived nepotism as a major factor in club turnover decisions. That gap between institutional efforts and student perception is worth examining.

My own personal experience with clubs at Exeter also reflects these findings — I would have answered in the affirmative for all these questions. Having now been on both sides of the turnover process, I can attest to the social dynamics that are indeed at play. Not only

have I been involved in the deliberations behind turnover for the clubs I help lead, but I’m also close friends with the co-heads of many other of these major “academic” clubs at Exeter. What I’ve found is that, often subconsciously, co-heads will favor their friends, or even candidates who they “like” more or they perceive as having higher social “value”, skewing club leadership in a direction that tends to be counterproductive to purely meritocratic considerations.

This pattern is not unique to Exeter, nor does it require malicious intent to explain. The tendency, especially among adolescents, to favor friends is less a conscious choice than a neurological inevitability. Research consistently shows that adolescents are uniquely susceptible to peer influence — more so than adults, and even children — due to a developmental mismatch between the brain’s social reward system, which matures early, and its cognitive control systems, which mature gradually. In fact, neuroscientists at UCLA found that, in adolescents, social rejection activates the same brain regions as physical pain. Against that neurological backdrop, the prospect of passing over a close friend for a club position and the social consequences that might follow is not simply uncomfortable for a seventeen-year-old brain — it registers as genuinely costly in ways that are difficult to consciously override, even for selectors who believe they are acting on merit. These social pressures are only magnified in a boarding school environment like that of Exeter, where the judgment of other adolescents is seemingly impossible to escape.

On the flipside of the

coin, social dynamics can also be used to explain why a sheer majority of Exonians believe that these clubs can be cliquey and have a toxic turnover culture. A line I commonly overhear at Exeter is “Don’t tell [x], or he/she won’t give me co-head of [y] club”. The very language around clubs and their turnover creates a toxic, overcompetitive atmosphere that, for many Exonians, incentivizes the creation of an ingenuine, masked, and filtered version of themselves designed to appease other students in positions of power. The consequences of this are far-reaching and tend to dictate, or at the very least influence, every interaction a prospective club member may have with an existing co-head, even outside the club environment. The end result is a quasi-sycophantic power dynamic with perverse incentive that, in circles of upperclassmen, is often the subject of derision. You’ll find no shortage of upperclassmen joking about “how far” an underclassman will go for co-head. Sometimes, they’ll even say it to their face: “Nice try, but I’m still not giving you co-head.” Exonians can therefore end up feeling like they can’t really trust any new faces in the clubs they run — after all, each new person could be an obstacle to getting a co-head position. This inevitably creates the cliquey culture that 79 percent of respondents identified as endemic to clubs at Exeter.

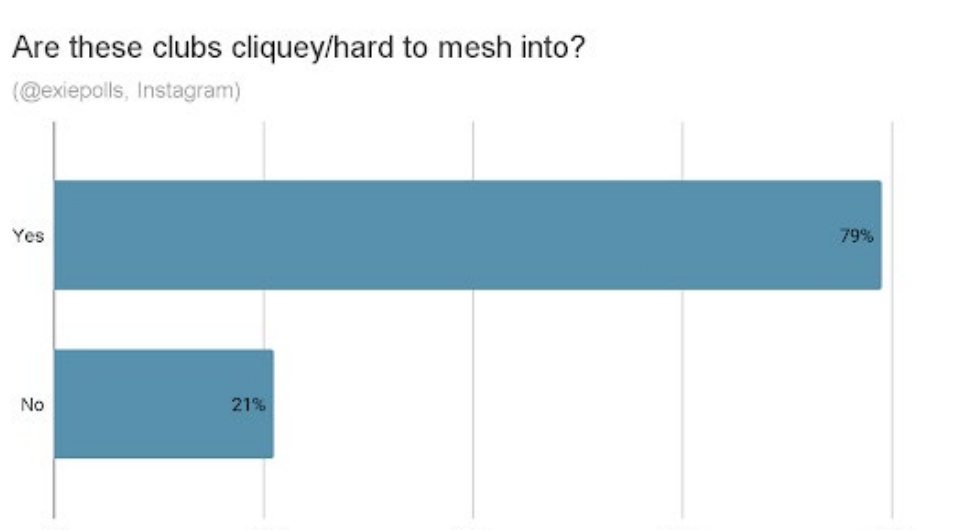
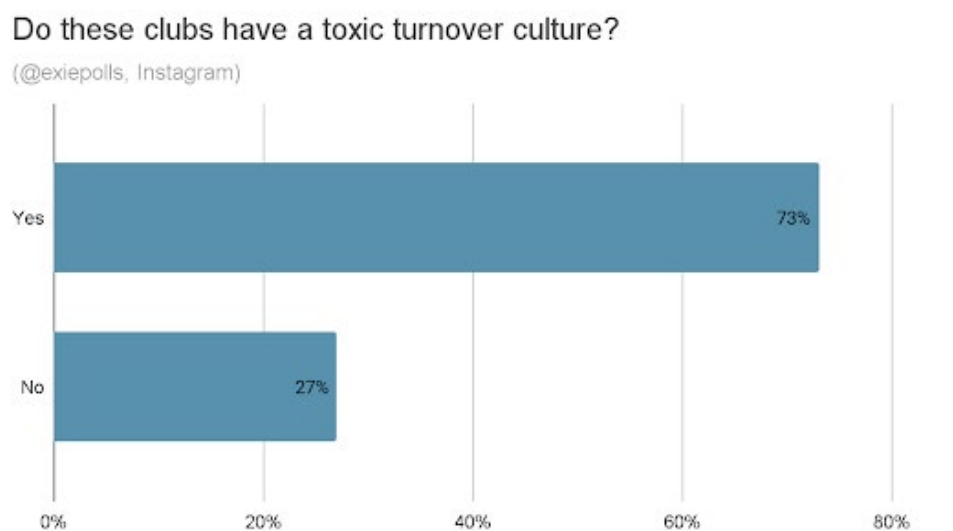
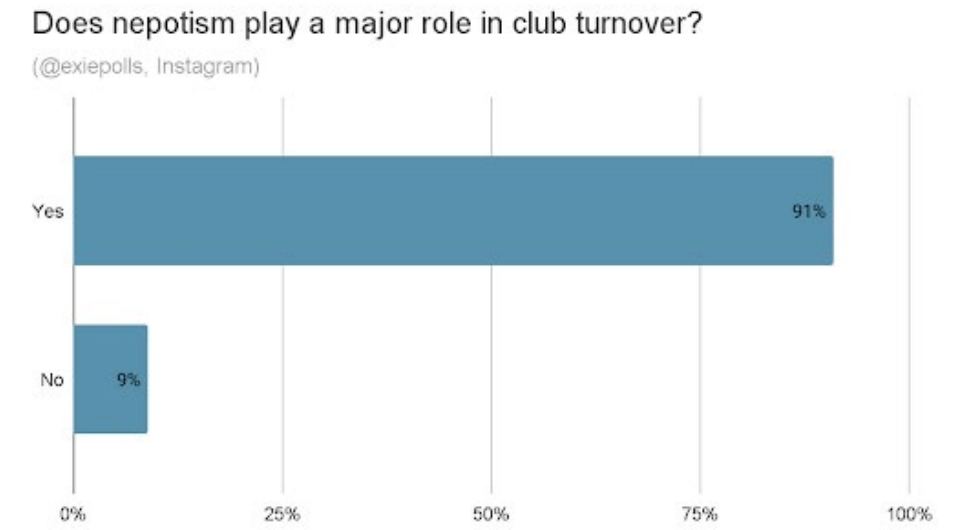
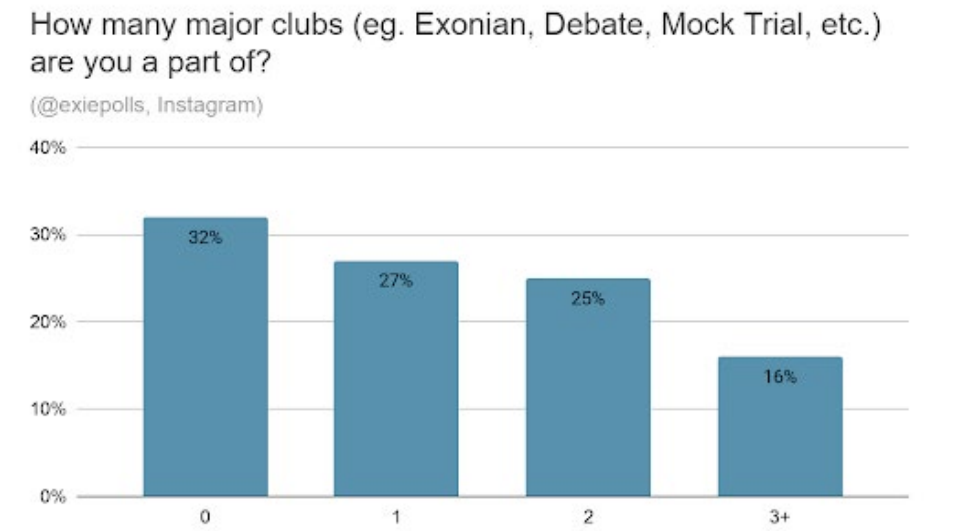
Once again, this is not a pattern unique to Exeter. Impression management and ingratiation, the established psychological terms used by professionals to refer to the process (conscious or subconscious) of how one controls others’ perception of them, has been observed by professionals in a myriad of social en-

