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How are Federal Layoffs Affecting Students and Faculty at Latin?

By: Giselle Norquist and Annie Patterson, sophomores

Since the beginning of February, the United States government has announced major defunding and the permanent shutdown of a handful of government agencies. Not only did thousands of people lose their jobs after days of uncertainty, but also many other organizations, including many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are suffering due to losing the funding of the dismantled agencies. Those let go include contractors and employees of USAID, the United States Agency for International Development, an independent agency of the U.S. government which was responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance. Elon Musk, advisor to President Trump, shut it down, claiming the organization was “corrupt.” He closed the agency after ending many of its international programs. Those programs included ones combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis as well as providing nutrition assistance and humanitarian aid around the world including to those in conflict zones. In addition, the administration made cuts to other agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Education, and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Honors and AP chemistry teacher Mr. Stuart commented on the impact the USAID shut down has had on him and his wife. “We have gone from stability to not knowing how to survive in the span of two months. My wife has a project that she had been working on for three years stopped without any notice.” When asked about why he thought the government decided to shut down the .

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organization, Stuart responded, “The purpose of shutting down all of these organizations is to prevent any investigation of Elon Musk’s activity. The reason USAID went first is that they were investigating Musk’s activity in Ukraine in relation to his satellite that severely benefits the Ukrainian army, but the purpose of eliminating all of these different agencies is weakening anyone who threatens Musk and those who participate in investigations against him.”

Government employees fired as a result of Musk’s efforts and organizations working for USAID have sued, arguing the firings and funding cuts break the law. Freshman honors and AP Physics teacher Mr. Keller explained how his spouse, who works at the Center for Gender Equity, was going to have her name on a case against Musk, and how this would affect his family. “Because of DOGE, they had to decide whether they’d be the named plaintiffs against Elon Musk. It would be her name on the court docs against Elon Musk. We’d have to get security or move. We’ve had conversations about when she’d become a target.”

Freshman Ruark Jennings’s father lost his position at USAID. “It was chaotic for a while, our schedules had to change, but in the end there was nothing else for my dad to do except keep going.”

Another Freshman, Daphna Soskis whose mother works for The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) said “My mom is super stressed and they put everybody at her office on leave.”

Sophomore Patrick Brooks said his father has worked for the federal government for 18 years and is just 19 months away from earning his full pension. He’s worried his dad will be fired: “This situation has put us into a hard spot as all his work could go to waste in a moment’s notice. It has put a lot of stress on us as the fear continues.”

At Musk’s urging, the White House sent an email to all federal employees in early February asking them to share five bullet points on their accomplishments the previous week. Musk said his goal was to monitor productivity and search for fake government employees despite no evidence they exist. Many parents of Latin students received this message. One student whose mother is a financial regulator said, “My mom felt scared but angry. Now my family can’t even mention anything about politics today because my mom will dismiss it and leave the room.” Their mom told the paper herself, “I’m continuing on with my fraud cases because I want to get the bad guys.”

The government is also cutting funding to a number of universities, both the Times of India and Forbes put out articles detailing how Trump’s freezing of federal funds could directly harm 30 different schools with D.C.’s Gallaudet and Howard being hit some of the hardest. The Times of India’s article states, “Gallaudet University, a federally funded institution for the deaf and hard of hearing, depends on federal support for 65% of its \$213 million dollar yearly revenue. Similarly, Howard University, a prominent HBCU, relies on federal funds for 30% of its annual budget.” A loss of funding for these schools means large scale cuts to their academic programs including diversity programs and scholarships. Specifically, the smaller departments within universities are at risk of getting shut down due to loss of funding. Sophomore Sabine Mann said that her mother, who works as a chair in the philosophy department at Howard, had to lay off coworkers of hers. “She’s okay, but she’s worried, as the government cut funding for Columbia University, that Howard may be next.”

Lyla Kramer's mom who worked for FHI360 said, "My non-profit organization implements USAID funded projects in developing countries. When USAID was dismantled and projects forced to stop work in late January, that meant we could no longer do the work we had been asked to do. Unfortunately without money my organization cannot pay workers, which meant they needed to let employees go. Eventually I was one of those employees. And due to all of this happening very fast, our organization needed to pivot quickly to keep our company from going bankrupt, so many of us were only given 24 hours notice before we were locked out of our computers and offices. Many of us worked there for over 20 years, and in one 24 hour period that all changed. USAID has been doing amazing work all around the world, assisting the most vulnerable people amongst us. Many of these programs provided basic human necessities like nutritious food, vaccinations, and clean water. Without it, only time will tell how countries will adapt. Most likely there will be increased poverty and unnecessary death. Most certainly we have lost the trust they had in Americans to help them."

When asked what she wishes people understood about how the shut down of a major organization affects people who depend on them she responded, "I'm not sure everyone truly understands what it means for someone in our community to lose their job, let alone the thousands in DC who have. That lost income is a blow to the person and their family, that is for sure. But that also means that the unemployed person is no longer paying taxes on their wages, taxes that go back into the economy. That unemployed person is also less likely to spend their money to shop in the community, spend money in restaurants for a nice meal, and will basically do what they can to conserve what money they have left.

Eventually if that unemployed person is unable to pay their rent, health insurance, food, or hospital bills, other taxpayers end up paying it for them. Having those of us who can work, actually working, makes our economy run more smoothly."

Chinese and Government teacher Mr. Liu shared his thoughts about the massive impact of the cuts given his background as a lawyer and his work on U.S.-China policy on Capitol Hill. He said, "President Trump's executive orders to downsize the federal government workforce and curtail the activities of such departments and agencies as USAID, the Department of Education, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and many others has an outsized impact on the DC area because our economy is so closely tied to the jobs they created. This also means that the DC government can anticipate collecting fewer taxes to fund basic services such as police, schools, parks and recreation because laid-off workers will not be generating tax revenue from their income. It's possible that the businesses that serve these workers, like restaurants and convenience stores, also will be impacted."