vironments — corporate, academic, or otherwise. Studies have found that organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), the voluntary undertaking of additional, nonobligatory tasks by employees, increases when an individual perceives the possibility of promotion, and declines after said promotion. A similar logic can be applied to turnovers — students perform exaggerated enthusiasm and involvement during and before turnovers to increase chances of selection, which may not reflect their genuine engagement with the club. Research consistently shows that applicants in desirable selection contexts are more likely to engage in ingratiation: flattering those in positions to “select”, conforming to their expressed opinions, and performing behaviors that signal loyalty rather than ability. In adolescents, this tendency is especially amplified by a neurological heightened sensitivity to social rewards that makes peer approval feel more valuable than it would to an adult. The result is a process that may not select for the most capable candidates, but rather the most socially capable performers.

This “yes-man” effect reverberates beyond the echo chamber it tends to create. Research on adolescent authenticity consistently finds that inauthenticity — behaving as a “false self” to meet perceived social expectations or requirements—is associated with lower wellbeing, reduced self-esteem, and depressive symptoms. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), one of the most extensively validated frameworks in motivational psychology, identifies autonomy as a basic psychological need whose thwarting produces predictable harm. When students “perform” enthusiasm for clubs not

out of genuine enthusiasm but out of a desire to be selected by current leaders, they are engaging in what SDT researchers call “introjected regulation” — behavior not driven by passion but by contingent self-worth. This form of motivation also, ironically, undermines the deep identification with an activity that is necessary to produce the genuine expertise, commitment, and passion embodied by a leader. Consequently, a system like the one perpetuated in Exeter’s “academic” clubs may actually be producing the opposite of what it intends at a structural level.

Having identified the social forces that drive the causes of inequity in Exeter’s clubs and the general lack of student confidence in Exeter’s clubs, the logical next step is to ask who bears the brunt of these systemic issues. This has been the main focus of my research for the past few months. In a longitudinal study of two selected clubs — the Daniel Webster Debate Society (DWDS), and *The Exonian* — I collected data on the gender and ethnic distributions of the leadership of these clubs over the past couple of years to see if there are any noticeable patterns within these groups. I myself, as a member of *The Exonian*’s 147th Editorial Board and a former debater, was one of these statistics. My involvement in the turnover process and relative familiarity with the ins and outs of these clubs was, along with their prominence and perceived prestige on campus, why I chose to analyze them specifically. In *The Exonian*, I focused primarily on the Editorial Board, which is responsible for all “newsroom”, print-published work, and for DWDS, I focused on the co-heads of the club.



Data taken from polls taken on Instagram via @exiepolls.

My dataset for *The Exonian* contained every Editorial Board since 2011 — I had access to the mastheads of the previous three boards, and pulled the rest of the boards off of a historical version of *The Exonian*’s Wikipedia page. I compiled the names from all of these boards into a single spreadsheet, and sorted all individuals listed as having participated in The Exonian’s Editorial Board by their board number, position held, and the year of their board.

The most immediate observation was the substantial increase in the size of the Editorial Board in the last 15 years. In 2011, there were 10 individuals on The Exonian’s Editorial Board. That number has steadily gone up since then, increasing to 32 this year. The size of the Editorial Board has therefore roughly tripled since 2011. This can likely be partially explained by The Exonian’s policy of giving all upper board applicants a position, ensuring no one is turned away.

As for demographics, I faced an issue when it came to identifying demographics for historical boards beyond the 146th. Logistically, it would be impossible to individually contact each and every member of these boards to confirm their identities, forcing me to resort to demographic inference, a method commonly used by researchers for large-scale population studies. For this study, demographic inference was conducted using Claude Sonnet, a large language model. Recent research has found that LLM-based name-ethnicity classification achieves up to 84.7% percent accuracy, outperforming the widely-used BISG (Bayesian Improved

Surname Geocoding) method at 68.2 percent on balanced samples. Importantly for this study’s context, BISG is known to systematically misclassify affluent minorities as White—a bias that would be especially problematic in an elite boarding school environment like that of Exeter. LLM-based inference does not exhibit this same income-correlated bias. That said, all name-based tools carry limitations: they cannot capture multiracial identity, struggle with names that cross cultural lines, and may encode training data biases. For this reason, findings from inferred boards should be understood as aggregate directional estimates rather than precise counts. The most critical comparisons in this study, which are done against Exeter’s actual student body composition from 2024-2025, therefore use verified data from the four most recent boards only.

An evaluation of gender, across all boards, reveals that gender divide has remained relatively equal over the years. Statistically, *The Exonian* actually skews slightly female, however this is not significant enough to be anything more than just slight year-by-year variation.

Looking at ethnic demographics presents a different picture — one of significant overrepresentation of certain minority groups and underrepresentation of others. In each of the four last boards (with verified data), East Asian students have constituted a plurality or outright majority of the editorial board. This pattern has grown more pronounced over time, reaching 58 percent on the current 148th

board. White students represent the second-largest group on every board, but notably, have also seen the most dramatic decline of any group, falling from 36 percent on the 146th board to just under 20% on the 148th. Using the inferred historical data, White students have fallen 40 percent from 2011, when they composed approximately 60 percent of the board. Despite comprising nearly half of Exeter’s student body, White students have been consistently underrepresented in the last four years relative to their share of the school, and that gap has widened in each successive board. The percentage of South Asian students have remained relatively constant in the last three years at about 13 percent, but a more longitudinal analysis shows the complete absence of South Asian students for a number of years, and numerous outliers. It is difficult to compare these numbers to school-level proportional representation without a breakdown of Exeter’s Asian enrollment by subgroup. Most critically, however, Black and Latino students are starkly underrepresented in The Exonian’s editorial board, collectively accounting for just over 5 percent of the last four boards combined while, based on Exeter’s 2024-2025 enrollment data, making up about 20 percent of the student body.

The pattern of this data tells two stories — one of a widening gap between the two dominant demographics — White and East Asian students — and another of systemic, long-term underrepresentation of other demographics in *The Exonian*, most notably Black and Latino stu-

dents. In the most recent board, when compared to school-wide numbers, Asian students (South and East), as a whole, are overrepresented by almost two times, White students are underrepresented by 0.4 times, Black students are underrepresented by 0.6 times, and Latino students are completely absent.

Similar findings can be seen in a long-term analysis of DWDS leadership, although on a smaller scale. Data collection and analysis was primarily done through looking through past co-heads on the club’s social media, due to a lack of concrete historical data for the club’s leadership and demographics. Nevertheless, the data here also mirrored the wider trend seen in *The Exonian*.

So, why does this happen? And can these trends of overrepresentation and underrepresentation be explained? Well, while the overrepresentation of East Asian students and the chronic underpresentation of Black and Latino students are correlated, they are not strictly inverses of each other (one does not cause the other). Rather, both are produced by different mechanisms that operate at different stages of the same process.

Once any group reaches a certain critical mass in an entirely student-controlled selection process, the selection process tends to reproduce that group. This is not necessarily through intent—in fact it often has nothing to do with intent—but is a structural issue. Overrepresentation can therefore be classified as a self-reinforcing cycle that produces a cascade effect of more overrepresentation. The minimal group paradigm employed in social psychology reveals that even arbitrary distinctions of an “ingroup” and “outgroup” can play a significant role in decisionmaking—in a process where those in charge of selection may know some candidates personally, this creates a preexisting bias that can subconsciously, yet unfairly, tip the metaphorical scale of turnover decisions. Affinity bias leads to perception of “ingroup” members as more competent and committed.

How does this tie to ethnicity? Jackson Lu, a professor at MIT Sloan School, tackles this question in his research on the “bamboo ceiling” faced by East Asians in the United States. Specifically, Lu analyzed the prevalence of ethnic homophily, “the preference for interacting with individuals of the same ethnicity”, across 124 U.S. law schools and 54,620 JD students. Lu, in his analysis, found that high ethnic homophily among East Asian students was ultimately detrimental to leadership emergence among East Asians in White dominated environments.