Mr. Liu explained that the balance of powers between the three branches of government could potentially impact the extent of the cuts, "The core issue is the relationship between the President, Congress and the federal bureaucracy. The tension is between a President who was elected and wants to use that as a mandate to undo the federal bureaucracy that he arguably has some control over, versus the wishes of Congress, who also has influence over the federal bureaucracy through the laws that created them and the funding of their activities that they approved. And then you add in the third branch, the judicial branch, that is trying to determine what that balance should be and how much President Trump (and potentially future presidents) should be allowed to do under

executive orders and actions. That is why you are seeing a lot of court cases challenging Trump's actions and in some cases requiring Trump to stop what he is doing. It remains to be seen to what extent the courts and Congress limit President Trump's actions."



Freshman Dino Sadiq Silla accepting his award for placing third in the city-wide Poetry Out Loud competition.



Taking the Test

By: Daphna Soskis, freshman

The SAT, or Scholastic Aptitude Test, measures a high school student's readiness for college. It assesses skills in critical reading, writing, and math. The SAT is one of two standardized college admissions tests in the US, along with the ACT. Latin students took the SAT on Wednesday March 5, on campus. Latin students in 9th and 10th grade complete the preliminary SAT (PSAT), and they wait until 11th grade to take the real SAT. For 9th graders, to get into the class AP Lang, they must get a score higher than 600 on the English section of the PSAT, but other than that, nothing else rides on the test. Therefore, the PSAT need not be taken quite as seriously as the real SAT.

Freshman Judah Harris took the PSAT and felt no stress about it. "I am not stressed at all because it's the pre-SAT," he said. Because of this mindset, he has chosen to spend little to no time preparing for the test.

Sophomore Daniel Anker-Scherer also took the PSAT and took a relaxed approach. He said, "I'm not at all stressed. My score does not affect me, and it's really just a chance to familiarize myself and prepare for taking it in 11th grade."

However, he has noticed that his older peers taking the real SAT are feeling the pressure, "All my junior friends taking the real SAT are very stressed."

For Junior Nina Harris, stress is something she expects but hasn't felt yet. "I'm not stressed yet, but I probably will be the morning of the test," she admitted. Her preparation is planned and organized, and she dedicates most of her study time to weekends and puts in at least three hours every Wednesday with a tutor.

Junior Sophia Showalter shared a similar sentiment, "I'm a little bit stressed, but I am prepping about two hours a week," she said. However, she remains confident. "I am not too stressed because I believe in myself." Her strategy shows that with preparation and self-assurance, pressure can be managed effectively.

These different perspectives on the SAT highlight how different students handle standardized testing. While some see it as a life-altering test requiring extreme preparation, others view it as just another standardized test.

Whether you are taking the pre SAT or the real SAT it is always important to gain helpful study habits for future standardized tests. Students can always benefit from finding a preparation strategy that works for them, whether that means extensive studying or a more laid-back approach. With confidence and the right mindset, the SAT doesn't have to be a source of overwhelming stress.

Spring Fling Coming in April

By Madelyn Zeller, sophomore

The spring dance for 9th and 10th graders is coming up soon! This year, Community Council opted to call it “Spring Formal” rather than Spring Fling—just one in a host of changes they are planning to make.

One complaint students had with the Spring Fling in previous years was that the decorations were subpar. As junior Godiya Dakim put it, “the decorations get kind of sad sometimes.” This year, with the change to “Spring Formal,” the Community Council is hoping to up the quality of the decor and improve the “overall vibe,” according to sophomore Community Council member Selah Brown. However, “that doesn't mean you need to be super fancy,” she added.

Another one of students' complaints about past Spring Flings was the lack of food options, especially free ones. Junior Catherine Paci voiced that “food would've made [the spring dance] ten times better,” and sophomore Maria Stocker added that, “you need good food” to make the dance a success. This year, the Community Council will provide drinks, and, as usual, clubs will be there to sell food. Selah also said that “there will be tables at the back where you can sit and eat or just take a break.” On account of that, the entire MPR will be open for the dance, rather than just one side.

Students have mixed feelings about splitting the MPR versus using the whole room. Sophomore Elizabeth Lewis liked having it split last year because it “[made] it feel smaller, like there [were] more people.” However, Godiya lamented that “It messe[d] up the entire aura.” Hopefully having the entire MPR open this year—but with tables in the back—will provide a happy medium.

And, of course, there is always the question of music. This year, Community Council will most likely not get a DJ. Instead, there will be a “song request form and a playlist and [...] someone to man the playlist,” Selah explained. In past years, there were song request forms, but some students have found that, as junior Mira Soskis put it, the music “tends to not reflect what people have submitted.” Mira also said there should be “diversity in the music,” meaning incorporating multiple music genres and styles.

As a potential remedy for this, sophomore Sylvia Bleimehl suggested “the Big Bootie Mix. [I]t's a track that you can play that has just a bunch of songs that everyone knows together, and if you play that we don't even need a DJ, and it plays good songs that everyone knows and everyone can dance to.”

Students also chimed in about potential activities at the dance. Without the juniors and seniors there—the spring dance is traditionally only for freshmen and sophomores, as juniors and seniors have prom—the dance can feel empty and less exciting than Homecoming, which is open to the entire Upper School. Therefore, to enliven the dance a little, Community Council is planning to bring the photo booth back again this year, although it's not yet set in stone. However, junior Thalia Ehrenpreis thinks that the dance would benefit from even more activities. “We should be able to do more things other than just a photo booth if we don't want to dance,” she said.

As for other details and changes, there will be a maximum of “2 guests per person that need to be between the ages of 13-17,” Selah mentioned. “And the doors will be closing after an hour of the start, so the dance goes from 7-9 [and] doors will close at 8.”

Hopefully these changes will refresh and revitalize the spring dance and make it more appealing to attend. From a teacher’s perspective, upper school chemistry teacher Mr. Stuart believes it is always “efficiently organized.” However, he added that he has “no idea how much the students enjoy it,” although he often “get[s] reports the next day saying ‘Thank you for organizing. It went really well.’”

Upper school physics teacher Mr. Keller agreed, noting that, while “there’s always a period of awkwardness in the first ten or fifteen minutes,” students usually “sort of settle into it.” He also contends that “it’s like JV Prom, [and] you need the experience of the Spring Fling as JV prom to have the experience for prom to be excellent, so you know what you want out of it.”

On the other hand, some students have found the spring dance in past years to be not quite as enjoyable as the other dances offered, with junior Jonah Cohen calling it the “forgotten child” of Latin’s dances. He wishes that Latin would “pitch into these dance experiences that are so imperative to having a high school experience” and added that he believes “Latin can spare from its numerous amounts of income like 500 dollars to make it a little better. I think we can really stretch that budget with the dedicated people we have at Latin to make our dances great.”

This year’s spring dance could certainly benefit from various improvements from past dances. With luck, the efforts of this year’s Spring Formal organizers will enhance the dance for everyone.



Mr. Stuart posing majestically at last year’s Spring Fling.

Is There a Cure for Senioritis?

By: Andrew Kim, Hersh Kempf, and Gabriel Maysonett, freshmen

What is senioritis? Senioritis refers to a decline in motivation experienced by senior students approaching the end of high school. Once students have been accepted to colleges, some feel it's no longer necessary to maintain their grades, which is the mindset behind senioritis.

Is this a good strategy? No, it is not advisable to stop trying after being accepted. Colleges can and will rescind your acceptance if your grades drop significantly, especially if it affects college admissions or completing the high school diploma.

Senior Max Aaron said he sometimes feels like senioritis hurts his academic focus. "My grades are slipping a little, but not too much," said Max. He noted that he felt exhausted from school overall. When we inquired about his attendance, he mentioned struggling to arrive on time but clarified that he has not been late to any of his classes. Max believes that senioritis is affecting the Class of 2025 by making them eager to finish school.

Another senior, Alice Pittard, mentioned, "People are feeling less motivated because the end is so close, they feel like 'Oh it's only like three months' so they have less motivation to do their work." When asked if people's college admissions affected their motivation to do work, Alice said, "It's not necessarily the people who committed that feel less motivated to do their work." She contends that senioritis has the same effect no matter your college situation, but its effects depend on the person.

For example, Alice said, "Habit keeps me motivated and that's why I continue to work. I can imagine being less motivated and maybe doing less quality work, but I can't ever imagine just stopping."

In contrast, senior Bennet Fisher has a different experience with senioritis. When asked if he felt the effects of senioritis, he said "Yes, each of my grades have gone down about a letter grade since last year." He also spoke about how it affected his motivation by saying "It is also affecting my mental health. I am feeling fatigued and find it hard to do work." This shows how not everyone has the same mentality through their last months of high school. But, similar to his peers, Bennet said, "Senioritis is affecting everybody to varying degrees. For example, those who have most of their acceptances can lay back, while those still waiting have to keep up." Again, there is a common theme in the seniors affected by senioritis, and that it is situational.

Senior advisor and Honors Humanities teacher Mr. Hultgren sees symptoms of senioritis in students, but not every child has caught the virus. He said, "Some kids are producing outstanding work and are motivated, while others struggle with their motivation. It is not always the matter with college commitment, some people early in the year experienced less motivation."

He has a similar idea that senioritis is situational. Like Alice, Mr. Hultgren says that the college admission process doesn't exactly play a large role in the student's incentive to work, rather it depends on the person. He said the end of the year revealed the seniors' motivations, saying, "Once they get into colleges, why do they keep learning? .

Why do they keep doing school? It shows their incentive for doing work, either for grades, or personal interests.” In summary, senioritis changes from person to person. Incentives for work also vary, for example, if someone was in AP that counts towards college there would be a huge incentive to keep up your grade there, but if you were in an elective that wasn't necessary there would be little to no motivation.

To conclude, the only cure for senioritis is purpose. Without a purpose, it feels as if all the work that's been done is meaningless. To stay motivated there has to be interest in the work being done, whether you've been accepted to college or not.



Spring Break Justice Trip To the American South

By: Leo Shapiro-Morton, sophomore

Over spring break, 12 students across 10th and 11th grade will travel through the South to explore key historical sites of the African American civil rights movement. Along with these historical landmarks, they will also visit several historically Black colleges and universities. The goal of the trip is for students to gain a deeper understanding of the legacy left behind by the civil rights movement.

This is only the third trip to the South that Latin has ever offered, and it has changed a lot since the first year. Mr. Day, one of the creators of this trip and the organizer, explained some of these changes in depth. In 2019 on the first trip, the students actually took a train. This made for a far less adaptable trip, as the group did not have the same flexibility that they had in 2022 and will have this year. In 2022, with the additional versatility of having a van, the students were able to stop in Greensboro where they visited UNC at Greensboro and the famous Woolworth's lunch counter.

Mr. Day emphasized how astonishing it was to see the site of the lunch counter sit-in of 1960 in person due to its unexpected size. He also described how crucial the trip is to Washington Latin's mission: "It trains people to value the inherent dignity and worth of every person."

This year, the 12 students will be traveling in a packed van and staying in hotels while they travel through the South.

They will visit the Equal Justice Initiative Museum, Kelly Ingram Park, and the 16th Street Baptist Church along with several other memorials and museums. In May 1963, Birmingham police and firemen attacked civil rights demonstrators at Kelly Ingram Park. After that day, Kelly Ingram Park became the assembly point for a massive protest campaign. The 16th Street Baptist Church is the site of a deadly attack on the centerpiece of the Birmingham African American community. In September of 1963, the congregation was knocked to the ground and several children were killed. It is vital that students see these sites in person to gain a stronger understanding of the atrocities that occurred and the bravery that was shown.

Juniors Simon Balwin and Aaron Gill both decided to take part in this trip because of the opportunity to learn about the civil rights movement in areas where it was most active. Simon Baldwin said that the trip "offers the opportunity to experience things that [he] might not get the chance to otherwise." He also emphasized the importance of learning "more about the Civil Rights Movement at its source."

Aaron had been waiting for the opportunity to go on this trip since before the pandemic, so when he heard that there was a chance it was coming back he wanted to do anything he could do to help. Aaron also added that seeing the museums in person will "give [him] a different perspective and truly emphasize the atrocities [his] people faced back then."

Simon also believes that “being able to see the history and feel it and immerse yourself in it is a much more revelatory experience...” Not only did they both agree that it is very important to see where the history we learn about occurred, but they also both agreed that it is now especially important to learn about the injustices that African-Americans faced. Simon Baldwin argued that “the current political conditions are making certain accounts of history, especially those that concern the struggles and power of historically marginalized communities in the U.S., more difficult to access in an effort to erase it completely.” Aaron agreed and also added that “it is imperative that people know about the civil rights movement and know about people like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. so they can understand how far we’ve come and that we can’t be brought down by anything our nation’s president tries to do to us...”