In an East Asian dominated environment, it appears that the reverse effect may occur — homophily drives selection towards East Asian candidates. Lu also relates his findings to the ingroups and outgroups of the minimal group paradigm. Language, cultural values, and shared heritage are all factors that are significant in creation of perceived ingroups and

outgroups, even subconsciously. Consequently, affinity bias, the minimal group paradigm, and ethnic homophily go hand in hand in creating a self-reinforcing cycle of inequality and overrepresentation of certain groups, regardless of which group is being discussed.

In regards to the underrepresentation of Black and Latino students, a different mechanism seems to be at play. This is a “pipeline” problem, occurring at the point of entry, far before the turnover process even begins. Research from Nieman Reports finds that participation in student journalism among minority students is deeply intertwined with social indicators of support and belonging. This is especially important considering the nationwide underrepresentation of African-American voices in high school journalism. The increased value adolescents place on inclusiveness in social settings, as discussed previously, can manifest neurologically in reading environments for inclusion signals, or lack thereof. A masthead in which minority students are underrepresented, for example, could be interpreted as an implicit turnoff for prospective students, leading to disproportionately low participation in organizations such as The Exonian. A homogeneous masthead therefore doesn’t just signal lack of diversity, but also perpetuates it by indicating to prospective members “who” the publication may be for.

What then results, essentially, is an overrepresentation problem that compounds upward, and an underrepresentation problem that compounds downward. Both issues further exacerbate themselves, widening the gap. These mechanisms are a result of an almost entirely student-controlled selection process with a lack of significant external accountability for demographic outcomes. A student-controlled turnover model is designed to select for passion, merit, and commitment, but, as reflected by psychological literature and demographic data, it does the opposite, selecting for social proximity to current leadership and perpetuating a self-reinforcing cycle of inequality that ultimately leads to significant demographic overrepresentations and underrepresentations.

It is especially imperative to address this in clubs such as The Exonian and DWDS, which are bastions of student expression and the voice, because the problem is not only one of inequity, but also quality. This representation gap cannot be dismissed simply as a social justice issue—it is key to journalistic quality and integrity. Professor Scott Page at the University of Michigan shows in his book *The Diversity Bonus* that cognitively, socially, and ethnically diverse groups routinely outperform homogenous expert groups on complex-problem solving tasks. What’s more, especially in fields such as journalism and debate, participants have an immense responsibility to accurately represent beliefs, events, and ideas in a nuanced manner. A diverse

newsroom or debate team that incorporates a plethora of identities, experiences and perspectives is key to this. A lack of diversity in these organizations at Exeter therefore actively harms their express purpose and mission and leads to lack of relevance and impact.

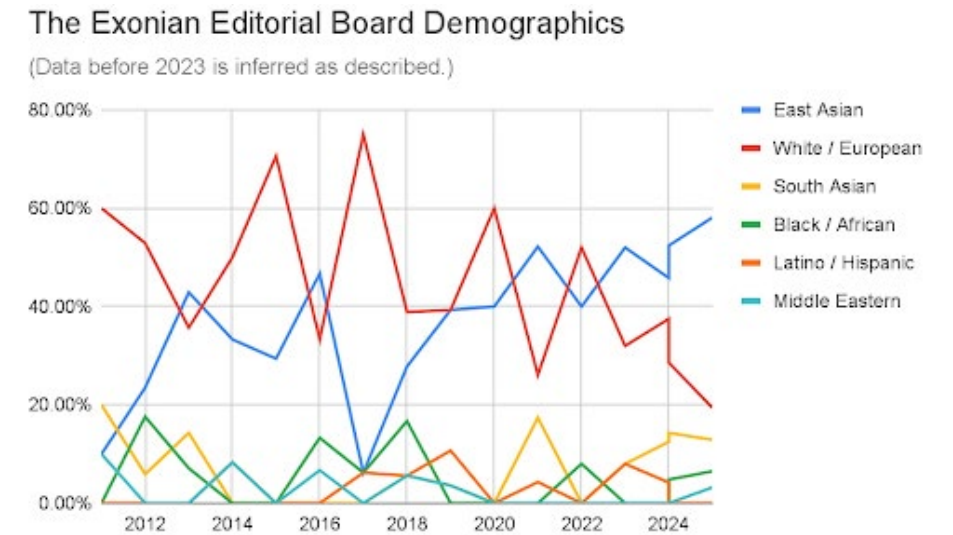
So, how do we fix this? The good news, and a highly important point of recognition, is that none of these problems are the “fault” of any person or group of people in particular. No individual intent is required — nor does the research support its presence—in this deeply structural form of inequity. The fault lies in a system that, though designed in good faith, is failing students on both ends and is long overdue for a reevaluation. Luckily, solving one end of the problem will also solve the other — by focusing on platforming underrepresented voices in these clubs, we can combat both underrepresentation by creating an influx of these voices, and also offset overrepresentation. This can be done in a myriad of ways, many of which these organizations already try to do. Most notably, clubs such as The Exonian and DWDS could work with affinity groups on campus to thoughtfully allocate page space and debate topics respectively and encourage open participation. Combined with intentional efforts to generally create a more diverse club body, this could significantly mitigate, or even eliminate, problems of overrepresentation and underrepresentation in just a few years.

On a more social level, our clubs could also try to propagate a democratic culture that does not make co-head positions the “end-all-be-all”. We should move away from having co-head positions be the primary object of value in clubs — something impressive to put on your college resume — and rather embrace an attitude that celebrates tangible accomplishments and hard work instead of rank, giving everyone the opportunity to be passionate about what they love, even if they didn’t get co-head. The point here being that no one should drop out of a club simply because they didn’t get the leadership position they felt they deserved.

Unfortunately, we’ve reached a point where clubs have drifted from their intended purpose as hotbeds of student passion, innovation, and love for learning, turning into hypercompetitive pressure cookers that, as the numbers show, the sheer majority of Exonians have lost faith in. The future is optimistic, though — efforts are already being made to acknowledge and address the problem, and if we keep it up, we can bring clubs back in line with their intended purpose. Together, we can make these clubs the bastions of goodness and knowledge we all want them to be. So, in the spirit of non sibi, and as a testament to our passion for our favorite extracurricular — whether it be writing, debating or even roleplaying as Fiji in the General Assembly — let’s keep working to make our clubs fun for everyone again.



Data taken Wikipedia.



I used Claude AI’s Sonnet 4.6 model to aid in aggregate data compilation.

Student body composition (2024–25) ⁽¹⁾ [hide]		
Race and ethnicity	Total	
White	48.8%	
Asian	36.5%	
Black	10.7%	
Hispanic	9.5%	
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.7%	
Two or more races	18.0%	
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.5%	

Screenshot from Wikipedia detailing the Academy’s overall demographic.

The Downfall of High School Traditions: Why Our School Events Have Become Monotonous

By SELASIE AMEMASOR '28

Exeter events are a major part of the Academy, and they have been for the past 20 years. The events we frequently have on the weekend started after the reduction of Saturday classes in 2005. However, many students on the weekend feel that the quality of activities on campus has declined. During each term, we have one to two major dances, as well as multiple smaller events that occur over the weekends. Such events include magic shows, visiting authors and concerts. While many of these events are quite promising, the general consensus on campus is that events — especially the dances — have started to become boring. Over the course of the year, parties end up becoming an opportunity to get free food and disappear back into your room. All in all, I think we can all agree that many of the weekend activities are unappealing to the student body.

However, it would be unfair to place the blame completely on the administration. While some of the events they plan just happen not to appeal to the student body, they don't have much to go on. The spaces the school gives us to give them feedback are not being used to their full potential. There are spaces in the Student Council where students can make suggestions.

The issue is all of the many wishes of the student body cannot be heard. Many of the events that go sideways end up failing because they seldom appeal to the majority of the student body. The Glow Dance had very poor attendance. At the beginning of the party, getting to do things like paint yourself with your friends and grab a quick snack to dance along to a song can be exciting, especially during your first year at Exeter. However, it gets really boring really quickly; the songs start to feel repetitive and people get sweaty after jumping around. The once fun function starts to feel overwhelming. By the end of the dance, most people have added the dance to the list of things they won't be doing twice at Exeter. Fall dances aren't the only example of this. When winter term rolls around, many people look forward to the Winter Formal, many of us start picking out our dresses and suits in the weeks prior. Similarly, the dance starts off fun, you get to see what everyone has been hiding away in their closets. Once again, however, things get sweaty and loud. And if that wasn't enough of a struggle, you're now playing hooky with the camera they bring out. A select few of the teens on campus want their faces projected for the whole gym to see. By the end of the night, you're tired, sweaty and hoping no one

saw you almost fall on the big screen. You walk out of the gym to realize you now have to make the freezing walk back to your dorm. Dances are a staple in the American high school experience but they evidently don't live up to the hype. Attending these dances ends up giving you a harsh reality check. High school is not full of 30-year-olds with fully developed social skills. It's filled with a ton of socially awkward teens. Part of why the dances on this campus suck is because we as students are wildly unable to find fun in situations like dances. You can't really expect teens to enjoy the entirety of a party when at any given point in the day you can walk into Elm and see entire tables focused on the phones or their homework. While this is a really common argument, it is evidently true. I do think that dances are just generally overwhelming, but they get so much more overwhelming so much quicker because all of us have become unaccustomed to this type of socializing. Most high schoolers nowadays simply aren't the type of people to enjoy school dances. That being said, not all events fall through. International Tea, for example, has been a major part of school events for years. Students dress up in the clothes associated with their cultures and have a number of activities to participate



Students dance at the Glo Dance. Madelyn Anglin / The Exonian

in. These events include henna, ballroom dancing and trying snacks from around the world. This event is a hit every year, lots of people dress up and participate, those who don't participate in dressing up are still able to enjoy themselves. Casino Night is also well-liked on campus. In mid-winter, our school hires a company to provide us with the needed equipment to 'gamble.' Like Winter Formal, people dress up in their best and make the very cold walk over. The stations are primarily student-run. You'll see a number of students in the room playing and even more waiting for their turn to bid on these games. This event has lasted for years because of its obvious popularity amongst students. I think I can say that most of us love these events because they are genuinely entertaining. These have lasted so long because there is an actual goal to achieve. You come to the events to have

your henna done or to lose all your chips to poker. Another part of why these events work is also the time they take place in the school years. Winter term is a pretty stressful term, getting time to say more than a quick 'hi' to your friends while rushing to class is nice. Exonians come to Casino Night because they get to participate in engaging events with their friends while doing something that any other night would garner a CCC case. International Tea offers time to sit with friends for a few hours. These events work because they allow students to properly interact with one another in non-academic settings. Events like Winter Formal don't simply because they're outdated and don't allow us to connect in the ways that teens today connect. Ultimately, I would argue that there are a couple of main reasons as to why certain dances fall apart. One of them is the fact that

many of the age-old traditions associated with high school aren't interesting to the teens of today. Most kids in school aren't nearly as interested in school dances as their parents might have been. Another reason is the students and adults organizing these events don't know what we want. Many of our students' wishes are under-represented in clubs that work with administration. While I do feel that there should be more action on the part of the general student body, I understand why many students don't show up to things like Student Council. Many of us are busy with other commitments and adding a club to the already growing list of responsibilities simply because you hate Fall Formal isn't reasonable. Ultimately, many of the events we have are simply outdated. It is possible to create fun events, but it requires the cooperation of both students and administration.

Writing Cont.

AI-generated written work exist, a practice that necessitates not even humanity, we should not be partial about what human-created work gets to be considered art. After all, the quality of an AI-generated novel

may be higher than that of a poorly written first draft, but it will always lack the touch of human thought. It will never earn the title of art, simply because it does not even meet the basis of "human" in "human

creativity." So why does it matter whether writing is considered art? Few would claim that Jane Eyre or Macbeth are not art in their own right. So much literary work is accepted as art. But by only considering classical works of writing to be art, we again

confirm this idea that art is something distant. Something far off. Something that the average person is simply incapable of. And it is not. Art is all around us — in writing, in conversation, even simply in thought as we go on with our days. Art is the pri-

mary form in which humans interact with the world. We cannot limit the title of art, which is simply just human expression, to the best works. It is part of everything that we do and everything that we are. Writing is part of that. And when we accept that even the dumbest things that

we may write are still art, even if they are a poor example of it, we accept that humans are naturally artsy creatures, prone to creation. We allow the emphasis to come back to the human part of art's definition, rather than lingering on that wavering concept of beauty.

Guidelines for the Publication of Opinions Pieces in *The Exonian*

To clarify our standards for Op-Ed, the board has outlined a brief list of expectations. Ideally, a quality op-ed will . . .

- ❖ Be factually correct, clearly citing credible sources. Writers will be required to provide a list of cited sources to editors during the editing process.
- ❖ Be in some way relevant to issues or events at Exeter or with the intention of prompting conversations on campus.
- ❖ Present an argument that is original, mature, and in good faith, challenging predominant narratives or providing a new angle for said narratives on campus.
- ❖ Exclude any hate speech, which *The Exonian*, in conjunction with the Academy's E-Book, defines as irrational, uninformed, derogatory, and oppressive language directed toward or harmful to specific communities or individuals.
 - Debatable cases will be discussed by editor(s) and adviser(s) with the writer(s) to be removed or reframed.
- ❖ Be well written, with a clearly stated thesis, logical line of thought and no extraneous content.
- ❖ Undergo revisions cooperatively and in a timely manner by the direction of editors and advisers.
- ❖ Not be used as a means of self-promotion or the promotion of corporations, violence, crime, conspiracy theories, oppression, or injustice.

Sports

» **GV SWIM WINS NEPSAC**
For the fourth consecutive year, the team won the championship, 18.

» **COACH BOYDEN**
Varsity Softball has a superweapon: Coach Jennifer Boyden, 19.

» **PRESEASON**
Read about the sun and warm climates that Exeter athletes had this spring, 21.

Boys’ Varsity Basketball’s
Miracle Overtime Win at E/a

By **BUCHI AKABOGU, REX JANG, and JAYDEN LU**

With only 72 seconds remaining on the clock against their Phillips Academy Andover opponents, the Exeter boys’ basketball team was down by 14 points. In a packed gym, the air was thick with tension. Through a series of huddles, Exeter had grand plans. Slowly but surely, the gap closed with each possession until senior Jake Attaway’s three-pointer tied the game, sending it into overtime. Exeter would go on to seal the deal, and this game would be one for the memory books.

Going into this game, the team felt very confident. But this confidence was not mere wishful thinking. It was the result of having barely lost a game in two months. In fact, just a few days prior, they beat Andover in a scrimmage with referees and parents watching from the stands. As Hamilton Ford put it, “We had the utmost confidence. We thought we were the better team.” These were not empty words. They truly felt this way, and they had the proof to back it up.

Although the boys’ varsity team was certainly prepared, they were trailing at the start of the second half. However, that didn’t stop the team.

During the halftime huddle, as Josh Belcher put it, the momentum started to shift when Coach Rafferty reminded the team, “We just have to play our game and fight to the end.” After halftime, the team pressed more, got more rebounds, and persisted. This shift allowed the team to make it to overtime.

A spectator, prep Tiger Mao, said, “I play basketball too, and I know that the crowd and the energy are a big part of the game.” With the Exeter fans cheering until the end, the momentum bore fruit, with Attaway’s game-winning shot leading to an important win in the longest high school rivalry.

What made this comeback possible wasn’t a single play. It was the same mentality that was repeated throughout those 72 seconds. “We were looking at each other’s eyes, and there was this real belief,” Ford said. “We kept telling each other one play at a time. We didn’t let the big picture of the game creep into our heads. The main thing we have to do is to get offensive boards and not let Andover thrive off of second chances. Every bucket was conscious. Making the right play, hitting the open guy. Once we got back to that, stopped forcing tough ones, our good shots went up, and turn-

overs went down.” Lower William Shu, watching from the stands, said Alex Hamblet’s fadeaway was the moment that made him believe. “He was trapped, and then he just escaped it and hit it. That was insane.”

From the other side of the gym, prep and spectator Kimathi Kuenyehia agreed: “That was when I really thought. Oh, we can definitely come back.”

Hamblet described the last two minutes as a blackout. Just pure adrenaline. “I knew we were going to win that game in any way possible,” he said. When Attaway’s three fell through, Hamblet didn’t overthink it: “Jake Attaway is the man. He launched it, he made it, and it’s probably the best shot anyone’s ever hit in a game I’ve ever been a part of.”

Belcher was holding his breath at the free-throw line. “I was hoping and praying he didn’t make any,” he said of the Andover shooter. “He made it. That’s all that matters.”

Ford continued, “I think we wanted it more than them. We’re tougher, smarter, and we care about each other more. We’re a family. We’re tighter than they were.”

When the final buzzer blew in overtime, the bench, crowd, and play-

BASKETBALL, 20.