All the students and chaperones are very excited to be going on the trip, and can't wait to share what they've learned when they are back.



Drawing by Bette Maren Loots, sophomore

Community Service Requirements

By June Walsh and Alice Birkenhead, freshmen

In Washington, DC, high school students must have at least 100 hours of community service to graduate. It is recommended that they complete 25 hours a year while they are in high school so you can achieve the minimum requirement. But, many people go above and beyond achieving their 100 hours of community service—or more—during their freshman year alone.

The school offers many opportunities to get community service, including doing stage crew for the musicals and plays, becoming an ambassador, and setting up for events. Occasionally there are even opportunities for community service within clubs during lunch and break. However, these are not the only ways to get community service. There are countless other ways that students can get service hours outside of school, including volunteering at a summer camp, helping out within religious organizations, volunteering for a library or food banks, and more.

Ms. Raskin, math teacher and director of Student Engagement and Leadership, said, “Some examples of CS projects that students have been involved in are volunteering at their place of worship or other community center, tutoring or babysitting (not for pay!), helping with people who are elderly or infirmed, working at a community garden, or volunteering at a summer camp. Students have earned CS hours around the school by helping with school and community events, being a Student Ambassador, helping set up and clean up for Prom, or being a crew member for a school theater production.

We even have had a student become a volunteer EMT and earn over 600 hours over the course of 4 years.” As Ms. Raskin demonstrated, there are tons of opportunities for students to volunteer, even right here at Latin.

The goal for all students is to start getting hours in their freshman year. Freshman Jack O’Rourke said that he has 18 hours so far and they are all from outside-of-school opportunities. He said, “I have gotten my hours from volunteering at my church and volunteering for SOME.” SOME stands for So Others May Eat (SOME). It is a Washington, D.C. non-profit that works for food distribution. When asked if he was stressed about getting the rest of the hours he needed, he said, “I am not stressed about getting the rest of my hours because I have 3 and a half more years to get 72 hours.” Jack plans to get the rest of his hours from volunteering at his church.

Another freshman that has surpassed her hours is Abby Fitzpatrick. Abby, unlike Jack, has completed most of her hours from the school. She said, “I have completed 150 hours.” These hours have come from working on crew for the play and musical, being an ambassador for the school, and volunteering for the Parkinson's foundation. As exemplified by Abby, there are many different times in the year, and different areas of interest that students can volunteer for and to get these required hours.

Many people, like Johnie Thomas, 10th grade, volunteer for a summer camp; There are also many people, like Abby and Jack, who volunteer during the school year.

In Abby's case, this includes staying late nights after school for ambassador work, crew for theater, or other school-related community service projects.

Others said they have easily met and then surpassed their hours by engaging in projects that really interest them.

Ms. Raskin said, “[Her] suggestion for freshmen would be to engage in a wide variety of different projects and see which types of projects are ones you like! Earning CS hours can be fun and rewarding if you are working in an environment that you love. [Another] piece of advice would be to look at the places you already spend a lot of your time (church, a sports team, a music or dance studio, etc.) and see if you can volunteer there. If you spend a lot of time there already, you probably enjoy being there!”



Senior Alice Pittard says she has finished her community service hours, and then doubled the expectation. She got a lot of hours at stage crew and volunteering at the DC public library. She also worked for the Gutenberg Project, typing up and scanning old books when their copyright expired. “I read books and then I checked that they were accurately scanned,” said Alice. In the end, she realized, “I had 200 hours.”

Students can submit their Community Service log forms by submitting the Google Form linked on the Daily Bulletin and can email communityservice@latinpcs.org with any questions.



Let's Unpack That...

By: Alice Pittard and Madeline Sickel, seniors

A very common complaint heard in the halls of Washington Latin is, "My backpack's so heavy!" Another one is, "Ugh, my zipper broke again." Backpacks are so commonplace in students' lives that we often forget about how much we need them. Yet, backpacks are so important as students have to carry them around all school day, as well as on their commutes to and from school.

Students have many different opinions about the weight they have to lug around. On one hand, freshman Miles McCartney claims, "My backpack is not too heavy. The school isn't doing anything wrong because they provide lockers."

Other students have the opposite experience. Freshman Eli Cohen says, "I think my backpack is too heavy but I don't think the school could change this. The lockers are a helpful tool but I find it tedious to go out of my way to either drop or pick up items for class."

However, Freshman Emma Fitzpatrick does use her locker "every day at the start of the day and at break/lunch because [she] can't fit all of my binders and books in [her] bag." Yet, she still says, "Last time I weighed it my backpack was like 20 pounds which is manageable but still really heavy."

Freshman Henry Freed suggested that, "A way my backpack could be lightened is if teachers gave more work online because there is some stuff that does not need to be on paper."

Additionally, he noted, "There could be a place to put your binder in every room so you wouldn't have to carry it everywhere."

Junior Jonah Cohen added that, "My backpack is around 20-25 pounds depending on the day. I personally don't see it as too heavy and I like the exercise but I'm also conscious to walk with good posture to avoid back injuries. If you had a heavy backpack and bad posture it would be a miserable experience."

As a student who bikes to school, he said he chose his backpack for its practicality, "it can split into [two] to become bike saddlebags."

Some students shared that their backpacks have lasted a surprisingly long time. Senior Maeve Marchand, for example, has had hers since first grade, though she hasn't used it continuously since then.

Henry said, "When I got my backpack my mom took me to REI and picked out a random hiking backpack. I got my backpack at the start of 6th grade so [it has lasted for] 4 years."

Junior Noa Smudde's has lasted even longer. She explained, "I have a Thule backpack, and I like it a lot. It has a lot of helpful pockets (front pocket, side pockets, several zipper pockets, computer pocket, notebook pocket, etc). It has held up for 5 years so far."

As many students may have noticed, there is currently a trend among high school seniors. At the beginning of their senior year, some students purchase backpacks intended for little kids. These backpacks often include designs featuring Disney characters, super heroes, and sparkly unicorns.

Commenting on this trend, Noa Smudde said, “I am not a senior, but I really like the trend. I think it's cute and funny.”

Agreeing, Jonah Cohen responded, “I think it's goofy but I like it.”