Girls’ Varsity Swim &
Dive Wins NEPSAC
Championship for the
Fourth Consecutive Year

By **ADAEZE ACHOLONU, RAYANN CISSE, VALMIK DANGAYACH, and ARIANA METZGER**

On March 7 and 8, girls’ varsity swim & dive competed at the New England Preparatory School Athletic Council (NEPSAC) Championships and won for the fourth consecutive year, continuing a remarkable streak of dominance in the program’s history.

In the weeks leading up to the NEPSAC Championships, the team concentrated on building speed through racing and refining diving techniques. Since the team had Easterns just a few weeks prior, they “tapered for about a week before, which means that we had slightly lighter practices,” prep Ava Chung mentioned. These lighter practices helped hone important skills and save some of their energy for the big meet.

Lower Talia Sandhu commented that “we were able to use our energy in the right ways when it came

down to the meet.” She added that while it was challenging to consistently push themselves and perform at their best in every set during practice, the team was ultimately able to “relieve that pressure and that stress” when it mattered most at the championship.

When it finally came time for the meet, prep Hanna Zhang mentions “the environment was very hype.” Zhang exclaimed that “being in that environment where you can work with your upperclassmen and when they cheer for you” was “an awesome place to be in.”

In terms of the scoring system at NEPSAC, each swimmer earns points based on their placement in finals, with the overall winner determined by total points accumulated. Exeter secured the championship by racking up the highest number of points in the tournament. This scoring system meant that every individual victory was part of a broader team effort,

which, as Sandhu put it, meant that “It’s kind of like their [teammates] wins are also your wins.” She added that “the energy of the team is really special”, a sentiment echoed by prep Ava Chung, who noted that “the team really came together and made sure to cheer everyone on.”

While prep Aaliyah Huang observed that NEPSAC “was a lot easier compared to Easterns because several top schools weren’t there,” the meet remains highly competitive and widely respected. Hanna Zhang emphasized that NEPSAC is “quite a large tournament” and “very prestigious,” making Exeter’s victory an impressive achievement.

At the end of the meet, the entire team jumped in the pool, even coach Mills joining them by side-flopping into the pool, trophy in hand, to celebrate the big win. The team ended the day by splashing around as a team and filling the room with laughter.

GV Hockey Wins the NEPSAC Large School Championship

By **EILENA DING, MAGGIE KOTKOWSKI, and ARISA YOSHINO**

On Mar. 8th, Exeter’s girls’ varsity hockey team won the Patsy Odden Large School Championship, securing their first New England Preparatory School Athletic Council (NEPSAC) title since 2000. At first glance, the scene seemed like any other conclusion to a game. Hair stuck to

sweat-covered skin, cheeks flushed from exertion, and cheers echoed across the ice. But the joy that filled the rink that day felt different. The players’ smiles were more radiant, their hugs tighter as they accepted the golden trophy.

However, for the seniors on the team, the piece of wood and metal meant more than just their win, but the end of their high school hockey careers.

It meant another red and white banner filling up the empty wall space of the Exeter ice rinks, taking its place next to the one from 26 years ago. This was not just a regular win, but one deeply meaningful to every player, sure to stick with them for the rest of their lives.

Leading up to the tournament, the team focused on systems and preparing for potential situations rather than conditioning.

Captain and senior Maria Gray described, “We were already at a point where we were all in hockey shape, but we just wanted to practice situations that we could end up getting in.” One of the scenarios included “possibly having to pull our goalie, which we ended up having to do in the game,” Gray explained, revealing the payoff of their practice.

However, the team’s

preparation for competing in the playoffs began at the very start of the season. Head coach Sally Komarek elaborated, “Throughout the season, we’ve been building toward the goal of making the playoffs and competing in them. And when that opportunity finally arrived, it was not something new or surprising but something that we had been working on for the entire season.”

Despite kicking off their practice during final exams in the fall, Komarek recounted, “We try to set an intensity in our program and a recognition that our goal is to be playing hockey during finals in the winter term.”

The team played one game each day of the three-day, eight-team tournament. Big Red was “the number one projected seed, so we got a home game all throughout the quarters and semis until finals,” senior and captain Mia Griffith explained.

On the first day, the quarterfinal, “we played Middlesex School [the eighth seed], the score was 4-3 and we won in

overtime,” senior and captain Grace Riley recounted. One of the most memorable moments in the tournament occurred during the last ten minutes of the game. “We were down 3-0 with about 10 minutes left,” Riley said.

Even so, the team refused to back down, and Gray emphasized the team’s perseverance despite the scoreboard. “All of the goals in that game were just from us not giving up because a team that’s down 3-0 or that’s losing more than three basically never wins,” she shared. More specifically, “After [upper] Erin [Sears] scored her fourth goal, I knew that the game was over and that they were going to pull their goalie. We just continued to shut them down, playing really good defense and watched the time go down to zero,” Gray continued.

In addition to the players on the ice, the athletes on the bench played a vital role in the ultimate success of the team. Komarek elaborated, “When I think about that game, I think about how en-

HOCKEY, 19.



Courtesy of @exeterathletics

The girls’ varsity hockey team celebrates their win.

Varsity Softball’s Weapon: Coach Jennifer Boyden



Lucy Ma / *The Exonian*

Coach Boyden poses for the camera.

By VALMIK DANGAYACH, JUNE KOH, and OWEN SAFFORD

At a preseason practice down in Florida, the girls’ softball team had just wrapped up a long day on the field when the focus shifted to something unexpected: roller coasters. Within minutes, coach Jennifer Boyden led the group through the park, darting from ride to ride with the same intensity she brings to every drill. Players laughed as their coach raced ahead, the serious, detail-oriented coach seemingly becoming a kid fully in her element. It was a side of Boyden they didn’t always see during practice.

This balance between intensity and approachability defines Boyden’s presence on the team. She emerges as a coach who wants focus, precision, and a deep understanding of the game, while also creating a space for connection and growth. With her emphasis on softball IQ, Boyden pushes athletes not just physically but mentally. At the same time,

her relationships with players reveal a personal side where trust fosters team unity and turns everyday practices and tough losses into meaningful experiences.

As a former player herself, Boyden has always loved the game of softball. Furthermore, Boyden explained, “I had worked in the mental health counseling field for a few years and also felt those skills weren’t actually used as much as they could be, and that coaching with a transformative mindset could actually be more impactful than the systems I was currently working within.” This perspective ultimately led her to approach coaching as a way to make a more direct and meaningful difference in athletes’ lives.

Coming from coaching at public high schools and colleges, Boyden emphasized that Exeter “provides an environment with some of the best opportunities for the whole student-athlete.” In her own experience, she reflected on the work ethic and character of Exeter

athletes, stating, “the student athletes at Exeter are some of the most grateful, most eager to learn we’ve ever had the opportunity to work with. They truly value the experiences they’re given and truly thank those around them that help deliver those experiences.” This culture of appreciation and dedication, she noted, makes coaching at Exeter especially rewarding.

Boyden also underlined the importance of team culture at Exeter. In her words, “We’re trying to build a culture of long-term development; players feel like they truly improve every season and can look back over their careers and believe they realized their softball potential.” Further, she reflected, “We try to provide high-level physical practices but also discussions about softball IQ and walk-throughs of different plays that happened. When you’re invested in so many different aspects of the game, it’s easier to stay engaged and excited.” In this way, Boyden works hard to make sure her coaching cov-



Lucy Ma / *The Exonian*

Girls’ Hockey Cont.

ergetic our bench was and how they pushed the momentum on the ice, allowing us to keep fighting and trying to claw back.”

Equally significant, the Exeter girls won their matches on the second and third days of the tournament as well. “We played BB&N [Buckingham Browne & Nichols School] in the semifinal, winning 5-1, then Choate in the championship, where we won 4-2,” Riley said.

Komarek highlighted the team’s culture of both skill and dedication as the driving force behind their success. “We have a really high skill environment, and we have kids who are willing to compete really hard,” she said. “That takes a lot of work during the season but also out of season.”

She added that for many players, their love for hockey extends far beyond the rink: “These kids, for a lot of them, they live and breathe hockey. It’s their passion. It’s the thing that they’re most nerdy about.”

Building on this sense of team culture, Griffith explained how their energy, especially on the sidelines, played a crucial role in the win. She described this as “winning the bench,” adding, “We want to be the loudest. We want to cheer more than the other team, because hearing your team cheer for anything and having a positive attitude on the bench goes a long way.”

Riley reflected on the emotional weight of this win, especially as it marked the conclusion of her two

years playing hockey at Exeter. “This means so much to me; it really was such an honor to play for Exeter and to play with every single one of my teammates,” she said. “This has been the best two years of my life, and I’m so happy we were able to accomplish things that many people probably thought we couldn’t do.”

The girls’ varsity hockey team’s immense success this season is a result of their endless dedication amid the toughest, hardest games. Most importantly, their ability to support one another and believe in their potential made the championship win possible. As Griffith explained, “All we needed to do was to just believe in each other and have each other’s backs.”

ers the many important aspects of the game, including the mental parts.

Players described Coach Boyden as both knowledgeable and approachable. Prep Collette Provost said her first impression was that Boyden “had a very high softball IQ” and that her advice was “always very straightforward.” Upper Phoebe Elting highlighted Boyden’s focus on strategy, saying, “She wants you to think and be intentional while playing,” and added that her warm-ups and mobility exercises are “extremely intentional and helpful.” Provost also noted that Boyden “held me to a high standard” while taking the time to explain new techniques during preseason, which helped her adjust to varsity-level play.

Senior and captain Paris Tran praised Boyden’s supportive nature. “If you’re doing something wrong, she’ll tell you, but in a way that helps you improve,” Tran said. She also described Boyden as someone “the team really looks to for guidance” and

who brings the team together. Elting added that Boyden is “passionate, knowledgeable, and dedicated but still approachable and has a fun, goofy side,” often surprising the team “with stories or things she knows about anything and everything.” Tran noted that Boyden is “very intense, but she truly loves softball, and that really gets us motivated,” while Elting said, “She has high expectations of what she wants the team to be, but still laughs with us at practice.”

Fellow coaches of the varsity softball team also shared their sentiments on Boyden’s coaching style. Varsity softball assistant coach Jack Gronau reflected on his experience coaching with her, saying, “It’s been fantastic. She knows the game inside and out and is so dedicated to the development of the team and the players as individuals.”

Gronau also highlighted Boyden’s deep knowledge of softball. Whether on the physical or mental side of the game, Gronau explained, “She [Boy-

den] has such a depth of technical knowledge of the game and is deeply patient. She knows how to help each player grow their skillset, and she fosters a positive and fun team culture.”

In the end, Boyden’s impact reaches beyond the softball field. While her players leave practices with sharper swings and a stronger understanding of the game, they also carry with them something more important. They carry on a mindset that stems from resilience and care for something bigger than themselves. Her emphasis on “we over me” lingers in classrooms, dorms, and friendships, shaping how her athletes show up in each other’s lives. Whether it’s handling pressure, supporting teammates through challenges, or simply learning how to take feedback and grow, the lessons extend past the diamond. Long after the final inning, Boyden remains at the center of this impact, leaving players with more than just memories of games and seasons.



Coach Boyden stands with athletes.

Experience Exeter!

By ADRIAN CHAN ‘28



Preseason Athletes Travel to Sunnier Fields

By AVA CHUNG, GARY GUO, and CAROL LEE

Preseason is a perfect chance for all Big Red teams to build connections before their official seasons start, and begin to feel comfortable going into games and matches. The girls’ varsity softball, varsity lacrosse, and varsity tennis teams all went on preseason trips. “We build team culture, set individual and team goals, and get competitive match play before the season starts,” girls’ varsity tennis head coach Gayatri Ramesh summarized.

The boys and girls’ tennis teams had pre-season training at the United States Tennis Association (USTA) National Center in Orlando, Florida. Both teams stayed at the Cabana Bay Beach Resort, next to Universal Orlando Resort. Every day, practice starts at 8 a.m. and ends in the early afternoon. After training, athletes had the rest of the day free to have fun at Universal Studios.

“We had the amazing opportunity to play at the national center, on green clay, which is rare at Exeter, and we watched some college matches,” lower Pranav Alladu recollected. Similarly, girls’ varsity softball stayed in Florida for five days and had a game and practice in the morning, going to the parks in the afternoons. Girls’ varsity lacrosse did not end up going to Universal Studios, though they had some time to relax at night after a packed schedule. “It was definitely a really busy schedule, we had three practices a day,” said prep Devon Wilson from girls’ varsity lacrosse, “but it was great to get to know all my teammates a lot more.”

During tennis training, the girls team worked on patterns of play and point construction. “I believe mechanics and technique are best developed in individual work,” Ramesh said. “What a pre-season trip gives you is the chance to work on how you build a point,

understanding your patterns, recognizing opportunities, and executing with intention rather than just reacting.” To become a competitive tennis player, rather than just hitting a ball for fun, players learn to think about how to play and where to play. “Florida is hot and the practices were intense,” commented Lily Cui, a prep on girls’ varsity tennis, “I was trying to get back into the mindset of competing and trying to stay hype and be part of the team.”

Girls’ varsity lacrosse and softball were also trying to get back into the swing of things. Prep Colette Provost outlined what games looked like. “... we’ve gotten some time to try people out in different positions in these more low-stake games and see everybody’s abilities...It’ll be much easier to go into the season.” With the softball team, they worked on improving their technique as well as conditioning to get back into shape. “I’d say we just did a lot of drills, and

we really tried to learn our systems because we have a lot of different plays, and we all have to know them,” recalled Wilson. “We also focused on agility, conditioning, and stuff like that. Just really like tuning up our skills before we get into our season games.” These athletes were training intensely, and these experiences only united the teams.

During preseason, athletes were with their teammates throughout the day—before sleep, at breakfast, on the court when they were losing, and at dinner when they were sore. The extra time offers a perfect opportunity to build team culture and character. “When you spend a week with people under conditions that aren’t always comfortable, you find out who they are. You learn who encourages, who stays steady, who pushes through,” Ramesh said.

“I got to know everyone so much more than I did before. Hitting with everyone, building connections over a song or

going on late-night trips was very meaningful to me,” Alladu said. Members from girls’ varsity softball and lacrosse felt similarly. “I feel like I just know them a lot better now and I’m a lot more comfortable with them,” Provost said. Wilson agreed, “Just being together for a while helped us get to know each other.” Overall, the teams have grown tighter and feel more ready for the coming season.

While the athletes were hard at work for the coming season, they also had fun in other parts of the day. “We structured the days so that high-intensity match play was balanced with downtime, and we built in some fun,” Ramesh said. “The goal is to push the players athletically without grinding them down. If players are exhausted and miserable, you’ve defeated the purpose.” Every day from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., check-in, tennis and softball players could visit any park of the Universal Orlando Resort, find time to-

gether at the pool in the hotel, or explore nearby shops with friends. The lacrosse team stayed at the hotel, but still had a great time bonding with and learning fun facts about one another. The fun activities brought the athletes closer together, trusting each other more when it comes to games.

Going into the season, the varsity teams want to play for something bigger than the result. “We compete with discipline, build with purpose, and become a better self in pursuit of the score,” Ramesh shared. On the athlete’s side of things, Provost mentioned, “Since I’m a prep, it’s definitely a big jump for me to start playing high school softball, but I have a really supportive team that builds me up and gives me lots of good advice.” The athletic department truly did an amazing job in making these trips possible, and the memories made during preseason are sure to stick with the athletes.



Courtesy of Exeter Crew

Boys’ crew preseason practice in Austin, Texas.

Boys’ Basketball Cont.

ers erupted. “It was the best feeling I ever had”. Ford could barely find his words. It was a joy and love for the crowd, coming back from 1-4. But even in celebration, the team was still locked in for their playoff dreams. “We let it off for about five seconds,” Ford said,

“then locked right back in.”

The win was impactful for the school, but more importantly, it summarized the immense growth of the team throughout the season. When asked about the emotions after winning the game, Ford said,

“it was the product of all the discipline that we put in on and off the court, the growth from being down one and four at the beginning of the year in Class A.” Growth that propelled Big Red to persevere and come out with the win.



Anoushka Sarathy / The Exonian

Boys’ varsity basketball game in action.

Humor

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» WHAT’S THE WORST

Discover lower Sollie Beer’s imaginings of Experience Exeter, 23.

» GASLIT EXONIANS

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Springing Into Term

By PIPER CLARK ‘29

A once gray sky is now cloudless and brilliant blue. Several feet of snow have melted to reveal the bright green grass that was hidden underneath, and the freezing weather has now warmed up to a glorious forty degrees! Yes, spring is upon us.