Sarah Schifferle, a senior, said, “I have a senior backpack of a rainbow sparkly cat with sequins. I bought it before senior year started because it made me happy and it was smaller so I thought it

would make me carry around less stuff (but I just overstuff the bag).” It also helped her “put school into perspective: it's not that serious.” However, a downside of a small kids' backpack is that “it's not that durable. I might have to switch backpacks before quarter four.”

While the importance of backpacks is often forgotten, many students still appreciate their friend that's always got their back.



Editorial: Diversity in Honors Classes

By: Hope Robinson and Samantha Brooks, freshmen

At Washington Latin High School, each student has the option of taking On-Level or Honors courses. Honors courses are the more accelerated versions of On-Level classes. They're faster-paced and provide a heavier workload. To be admitted into Honors, you are required to at least have a B+ and a recommendation from your teacher. If you were in Honors the year prior, you also need at least a B. Being in an Honors course is beneficial to students—it provides a healthy academic challenge and adds a 0.5-point boost to your GPA. Since these are the only requirements, it's reasonable to expect diversity in races and ethnicities among students enrolled in Honors classes.

Unfortunately, many Black students have noticed that they're usually one of three or the sole African American students in their Honors class(es).

For a school like Washington Latin, which tends to make efforts to celebrate and appreciate students of all ethnic and racial backgrounds, why is the same not happening in the racial makeup of Latin's Honors classrooms?

This article was prompted by our experiences in Honors classes this year and noticing we were one of the few Black people in our Honors classes, usually one of three or four. This observation resulted in the question, why are there so few Black students in Honors classes? We decided to interview other students to ask them about their experience as African-American students, not only in Honors classes, but in general.

Ninth grader Musa Dansby says that being a Black Honors student, “[it] can be both empowering and isolating.

It's empowering to excel academically, but it might also come with pressure to represent or prove oneself in a space where Black students are underrepresented.” He went on to say “Often, I find myself isolated in classes because fewer Black students are in the Honors classes. While this is an issue on a personal level, it can still be discouraging.” He said that he finds that “The lack of Black students in Honors classes is concerning and often enraging.” He thinks that because of this, “[it] can raise a question about access to advanced coursework in earlier grades and encouragement from teachers.” He did say though that he never felt discouraged from taking Honors classes and that “It honestly depends on my relationship with the teacher.”

Freshman Temani Amam said that being in Honors in general is “tough, it's a lot of work I won't lie, however if you have decent time habits and you can get your work done. It's not terrible and the GPA boost is very helpful in the long run, so, if you do have the time and if you also Study Hall, it is very useful and you have the intellect for it then also, then I don't see why not.” Temani also stated that certain Honors classes like Honors English he didn't apply for because “Based on last year's English class I didn't think Honors English was for me.” He then went on to say that the lack of Black students in Honors, “is a shame and makes him feel isolated from his African-American peers because they are mostly On-Level.”

Seniors Basil Mann and Brooke Roberson have taken several Honors and AP courses throughout high school, and both said they would like to see more diversity in their classrooms.

Brooke has been here since the fifth grade while Basil has only been here since eighth grade.

Basil said that she's "grateful for my experiences as a Black Honors student, because I got to write my supplementals on them, and that helped me get into college." She then continued saying that "Last year was when I was like, 'Oh, I see what everyone's talking about.' It's not something people are making up that there's less Black people in Honors classes—because I was literally the only Black girl in my Honors Bio class. It kind of bothered me, it didn't impact my learning, but it was definitely like, I wished some of my friends were in the class because it's always easier to be in a harder class when you're with someone you're close with." She finished saying that, "For me, most of my friends are Black people. I just felt like the class would have been a little better for me if I had someone else who looked like me."

Senior Brooke Roberson then shared her experience, describing how she felt as an underclassman, saying that she "felt like a grain of pepper in a salt shaker—I was one of few Black people in my Honors classes. Honestly, I felt like it created a disconnect between me and some of my Black classmates that didn't take Honors because you don't have classes with people, you're not already close with them, you don't really get to know them. And I feel like it kind of creates a separation between people of the same community at Latin. I'm glad we have clubs like this Black Student Association that facilitate conversation between students of the same ethnic background and communities." She then closed by saying that, "I wasn't in one of those clubs when I was an underclassman and to be in a class where you're challenged and pushed, and you don't really see people like you, bringing forth ideas, in a way, it kind of made me less confident.

And I feel like as an underclassman, like that's a confidence, I would have probably needed to succeed more than I already did."

Mr. Love teaches Honors Pre Calculus and AP Calculus and is the chair of the math department and has thought a lot about diversity in upper level math courses. He says that, "generally there can be more diversity in Honors classes, for sure, and I think if you ask any staff member here, they would recognize that they could benefit from more diversity in Honors classes and AP classes. I think how we do that and achieve that is the question."

Because Mr. Love also teaches math, he elaborated that the lack of Black students in STEM needed to be addressed. He said, "We should consider just on a larger scale, students of color are underrepresented in that regard (to STEM). Partially because of just numbers, like students of color make a smaller portion of the population is one, but also two, there's a lower percentage of them going into those fields. I don't know if I could say that Latin has less Black students in STEM than any other typical public school charter school: there are some. There could always be more." He then finished saying, "I think it's really about helping students find out what their passions are earlier. And so, what we could do is do more work in the ninth and tenth grade years to try to help students figure out what they wanna do. But kind of showing them that they do have options, and that STEM can be one of those options if they so choose."

Mr. Price has worked as a college counselor at Latin since 2023 and is now teaching the new 9th grade H.A.C.K.S program and the 10th grade QUEST program to prepare students to apply for college. Mr. Price is a Washington, D.C. native and a former Assistant Director of Student Affairs at various universities.

Mr. Price began saying that, “You have to recognize that all the Black students here are different students, right? I think that in all cases, Blackness is not a monolith. And there's the Black students who are here that all fall into different categories,” and, “I can see an opportunity for how our Black students identify in multiple ways, how there could be blind spots for things that some teachers or for some students that they need or just how some students look around and they don't see things that reflect things that they believe are very important.”

Mr. Price explained more about the Honors process, “I think that with Latin and other institutions or other schools, we have to ask what is impacting how many students who are Black or of other traditionally marginalized backgrounds,

what's impacting their ability to even get into the honors courses? Is it, I mean, especially for the students who've been here since fifth grade, right? Essentially those students have been exposed to the same teachers, the same community, the same environment, right? So, what are the things that are impacting the students' ability to get that B plus in the standard course, to be able to move up?”