Now that we have reached this most wonderful time of the year, how should we spend these precious ten weeks full of sunshine and birdsong? Should we spend our weeks soaking up the sun and watching the newly defrosted spikeballers, or should we lock in at the library to get ahead on a history essay? Well, I have come to solve all of your problems. Be-

hold! A comprehensive list detailing exactly how spring term should be spent:

1. Go to Stillwell’s with your friends. Nevermind if the ice cream is still occasionally warmer than the air or that the forecast is predicting flurries next week; ice cream is essential to enjoying the newly spring weather.
2. Play spikeball. You don’t really need to start your 333 this week, right? That history reading can wait. Also, I’m sure you’ll be able to find an open spikeball net... maybe.
3. Wear a t-shirt. (I’m still wear-

ing my puffer jacket, but maybe you’re brave enough to do this one).
4. Join a new club. It’s never too late to try something new! Also, I’m sure your schedule will have enough time to fit something in. After all, why would you need to start your homework before check-in? It’s spring term, after all. There isn’t much more time for new activities.

5. Enjoy some time in the Quad. We have all been stuck inside dorms and EPAC for long enough. Now that we do not have to walk through a blizzard to get to class,

we can actually go outside and get some vitamin D from touching grass rather than a bottle. If you have homework or you want to read a book, why not do it in one of those red plastic lawn chairs? (If you do this though, beware of spikeballs.)

And there you have it! If you have accomplished all of these tasks, then you can officially say that you have experienced Exeter spring. I mean, how much more can there possibly be to enjoying life than a practical and feasible checklist, right? Now you can go back to being an Exeter student: locking in on homework and eating chicken waffles from Grill. Have Fun!



New Spring Term Schedule

By AVA CHUNG ‘29 and ARIANA METZGER ‘29

Mar. 21 marked the last day of spring break, and so the grind began once again. Maybe you found out who your teachers were early on using the “link-hack”, so you at least had a preview of what the next three months would look like. Aside from the teachers you have, there are also classmates and sleep-ins to consider. After all, it could decide whether spring term would be sunshine and rainbows or rainy and muddy.

Blessed by the

Schedulers:

It was time. After what felt like a mad-denyingly short spring break, it was time to get our schedules. I opened MyExeter. After using the annoying yet useful link-hack, I waited as the blank page loaded into the dreaded grid. Scanning through my classes, I was met with an unfamiliar feeling: joy. Row after row were teachers. But not ones like my previous two terms. I shuddered, recalling the ordeals of those classes. I almost danced on the spot as I read the names. Later, I logged on and checked my schedule.

Monday: 9 a.m., Tuesday: 10:50 a.m., Wednesday: 9 a.m. (x2) – I had to pause my reading to collect myself – three sleep-ins already? I clicked to the next page. Thursday: 9 a.m., Friday: 10 a.m..

This is a never-before-seen occurrence! I won the lottery! Am I the luckiest person in this whole school? What had I done to earn such a luxurious schedule?

The schedulers probably felt bad for me. This schedule certainly made up for the painful 8 a.m.s I experienced every day for the past two terms.

Cursed by the

Schedulers:

How could spring break possibly be done already? I was only just settling into the relaxed life of zero stress and pure bliss. Suddenly, I’m already in the middle of nowhere: Exeter, New Hampshire. I was clinging to the hope that the schedule would be alright. So far, the teachers I have sound pretty strict, and it’s not the best news to my ears, but there’s no harm in being optimistic. I’ve already had plenty of sleep-ins during both fall and winter terms, so maybe the streak will continue. The double sleep-in I had during

winter term had to be the best thing I’ve ever experienced. I opened MyExeter to discover my fate:

Monday: 8 a.m., Tuesday: 8 a.m.. It wasn’t looking the greatest, but it could still be turned around. Wednesday: 8 a.m./9 a.m., Thursday: 8 a.m., Friday: 8 a.m.. I clicked back and forth with the little arrow on Blackbaud to see if there’d been a mistake.

I didn’t know if there was something worse. The only glimmer of hope I had was on a Wednesday, every other week. I wasn’t even taking Health! Somehow, all my teachers had col-

lectively decided on using every reserve format in the book. The schedulers hated me, at least that’s what it felt like. It would be three months of 7 a.m. wakeup calls. I shuddered, the dread setting in. This was my life now, living on caffeine and awaiting June 5th.

A Word of Advice:

Whether your schedule wants you to sleep as much as possible or incorrectly thinks you’re a morning person, don’t forget to set your alarms! The schedulers are always watching, and who knows? Maybe you will receive the blessing of the schedulers next year!

Exonians Talking to Terms Again. Sigh.

By SOLEIL POMMERAUD ‘29

Dear Spring Term,

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO GASLIGHT ME LIKE THAT?!?!? I thought I would return to school and find some lovely cherry blossoms and a beautiful, shining sun waiting to greet me and provide bearable conditions for the term. But no, it just had to snow the day we got back, crushing all of my naïve, good-for-nothing dreams. All I want to do right now is lie down in bed and hibernate until the summer. The number of bears in the wild is running low anyway, so why don’t I just become one? What a perfect win-win situation.

Not only is it cold and miserable, but we have to stay here for not nine, not ten, but ELEVEN WEEKS. I consider that an outrageous amount of time to be locked in for, and my survival rate is dropping at a very rapid pace. What’s even more annoying is how I don’t even get to relax over break! The constant grind of an Exonian never ends. When we’re not at school, the SAT studying, internships, and many other forms of employ-

ment fill every second of our well-deserved resting time, making it impossible to ever catch a break. Can we please all agree to just have a month of straight rotting where nobody does anything, and we can all be happy for once?? God forbid a girl wants to watch AI fruit love island and binge Netflix shows for an entire week straight.

Spring term is supposed to be joyful, but I’m struggling to find even an ounce of whimsy in my poor, overworked soul. If the sun doesn’t come out soon, I will genuinely wither away from lack of vitamin D. We’re still not even close to halfway through the term, and I feel like it’s been months since spring break ended. Just looking at the endless weeks of stress awaiting me makes me shiver in my boots, but listen here, my fellow Exonians, we mustn’t lose hope! I’ve already seen countless SpikeBall nets and Frisbees popping up around campus, and it’s only a matter of time before everyone’s out frolicking.

Speaking of SpikeBall, though, I swear, Exeter has the most sweats at it that I’ve ever seen in my life. These people are pull-

ing out some triple alpha spinning combo moves and expect me to throw myself after the ball going a thousand miles per hour AND successfully return it to the tiny net. At this point, the number of casualties occurring from SpikeBall will surpass those of all the other Exeter sports combined, and that is no small number. We should start having to sign liability waivers any time we even approach one of those treacherous nets (to avoid any consequences from both flying balls and people).

Only one more term until summer, gang, we’ve got this. And then the seniors get to run off to college, and everyone else gets to come back and cry about the endless work again. So fun! I love being here! Only 50 more years until retirement! Unless the retirement age goes back ... sigh. All there’s left to do is just accept my fate, I guess. I guess the spring term is more bearable than winter ... Stay strong, my fellow soldiers. Until next year.

My greatest condolences, An Exonian corpse (almost)

Ask Humor

By GARY GUO ‘29

Aaliya Huang ‘29: “The wind bothers me.”

Yeah no the wind is sometimes just cold like blades carving into my skin. Sometimes it comes with dirt and sand that blinds my eye so that I can’t make it to my next class on time. One second you’re walking to class, the next you’re getting exfoliated by sand and arriving five minutes late, looking like you fought a leaf blower and lost.

Letter to the administration: Due to the wind bothering traveling between classes as much as snow does. “Wind Passes” must be implemented, which excuses students from 8 a.m. tardies when gusts exceed 12 mph and allow students to enter class by crawling so they won’t fly away. Matthew Hao ‘29: “Too low grade, Harkness warriors in class.”

Grades, grades, grades, the determin-

ing factor of students’ happiness here at Exeter. Sadly. Just upon hearing the situation, my body develops symptoms: fatigue, weakness, soreness, and an allergic reaction to eye contact. There’s nothing more than a bad grade and warriors getting in my way of a good grade. I just lost points because I didn’t interrupt fast enough. You have my sympathies.



Alex Luo ‘28: “Random people like Gary asking me what’s bothering me bothers me.”

Peak English sentence and grammar. Valid reasoning (maybe it’s circular reasoning? Hmm...uhhh... anyways, my brain hurts.)

Next time I see you, I’ll just nod silently like a hallway

NPC and let you continue your day unperceived, as nature intended.

Karsten Vun ‘26: “I need to work ahead so I don’t have to wake up at 6 a.m.”

Valid. “Listen to your elder,” my mom said to me when I was young. Listening to our five-year senior! Obviously, he knows the school better than any of the students here. If you want a successful Exeter run like Karsten, listen to him. If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it?

Albert Xu ‘29: “My schedule. Preps taking reserve block classes causing me to get a lot of 8 a.m.”

Preps are naturally at the bottom of the food chain. Every day we have to face teasing from higher classes. Now even the schedulers get on our backs. But Albert, please stay strong: in two years, we will get promoted to “upperclassman,” and tradition demands we become part of the problem. Nyahahahaha...

“What’s the Worst that Could Happen?”

By SOLLIE BEER’28

Oh, Experience Exeter; thate wonderful time of year when a young Exonian’s despair and exhaustion magically turns to excitement and cult-like fervor. It seems like nothing even unpleasant could ever happen this week; the world itself seems to stand still for ourthe budding future students to experience the school in its full spring glory. The only thing that could POSSIBLY spoil this grand old time would

be some bizarre incident, like a lockdown on the first day. Of course, something like that would neverNEVER happen, but it’s fun to pretend! After all, us Exonians could use an exercise in delusiondeluding ourselves to prepare ourselves for the always-looming end-of-year report cards. TO THAT END:

Please enjoy the worst of EXPERIENCE EXETER’S “TOURING TRAGEDIES”

Accidentally bringing

a prospect into the DSL during the weekly scheduled group makeout.

A spill of the secret Elm “vat of doom” that’s kept in the back corner behind the ice cream machines.

Grill closure (In the event of a riot, hosts ARE expected to protect their prospect with their lives.)

A flash flood of the Squamscott river from the rapid snowmelt.

Turning the wrong corner and unwittingly walking into a student sacrifice

ritual for a second-week math test.

Accidentally slipping on the one patch of ice left on a path.

Webster Hall.

Alien invasion (corollary; can be made positive should the school choose to give a day off for ‘extenuating circumstances’).

Total destruction of the academy building in a freak construction accident.

The final, all-out “Harkness War” between every blabbermouth in

your 8:00 a.m.A.M.

Sudden teleportation of the school and surrounding areas to a remote location in Nicaragua (corollary; can be made positive should the school choose to give a day off for ‘extenuating circumstances’).

Accidentally showing your prospect the room where the deans generate the AI posters for their emails (may boil them alive, computers are known to generate heat with excess use).

Or ... the very worst of all ... the unthinkable ... the horrible ... the DASTARDLY... NOT GETTING A PROSPECT! This is the very worst fate of all; if this should arise ... well, it’s best to not even consider it.

So long as these disasters are avoided, we should all be set up for a fantastic Experience Exeter. Go forth, friends, Exonians, compatriots, and recruit each and every prospect that graces our lawns!



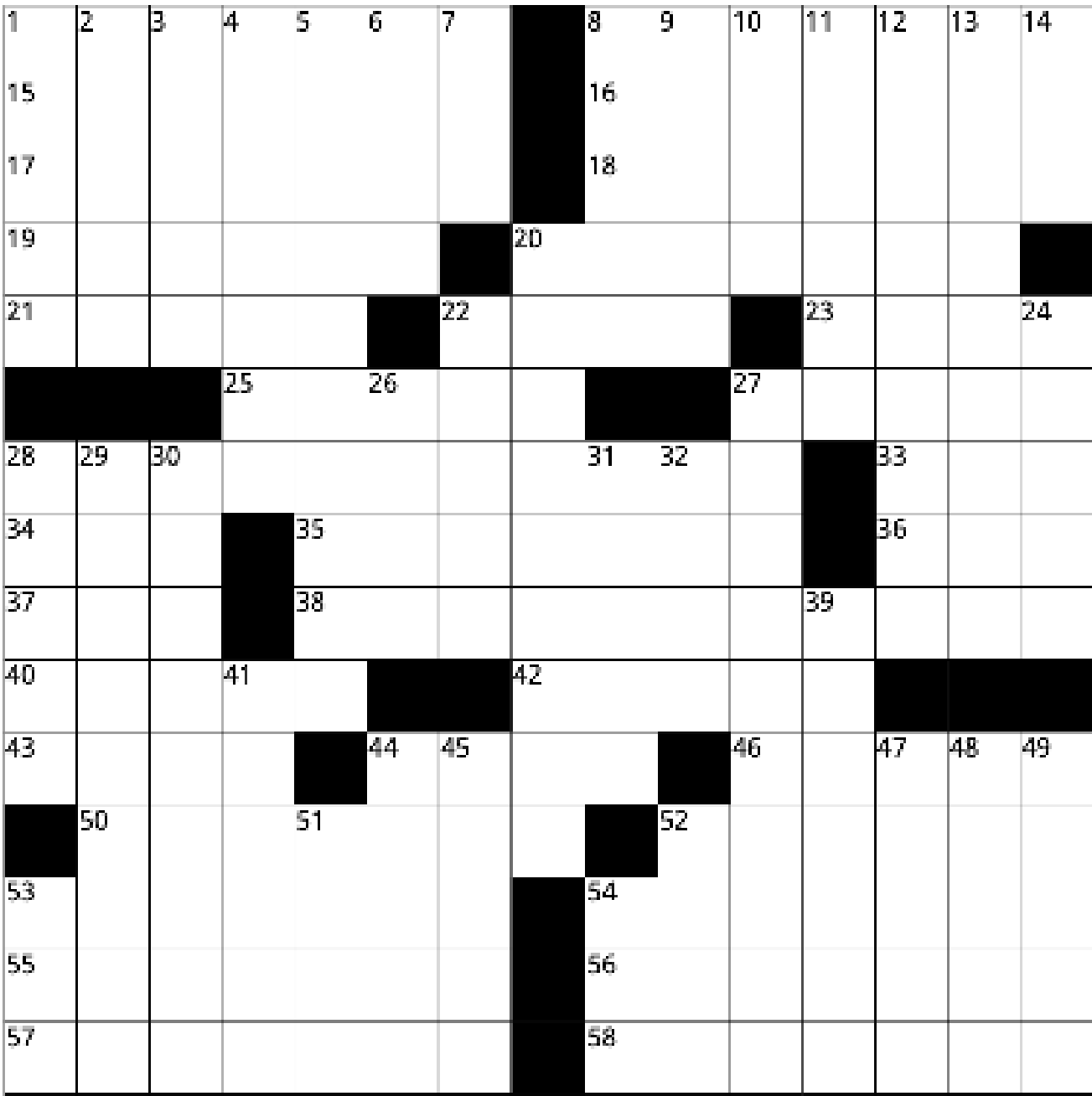
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(guess who!)



The Crossword Corner

By CAROL LEE ‘28



ACROSS

- 1-Some daisies
- 8-Sketches over
- 15-Southwestern saloon
- 16-”Gimme!”
- 17-World atlas spread
- 18-Starts to melt
- 19-Drive off
- 20-Strong Greek wine
- 21-Fishhook fastener
- 22-Level, in London
- 23-Chris of “The Good Wife”
- 25-Gourmand
- 27-Subway entrance
- 28-Brewery product since 1777

- 33-Stop working
- 34-Prefix meaning “self”
- 35-Term for a word that isn’t in the dictionary, but maybe should be
- 36-CIO partner
- 37-NYC subway org.
- 38-They have lots of dead people
- 40-Makes darker, as text
- 42-The New Yorker cartoonist Edward
- 43-French friend
- 44-Grieg’s “___ Death”
- 46-___ Buena (island in San Francis-

- co Bay)
 - 50-Brightest star in Scorpius
 - 52-Overhaul
 - 53-Pittsburgh pro
 - 54-1982 Toto hit
 - 55-Saw-toothed
 - 56-Heroic poems
 - 57-Seven-time Emmy winner
 - 58-Least relaxed
- DOWN
- 1-A lot
 - 2-Invites over
 - 3-Licorice flavoring
 - 4-Office Depot rival
 - 5-Videos showing flowers blooming, often
 - 6-Like a control

- freak
- 7-Easy mark
- 8-Goes up
- 9-Cybermemo
- 10-Dict. entries
- 11-Give a new hue to
- 12-Sounding as if the speaker has some swollen glands
- 13-Succeed in all one’s endeavors, so to speak
- 14-Ave. crossers
- 20-They don’t react much
- 22-Ignited again
- 24-Loaf ends
- 26-Catches some rays
- 27-Spots

- 28-Ritchie Valens hit, with “La”
- 29-Self-operating
- 30-Setting for “One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich”
- 31-Choir section
- 32-Creepy look
- 39-Pub pullers
- 41-Dissuades
- 44-Mountain ridge
- 45-More desertlike
- 47-Actress Blakley
- 48-Joint tenants?
- 49-As ___ resort
- 51-Mathematician Turing
- 52-Tug-of-war need
- 53-Opposite of NNW
- 54-Emeritus: Abbr.

The Exonian

We would like to acknowledge the Squamscott/Penacook peoples who were the first peoples of this land. We would like to honor their ancestors, descendants and future generations for caring for this area and allowing us to be here today.

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