Price added, “So I would think that if we want to be an environment where everybody has opportunity to take the tough courses and to do their best and to really excel, we have we as the adults and the teachers have to ask ourselves really tough questions and ask some really tough conversations about how do we improve that?”



Senior Scholarship Winners!

By: Lily Williams and Folasade Jackson, seniors



On Tuesday, March 6th, two seniors, Brooke Oliver and Nick Kempf, received an amazing opportunity–The George Washington University Stephen Joel Trachtenberg Scholarship, which fully covers tuition, housing, books and fees for all four years of enrollment.

During Epsilon period, the entire senior class was called to the MPR for a “senior meeting,” however, after brief updates on upcoming events, the president of GW suddenly came out to announce the two students as winners. Nick and Brooke were then surrounded by family members, students, GW faculty, and NBC 4 newscasters to congratulate them on their outstanding accomplishment.

This event was carefully planned to keep the students from knowing until the announcement, and it was successful. “I was the only one who didn't know that it was gonna be like, a GW thing,”

said Nick “because everyone else kind of thought it was, but I actually thought it was a senior thing until I saw Miss Barahona fall out of the kitchen door and saw my brother.”

Brooke agreed, saying she “was just kind of oblivious” of what was about to occur.

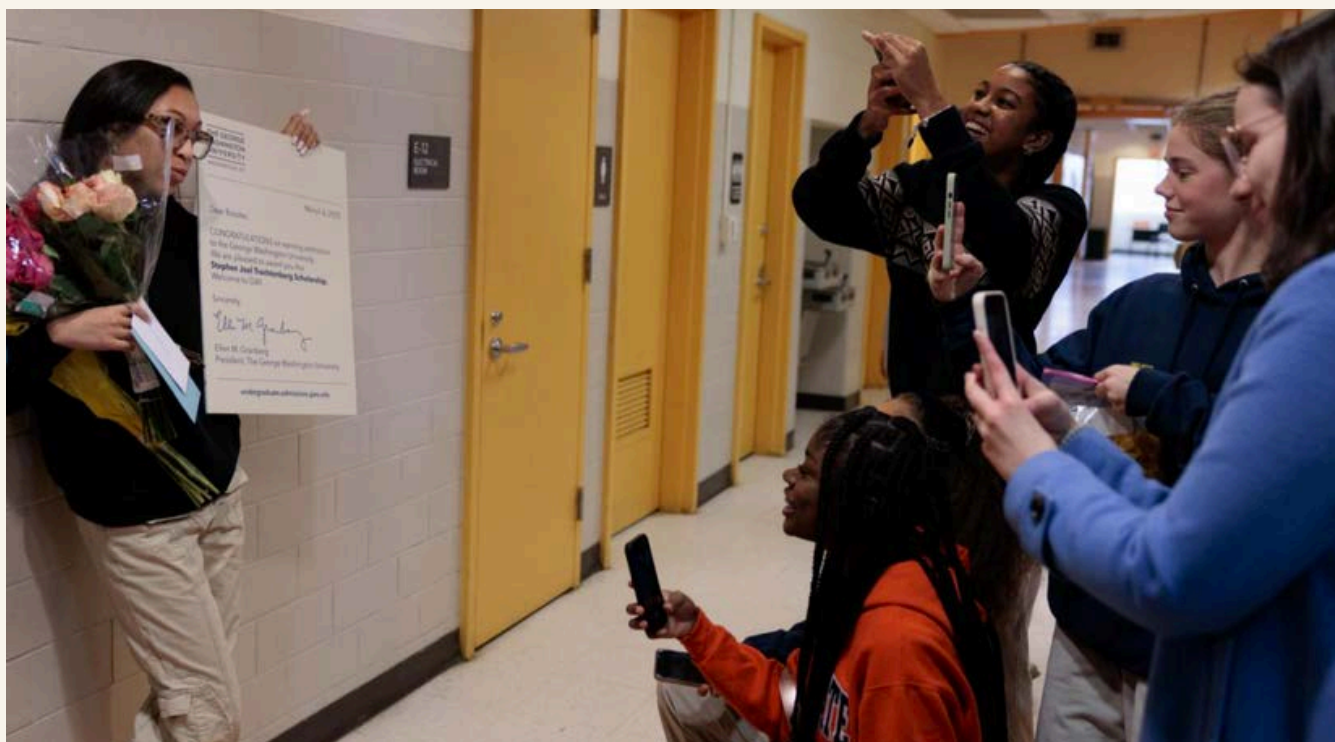
Both seniors shared the same sentiment about being overwhelmed after the reveal and follow up news interviews, but they were grateful about the opportunity and community support. Brooke felt “really happy, glad to be recognized [and] ...felt very supported by everybody, especially my friends and family.”

Likewise, Nick said he “definitely felt the love. I got a lot of texts. It was like they told us that it was going to be a public release, but I didn't know I was going to be on NBC.”

College can be a major expense, so having this opportunity will allow them to further flourish without worry of debt in the future should they choose to attend.

Director of College Counseling Ms. Latham described the enormity of this event in an email to faculty members.

“To understand the significance of this, approximately 3.9 million high school seniors will graduate this spring. Only about 20,000 will receive a full-ride scholarship such as the Trachtenberg. This is truly a rare opportunity for these seniors!”



Government Students Have Their Day in Court

By: Chase Warren and Miles McCartney, freshmen



On Friday, March 7th, the two Government classes taught by Mr. Liu and Ms. Colt were a part of a mock trial. The classes had the opportunity to present cases before a real judge. The event was put on by the Historical Society of D.C. Circuit 2025 Mock Court Program. The organization made up cases surrounding the applications of the 1st and 4th amendments in schools. Students are divided by amendments and then again into plaintiffs or defendants. They then construct arguments on whether or not students' 1st or 4th amendment rights were being infringed. Students analyzed real cases with similar conditions to the made-up ones to build arguments for their respective positions.

Some of the students agreed that this was a highly educational experience and felt that it was important for them to do this. "I have learned so much about the legal process due to my experiences constructing an argument using real documents and then going and arguing in front of a real judge," said senior Jack Pearson. Also senior Summer Romney said "I had so much fun at the Mock Trial and I'm so happy Latin was able to participate. This was my first time going, so I was super nervous, but ended up loving it. I feel a lot more confident and comfortable with my public speaking after this, and saw how cool our judicial system truly is."

The students were not alone in this endeavor because they had their teachers to help them and prepare them for this trial, they did this by setting them up with real lawyers. Mr. Liu said, “In terms of preparation, the DC Circuit Court Historical Society organizes and sponsors the event. In addition to doing an amazing job putting on the event, which is held at a federal court house downtown, they also provide us with real-life lawyers who volunteer to come to our school to help our students prepare. These volunteer lawyers are all very accomplished in their fields and it's great to see them interact with our students.” Also most of the students found it was really helpful to have the lawyers. Senior Summer Romney said, “In my AP government class, we had 3 lawyers come in twice a week for the past 2 weeks. This was not only helpful for building our arguments, but they also helped us with our presence in the courtroom, and learning about our judicial system.”

The teachers had some goals for their students, Mr. Liu said, “The goal was for students to learn how to think like a lawyer (which is a good skill for everyone to learn because it is so important to daily life) and specifically to be able to apply a precedent, like a Supreme Court case, to a new hypothetical case and argue for why the precedent supports your side in the hypothetical case.”

Students got the opportunity to spend a while working on these cases with real lawyers and their teachers, Mr. Liu and Ms. Colt. Their diligent preparation for the trial was displayed when seniors Summer Romney, Belen Gonzalez, and Aitana Camponova won best advocate prize at the trial. Senior Belen Gonzalez said, “It was because according to the judge, I was the student who most clearly advocated for my clients and explained my argument. I also faced tough questions when the judge interjected between my arguments.” Another winner of the award agreed that the reason they won best advocate was because of their ability to answer questions on the fly. Summer Romney said, “From each courtroom, the judge picked an “outstanding advocate”. My judge essentially said ours was chosen on the criteria of preparedness, clarity, and their ability to answer tough questions.”

The teachers were pleased with the students' performance at the trial. Mr. Liu said, “They were all nervous but when they got up to the podium, they calmly delivered their opening statement and were able to think on their feet and answer the judge's questions so well. So proud of them!”



Spring Into Sports!

By: Neri Portilla-Marchiori, Sophomore

All of the spring sports, which include tennis, track, frisbee, and lacrosse, got going in late February or early March, eager to have a season filled with fun and success.

Tennis was one of the later spring sports to begin their season, as tryouts didn't officially start until Monday, March 10th. However, seniors Teddy Greene and Phillip Douglas took the initiative to host a couple pre-tryout practices, in order to help get some players back in shape prior to the season. "We just wanted to give the opportunity to play a little to those who maybe haven't picked up a racket all winter," said Teddy. "We're just going to play a little, and hopefully all get into shape before [tryouts]."

Coach Kukic attended one of the two practices, and helped out with some matches that Teddy and Phillip had set up. Speaking of coaches, a new face was added to the program this year. Class of 2019 Latin alumni Daud Gantt-Bey joined the team as an assistant coach, due to the fact that Mr. Liu, the old head coach, had to step down to take some time for himself. This bumped up Coach Kukic to head coach, which means he'll be in charge of scheduling matches and organizing practices. Many players, although saddened by Mr. Liu not being on the court this year, are excited for a new season with new coaches. Freshman Andrew Kim has been on the team for two years now, and is looking forward to being able to play against other high schoolers across the district. "I'm very excited for this year, because last year I couldn't play as many matches as I was still in eighth grade, so this will be a good opportunity for me."

When asked about the coaching changes, he said "I was disappointed that Mr. Liu left, as I really liked him last year, but Mr. Kukic is also a great coach, and I'm really excited for the new coach, since he played Division One in college, so I'm confident he'll bring a lot to our team."

The ultimate frisbee team here at Latin has seen a large growth in interest over the years. This spring, around 25 students will be trying out for a spot on the team, which means tryouts will be extremely competitive. Ethan Hettenbach, a junior who is new to the sport, mentioned how "All the kids trying out are very good and skillful, so it will be difficult to secure a spot on the roster." However, he added that, "Everyone is very supportive of each other, and it's overall a really nice team environment. People seem like they really want to be there, and enjoy playing the sport and being around each other, which isn't something you see on every team." The team's first game is on Tuesday, March 18th, versus Field. However, tryouts don't end until Thursday, March 13th, so coaches Cooper campus civics teacher Mr. Starnes, English teacher Mr. Hultgren, and geometry teacher Mr. Baar will have to act quickly to decide on a team and prepare them to complete the following week.

Lacrosse has been going on for a few weeks at this point, so players have had a chance to meet and play with Coach Perez, a new addition to the team, alongside Coach Torrence, and Coach Kiki, who were already part of the squad.

Contrary to most other spring sports, lacrosse is actually no-cut, so anyone who wants to join is more than welcome. This has led to many new faces on the team, like sophomores Maria Stocker and Sylvia Bleimehl, who have little lacrosse background, but are excited for this new opportunity. Sophomore Lyla Kramer says that she's "very excited for this new season, especially with a new coach, and we can hopefully do well in our end of year tournament." "I'm excited to see all these new faces," she added, "but unfortunately the hard truth is that due to so many people being on the team, playing time will be hard to come by for some people." However, she believes that, "All these new people add to the team spirit, and make it very enjoyable to practice and play." Sophomore Rina Saxon was also asked about their new coach, and said that "She's making us a better team already, especially since we're doing a lot of conditioning and training to prepare for our upcoming games." Latin unfortunately fell to Walls 6-7, with sophomore Lyla Kramer scoring five of our goals, and the other one coming from senior Summer Romney. "Walls is our biggest rival," continued Rina, "since we are usually very evenly matched which makes the games close and fun." Overall, she felt that "We will do well this season, thanks to our seniors doing great jobs as captains, and Coach Torrence adjusting well to a higher role on the team."

As indoor track comes to an end, the doors open for outdoor track, led by Coach Callum and Coach Dreux. While the season has yet to start, coaches have made it clear to the athletes what needs to be done in order to obtain a spot on varsity. Sophomore Leo Shapiro-Morton said, "The coaches really care mostly about how committed we are to the team. That's what matters a lot for making varsity." When asked about potential goals for this upcoming season, he responded by saying, "I hope that we're able to get top three at the PCSAA championship, and with hard work and commitment,

I believe we are able to do that, and I think our coaches will help us meet that goal." Coach Callum added, "Ultimately, our goal is to create a well-bonded team that knows how to work together effectively, with the aim of winning a charter league title again for both the boys' and girls' teams. This year, we have a large team and a significant number of seniors with whom I have great confidence to perform when it matters most. We will have success individually, but the hope is that we can do well as a team."

Varsity Softball had its first game on Friday March 14, which was a scrimmage against some team members and some teachers. The team has many new players, as several players graduated in the last two years. The team is coached by eighth grade student support teacher Ms. D'Angelo, art teacher Ms. David, and college counselor Ms. Barahona. The captain is senior Diana Salmeron, with support from senior players including Basil Mann, Brooke Roberson, and Kennedy Little.



Varsity Baseball Swings Into Action

By: Noah Ratzman and Noah Eustler, freshmen

This year, the baseball season kicked off at the beginning of February, earlier than any other spring sport. The team, coached by Coach Cooper in his third season as head coach and fourth overall, has played four games so far. The three assistant coaches are all coaching for the first time as upper school coaches, including Coach Goff, who teaches 10th grade history and theater, Rafi Rosario, the previous middle school coach, and Andre Lewis Jackson, who played baseball in college. And, of course, the captains are seniors Ben Blier, Liam Saxon, Xander Perry, and junior J.D. Miller. The captains had to distinguish themselves to their teammates, who voted to choose the leader(s) of the team. Baseball practices happen Monday through Thursday, usually on the Latin field, but due to some bad weather recently, the team has been indoors.

The team's first scrimmage and real game was against Riverdale Baptist. The scrimmage ended up being a 7-5 Latin victory, which didn't have any impact at all towards their record. The second game on Tuesday, March 4 was unfortunately a 3-2 Lions loss. Despite the loss, the game was a nail-biter throughout all seven innings. Latin found themselves down 2-1 in the seventh inning, but a game-tying base hit by senior captain Ben Blier tied the game. Not only was the game close, but it got heated when one of the Riverdale Baptist players cleated junior T.J. Chandler. Words were exchanged from then on and both teams were riled up. This event made both teams much more determined to win the game. The game ended in the final inning on an unfortunate error, giving Riverdale the win. On this play, the ball woefully hit the umpire on a throw into the infield for a play at the plate.

Even though this play was quite controversial, the umpires called the end of the game.

Coach Sebastian Cooper spoke to the team after the loss against Riverdale Baptist with words of motivation and despite the loss, he expects to have a strong stretch from start to end. "We have a great baseball team with great kids on it and despite Opening Day's outcome, we're just getting started." The third game happened Saturday March, 8, in which the team received the honor to play at one of the oldest Negro League ballparks, Drury Ballpark. Latin left with the win 11-4 against Northwestern HS. Latin seemed to have had momentum throughout the whole game, giving them the win.

Despite looking ahead to spring break, Latin looks to compete in six more games before the break. Those teams include Landon, Eastern, Dunbar, Bell, DCI, and Bishop McNamara.

This spring break will mark a huge achievement for the Lions, as they will be traveling to Orlando, Florida for a baseball tournament. The team is jittering with anticipation for the games, the travel, and the warm weather.



The competition will obviously be a challenge, as the Lions will face off against the well-known IMG Academy on their home turf. There will be other teams that Latin will face as well, including: Many players on the team will be in attendance for the week at Orlando.

Spring Break to most of the team means a good amount of sun and baseball, but some players have specific goals they are looking to achieve. Freshman Paul Boone said the team will really connect over this upcoming week, “bonding as a team, becoming real friends.” The Lions will definitely gain chemistry over this trip. Coach Copper has high praise for the team and is excited for what they are going to do out on the field, “I’m excited to see how this talented group comes together—there’s nothing quite like witnessing a team discover their collective potential and bring it to the diamond.”

Along with the Florida trip, this year is also a very special year for Senior Ben Blier, who received an offer to play baseball and made the decision to carry his baseball talents to Grinnell College in Iowa, becoming the first Latin baseball graduate to

play at the collegiate level. Ben, in his final season as a HS baseball player, spoke out about his goal for the team. “A goal I have for the team is to show that we’re a competitive force not just in the PCSAA, but in all of DC. Last year we played a lot of close, competitive games that we ended up losing. I’m really looking forward to the opportunity to prove we can win those big games.” Ben, like many other players, wants to show other schools who they are as a team and that they are capable of winning close games at a competitive level.

Ben was also a freshman when Latin athletics decided to bring back Varsity Baseball for the first time in 8 years. He talked about where the team started when he was a freshman, all the way to his senior year as he cherishes his final high school games. “Every year we’ve gotten better and progressed into a more competitive, more respectable team. Seeing the baseball program that was originally an experiment for the athletics department now be a team with a winning pedigree full of players who want to play is really special for me. I’ll leave Latin happier knowing that the baseball program is in the strong and still growing condition it’s in.”



Sports Photos

Photo credits to Hannah Park, sophomore



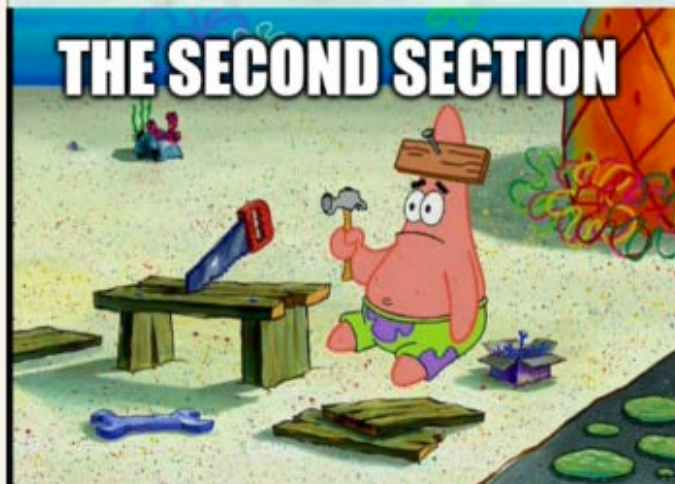
Mememes

By: Catherine Paci, Junior

Time for yoga with Ms. Gott!



It was yogalates.



Photos from Matilda

